

EDG

PRIME MINISTER

MEPs

I attach a note from Kenneth Baker reporting on his meeting with the MEPs last week. He plainly took a very robust line with them and told them that they should support the Government and the Party if they expect to receive help from the Party.

As you know, you are seeing the MEPs on 24th January and Kenneth Baker, Douglas Hurd and Tim Renton will also be present. The fact that Kenneth Baker has delivered them a pretty uncompromising message should help as it diminishes the need for you to do so.

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JOHN WHITTINGDALE

15th January, 1990



CONSERVATIVE

THE PRIME MINISTER

MEETING WITH MEPs ON MONDAY, 8TH JANUARY, 1990

As you will be meeting the EDG on 24th January, I think that you should know that on Monday afternoon I met the Tory MEPs in Committee Room 5 in the House of Commons. It was a very well attended meeting and it lasted for an hour and a half. This is part of a series of meetings to improve the relationship between the Group, the Party and the Government. In the morning they had met 10 Junior Ministers with Francis Maude to go over aspects of policy.

I do not envy Christopher Prout in trying to hold together a group which ranges from Federalists like Newton-Dunn, Price and Welsh to those who support Government policy like Bryan Cassidy and Edward Kellett-Bowman. I attach a copy of my speaking notes which may serve as a brief for your meeting.

In the discussion that followed my opening remarks, I thought there was no point in beating about the bush and I made the following points:

1. We must not be divided on Europe. It is damaging to the Party to hear the individual MEPs rehearsing their own views about policies in Europe. We accept that there are differences of opinion, but it is damaging to have these rehearsed so vocally. Labour MEPs, who on many matters disagree with Kinnock, stress the points where they agree and keep quiet about the rest.

2. They must think of the political impact they will have if they are seen always to be at odds with the Government and that impact will tell upon the General Election. They must think in terms of the next General Election in this country and how they can work to help us.

3. Our object must be to win back the 13 Euro-seats that we lost at the Election in June and this requires much better organisation at the Euro-Constituency Council level.

4. They are very sensitive to charges of 'Federalism', but I think that it is important for us to make this the issue so that the matter is not fudged. I told them very bluntly that there is no majority in the Conservative Party or in the House of Commons or in the country for a Federalist approach.

5. They want to work more closely with the CDU Groups in Europe and they are having discussions with the European

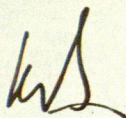
People's Party, which is the umbrella organisation for the right of centre groups, because they feel that this is the best way to foster a philosophical alternative to Socialism. I pointed out to them that many of the groups to the right of centre in European politics still have a dirigiste and corporatist approach. We have moved away from this in the last 10 years and they must appreciate how the philosophy of Conservatism has changed.

6. Various issues came up in passing like the Social Charter and Lingua, but one issue that was raised by Price was a single currency. I explained to them that we do not think that this is a quick-fix to deal with economic problems in the UK and that no-one can impose a single currency upon Europe unless there is a much closer convergence of the European economies and the European Monetary policies. I asked them to consider seriously the paper that John Major had produced on this.

7. We also discussed the position of the Commission and I made clear that in Britain we are not used to a politically-motivated Civil Service which of course is what the Commission is and it has far too great powers. Some of them recognised this and are trying to find out ways in which it can become more accountable. The phrase they used for this is the 'democratic deficit'!

As you will see this was a plain speaking meeting. I think it is better for us to speak in these terms and to impress upon them, as I did, that they get elected under the Conservative banner and that we do expect them to support Conservative policies.

I have a strong sense that several of them have very little sense of allegiance to the ties that hold a party together, either at a national or a local level. However we must do what we can to keep the lines of communication open and get a better working relationship.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to be the initials 'KS' or similar, written in a cursive style.

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SPEECH NOTES - CHAIRMAN'S ADDRESS TO THE EDG, 8 JANUARY 1990

- Congratulations to Christopher on knighthood - honour also to Group as a whole. Delighted to see other well-deserved honours to former members. [John de Courcy Ling CBE, Alistair Hutton OBE and Fred Tuckman OBE]
- Pleased EDG now meeting in the House, and that access arrangements have been improved. Long overdue. Also understand you have access to 1922 meetings and Backbench Committees - welcome development.
- Good news for all sides if you become familiar faces in these corridors.
- Improved consultation between EDG and Government very welcome and overdue. Understand you had an 'open day' in the FCO today; due to see PM later this month, and I'm coming to visit you in Strasbourg next month. Looking forward to it.

European Scene:

- Very exciting times in Europe. Especially so for you who are involved in it day by day.
- Personally I have long been convinced that eras do not conveniently end at the turn of the century. Once again history has not waited. 1989 will be seen as the turning point for the twentieth century.
- Your role as Members of the European Parliament at this time is particularly important - both following the Single European Act and because of recent developments. Your role is increasingly recognised in the Government - I am conscious that that has perhaps not always been the case in the past.

Selling Britain's Case

- Although I think there are some signs that the tide is turning, it remains the case that our message on the Community is not getting across as well as it should.
- My job to ensure that it does. EDG is my natural ally in that task - in addition to your role as legislators in your own right. Would welcome your support. As the experts you are in an excellent position to help us.
- The Labour Group clearly see this role for themselves in helping the Labour Party. Many of you will have seen their leaked memorandum, which states clearly that they intend to position themselves foursquare beside the Labour Party in harrying the Government and campaigning to put Mr Kinnock in Number Ten. They even explicitly refer to their intention to provoke divisions between the EDG and the Government. It would be criminal for us to allow them to get away with the fiction that they are more pro-Europe than the Government.

