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CABINET OFFICE

70 Whitehall London SW1A 2AS Telephone 01-270

MR TURNBULL

CLIMATIC CHANGE

As requested in your minute to me of 3 January, I attach a further paper for discussion at the Ministerial meeting on Thursday 12 January, setting out suggestions about the form of the proposed seminar of experts.

I am copying this minute to the private secretaries to the Foreign Secretary, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Secretaries of State for the Environment, Trade and Industry, Education and Science, Transport, Energy, the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the Paymaster General, and to Sir Robin Butler and Mr Fairclough (Cabinet Office)

*R.T.J.*

R T J WILSON

10 January 1989

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CLIMATIC CHANGE

PROPOSALS FOR A MINISTERIAL SEMINAR

Note by the Cabinet Office

We have been asked to circulate a further paper setting out detailed suggestions for the Ministerial seminar with outside experts, proposed in our paper of 22 December.

**OBJECTIVE**

2. The aim would be to enable Ministers to hear at first hand the opinions and advice of the foremost national experts on climatic change, including any who diverge from the scientific consensus. It would help to involve these experts in policy-making, and enlist their support for the outcome. It would be made clear that the aim was not to take decisions at the seminar itself.

**FORMAT**

3. The seminar would be chaired by the Prime Minister, supported by the Ministers principally involved. The formal proceedings might last 2 to 3 hours, from say 9.30 am or 10.30 am to 12.30 pm. If Ministers so wished, it might be followed by informal discussions over a buffet lunch.

**INVITEES**

4. The seminar would need to be kept to a reasonable size in order to make it manageable and give all the outside experts a chance to contribute. This suggests a total number, including Ministers and officials, of no more than 30 or perhaps 40, preferably fewer. The list of outside experts to be invited might be drawn from Annex J to the Cabinet Office Note of 22 December, in the light of comments from

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attached.

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Ministers which the Prime Minister invited on 3 January. Ministers might also wish to invite key experts from within the Government service.

#### STRUCTURE

5. The seminar might be divided into three sessions. Each session would be introduced by a short, prepared presentation from a leading expert, of perhaps 20 minutes, followed by comments from the floor and discussion lasting about 20 to 40 minutes, depending on the length of the seminar.

6. The main headings for the three sessions, and possible presenters, might be:

I. the science of climatic change and its likely impacts. Possible presenter: Professor Tom Wigley, Director of Climatic Research Unit, University of East Anglia.

II. options for mitigating the greenhouse effect. Possible presenter: Dr Ken Currie, Head of Energy Technology Support Unit, Harwell.

III. responses in an international context. Possible presenter: Sir Crispin Tickell, Ambassador to the United Nations.

In order to get the best out of the occasion, it might be useful to send all invitees beforehand a short note explaining the purpose of the seminar and the topics which would be covered under each heading, and perhaps informally discuss with a few of them how and when they would contribute, so as to provide the occasion with some structure without being too rigid.

#### LOCATION

7. The location would depend in part on how many people were invited. Possibilities include:

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- i. Number 10 Downing Street;
- ii. Number 12 Downing Street (where the seminar on broadcasting was held);
- iii. Chequers.

#### **TIMING**

8. The Government are hosting a major international conference on CFCs and the ozone layer in March 1989. The best timing for the seminar on climatic change might be April or May. This would keep the two events separate and, by spacing them out, help maintain the momentum on environmental issues.

#### **PUBLICITY**

9. Ministers will want to secure effective public presentation of the decision to hold a seminar, to gain credit for the event and to avoid any misunderstanding about its purpose. This argues for:

- i. a press notice, incorporating the letter of invitation, to be issued at the same time as the invitations go out;
- ii. a suitable briefing by No. 10 after the seminar on the basis of lines agreed at the end of it (as with broadcasting);
- iii. consideration at the time of the possibility of a participating Minister giving radio and television interviews after the event (there would however be no action or decisions to report);
- iv. a clear briefing line for use by No. 10, the Department of the Environment and the Cabinet Office after the event.

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**FURTHER ARRANGEMENTS**

10. Ministers will probably want the Department of the Environment to take the lead in the detailed preparations for the seminar.

**CONCLUSIONS**

11. Ministers are invited:

- i. to agree the proposals for the objectives, format, and invitees for the seminar (paragraph 2 to 4 above);
- ii. to agree the structure and consider the presenters proposed for each session (paragraphs 5 and 6);
- iii. to consider where the seminar should be held (paragraph 7);
- iv. to decide when the seminar should be held, and what the publicity arrangements should be (paragraphs 8 and 9);
- v. to agree that the Department of the Environment should take the lead in further arrangements for the seminar.

