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bc HMT

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

23 April 1985

Dear Hugh

Cascone

A Minister meeting to arrange on
drugs, see over. I think we should
leave 1 hour, ~~with~~ extra

DRUG MISUSE

next convenient
slot.

MBA 25/4

The Prime Minister today met the Home Secretary, together with Mr. David Mellor and Mr. John Patten, to discuss drug misuse. Mr. Hartley Booth of the No 10 Policy Unit was also present.

The Prime Minister opened the meeting by seeking clarification about where matters stood on forfeiture of assets of convicted drug traffickers. There was a need to get such legislation in place quickly. The sums of money involved in drug trafficking generally were very large. The problem was growing and had now to be tackled very vigorously indeed. The Government had taken useful steps but needed to do more. This was partly a matter of using resources effectively, including in the treatment of addiction.

The Home Secretary said that the Government was publicly committed to introducing legislation on forfeiture; the question was when and how this could best be achieved. The Criminal Justice Bill, which was the vehicle originally proposed, had slipped to 1986/7. It might therefore be right to proceed with legislation on forfeiture in respect of drugs in advance of forfeiture in respect of the profits from other types of crime. More generally, the Government had now considered the extent of the drug problem, and knew how it ought to be tackled. The key problem for the present was one of resources, though it was also important to be realistic about the prospects for complete success.

In discussion, the following points were made:-

(i) Corruption was certainly one difficulty. In some countries this infected very high levels of their administration and limited the effectiveness of efforts to help stop drugs at source. At home, the police had initially been reluctant to step up drug squads because of the dangers of corruption within them. But coverage up and down the country of the squads was now good.

(ii) The international dimension was crucial. The drug traffic being stopped at source could be dramatically increased if the right kind of co-operation were obtained.

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Good intelligence was the key to this, and the good work of H M Customs had to be built on.

(iii) At home, doctors' prescription methods needed looking at carefully. Tranquilliser addiction was now a serious problem. It was also important to get the right kind of message across to young people at school and to manage treatment and rehabilitation facilities properly.

Summing up the discussion, the Prime Minister said that there was agreement that more needed to be done to tackle the problem of drug abuse. It was a potential massive source of corruption in the country, and a dreadful physical threat to a whole generation of young people. Whatever difficulties the divisions of departmental responsibility presented, the Government ultimately had the overall task of setting its priorities in the appropriate way to deal with the problem, and had to be seen to do so. The international dimension was vital, and the Prime Minister would consider raising the matter in the margins of the Bonn Summit. On forfeiture of assets, the Government could not afford to delay too long; one way forward would be to use a Private Members Bill to get forfeiture legislation in respect of drugs in place quickly. The Prime Minister proposed, as a next step, to call a meeting of all those Cabinet Ministers with a departmental interest in the area. This would include, as well as the Home Secretary, the Chancellor, the Chief Secretary, the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Security, and the Secretaries of State for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. She would ask the appropriate Secretaries of State to bring with them those Junior Ministers with a direct interest in this problem.

I am copying this letter to Steve Godber (Department of Health and Social Security).

Y e
Mark Addison

MARK ADDISON

There are

John Patten (HSS)
David Miller (HO)

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Hugh Taylor, Esq.,
Home Office

CONFIDENTIAL