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EDC
Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

11 May 1990

To all Special Advisers

Dear John,

/// I attach a list, prepared by the European Democratic Group, of current EC policy items. The list is updated regularly, and is intended to flag up possible areas of difficulty as well as set out the state of progress of each item through the EC machinery. You will see that most of us will have at least one or two things on the boil in our own patch at any one time.

I would be most grateful if you could draw to my attention any matters which you feel require special attention by Ministers and/or MEPs. Do bear in mind that, in addition to your usual departmental channels and bilateral contacts with EDG spokesmen, there are now two additional fora available for dealing with EC issues: the monthly meeting at the FCO of 'Euro Ministers' from all Government Departments, and Francis Maude's regular meeting with Sir Christopher Prout, Christopher Jackson, Tom Spencer and Tim Bainbridge.

It goes without saying that some of the issues listed will be ones where the Government is well-placed to score some runs, or to turn the spotlight on un-Communautaire behaviour by some of our EC partners.

With all these different angles in mind, I would be grateful if those of you with any thoughts could share them with me by Friday 18 May.

Yours,
Maurice

MAURICE FRASER
Special Adviser

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IMPORTANT AND SENSITIVE ITEMS

(As at 17.4.90)

Com No.	Legal Base	Procedure	Committee	Likely Timetable	
				Plenary	Council

1. POLITICAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

89.2290 final/ EEC Art.237 / 'Avis conforme' / Sept '90 / Oct/Nov '90 / N/A

Title : Commission Opinion on Turkish Application

Explanation : The importance of this is self-evident.

N/A / N/A / EP Rule 63 / ? Sept '90 / ? Summer '91 / N/A
/ (Own Initiative)

Title : Human rights situation in Hong Kong before and after 1997

Explanation : This question is not only sensitive in Hong Kong and the United Kingdom, it has a direct bearing on relations with China.

2. AGRICULTURE COMMITTEE

89.114 / - / - / - / April '90 / -
89.115 / - / - / - / April '90 / -
89.322 / - / - / - / April '90 / -

Title : Animal welfare proposals - intensive veal and pig production; transport of animals

Explanation : The proposals have now gone through the Parliament. The proposals now contain a number of important amendments proposed by the EDG, some of which have been accepted by the Commission. Further action may be needed to ensure adoption by the Council.

3. BUDGETS COMMITTEE

Title : 1991 Budget

Explanation : Parliament has now adopted the introductory Lamassoure report. The Group will be kept informed of developments.

Com No.	Legal Base	Procedure	Likely Timetable		
			Committee	Plenary	Council

4. ECONOMIC AND MONETARY AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

Not known / EEC Art.99 / Single Reading / ? / ? / End '91

Title : Approximation of VAT and excise duties (revised proposals)

Explanation : Sensitive because of "tax sovereignty".

Not known / EEC Art.100 / Single Reading / ? / ? / ?

Title : Corporation Tax Approximation

Explanation : Sensitive because of "tax sovereignty".

89.446 / EEC Art.100A / Depends on legal base / April-May '90 / June '90 / Common Position / 20 June '90

Title : Acquisition and Possession of Weapons

Explanation : Sensitive because of "Hungerford" factor, rather than "terrorism", which involves weapons carried illegally.

None / Art.121 EP Rules / N/A / By summer / By summer / (IOC) / (interim report May)

Title : Own initiative report - Economic and Monetary Union

Explanation : Sensitive because of "national sovereignty".

Com No.	Legal Base	Procedure	Committee	Likely Timetable	
				Plenary	Council

5. LEGAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

89.268 / EEC Art.100A / Two Readings / April '90 / May '90 / June '90
 / EEC Art.54.3(g) / Policy Debate

Title : European Company Statute

Explanation : The proposal is in two parts, a Regulation and a Directive. The Government is particularly troubled by the latter, which concerns employee consultation and involvement.

88.496 / EEC Art.100A / Two Readings / Originally foreseen for May '90 plenary. Will be
 / delayed due to organisation of public hearing
 / during May. Policy Debate/Common Position expected
 / June '90.

