

Pa.
CDP 29/8.

PRIME MINISTER

BRITISH EC COMMISSIONERS

You have frequently proposed Lord Cockfield as the Government candidate to be the main British Commissioner in the next Commission. You have met with equally constant but not very well defined reluctance from several of those whom you have consulted. It may be helpful to try to interpret their misgivings.

On the face of it, we should be doing the Commission proud by sending Lord C. A senior Cabinet Minister, expert in financial matters and with his experience of business at the highest level. A man who knows intimately many of the issues which concern the Community. A person whom you can be confident shares your views of the need to constrain Community expenditure and will fight hard for this goal.

The objections, as I understand them, are two-fold.

The first is whether his particular brand of skill and tenacity would be effective in the Commission. There are no vetoes in the Commission. That is an option only in the Council. At the end of any discussion, the President simply sums up on the basis of his perception of the majority. Saying no in isolation gets you nowhere: the tide simply flows over you. Bad ideas can only be blocked (or good ones promoted) by endless manoeuvring, forming alliances with other Commissioners, scratching their backs in return for their support. There is no doubt that Lord C would be excellent at trench warfare. But that is more the role of the representatives of Member States in the Council. In the Commission you need someone who is fast-moving, tactical and

above all some-one who can get into the inevitable inner circle of senior Commissioners (which in practice means speaking French). The doubt is whether Lord C, despite all his admirable qualities, could operate in that way.

The second objection is that his appointment could be portrayed as simply a means of unloading someone from your Government. That is unfair. For instance M. Delors went straight from the French Cabinet to a Commission post. The difference, I suppose, is really one of age. Delors is demonstrably on the way up: for Lord C it is presumably a last job.

There is one further problem which has not been mentioned, but which could be relevant. Having a former Minister of Lord C's eminence and seniority as our Commissioner could give rise to problems of working relations with the UK Permanent Representative. Insofar as instructions are given, they go from the Permanent Representative to the Commissioner. It has to be the former who represents HMG. There might be difficulties in this with a very recent ex-Cabinet Minister.

This is just an attempt to explain what I think are the reasons behind the rather persistent opposition to your naming Lord C. The onus is of course on the others to come forward with some-one whose merits equal Lord C's and outweigh his possible drawbacks.

My own view is - looking at all the names suggested - that you would get the most effective service from Michael Butler with Phillip Whitehead or Denis Landau for the second Commissioner.

C D P.
C D POWELL

28 August 1984

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PRIME MINISTER

British EC Commissioners

So many names have been mentioned that you may find it useful to have a note of them, if only to keep a tally.

Government Side

Lord Cockfield
Lord Jellicoe
Sir Henry Plumb
Lady Elles
Basil de Ferranti
Lord Limerick
Lord Selsdon
Lord Soames
Lord Gowrie
Lord Colville
Lord Barber
Lord Windlesham
Sir John Nott
Lord Thomas
Lord Avon
Lord Aberdare
Lord Rawlinson
David Young
Sir Robin Ibbs
Sir David Wolfson
Sir Philip de Zulueta

Opposition

Joel Barnett
Stanley Clinton-
Davies
Roland Moyle
Lord Wedderburn
Dennis Landau
Denis Healey
Lord Northfield
Phillip Whitehead
Fred Mulley
Peter Parker
Peter Jay

Officials

Sir Michael Butler
Mr. Williamson
Mr. Hannay
Sir Donald Maitland
Sir Michael Palliser
Sir Michael Franklin

Businessmen

Christopher Hogg
Jeffrey Stirling
Ronnie Grierson

Sitting MPs

/Peter Rees
Terence Higgins
Douglas Hurd/

CDP.

C. D. POWELL

28 August, 1984