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07/10

7 October 1988

Dear Domink,

SPEECH BY STANLEY CLINTON DAVIS

My Secretary of State has asked me to send to you a copy of this briefing which DOE officials have prepared on the speech given by Stanley Clinton Davis in Blackpool this week concerning the UK's record on the environment.

The briefing was prepared rather hastily so please let me know if you have any questions.

Yours,
Deborah.

DEBORAH LAMB
Private Secretary

Prime Minister²

You might like to glance at this. The line is unduly defensive but it contains one or two useful facts

Ann 7/X

EMM

BRIEFING FOR SECRETARY OF STATE ON SPEECH BY MR CLINTON DAVIS

1. The Speech

Outburst unworthy of a European Commissioner. Clear convention that Commissioners do not single out individual Member States for public criticism - and certainly not in the interests of their domestic political party.

He made no mention of these criticisms at Informal Environment Council last week-end - on the contrary, the Prime Minister's speech on environment was warmly received by all Member States and by Commission too.

Mr Clinton Davis made remarks while wearing Labour Party hat - not Commissioner's hat.

2. Prime Minister's Speech

CD suggests the Prime Minister's speech was the first time she had mentioned the word "environment". Obviously did not read Mrs Thatcher's foreword to our response to the Brundtland Report on sustainable development. Sustainable development is a major issue for the 1990s. Very few other countries have taken the step of producing a formal response to the Brundtland Report. The Prime Minister's foreword is an indication of her interest and concern.

3. Implementation

CD suggests the UK has been slow to implement EC directives. UK's record on implementation is very good. We take implementation very seriously. Some delays and some problems of course, but we have a much better record than many other Member States.

- Disposal of Toxic Waste: True that UK was not as quick as we would have liked in implementing directives on the transfrontier shipment of hazardous waste (the directive was due to be implemented in January 1987). But the Directive is complex and, frankly, clumsy. The regulations were made as soon as possible and have now been laid in Parliament: they will come fully into force by 14 November - ahead, incidentally, of many other Member States, including France, Germany and the Netherlands. (The regulations will stop imports of hazardous waste from ships like the Karin B where the composition of the waste is unknown and the receiving waste disposal authority has not given its consent.) Our record of implementation on other waste directives is 100% complete.

- Bathing Waters: It has taken us some time to implement the directive on bathing waters - this is one directive which has caused us a few problems. But we are taking it very seriously, in spite of previous misunderstandings. We have about 400 bathing waters, and no substantial seaside resort is omitted. We are spending some £70 million a year to bring them all up to the Directive's standards.

We do not conceal our failings. Unlike some Member States we

regularly report the results of monitoring to the Commission. Indeed we take some pride in the thought that the style and content of our reports are taken by Commission officials as being a model which other Member States should follow.

- Drinking Water: Public Water supplies throughout the UK are safe to drink. In some places the appearance and taste of drinking water needs improvement. That is why the Water Authorities are spending £550 million a year in England and Wales to improve water supplies. the UK is ahead of its European partners in implementing the Drinking Water Directive, and we have found it impractical to operate in some respects. The Commission have recognised the difficulties and are proposing to review the Directive very shortly.

4. Atmosphere

- CFCs: Far from dragging our feet the UK actively supported the Commission, which had a mandate to negotiate on behalf of the Community, in negotiation of the Montreal Protocol. Since Montreal the UK has taken a leading role in the Community both in encouraging scientific coordination and in calling for a significant strengthening of the Protocol. On Monday Lord Caithness led the way in calling for a global cut of at least 85% in CFC emissions as soon as possible.

- Motor Vehicles: UK was amongst majority who accepted the original Luxembourg Compromise. The final agreement was delayed by other Member States who, following the passage of the Single European Act, were outvoted.

UK took a lead in the Unleaded Petrol Directive, pressing for the earliest dates for cars to be required to be able to use unleaded petrol.

UK was the first Member State to move its position on the second stage limit values for small cars under the Luxembourg agreement at the Environment Council in June this year. At that meeting the UK was praised by CD for its rapid acceptance of the Commission's proposed limit values.

- Large Combustion Plant Directive: Action by the UK Presidency (1986) rescued the Directive from the log jam and started serious discussion.

Directive was most difficult for the UK because our own coal has a higher sulphur content than anyone else's.

Negotiations were complicated because subsequent Presidencies successively shifted the goal posts.

Other Member States (notably France and Spain) had equal difficulties in accepting the original German Presidency proposal.

UK agreed this year with good grace to a compromise which, however, bore more heavily on our economy than on those of other Member States. The UK was praised by CD at the last Environment Council in June for accepting this compromise.

5. Marine Pollution

Sewage Sludge Dumping: Sewage sludge is not poisonous. We have been disposing of sewage sludge at sea for a century, and virtually no environmental damage has resulted. It contributes less than 1% of contaminants in the North Sea. Disposal operations are licensed by MAFF and closely monitored. In those places where it is practised disposal at sea represents the Best Practicable Environmental Option.

Dumping of Harmful Industrial Waste: We are a very small user - 10% of annual total dumped. On target to phase out dumping completely by end 1989. Led agreement on this at North Sea Conference we hosted last year.

- Incineration: We are a very small user - 3% of total. On target to phase out by 1994, as agreed at North Sea Conference.