Title : Protection of Biotechnological Inventions

Explanation : The Directive is concerned with the patentability of living matter and of processes for the production of plant and animal varieties. It is important from the point of view of both
 a) public concern, and b) international competition.

N/A / - / - / - / - / -

(Proposals expected in second half of 1990)

Title : Copyright

Explanation : Potentially the most controversial aspect of the copyright package is the question of the blank tape levy.

N/A / - / ? Two Readings / - / - / -

(Proposals expected in second half of 1990)

Title : Patent Protection - Pharmaceuticals

Explanation : Not politically sensitive, but of very great importance to the pharmaceutical industry.

N/A / (Probably) / ? Single Reading / - / - / -
 / EEC Art.235

(Proposals expected in second half of 1990)

Title : Community Accession to European Human Rights Convention

Explanation : Politically sensitive in so far as it will fuel the ongoing debate about whether Britain needs a Bill of Rights.

Com No.	Legal Base	Procedura	Committee	Likely Timetable	
				Plerary	Council

6. ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

88.708 / EEC Art.130S / Single Reading / single / ?
 / Reading
 / May '89

Title : Nitrates in Water
 Explanation : Concern of general public about purity of supplies of drinking water and about eutrophication. Concern of farmers that the directive as it stands would mean a radical change in land use in many areas.

88.654 / EEC Art.100A / Two Readings / Sept '89 / 1st reading / ?
 / Oct I, '89
 / 2nd reading ?

Title : Food Irradiation
 Explanation : Public concern in many Member States, including the UK and Denmark, about the safety of, and necessity for, irradiated food.

7. SOCIAL AFFAIRS, EMPLOYMENT AND THE WORKING ENVIRONMENT

N/A / - / - / July-Sept '90 / - / -

Title : Protection of pregnant women in the workplace
 Explanation : Social Action Programme

N/A / - / - / Oct-Dec '90 / - / -

Title : Third programme for the promotion of equal opportunities
 Explanation : Social Action Programme

N/A / - / - / April-June '90 / - / -

Title : Information procedures for workers exposed to certain dangerous industrial agents
 Explanation : Social Action Programme

N/A / - / - / April-June '90 / - / -

Title : Atypical work
 Explanation : Social Action Programme

N/A / - / - / April-June '90 / - / -

Title : Reorganisation of working time
 Explanation : Social Action Programme

N/A / - / - / Oct-Dec '90 / - / -

Title : Information, consultation and participation of employees in companies with a Community dimension (ie. multinational enterprises)
 Explanation : Social Action Programme

Com No.	Legal Base	Procedure	Likely Timetable		
			Committee	Plenary	Council

8. INSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

N/A / Art.121 EP Rules / N/A / April / June / (IGC)

Title : Own initiative report - "Assises" on Future of the Community

Explanation : Sensitive because of "national sovereignty".

N/A / Art.121 EP Rules / N/A / ? / ? / N/A

Title : Own initiative report - Community's Relations with Local and Regional Authorities

Explanation : Sensitive because of "national sovereignty" and link with devolution/centralisation.

N/A / Art.121 EP Rules / N/A / Some Committee members see no / ?
/ need to give any priority to
/ this

Title : Own initiative report - Uniform Electoral Procedure

Explanation : Sensitive because of "national sovereignty" and inevitability of first-past-the-post being ruled out.

N/A / Art.121 EP Rules / N/A / ? / ? / N/A

Title : Own initiative report - The Role of the Commission

Explanation : Sensitive because of "national sovereignty".

N/A / Art.121 EP Rules / N/A / ? / ? / (IGC)

Title : Own initiative report - Assent Procedure

Explanation : Sensitive because of "national sovereignty".

N/A / Art.121 EP Rules / N/A / ? / ? / (future IGC)

Title : Own initiative report - Draft Constitution for the European Union

Explanation : Sensitive because of "national sovereignty".

N/A / Art.121 EP Rules / N/A / ? / ? / (IGC)

Title : Own initiative report - Cooperation Procedure (Prag)

Explanation : Sensitive because of "national sovereignty".

N/A / Art.121 EP Rules / N/A / ? / ? / (IGC)

Title : Own initiative report - Subsidiarity

Explanation : Sensitive because of "national sovereignty" and link with devolution/centralisation.