



CCNO 1

- 1) Mr Baker
- 2) Pina M... ..

Prime Minister

Agree to appointment
 Yes of Mrs Christie or Mrs
 Eccles?
 with TF
 in that order
 no

29/3

In my minute of 25 February about membership of the Committee of Inquiry into the Conduct of Local Government Business I said that Kenneth Baker and I were taking soundings of a possible fifth member. Although the present members, who held their first meeting on 13 March, make an impressive team, I believe that the appointment of a further robust spirit is called for. I have been looking for someone who combines a good understanding of public affairs with a background outside London. I have been pressed, too, to add a woman to the team.

I should therefore like to put forward for your approval two nominations, ¹ Mrs Elizabeth Christie whom I have known for some years and whose name has been highly recommended to me by Lynda Chalker; and Mrs Diana Eccles recommended to me by Michael Jopling and warmly commended by Peter Walker. Mrs Christie would be my first choice, but Mrs Eccles would make an excellent candidate if Mrs Christie were unavailable. Either candidate would, I believe, be very acceptable to the Party.

Mrs Elizabeth Christie is a solicitor in general practice in Liverpool. A former member of the Race Relations Board



in 1970-77, she was in the running for the Deputy Chairmanship of the Equal Opportunities Commission. She is known to be extremely energetic and business-like. I know her to be a person with a strong sense of what is right and proper in public life. Her father was a Judge in the Palatine Court.

Mrs Diana Eccles is the present Vice-Chairman of the National Council for Voluntary Organisations and has strong links in Yorkshire and the North. Her present appointment as a part-time member of the North Eastern Electricity Board, where I understand she has done outstanding well, expires at the end of April. Her appointment, would be very acceptable to the voluntary sector. She is a daughter-in-law of Lord Eccles.

I have discussed this matter with Mr Widdicombe, the Chairman of the Committee of Inquiry. While he is understandably concerned that any further appointment should take place at the earliest opportunity, and not be seen to undermine the impartiality of the Committee, he would certainly not resist the membership of either Mrs Christie, or Mrs Eccles. Subject to your agreement, I would wish to sound out, as quickly as possible, these two candidates on their availability and willingness to serve. The Committee will be holding their first press conference on 2 April. Mr Widdicombe will need



to have some idea by that time of how matters stand.

If you agree to my doing this, and subject to the outcome of those soundings, I would propose to seek your formal approval to the membership of Mrs Christie (or, should she be unavailable, Mrs Eccles) and to proceed to appointment.

I am copying this to Cabinet colleagues and to Sir Robert Armstrong.

P J

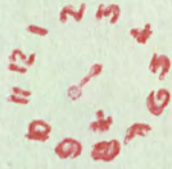
24 March 1985

*Approved by the Secretary of State
and signed in his absence.*

Local Govt Fr 25

Relative

29 MAR 1985



COMPLETION