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Prime Minister

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FM WASHINGTON 240035Z DEC

TO IMMEDIATE F C O

TELEGRAM NUMBER 4998 OF 23 DECEMBER 80.

INFO UK MIS NEW YORK AND C G NEW YORK.

INFO SAVING MOSCOW, PEKING, PARIS, BONN, OTTAWA, DUBLIN, UK REP
BRUSSELS, ANKARA, ATHENS, BRUSSELS, COPENHAGEN, LISBON, LUXEMBOURG,
OSLO, ROME, REYKJAVIK, THE HAGUE, UK DEL NATO, ATLANTA, BOSTON,
CHICAGO, CLEVELAND, DETROIT, HOUSTON, LOS ANGELES, SAN FRANCISCO,
AND SEATTLE.

MY TELEGRAM NO 4987 : REAGAN CABINET : SECRETARY OF AGRICULTURE.

1. FOLLOWING IS BIOGRAPHY OF JOHN RUSLING BLOCK, WHOSE NOMINATION
AS SECRETARY OF AGRICULTURE WAS ANNOUNCED THIS AFTERNOON.

2. BORN 1935, SON OF ILLINOIS FARMER.

1957 : GRADUATED FROM WEST POINT MILITARY ACADEMY.

1960 : AFTER MILITARY SERVICE IN INFANTRY, TOOK OVER FAMILY FARM,
EXPANDING THE ENTERPRISE TO 3,000 ACRES.

1977 : APPOINTED BY GOVERNOR THOMPSON AS DIRECTOR OF AGRICULTURE
FOR THE STATE OF ILLINOIS. FORMERLY ACTIVE IN LOCAL AMERICAN FARM
BUREAU; VARIOUS AWARDS FOR DISTINGUISHED CONTRIBUTIONS TO U.S.
AGRICULTURE. FORMER PRESIDENT OF THE MID-AMERICA INTERNATIONAL
AGRI/TRADE COUNCIL AND PARTICIPANT IN SEVERAL AGRICULTURAL EXPORT
MISSIONS TO JAPAN, CHINA, USSR AND EUROPE. MARRIED, SON AND TWO
DAUGHTERS.

3. BLOCK'S NOMINATION HAS BEEN PRESSED STRONGLY BY SENATORS DOLE
AND PERCY WHO WANTED SOMEONE WITH PERSONAL AND PRACTICAL EXPER-
IENCE OF FARMING. BLOCK'S CANDIDATURE HAS BEEN INFORMALLY APPROVED
BY SENATOR HELMS (FUTURE CHAIRMAN OF THE SENATE AGRICULTURE COMM-
ITTEE) DESPITE EARLIER SPECULATION THAT HELMS WOULD HAVE DIFFICULTY
IN SUPPORTING A SECRETARY OF AGRICULTURE FROM THE PROSPEROUS MID-
WEST; HELMS'S POLITICAL BASE RESTS AMONG THOSE FARMING PRINCIPALLY
COTTON, TOBACCO AND PEANUTS WHICH ARE HEAVILY DEPENDENT ON U.S.
SUPPORT PROGRAMMES. WHILE ONE OF SEVERAL FAVOURITES FOR THIS POST,

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BLOCK HAS EVIDENTLY MANAGED TO INCH PAST OTHER STRONGER, AND ARGUABLY MORE EXPERIENCED, CONTENDERS SUCH AS CLAYTON YEUTTER (PRESIDENT CHICAGO MERCANTILE EXCHANGE AND A FORMER ASSISTANT SECRETARY AT USDA AND THEN DEPUTY STR IN THE NIXON/FORD ADMINISTRATION) : AND, ESPECIALLY, RICHARD LYNG, ANOTHER FORMER ASSISTANT SECRETARY AT USDA, REAGAN'S DIRECTOR OF FOOD AND AGRICULTURE IN CALIFORNIA, AND THE LEADER OF THE AGRICULTURAL TRANSITION TEAM WHO WAS SUPPORTED BY FORMER SECRETARY EARL BUTZ.

4. ACCORDING TO SOME SOURCES, DESPITE HIS APPARENT EXPERIENCE IN PROMOTING U.S. AGRICULTURAL EXPORTS, BLOCK HAS VERY LITTLE INTERNATIONAL EXPOSURE. HE WILL BRING TO THE JOB LITTLE OR NO EXPERIENCE OF THE CONGRESS, YET WILL NEED TO COPE WITH IMPORTANT LEGISLATION IN 1981 IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE NEW FARM BILL: AND DEAL WITH THE COMPLEXITIES OF THE GRAIN EMBARGO AGAINST THE SOVIET UNION (WHICH HE HAS LONG OPPOSED).

FCO PLEASE ADVANCE TO PS MINISTER, J.H.V. DAVIES PARKHOUSE AND WILKES (MAFF).

FCO PASS SAVING MOSCOW, PEKING, PARIS, BONN, OTTAWA, DUBLIN, UK REP BRUSSELS AND ALL OTHER NATO POSTS.

HENDERSON

FCO/WHITEHALL
NAD

[PASSED AS REQUESTED]