

*u no*PM/84/91PRIME MINISTER

EC Labour and Social Affairs Council on 7 June: Draft  
Recommendation on the Reduction and Reorganisation of  
Working Time

1. I have seen your Private Secretary's letter of 4 June about Tom King's letter to me of 31 May. I have also seen Norman Tebbit's letter of 4 June on the same subject. *- attached*
2. I agree that there is little if anything to commend a proposal which could affect our approach to the question of working time in the UK and which our industry opposes.
3. The difficulty is that the Mitterrand government in particular attach importance to getting agreement on this recommendation, which is for them the most important item on the agenda for the Council this Thursday. They want to make more of the "social" dimension of the Community.
4. We should not agree to proposals incompatible with our industrial strategy. But at this particular juncture, in the run-up to the European Council, we should try to handle this in such a way as to avoid a head-on collision with the French and other Member States.
5. I therefore suggest that at the Council, Tom King begins by recalling our strong reservations. He would then go on to make every use of our considerable bargaining power to negotiate the further important changes which he describes in his letter. If he is successful and only our assent stands in the way of adoption, he should still endeavour to

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reserve our position. We should then consider in the light of the Council how best to proceed.

6. Copies of this minute go to Tom King and the other recipients of his letter.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'G. Howe', written in a cursive style.

(GEOFFREY HOWE)

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

5 June 1984

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