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10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

9 November 1984

HONG KONG: WHITE PAPER ON FURTHER DEVELOPMENT
OF REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT

The Prime Minister was grateful for the Foreign Secretary's minute about the forthcoming White Paper on the Further Development of Representative Government in Hong Kong. She has no comment to make.

I am sending copies of this letter to the Private Secretaries of members of OD(K) and to Richard Hatfield (Cabinet Office).

(C.D. POWELL)

Peter Ricketts, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

BTC



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PM/84/169

PRIME MINISTER

HONG KONG : WHITE PAPER ON FURTHER DEVELOPMENT OF REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT

Prime Minister
This just tells you that the White Paper will slightly accelerate the constitutional changes proposed in the Green Paper. This will be useful in parliamentary debate on the Hong Kong Agreement.

CJP
S/ai

ms

1. My minute of 25 June outlined the proposals to be included in a Green Paper on the Further Development of Representative Government in Hong Kong. These met with your approval and the Green Paper was published in Hong Kong on 18 July.

2. Two months were allowed for public comment. In the light of these comments and after taking the advice of the Executive Council, the Hong Kong Government intends to table a White Paper in the Legislative Council on 21 November. It will contain some minor changes from the proposals in the Green Paper. The main points in it will be:-

a) the proposals will only cover the next stage in the development of representative government in Hong Kong (ie the 1985 elections). Subsequent developments will be considered later.

(b) 12 members (rather than 6, as proposed in the Green Paper) will be elected to the Legislative Council (LEGCO) by the electoral college in 1985. To ensure a balanced geographical representation, instead of the electoral

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college electing the 12 members in one vote, 10 will be elected by separate groups of District Board Members organised on a regional basis and the other two by the Urban Council and proposed New Territories Regional Council respectively. There will thus be a form of constituency.

(c) Similarly, 12 members (instead of the 6 originally proposed) will be elected in 1985 by 9 functional constituencies representing various sectors of the community (eg commerce, industry, education, social services). There will thus be 24 elected members in all.

(d) The number of appointed members of LEGCO will be reduced in 1985 from the present total of 30 to 22 (instead of the Green Paper 23), and the number of official members from the present 16 to 10 (instead of 13). With the additional elected members LEGCO will therefore have 56 members instead of the present 46 and the 48 originally proposed in the Green Paper

(e) The White Paper will contain a commitment to a further review of progress towards representative Government once the 1985 arrangements have had time to become established. It will cover such areas as the desirability of direct elections, the possible introduction of a ministerial system the future development of the Executive Council and the position of the Governor as President of LEGCO. The Green Paper

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proposed that this review should take place in 1989. The Governor now considers, and I agree, that it should be brought forward to 1987, so that any changes could be introduced in time for the 1988 elections. I am making my views on this point clear to EXCO. EXCO have not yet however been convinced of the need for this. They will discuss this point again on 13 November when they consider the text of the White Paper. If they decide that no date should be specified for the review, we will have to say that the timing and scope of the review will have to be further considered after the 1985 elections, when it will anyway be necessary to decide whether there should be any changes to the composition of LEGCO in the 1988 elections.

3. The effect of these changes in the White Paper will be to accelerate the process of constitutional change and thereby go some way to meeting the criticism that the proposals in the Green Paper were too cautious. In my view the revised proposals are to be welcomed in themselves as consistent with our objective of giving Hong Kong a solidly-based structure of representative government, capable of withstanding the transition to the arrangements set out in the draft agreement for the period after 1997. They should be generally well received in Hong Kong. Those who have argued for the early introduction of direct elections will be disappointed, but may be mollified to some extent by the increase in the number of members to be indirectly

(elected)

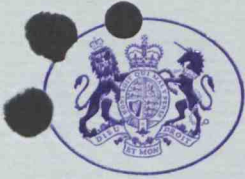


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elected in 1985. Those who have advised against making too many changes too quickly will be pleased to note that the elected members of LEGCO will still be in a minority in 1985 and that there are no firm proposals for direct elections. I have informed the Governor that he may proceed with the publication of the White Paper, subject to detailed consideration of its text by EXCO.

4. I have also considered the question of how and when to consult or inform the Chinese before the publication of the White Paper. Hong Kong's view is that there ought to be little in the revised proposals that should alarm the Chinese, as they do not involve the introduction of direct elections or any changes in the Executive Council or the position of the Governor. However, the Governor considers that it would be prudent to give the Chinese more notice than we did before the Green Paper was published (24 hours). Peking agree with this. I have therefore given instructions that the text should be handed over 4 or 5 days before publication, and explained in detail to the Chinese, though without seeking their views on it. The Ambassador will take the line that the proposals do not vary significantly from the Green Paper and are entirely consistent with the terms of the draft agreement. There is of course a danger that the Chinese will object to certain parts of the White Paper and seek to make amendments, as they did with the White Paper on the agreement. If so, we shall have to consider carefully whether we can accommodate these. But I

/believe



believe that this represents a more sensible approach than springing the White Paper on the Chinese at the last minute and running the risk that they may react adversely to the proposals in it and damage public confidence.

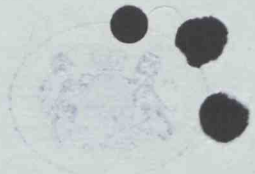
5. It is helpful that the White Paper will have been published before the Parliamentary debate on Hong Kong. Overall I believe that the proposals in it will be welcomed, though some members, particularly on the opposition benches, will no doubt take the view that the proposed steps do not go far enough.

6. I am copying this minute to other members of OD(K) and to Sir Robert Armstrong.

GEOFFREY HOWE

Foreign and Commonwealth Office
8 November, 1984

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P217



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