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Prime Minister

Content that we should work for a reduced European Commission of 12 members?

A.J.C. 2/3

Yes - I dismissed this one with

Helmut Schmidt and we both

PM/83/21

PRIME MINISTER

Reform of Community Institutions

added -

1. I held a meeting yesterday of the Ministerial Sub-Committee on European Questions on the basis of a Report by Officials (OD(E)(83)1) to consider the line the United Kingdom should take in discussions in the Community on the institutional reforms which will be required in the context of enlargement. We gave officials guidance on a wide range of reforms which we might seek to make the Community more efficient and cost-effective.

agreed that 12 would be better than 17.

2. There is only one point which I think I need draw to your attention. This concerns the size of the Commission. At present this has 14 members, and the natural progression on enlargement would be to 17 (2 for Spain and 1 for Portugal). It was agreed that a Commission of 17 would be too large and that a Commission of 12 (one per member state) would be more effective. This would require the four large member states, including the United Kingdom, to give up one of their two Commissioner posts. It was felt that the balanced political representation of two Commissioners no longer had its original national significance, and that the loss of the second French and Italian Commissioners could work to our advantage. A move to a single Commissioner would make it important for us to choose a national figure of standing who could command a major portfolio. It was noted, however, that the discussions on institutional reform were still at a very early stage and that the reactions of other countries were not clear. We could not yet be sure, therefore, whether a Commission of 12 would prove to be negotiable with the other large member states, particularly France and Italy.

not

It was



It was accordingly agreed that the United Kingdom should float the idea of a Commission of 12 in such a way as to gain the maximum negotiating credit, but that our subsequent position would have to take account of the views of the other large member states.

3. I am sending copies of this minute to the Lord Chancellor, the Lord President, members of OD(E) and Sir Robert Armstrong.

(FRANCIS PYM)

Foreign and Commonwealth Office
9 March 1983

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Envo. Pal.

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10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

10 March, 1983

Dear Sir,

Reform of Community Institutions

The Prime Minister has seen the minute of 9 March by the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary. She is content that we should work for a reduced European Commission of 12 members. Mrs. Thatcher has recalled that she once discussed this matter with Helmut Schmidt and they both agreed that 12 would be better than 17.

I am copying this letter to the Private Secretaries to the Lord Chancellor, the Lord President, the members of OD(E) and Sir Robert Armstrong.

*Yours ever
John Gals*

R. B. Bone, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office

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