

NOTE FOR THE RECORD

BRITISH COMMISSIONERS FOR THE NEXT EC COMMISSION

The Prime Minister held a meeting this morning to consider possible candidates for the two British Commissioner posts in the next European Commission. Those present were the Lord President, the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary, the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, the Lord Privy Seal and the Chief Whip.

It was pointed out that candidates normally came from both Government and Opposition. On the Government side, a number of names were mentioned from the House of Commons, notably Douglas Hurd, Nicholas Ridley, Cecil Parkinson and Terence Higgins. It was agreed that some would make excellent candidates but their nomination would involve a by-election. It was desirable to avoid this. The Prime Minister said that the key thing was to send someone who would ensure tight control of the Community's budget. The ideal person in this respect would be Lord Cockfield. The Foreign Secretary said that an alternative would be to find an experienced official. Sir Michael Butler appeared the strongest candidate. The Chief Whip and the Lord Privy Seal, however, were emphatic that there would have to be a candidate from the Government ranks if there were to be one from the Opposition. The Party would not understand a solution whereby the Government candidate was an official and the Opposition were allowed a politician. If both were officials or businessmen, it would be easier to accept.

In a brief discussion of possible Opposition candidates, it was agreed that the best would be Lord Barnett if he would agree to be nominated. It was agreed that the Chief Whip would sound out Opposition views on whether they would wish to submit suggestions from within their ranks, or would be content with officials.

C.D.P.