

PRIME MINISTER

COMMONWEALTH GROUP OF EMINENT PERSONS

The attached letter says that the Foreign Secretary has taken soundings of other Governments about the level, venue and timing of the review conference for the Commonwealth Eminent Persons Group.

Why?

On level, it is quite clear that the other heads of Government concerned are all expecting to meet. Clearly you will have to take part.

On venue, there is a move afoot to hold the meeting in Delhi. The Foreign Secretary is concerned to get in a firm bid for London very quickly in order to pre-empt this. To get London accepted, he thinks he will have to agree that Sir Lynden Pindling (rather than you) should be in the Chair. Actually I think this will probably suit you: it will be easier to push the British point of view.

Yes not

The main problem remains that of timing. The soundings conducted by Sonny Ramphal show that all the heads of Government expect to meet in late July or, as Mr. Hawke has suggested, 4 August. The Foreign Secretary's view is that it is simply not feasible to postpone the date until September. The truth of the matter is, I am afraid, that no real effort has been made to get agreement on postponement except for your own attempt with Mr. Hawke. The Foreign Secretary obviously believes it is now too late and the bandwagon is moving in favour of late July/early August. The choices are either:

- (i) to go back to him and instruct that a proper effort be made to get agreement on dates in September (though even September is pretty full for you). Or

This would be much better.
not

(ii) to agree to a meeting on 4/5 August (you could just do this before your engagements starting on 6 August), provided the meeting is in London.

Agree to (i) or (ii)?

C D P

C D POWELL

28 April 1986

*I may not be able to do
an early day work meeting.
Certainly would not go to Delhi
for it. But what really bothers
me is that the BPA do not
seem interested in getting the best results -
only in far up the price.
not*

SLHAKP



10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

29 April 1986

COMMONWEALTH GROUP OF EMINENT PERSONS

Thank you for your letter of 28 April about the modalities of the Commonwealth Review meeting to consider the forthcoming report of the Commonwealth Group of Eminent Persons.

The Prime Minister remains highly reluctant to agree to a meeting in late July or early August and sees little evidence that any serious effort has been made to persuade the other countries concerned that the meeting should be delayed until September (apart from her own efforts with Mr. Hawke). In her view it is still not too late to mount an effort to persuade the others to accept dates in September (for instance in the period 1 - 3 September), and she would like to see this done. She would not object to a preliminary meeting of Foreign Ministers in July if this would help. In the last resort and if this attempt were to fail, she would accept Monday 4 and/or Tuesday 5 August, but no date after that until early September. Nor can she manage late July, given her parliamentary commitments. Her agreement is predicated upon the meeting being in London: she is not prepared to go to New Delhi or Nassau. She would not object to Sir Lynden Pindling being in the chair at a meeting in London.

I should be grateful if you could set in hand action on the above lines.

I am copying this letter to the Private Secretaries to other Ministers in OD and to Michael Stark (Cabinet Office).

(C.D. POWELL)

A.C. Galsworthy, Esq., C.M.G.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

28 April 1986

Dear Charles,

Commonwealth Group of Eminent Persons

Thank you for your letter of 15 April giving the Prime Minister's views on the modalities of the Commonwealth Review meeting to consider the forthcoming report of the Commonwealth Group of Eminent Persons. ^{2 pp}

Meanwhile, in addition to the Prime Minister's discussion with Mr Hawke (your letter of 21 April) Sir Antony Acland has talked to the Secretary General of the Commonwealth. It emerged that Ramphal had consulted nearly all the Heads of Government concerned. Most were thinking in terms of late July, though Mr Hawke had specifically suggested 4 August. All were assuming that they themselves should attend. On venue, Mr Mulronev was not keen on having the meeting in Ottawa and had suggested Nassau. Rajiv Gandhi had definitely offered New Delhi. Ramphal thought that the alternative would be the Commonwealth Secretariat in London. *at Harp*

On chairmanship, Ramphal seemed initially to think that the Head of Government of the host country would have to chair the meeting. If it were in London, he was not sure whether Mrs Thatcher would want to be in the chair or whether this would be acceptable to others. In further discussion Ramphal came increasingly round to the idea that Sir L Pindling, as the Chairman of the Commonwealth meeting in Nassau, should continue. Sir Antony Acland said that while he did not know what the Prime Minister thought on the subject of venue or chairmanship, a meeting at the Commonwealth Secretariat under Sir L Pindling's chairmanship might be a practical and economic solution.

The Foreign Secretary also spoke to Joe Clark on this subject at the OECD meeting in Paris on 17 April. The latter expressed doubt about the acceptability to some other Commonwealth members of London as a venue and indicated a Canadian preference for Ottawa for this reason (but see paragraph 6 below). Despite this the Foreign Secretary believes that the Canadians could probably be brought to accept Sir Antony Acland's proposal in paragraph 3 above.

/There seems



There seems to be a consensus in the Commonwealth that the meeting should take place at Head of Government level. This accords with the Prime Minister's own feeling. Timing remains a problem, and the Foreign Secretary does not believe that we shall be able to delay matters until September. This would go against the preference of the others concerned and risk giving an impression of British foot dragging. The issues of venue and chairmanship are to some extent linked. It looks as though we might be able to secure agreement on a meeting in London, but this could be at the price of ceding the chair to Sir L Pindling. Sir Geoffrey Howe sees some advantage in making a virtue of necessity. If the meeting takes place at Head of Government level the Prime Minister will be better able to argue the British case if she is not in the chair. Willingness to cede the chairmanship might also serve to reduce suspicions of the British role. Sir L Pindling played a helpful Chairman's role in Nassau and might reasonably be expected to do so again.

Sir Geoffrey Howe considers that there remains advantage in putting forward a definite proposal on the modalities of the review meeting before the views of others get too set (for example, the Canadian High Commission told us on 23 April that they had just conveyed to Ramphal a message indicating that Mr Mulroney could agree to attending a review meeting in Delhi on 4 August: the High Commission thought Mr Mulroney would personally prefer London, but Delhi was the only capital being canvassed by the Commonwealth Secretariat). He therefore recommends that we should go for London on 4 August at Heads of Government level with Sir L Pindling in the chair. The Foreign Secretary accepts that such a format is not ideal and does not entirely meet the Prime Minister's preferences. But in his view it constitutes the best package we are likely to achieve without a great deal of ill feeling and adequately protects our own interests.

If the Prime Minister agrees, the Foreign Secretary suggests that we should move quickly. He would himself proposed to call in Mr Ramphal to ask him formally to convey to the other governments concerned a proposal on the above lines. At the same time, given that Mr Ramphal is evidently for his own reasons actively canvassing for the review meeting to be held in Delhi, Sir Geoffrey Howe suggests that we should take direct action with the other governments, probably through High Commissioners in London, starting with the Bahamian (as Sir L Pindling would have to agree to staying on in the Chair despite the change of venue). The Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary will in addition have an opportunity to talk to their Australian and Canadian colleagues in the margins of the Tokyo Economic Summit. But Sir Geoffrey does not think things can be left until then.

/He therefore

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He therefore intends to telephone Joe Clark early this week.

I am copying this letter to the Private Secretaries of other Ministers in OD and to Michael Stark (Cabinet Office).

*Yours ever,
Tony Galsworthy*

(A C Galsworthy)
Private Secretary

C D Powell Esq
10 Downing Street

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