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1 May 1989

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Charles Powell Esq
Private Secretary
10 DOWNING STREET
London SW1

Dear Charles,

PRIME MINISTER'S SEMINAR ON GLOBAL CLIMATE CHANGE

I am sorry you were unable to come to the Prime Minister's seminar on 26 April. As others will have told you it was a most interesting occasion which I think all enjoyed, except perhaps one or two Ministers (who were gagged for the day by the Prime Minister). I hope something will come of it, not least in the international field. The best way to cope with the schemes of Rocard and others is to have a better thought out policy of our own.

/ 2. In case it is of interest to you, I enclose a typed copy
/ of the notes I used for my contribution to the seminar. I
also enclose a copy for Dominic Morris, who was most kind and
helpful throughout.

*Tommaso
Crispin*

Crispin Tickell

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RESPONSES WITHIN THE INTERNATIONAL FRAMEWORK

Notes for the Prime Minister's seminar on
Global Climate Change, 26 April 1989

by Crispin Tickell

1. **Introduction:** 3 broad issues
 - the global problem, with particular reference to non-industrial countries
 - the idea of international agreements to cope with global warming
 - the institutional aspect
2. **The global problem**
 - artificial contrast between so called developed and so called developing countries: rather notion of a spectrum
 - industrial at one end who have created most of the problem
 - poor at the other
 - those in between - eg India, China, Brazil - and the problems of the future
 - 3 main sources of greenhouse gas worldwide: the particular contribution of those from the poor and middle parts of the spectrum:
 - change of land use
 - CO₂: deforestation
 - methane: cleared land, paddy fields, ruminants etc
 - nitrous oxide: fertilizer and biomass burning
 - energy policy
 - CO₂: fossil fuel consumption and fuel wood
 - nitrous oxide: biomass burning
 - industrial policy: now little but more in the future
 - CFCs etc

- in all cases the driving force of population pressure of people, and the animals and plants associated with them: resource/population balance in many countries out of control: bleak prospects for sustainable economic growth
- so far most non industrial countries have not wanted to hear about problems of global warming. But report of the Brundtland Commission on Environment and Development may prove a turning point: need now to bring out:
 - likely global consequences, and still more important likely national consequences - and interest - in each case
 - some acceptance of the principle of equity (as in provisions of the Montreal Protocol over CFCs)
 - practical measures of help

underline the fact that all remediable measures are desirable for good reasons other than the threat of global warming

- On each point above:
 - the consequences: inadequacy of existing models but likely
 - rainfall pattern changes
 - eventual sea level rise
 - environmental refugees as conditions deteriorate (wars over water and productive land)
 - spread of new diseases and pathogens
 - principle of equity: great difficulties in working out implications of polluter-pays principle, but example by the industrial countries - as the main polluters - the best precept:
 - discouragement of greenhouse gas production in industrial countries by whatever means
 - fiscal so that energy sources are taxed according to their greenhouse gas effect (Dutch precedent)
 - prices so that they take some account of future costs of coping with global warming
 - reafforestation in industrial countries

- practical measures of help to non industrial countries: this will require money, but costs not unmanageable: that is what aid programmes are for

- land use

- forest: conservation and harvesting: improvement of organic soils: agro-forestry: selection of trees and plants for semi arid conditions to halt soil erosion and reduce desertification
- helping nature to adjust to rapidly changing conditions (forest migration, balance of C3 and C4 plants)
- debt-for-nature swaps
- changes in economic policy to eliminate wrong headed subsidies etc

- energy policy

- conservation: much room for it everywhere
- small scale energy generating systems: hydro, solar, alternative renewable
- better use of fuel wood (improved stoves) and growing and harvesting appropriate species of trees

critical issue the price of energy:
otherwise India and China will use their coal: dilemma that

- in industrial countries prices must rise to reflect true costs
- elsewhere prices must fall to discourage use of indigenous coal and fuel wood

obvious danger of the market-distorting effects

- industrial policy: need to leapfrog such technologies as CFCs: tighter environmental guidelines on aid, and tighter control over export of noxious technologies

3. International Agreements

- avoid excessive ambition at the start: fate of the Law of the Sea: do not devalue process by trying to dragoon governments into obligations they would not respect
- advantage of loose framework convention: last year Britain co-sponsored the resolution passed unanimously by the UN General Assembly which involved action to "identify possible strengthening of relevant legal instruments with a bearing on climate, and to consider elements for inclusion in a possible future Convention". Detailed perhaps over ambitious work already in progress, notably by the Canadians
- within the framework a two pronged approach
 - guidelines or voluntary code to cover the most difficult areas
 - energy uses: conservative, efficiency, supply, pricing, research etc
 - major experiments with climatic effect: iceberg diversion, hurricane dispersal, artificial rain making etc
 - actions with likely climatic effect: river diversion (the Ob), melting of ice shelf, deforestation
- specific agreements in specific areas as they arise: eg the 1987 Montreal Protocol on CFCs, and the 1977 Convention banning environmental weapons: in the future bring in CO₂, methane, nitrous oxide and other greenhouse gases