CDEP/EPINT
6 October 1988

EVIDENCE FROM
HEAD OF NOAA

US SENATE FILE (Environment)

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VILLACH - BELAGIO REPORT

A 1. The dominant influence on global climate for the indefinite future is expected to be a continuous warming caused by the accumulation in the atmosphere of infra-red absorptive gasses, especially carbon dioxide and methane, but including nitrous oxide and the CFC's..

2. The warming marks the transition from a period of stable climates to climatic instability. Stable or very slowly changing climates have prevailed during the development of civilization. We are now entering a period of continuous warming accompanied by changes in precipitation. The changes in climate are predictable in general at continental and broad regional levels; they are not predictable locally.

C 3. The rate of the warming is uncertain. Estimates based on models suggest that a doubling of the carbon dioxide content of the atmosphere (or the equivalent through increases in other gasses) above the levels present during the middle of the last century will produce a global average warming of 1.5-5.5 degrees C. Such an effect is expected by the period 2030-2050.

S 4. The earth has warmed between 0.5 and 0.7 degree C over the past century and the rate appears to be accelerating.

5. The warming in the tropics will be less than the mean for the earth as a whole; in the middle and high latitudes the warming will exceed the mean by two fold or more and will fall in the range of 0.5-1.5 degrees C/decade.

6. The current sources of carbon dioxide are the combustion of fossil fuels and deforestation. The dominant source of methane is anaerobic decay.

7. A rate of warming in the middle and high latitudes that approaches 1 degree C/decade exceeds the rate at which forests can migrate and will result in the destruction of forests at their warmer and drier margin without compensating changes elsewhere. Such destruction of forests and soils release additional carbon into the atmosphere as carbon dioxide.

8. It is possible that the warming already experienced is stimulating the decay of organic matter in soils globally, increasing the total releases of carbon dioxide and methane.

9. No stimulation of the storage of carbon in forests or soils that is large enough to compensate for such rapid releases is known.

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10. ~~The warming will cause accelerated melting of glacial ice and an expansion of the water in the oceans. The effect will be an increase in sea level of 30 cm to 1.5m over the next 50-100 years.~~

11. The changes in climate anticipated over the next decades extend beyond the limits of experience and beyond the limits of accurate prediction. Surprises such as the discovery of the polar ozone holes are common in such circumstances. The possibility exists that a rapid warming will change the patterns of circulation of the oceans and produce sudden but profound changes in climate in regions such as western Europe, now kept warm by the Gulf Stream. The same changes may have equally surprising effects on the storage or release of carbon from forests and soils.

~~The warming will move climatic zones generally poleward, shift the arable zones of the earth continuously, cause large and continuous dislocations of natural vegetation, and cause flooding of low-lying areas globally. The arid zones of the northern hemisphere will expand because there is more land at higher latitudes in the northern hemisphere. The warming will be greatest in winter and will be accompanied by increased precipitation in high latitudes.~~

A one degree C change in temperature is equivalent to a change in latitude of 100-150 km, 60-100 mi. Rates of warming, if they occur as anticipated over the next decades, will exceed the capacity of forests to migrate or otherwise adapt. In that circumstance forest trees and other plants will die at their warmer and drier limits of distribution more rapidly than forests can be regenerated in regions where climates become favorable. The destruction of forests will add further to the releases of carbon to the atmosphere. The seriousness of this problem will depend heavily on the rate of warming. There is sufficient carbon in forests and soils of middle and high latitudes to affect the atmosphere significantly. While there is no proof of this process and there will probably not be proof until the changes are well underway, the process will hinge heavily on rates of warming. Rates that approach 1 degree per decade exceed by a factor of 10 or more the capacity of forests to accommodate the changes.

III. ~~What Can be Done?~~

The earth will warm as a result of the changes in the composition of the atmosphere that have already occurred. But an open-ended, continuous warming that speeds the rise in sea level and destroys forests over large areas is so thoroughly disruptive of the human enterprise as to preclude any thought that civilization might "muddle through". ~~Can the warming be checked?~~

(5)

The annual increase in the atmospheric burden of carbon dioxide alone is about 3 billion tons currently. The global warming has the potential for increasing this net accumulation by speeding the release of carbon from forests and soils without causing an equivalent increase in the rate of storage. No estimate is available of the extent to which this additional source of carbon dioxide is likely to compound the problem. But the new source will diminish as the warming diminishes. At least three possibilities exist for reducing or eliminating the imbalance and moving toward long-term stability of climate:

1. a reduction in the use of fossil fuels globally, now estimated as the source of about 5.6 G-tons of carbon annually;
2. a reduction in or cessation of deforestation, now estimated as releasing 1-3 G-tons annually;
3. a vigorous program of reforestation that would remove from the atmosphere into storage in plants and soils about 1 G-ton of carbon annually for each 2×10^6 km² tract in permanent forest.

Further adjustments in emissions will be appropriate as experience accumulates. Such steps are appropriate now and possible. They will bring widespread ancillary benefits to the human enterprise. Further delay increases the accumulation of greenhouse gasses in the atmosphere, the severity of the warming that must be accommodated, and the risk of unexpected consequences that lie beyond the limits of current prediction.

These changes are possible now. They will require adjustments in the efficiency of use of energy in the industrialized nations and imaginative and far-reaching changes in the patterns of development of the less industrialized nations. Recognition of the need for the transition to a new era in the management of the earth's resources opens new opportunities for industry and governments to pursue new paths for sustainable economic development on a global basis.

References

WMO. 1988. Developing Policies for Responding to Climatic Change. TD-No.225. World Meteorological Organization. 53 pp.