



in FW
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 Minto

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Principal Private Secretary

16 September 1980

Dear Minto,

EUROPEAN COMMISSIONERS

When the Chief Whip called on the Prime Minister this afternoon, he told her that, in accordance with the decision reached at the meeting which she had held on 25 July, he had spoken to Mr. Joel Barnett shortly before the recess to see whether he was interested in the second of the British posts in the European Commission. In the light of the discussion which he had already had with Mr. Callaghan about the appointment, Mr. Barnett had been surprised to be told that Ministers were anxious that he should let his name go forward for the post, but he had nonetheless said that he would like to think about the matter further during the recess.

The Chief Whip continued that Mr. Barnett had now been in touch with him again to say that he was very interested in the appointment and would like, as the next step, to take some soundings within the Labour Party about it. He had told Mr. Barnett, however, that before he took the matter any further, the Prime Minister would have to let Mr. Callaghan know that Ministers were not happy with his suggestion that Mr. Mulley should be considered for the post and that instead they would like to approach him, Mr. Barnett, more formally to establish the extent of his interest.

The Prime Minister said that she was still of the view that Mr. Barnett would do the job in Brussels very well. Lord George-Brown had, however, let it be known that he would like his name to be considered, and some thought ought to be given to his suitability. The difficulty about him was that his appointment would probably not be acceptable to the Labour Party.

The Chief Whip said that he thought that if the post were offered to Lord George-Brown, it would infuriate the Labour Party. It should be recognised, however, that some pressure might be put on Mr. Barnett not to accept the appointment.

After further discussion, the Prime Minister said that she would now write to Mr. Callaghan letting him know that Ministers did not wish to pursue his suggestion that Mr. Mulley's name might be put forward but that provided he had no objection, a formal

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approach would be made to Mr. Barnett (I attach a copy of the letter which the Prime Minister has now sent to Mr. Callaghan).

I am sending copies of this letter to Paul Lever (FCO) and to David Wright (Cabinet Office).

Yours ever,

Alvin Whitman.

Murdo Maclean Esq
Chief Whip's Office

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