As work proceeds and experience - with international acceptance - grows, move items from the voluntary to the obligatory part of the convention

4. The International Aspect

- a look at what already exists
 - WMO
 - UNEP (1973): although endowed with coordinating functions among Specialized Agencies and other UN associated bodies with environmental responsibilities, it has no means of performing them, and is chronically under funded: its location in Nairobi is another handicap

- World Climate Programme (1979)
- Inter Governmental Panel on Climate Change (1988) with three working groups
 - science (United Kingdom)
 - impact (Soviet Union)
 - national and international responses (United States)
- a big and growing international debate on the global warming issue
 - Brundtland Commission
 - General Assembly 1987 and 1988, and more in the future
 - Stratospheric ozone aspect: the Vienna Treaty, Montreal Protocol, London conference, and Helsinki meeting to revise Montreal Protocol
 - The Hague conference and declaration of 24 countries
 - Multiplicity of official and unofficial conferences
 - climate change (the Netherlands November 1989)
 - world energy (Canada September 1989)
 - World Climate Conference (Switzerland June 1990)
 - World Environment Conference (probably Brazil 1992)

In addition work among the super powers

- the United States: strong on the science but still debating political implications
- the Soviet Union: much interest and many ideas
- problem of how best to cope in the future in the knowledge that what now exists is not satisfactory: four point proposal:
 - i) build up the technical bodies and make the most of them (while recognizing their limitations)
 - WMO: more financial support

- UNEP : also more support and consider whether to promote to status of a Specialized Agency
- World Climate Programme: again more support
- Inter Governmental Panel on Climate Change: a useful body whose report next year should provide the scientific basis for policy making: its present mandate will come to an end but see below

ii) give top level political impulse by seizing the Security Council of environmental issues from time to time (quote Article 34: "The Security Council may investigate any dispute or any situation which might lead to international friction or give rise to a dispute in order to determine whether the continuance of the dispute or situation is likely to endanger the maintenance of international peace and security"): advantages of using the Security Council

- avoid the hideous complexities of trying to create something new
- keep matters under control through powers of the Five Permanent Members
- bring in three of the largest landowners (United States, Soviet Union and China)
- Some would be unhappy (eg India, Canada, Brazil) but onus would be on them to suggest something else. In any case no-one can prevent Security Council which can determine its own mandate within the Charter.

iii) Security Council cannot give day to day direction: idea of setting up under its authority (and with the endorsement of the General Assembly) an Inter Governmental Commission as a successor to the Inter Governmental Panel on Climate Change

- precedent for such a Commission is: the Baruch Commission of 1946 which was set up to manage the then new problems of nuclear energy: although it ultimately failed because of Soviet withdrawal, its result was the International Atomic Energy Authority
- its functions might be to tackle the problems and consider what might go into a framework convention: also

- revision of UNEP: promote to Specialized Agency with new mandate
 - consideration of coordinated approach to discouragement of greenhouse gas production (look at proposal for carbon tax, phasing out of subsidies, problem of those who refuse to participate)
- iv) consider not only bringing the environmental dimension more effectively into all the activities of the international financial institutions, but also setting up a special Environment Facility or Fund in the World Bank with similar facilities or Funds in the regional development banks
- if a four pronged approach of this kind is acceptable, it will be necessary to act fast to avoid other less desirable initiatives occupying the international agenda
 - begin with the United States and the Soviet Union: consult the UN Secretary-General who has already showed positive interest
 - then talk to the Chinese and members of the European Community
 - next consult the Canadians, Scandinavians and other environmentally conscious countries
 - go public
 - at follow up to Hague conference
 - in major speech by the Prime Minister
 - at the UNEP Governing Council
 - at the next Economic Summit
 - at the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting

5.

My Conclusions

- more generally recognize that science is full of surprises: things do not necessarily happen in linear or gradual fashion: we cannot be certain what will happen next: yet presumption is now good enough, and measures proposed could all be justified on grounds other than likely global warming

- politics is also full of surprises: again leaps and jumps can be necessary: it is now time for such in coping with a problem which could be as big as that of the discovery of nuclear energy.

26 April 1989