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10 January 1989

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CLIMATIC CHANGE: EXPERTS WHO MIGHT BE INVITED TO A SEMINAR

Sir Herman Bondi

Mr Tom Burke, Director, Green Alliance

Dr P Chester, Central Electricity Generating Board

Mr David Cope, UK Centre for Economic and Environmental Development

Dr Ken Currie, Head of Energy Technology Support Unit, Harwell

Dr D Drewry, Director, British Antarctic Survey

Professor Ian Fells, Professor of Energy Conservation, Newcastle University

Dr Tony Fish, Head of Sittingbourne Laboratory, Shell

(alternative Mr P Downes, Shell)

Mr A J Grayson, Director of Research Services, Forestry Commission

Mr John Gribbin, Consultant, New Scientist

Mr H W Hill, Director of Fisheries Research, MAFF

Dr Martin Holdgate, Head of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature

Professor Brian Hoskins, Professor of Meteorology, Reading University

Mr Gerald Leach, Consultant and Author

Sir Jack Lewis, Chairman, Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution

Sir John Mason, former Director-General, Meteorological Office

Sir Richard Norman, independent Chief Scientific Adviser, Department of Energy

Mr Michael Oppenheimer, US Environmental Defence Fund

Dr M G Parry, Atmospheric Impacts Research Group, Birmingham University

Professor David Pearce, Professor of Environmental Economics, University College

Mr Jonathan Porritt, Friends of the Earth

Dr N J Shackleton, Cambridge University

Dr D W F Shannon, Chief Scientist (Agriculture and Horticulture),  
MAFF

Mr Corbally Stoughton, IBM

Professor Fred Taylor, Head of Planetary and Atmospheric Physics,  
Oxford University

Sir Crispin Tickell

Professor M H Unsworth, Department of Environmental Sciences,  
Nottingham University

Dr R T Watson, NASA (UK born)

Professor Tom Wigley, Director of Climatic Research Unit,  
University of East Anglia

Dr John Woode, Director of Marine Science, Natural Environment  
Research Council.



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PRIME MINISTER

CLIMATIC CHANGE

Note by the Cabinet Office, 22 December 1988]

DECISIONS

The Cabinet Office paper is intended as a basis for a first discussion of the problem of climatic change, and for commissioning further work. The problem is global, and measures taken by the UK alone would have no significant effect. The international dimension is therefore very important.

2. You may wish to use paragraph 27 of the paper as an agenda for the meeting. The main issues are:

(Flagged  
'Agenda' in  
B in folder 2)

- i. the choice of domestic policy options on which further work should be undertaken. The aim would be to identify a package of possible measures which the UK could put forward for international action;
- ii. the best forum for international action. The paper recommends support for existing initiatives under the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the World Meteorological Organisation (WMO), in which the UK already has a strong position;
- iii. whether there should be a new political initiative by the UK at a suitable time, as international discussions develop;
- iv. whether to convene a seminar with the foremost UK experts on climatic change. I have submitted separately a further paper suggesting how the seminar might be organised;

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- v. the presentation of Government policy on climatic change. You might want to consider commissioning work on a White Paper or a glossy policy document similar to "Action for Cities".

#### BACKGROUND

3. The problem posed by the greenhouse effect is outlined in section I and Annex A to the paper. There appears to be no serious disagreement within the scientific community that there will be an increasing concentration of the greenhouse gases (eg carbon dioxide, CFCs and methane) in the atmosphere which may lead to climatic changes. But the magnitude and nature of the changes is still subject to considerable uncertainty, due to gaps in our understanding of climatic processes. This is reflected in the wide range of global warming (1.5-4.5°C) predicted to result from a doubling of the greenhouse gases compared to pre-industrial levels. Even the bottom of the range goes beyond historical experience: and at the top end the temperature difference would be roughly the same as that between an Ice Age and historical experience, but in the opposite direction.

#### MAIN ISSUES

4. Better estimates of the magnitude of global warming are expected within about 5 years. We should then know where in the above range the global temperature increase is likely to fall. One approach to the problem would be to develop our responses gradually, and in an international framework, as the scientific position becomes more firmly established.

5. It is essential to ensure that any action taken in the UK does not simply involve us in extra cost without having an impact on the attitudes of other countries. Equally, in order to carry credibility internationally, and to ensure that international action does not develop along lines unfavourable to the UK, we must have a coherent approach which meets our circumstances and for which we can argue. You may therefore want to agree that the aim should be to develop a coherent UK approach to climatic change, in an international context, as scientific understanding advances.

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Domestic policy options

6. You may want to commission work aimed at developing a package of measures which meets the following criteria:

- i. the measures could be applied in the UK with acceptable effects in economic and social terms;
- ii. they could form the basis of an international agreement, including some chance of being accepted by the newly industrialised and less developed countries (NICs and LDCs);
- iii. they would make a substantial impact on the greenhouse effect if applied globally.

