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NOTE FOR THE FILE

Subject matter

MEETING WITH SIR CRISPIN TICKELL, 28 JUNE

Sir Crispin Tickell came in today for the first of his meetings with the Prime Minister in his new capacity as her occasional environmental adviser.

He explained that he had asked to take on an occasional role rather than a full-time position because of his other commitments. He had just taken on the Presidency of the Royal Geographical Society and when he left his current post as Ambassador to the UN he would among other things be taking up a position at Green College, Oxford and would become President of the National Academy of Science in the USA. He also mentioned that when Professor Lovelock steps down as President of the Marine Biology Association, he planned to take over this post. A further responsibility was that he was Director of Earthwatch, which is an organisation which gives young scientists the opportunity to travel and take part in specific environmental missions across the world.

The Prime Minister commended Sir Crispin on his job as Ambassador to the UN; and invited him to see her before he finally stepped down so that she could formally thank him for all his work. On the environment, she asked him for his views about the way ahead. She said that she thought that work on the ozone layer and on global warming was progressing reasonably well. Areas which needed more work, she thought, were biodiversity and research into the circulation of the sea, which would have a crucial effect on how global warming manifested itself. The effect of clouds on global warming also needed more work. Sir Crispin warmly welcomed the Prime Minister's decision to announce targets for reducing CO₂ emissions. He agreed about the importance of the circulation of the sea's currents. At the end of the last Ice Age, as he understood it, the flow of fresh water into the North Atlantic had, for example, had an enormous effect in diverting currents further south so that western Europe had frozen up but not America.

On the American position, he was critical of the Marshall Report and said that in certain particulars it was certainly not right,

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

- 2 -

especially on the effect of sunspots. The man who had carried out much of this work, Lindzten from MIT, had recently emerged very badly from scientific debate about the Report. However the signs from the USA were not all bad. He had learned that Diamond had suddenly awoken to the fact that a green tax might be a powerful weapon in tackling the federal deficit.

Sir Crispin had a specific proposal for getting the developing countries on side. Sir Crispin suggested that these countries would never believe the warnings on global warming unless they were told of this by their own scientists. One of the most useful ways of getting their cooperation would be to help them set up their own research institutes, rather than giving them information. He mentioned that a Chinese scientific paper had been prepared by the Chinese Government as part of their response to the IPCC Report. This had pointed out to the Chinese Government that they had a quarter of the world's population and only 5 per cent of the world's fresh water. The Government were now concerned that global warming would reduce their water supplies. A further fear was that the permafrost in Northern China, on which many buildings had been constructed, would melt with catastrophic results.

The Prime Minister pointed out that if developing countries set up their own research institutes this might only lead to duplication but Sir Crispin said that this was a small price to pay for getting the cooperation of developing countries. The Prime Minister picked up his point about fresh water which she saw as a considerable problem for the future. Sir Crispin mentioned that the major expert in desalination was James Weir in Glasgow. The Prime Minister agreed and said that she thought we would need desalination plants in East Anglia for example. Sir Crispin mentioned the need for greater use of solar energy but the Prime Minister said that she had been told at the Hadley Climate Prediction Centre that solar energy would provide only 3-4 per cent of the world's energy needs. Sir Crispin cast doubt on this and said that he knew of a major solar energy project in California and also believed that ways were being developed of getting energy from lower light levels. The Prime Minister

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL


- 3 -

wondered whether it might be possible to reduce the cost of solar panels and referred to some work being carried out by BP in this area.

The Prime Minister mentioned to Sir Crispin an idea that she had been mulling over of getting young scientists together to look at fresh solutions to environmental problems. Established scientists tended to get stuck in a groove, she thought, and there might well be positive insights and ideas which younger scientists might bring to these issues. What she was hoping to do was to identify the younger generation of Lovelocks. Sir Crispin agreed and thought that he might well have some suggestions of scientists who might usefully be involved. He stressed that any such meeting would need a good chairman who could marshal discussion and there would need to be a clear agenda, even though scientists should be encouraged to think imaginatively in a wide-ranging way. Some of the scientists he had come across at Earthwatch might be good candidates. The Prime Minister said that she had asked Mr. Patten to consider this further. She might also approach the Royal Society. She might have a dry run at No.10, she thought: a one-day seminar rather like the one she had held on the environment some time ago. Numbers involved would need to be small: 30 at maximum. Sir Crispin offered to give any help he could when he returned to Britain in mid-August.

Finally, Sir Crispin mentioned that the Prime Minister would enjoy seeing an astro-physicist, Freeman Dyson FRS, who would be over here on 11 October. The Prime Minister agreed that she would see him whenever she could.

After the meeting, Sir Crispin asked whether I would send him any key papers c/o the Foreign Office so that he could be up to speed on environmental issues. He said that he would be in London until 7 July (telephone number 071-289 1898). After that he would be in New York returning here in mid-August.


CAROLINE SLOCOCK

28 June 1990

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PRIME MINISTER

MEETING WITH SIR CRISPIN TICKELL, 12.30

Sir Crispin has asked to come in to see you while he is in Britain for his first meeting with you in his new role as your occasional adviser on the environment. You may like to ask him whether he has any initial thoughts on particular projects or ideas which he might like to develop. But you may also like to take his views on:

- the US position on global warming and the scope for developing targets of CO2 equivalents;
- the forthcoming Economic Summit;
- your idea of involving young scientists in looking at new ways of tackling environmental problems;
- any particularly interesting research projects you might visit in the year ahead. I understand that it was he who suggested that you should visit to the Scott Polar Research Institute last year.

CPS

Caroline Slocock

27 June 1990