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MR POWELL



Environment
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EUROPEAN COUNCIL, 29-30 MARCH: ENVIRONMENT

At the briefing meeting this morning the Prime Minister said that she would wish to present positively the United Kingdom's record on reductions in pollution. For this purpose you may wish to add to her brief the following points, which have been agreed with the Department of Environment:-

The United Kingdom has made enormous progress in reducing air pollution. Since 1970 our national emissions of sulphur dioxide have fallen by about 40%. The United Kingdom share of total European emissions (excluding the Soviet Union) has fallen from 25% in 1972 to 11% today. Our national emissions of nitrogen oxides have remained almost constant - or possibly fallen a little - in the last 20 years, while those in certain other countries, including the Federal Republic of Germany, have risen by up to 50%.

I am sending copies to Colin Budd (FCO), Rachel Lomax (Treasury), John Ballard (Dept of Environment), Sir Robert Armstrong and Sir Robin Nicholson.

DF Williamson

D F WILLIAMSON

27 March 1985

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Brief 9
Reference A

COMMISSION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES

me want: for further copying in
London please.

COM(85) 86 final

Brussels, 19 March 1985

Same plus
Mr Grouffed-Souss D. Lou.
Mr Gray MAES FCO

A EUROPE-WIDE ENVIRONMENT POLICY

(Communication from the Commission to the European Council
on 29 and 30 March 1985)

Broadly acceptable in conclusions.
Stop from doom about environment.
1987 - European Year of Environment!!!
North Sea Conference that year.
Arid Ravi - in lakes - put in time
Helsinki - 30% cut.

COM(85) 86 final

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A EUROPE-WIDE ENVIRONMENT POLICY

1. The environment in which the citizens of the Community, and of many other parts of the world, live and work is deteriorating, in town and countryside alike. This is the more regrettable since the natural resources and facilities exist for making life better and more livable. Protection and improvement of the environment therefore must be a top Community priority.

2. The European Council acknowledged this need when it decided at its last meeting in Dublin to devote part of the next session to the subject of environmental protection.

3. Urgent action is imperative on several fronts.

(i) Air pollution from the burning of fossil fuels is causing the destruction of forests, the pollution of lakes, the erosion of buildings and of our architectural heritage, and, sometimes, hazards to human health.

(ii) Marine pollution is reaching alarming proportions in the Mediterranean and some areas of the North Sea. The absorptive capacity of the sea, where pollution discharged to water, air or land finally ends up, could be swamped if action is not taken soon.

(iii) The handling of dangerous chemicals has given rise to serious and tragic accidents in Europe and elsewhere. Though rare, these can be utterly devastating.

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(iv) Modern farming methods sometimes cause grave ecological damage, even though agriculture, which has moulded the European landscape over centuries, still offers the best assurance of preserving landscape features.

(v) The scale of environmental deterioration in some parts of the Third World is such that they may well become permanently unable to support life: desertification, tropical deforestation and the loss of wildlife, and hence genetic diversity, are among the worst problems of all.

4. The seriousness of these problems is such that the Commission has given them prominence in the action programme it recently submitted to the European Parliament, in which it states its intention of laying before the Council a number of proposals concerning legislation, scientific and technical research, the orientation of common and national policies and the use of the financial armoury at the Community's disposal.

5. The Commission would like to see decision-making in this area of policy prompted and influenced by policy guidelines from the European Council. Without going into detail, it asks the European Council to endorse three main guidelines for Community environment policy:

(i) protection of the environment is to be treated as an integral part of economic and social policies both overall (at macro-economic level) and by individual sector (agricultural policy, industrial policy, energy policy ...), the point must be made that an active policy for the protection and improvement of the environment can help economic growth and job creation;

Look
at cost
level

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- (ii) Member States must recognize the necessity of coherent actions within the Community framework, since piecemeal and isolated action would risk to be ineffective and even harmful to the cohesion and continuity of its policies;

- (iii) signal the importance the European Council attaches to Community policy for the protection and improvement of the environment by deciding that the year 1987 will be the European Year of the Environment, and by inviting the Commission and Council to make every effort to ensure that the year is marked by major progress in the Community drive for the protection of the environment in Europe and the world.

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26 March 1985

EUROPEAN COUNCIL, BRUSSELS

29/30 MARCH 1985

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

Brief by Foreign and Commonwealth Office

BACKGROUND TO STEERING BRIEF

Reference: Commission paper entitled "A Europe-Wide
Environmental Policy"

1. The Commission paper calls for urgent action in five
areas:

- i) Air Pollution;
- ii) Marine Pollution;
- iii) Handling of Dangerous Chemicals
- iv) Dangers of Modern Farming Methods;
- v) Environmental Deterioration in the Third World.

Of these, the first two are likely to provoke
substantial discussion.

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Air Pollution

2. The Agreement on Vehicle Emissions at the Environment Council on 20 March centred on a compromise in which pollution levels for small and medium range vehicles were cut substantially while allowing for the development of lean burn technology; in return for the tightest possible standards for large cars and the Community's go ahead to the Germans to introduce limited fiscal incentives for low polluting cars. This political agreement will form the framework for negotiation of the standards themselves which should be agreed by the end of June 1985.

3. Within the Community attention is now likely to focus on controls of pollution from large combustion plants. Seven Member States (all except UK, Ireland and Greece) have joined the so-called 30% Club (cut in sulphur emissions by 30% by 1993). Germany and the Netherlands strongly support the Commission's Draft Directive on Large Combustion Plants and France, Belgium and Denmark are willing to support it with some modifications. UK, Italy and Ireland are strongly opposed on grounds of disproportionate implementation costs; the smaller countries (Greece, Luxembourg and again Ireland) are seeking derogations. The UK is

willing to cut both sulphur and nitrogen oxide emissions by 30% by the end of the century.

Marine Pollution

4. There are three main areas in which the UK could come under pressure: dumping in the North Sea, Special Area Status for the North Sea, and our attachment to Environmental Quality Objectives (EQOs).

5. At last year's North Sea Conference, there was strong political pressure led by Germany with support from Netherlands, Denmark, and Norway to implement new measures to control pollution of the North Sea. UK and France argued that existing international agreements were satisfactory and there was no need for a new EC initiative; the main problem was caused by discharges from rivers and estuaries, in particular the Rhine and the River Meuse. The UK is to host the next conference in 1986 or 1987 and will again insist that full account must be given to scientific evidence which we believe demonstrates that dumping at present levels is not harmful.

6. The main effect of granting Special Area Status to the North Sea would be to impose tighter ship cleaning

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regulations. Again there is no scientific basis for such regulations which would in any case be difficult to enforce.

7. The UK approach is based on Environmental Quality Objectives (EQOs) which take as their starting point that pollution controls should be geared to water quality levels. Most Member States and the Commission prefer uniform emission standards which control the volume of pollutants and invariably require costly new equipment to dispose of the excess without any demonstrable benefit in and around the UK.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE

26 MARCH 1985

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