7. The paper discusses measures in the following areas:

*China by 2050 17% lower as much coal as we are burning.*

i. energy and transport. Burning of fossil fuels accounts for 80% of carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) emissions, and CO<sub>2</sub> may account for nearly two thirds of the greenhouse effect by the middle of the next century. Action on energy efficiency and alternatives to fossil fuels is therefore likely to be an essential part of any package. You may wish to ask the Secretaries of State for Energy and Transport to set in hand further work accordingly.

*Energy Efficiency Office -  
 Money -  
 one-off increase -  
 1.76.  
 Energy Efficiency  
 No. 2  
 self-sustaining.  
 Duty of the  
 Board to  
 promote  
 energy efficiency.  
 Cost of 1.76.*

ii. agriculture, forestry and food. *Flood defences* Agriculture may be a significant source of a number of greenhouse gases (CO<sub>2</sub>, methane, nitrous oxide), but there are no obvious methods to reduce emissions. In contrast, increased forestry could make a positive contribution by absorbing CO<sub>2</sub>. However the main potential is in the third world where a reversal of present trends to deforestation would be required. Although action on agriculture is more likely to be for those countries than for the UK, you may wish to commission a study of the possibilities from the Minister of Agriculture.

*|| G.P. 30% energy efficiency increases fuel consumption. Increase in traffic. Clean-burner effect*

iii. waste disposal. Waste disposed by landfill is a major source of UK methane emission, equal in their effect to a substantial proportion of our fossil fuel burning. You may want to

*Speed limits.*

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non fossil fuel

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compared to nuclear.

commission further work from the Secretary of State for the Environment on the possibility of reducing such emissions.

- iv. chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs). The Montreal agreement requires a 50% cut in CFC emissions by 1999. But the Government have already called for a tougher cut of 85% on the same timetable, to stabilise CFC levels in the atmosphere. You may wish to commission work from the Secretary of State for the Environment on the feasibility of a still greater cut in the longer term.

### Research

8. Better scientific understanding of general warming is the key to developing an effective policy to deal with it. The UK is already making a substantial contribution to research into climatic change. If you felt that this contribution needed to be enhanced, perhaps by reordering priorities within existing programmes, paragraph 23 of the report suggests three options: accelerated development of climate models to reduce the time needed for better estimates of global warming; more support for observations of climatic processes as an input to the models; and further work on impacts and responses. You may want to ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, in conjunction with the Secretary of State for Education and others concerned, to arrange for this work and also to consider whether action is necessary to provide better co-ordination of UK research along the lines of the Stratospheric Ozone Review Group (SORG).

### Best forum for international action

9. We already have a strong position in the main international forum, the Inter-Governmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). The report recommends building on this position and resisting alternative initiatives which would fragment international efforts (eg the French Prime Minister's proposal for a supranational environment authority).

### A new international initiative

10. You will want to consider whether to launch a new UK initiative on climatic change, and if so when. The IPCC are due to report in autumn 1990. You may wish to discuss briefly the case for and timing of an international initiative by the UK, and invite the Foreign Secretary to prepare a paper on the handling of the question internationally.

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A Ministerial seminar

11. You have already agreed to the proposal for a seminar with the foremost national experts. I have submitted detailed suggestions separately. The main issues for decision are:

- i. presenters. The note suggests that Professor Tom Wigley of East Anglia University, Dr Ken Currie of the Energy Technology Support Unit, Harwell and Sir Crispin Tickell should be invited to introduce the three sessions;
- ii. location. You will want to choose between Downing Street (No 10 or No 12) and Chequers;
- iii. timing. The seminar would probably best follow the conference on CFCs in March. That suggests a date in either April or May.

You will also want to commission a final list of invitees, in the light of the comments of other Ministers.

Public presentation

12. You will want to consider whether to publish a new policy statement, either on climate change alone or on a wider range of international environmental issues (including ozone depletion and acid rain). One possibility would be a conventional White Paper. An alternative might be a glossy document, similar to "Action for Cities". It may be sensible to postpone a decision about the form and content of a statement until the further work has been done and the seminar has taken place. But you may wish, in order to give the necessary impetus to the work, to reach a decision in principle now that there should be such a statement.

**TIMING**

13. You will want the work you have commissioned to be ready for a further Ministerial meeting. That might best follow the seminar with national experts. If the seminar is held in April, another Ministerial meeting could be held in early May. You may wish to set the timetable for the further work accordingly.

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HANDLING

14. You may like to ask the Secretary of State for the Environment to introduce the discussion. The Foreign Secretary might say something about the international dimension. You might then ask each of the service Ministers to say something about their own areas: the Secretaries of State for Energy, Transport and Trade and Industry and the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. The Secretary of State for Education and Science may wish to speak about the UK research effort.

RJW.

R T J WILSON  
Cabinet Office  
10 January 1989

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