


CCO

PRIME MINISTER

HONG KONG

I attach a note from the Chairman concerning the handling of the Hong Kong issue. This largely repeats what he told you after Question Time yesterday.



 JOHN WHITTINGDALE

17th January, 1990



CONSERVATIVE

Strictly Personal and Confidential

16th January, 1990

PRIME MINISTER

cc Secretary of State for Home Department
Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs
The Chief Whip
Lord President of the Council

HANDLING OF THE HONG KONG ISSUE

Following David Waddington's speech at the Home Affairs Committee on Monday evening, I understand there was a 'planning meeting' of some members of the '92 Group which discussed their strategy to defeat the Government. I understand that they will be doing the following:

1. Encouraging Chairmen of Associations and Associations to write to me to express their opposition to the proposals. So far we have had very few letters about this.
2. Raising the whole issue at various Party meetings. In particular they will target the Central Council, which is on 30th/31st March at Cheltenham. Motions do not have to be in until 14th February, so it is quite possible that they will put in a number of motions and we will have to see how this can be handled.

**THE RIGHT HON. KENNETH BAKER MP
CHAIRMAN OF THE PARTY**

It is possible that we could lose that motion since there might be a heavy attendance from urban seats, particularly as Cheltenham is so close to the West Midland's conurbation.

My first thoughts are that we should take the debate right at the beginning of the proceedings on Friday morning this will be answered by David Waddington and then I would speak after lunch and be able, in the event of defeat, to give the very clear definitive Government view of the position.

I think it is all very important that this should be taken on the first day, that is, when you are not speaking. They might also seek to get Hong Kong debated both at the YC Conference and the Women's National Conference. It would therefore be better to try and let the Central Council deal with the issue and quash it at that stage.

3. I am told that they also talked about the Parliamentary tactics. They think that they will not defeat the Bill on Second Reading since Labour is likely to support it, but they do not believe that the Government will be able to command a majority for a Guillotine. Norman Tebbit said that they could drag out the proceedings and extend them if necessary beyond July into the overspill period

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so that there is a prospect of wrecking the Conference.

This is all highly irresponsible talk when one considers that the next Party Conference might well be the last before the next General Election. It is, of course, essential that the Bill is dealt with completely by the end of July. I will be discussing with officials here how we can best handle this at all these different meetings and marshalling support throughout the Party at all levels for the Government's policy.

WJ.