Improving Relations

- It is a fairly open secret that relations between the EDG and the Government have not always been all one might have hoped.
- *I am determined that 1990 should be the year when we put this right.*
- There is a great debate on now about the future of Europe.
- We need to get away from absolutes in that debate and respect each others' positions. The Government must try to understand your position - and you must try to understand the position of the Government.
- Together, we need to sell Conservative Britain's role in the European Community more effectively.

The Government's European Policy

- Let me say a few words about our policy:
- *First*, the caricature of our position as a 'wrecker' is unjust.
- We want more integration. The Single Market will help bring it - and we are one of the pioneers of the Single market. The campaign to create the Single Market is an excellent symbol of Britain's positive contribution to the Community.
- I am very keen that we should emphasise it, and push it back up the political agenda at home.
- Lord Young's campaign was magnificent. And the EDG's 1992 Clubs are an often unsung but very valuable, pioneering contribution.
- *Secondly*, we believe in a Community with a political as well as an economic dimension. That's why the Treaty on European Political Cooperation was based on a British draft.
- *Third*, our practical approach is one of the special qualities the UK brings to the Community - it should be valued as an asset.
- Of course we do not always agree with our partners. That is not a tragedy, as Delors might have said.
- Recently there have been differences, although on the momentous developments in Eastern Europe there has been very substantial common ground.
- On Stages 2 and 3 of Delors: the debate is only just beginning. We have proposed an alternative approach which is gaining ground. We want to avoid

bureaucracy and centralisation; and we also want to retain the Government's and Parliament's control over economic policy.

- That view is shared on both sides of the House of Commons - and in the country. I expect you saw the MORI poll just before Christmas indicating very substantial opposition to weakening the powers of the House of Commons [attached].

ERM

- On the ERM it is not a question of whether we will join the ERM, but when.

Social Charter

- On the Social Charter - I know some of you feel very strongly about this. Must respect each others' positions.
- Now individual measures will come from the Commission. The Government will consider them on their merits.
- Some we will be able to accept - some not.
- I am very keen that we should identify those we can accept as early as possible - and deploy them to maximum advantage. Role for EDG in helping us there.

'Democratic deficit'

- Again, something about which I know some of you feel very strongly.
- Government's view is that it is important to strengthen democratic control at the Westminster end. I believe that approach commands support here and in the country.
- The Procedure Committee's excellent report has a number of recommendations as far as the involvement of MEPs is concerned, and the Government is considering the report very carefully.

EDG/Government/Party Coordination

- There has been a concerted effort by both sides to work more closely in recent months. Delighted to see it.
- I am determined that together we should build on those improvements.
- Of course, sometimes the EDG and Government will have to differ. We must accept that.
- But what we *must* avoid is the unnecessary public divisions that come about through people not communicating with each other.

- It is silly to conduct arguments in the Press when people could simply pick up a telephone or ask for a meeting.
- In the same Party, people should be on those terms. We all know the cost of public divisions - we have seen what they have done to the Labour Party, and we saw the effect divisions within the Party had on our performance in June.
- We simply must not allow that to happen again. And it is a responsibility that lies with all sections of the Party, not just the EDG.
- Since June there have been several measures in hand:
- The *Prime Minister* has written to your Chairman stressing the need for regular contact between Spokesmen and Ministers, and contact with Special Advisers and CRD. Day to day liaison is perhaps best handled in that way.
- *Francis Maude* - as you will have heard this morning - is very keen. He has:
 - written to relevant Ministers stressing need for regular contact between them and their EDG counterparts.
 - set up formal monthly meetings with Christopher Prout.
 - encouraged Ministerial visits to Strasbourg (I'm coming in February and April)
 - organised more specific and targeted briefings for MEPs.
- *At Central Office:*
 - Shirley Stotter is, as you know, tasked with looking after Europe: a new post, and one which the Group sought, I believe. Pleased she is involved early with the new Information Campaign. It is imperative that you use the £2 million as effectively as Labour used theirs last year.
 - CRD is also keen to improve cooperation.
 - The recent CRD brief - Britain in the European Community - Leading the Pack - was sent to Spokesmen in draft, and many of your suggestions incorporated. This initiative will be repeated, on a more regular basis and with more notice.
 - A meeting is planned between CRD, the EDG Secretariat, Special Advisers and EDG research assistants to improve cooperation.
 - Andrew Lansley, recently appointed Director of CRD, starts on 1 February. I know he will be keen to meet you and encourage cooperation.

- I am also keen to see more joint publications between MPs and MEPs, to give a public face to improved cooperation. Perhaps Caroline Jackson might have a view on that?

Winning back seats

- Our overriding aim for the next European Elections must, of course, be to win back the 13 seats we lost. The campaign to do that has to start now.
- It is crucial that we retain the organisation and activists in those seats to win them back. Twinning is an excellent idea, and I think Bill Newton Dunn and Andy Simpson's initiatives on that score are well worth following up.
- And I appreciate that we need to find a way to motivate our activists better during and before European campaigns. Welcome ideas on that.

Conclusion

- Finally, it is good news that you are making progress with the EPP, and I wish you luck with your Group Meeting in Berlin during the rest of this week. The one word of caution I might just add is that I think you should avoid the temptation to 'sell your souls' for the sake of membership. But I am pleased you are making progress, and look forward to hearing more first-hand when I come to Strasbourg next month.