



Bonnie Minister. (U)

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

17 February 1981

Basically the mixture as before. Agree that Sir R.

Armstrong should take the line in the final paragraph?

Dear Michael,

Ans: 17/2 Yes not

Handling of Political Questions at Ottawa Summit

In two minutes to you of 16 December, Sir Robert Armstrong gave an account of discussion at the December meeting of Personal Representatives about the handling of political questions at the Ottawa Summit. At that meeting all were agreed that some part of the Summit should be devoted to purely political matters, but they saw a need to seek instructions from their Heads of Government before next week's meeting in London. Having seen the accounts of Sir Robert Armstrong's recent discussions with the Canadian Personal Representative (in David Wright's letters of 12 and 16 February to Andrew Burns) Lord Carrington has been reflecting on the line which the Prime Minister's Personal Representative should take on this aspect of the preparations.

It seems probable that there will continue to be a consensus on the need for some political discussion at Ottawa, but it is worth noting two recent indications of French and American attitudes. In his television interview of 28 January, Giscard expressed general scepticism about the role of summits, but said that he valued Economic Summits as an opportunity to survey the world scene. He went on to say however they were not the proper forum in which to discuss current political problems requiring decisions. He seems to have had it in mind that when actual decisions need to be taken this should be done through some other consultation machinery. As for the Americans, the present indication from Washington is that the new Administration may view the Summit as the occasion for a general exchange of views rather than for reaching agreement on courses of particular action. No doubt we shall learn more about the various national attitudes in the course of next ~~the~~ week's meetings.

Lord Carrington himself is convinced that political discussion in Ottawa will be timely and can make an important contribution to the continuing process of concerting Western policies on the major issues confronting us.

On the assumption that it will be agreed that there should be a political discussion we shall need to consider what preparations should be made in advance. You will recall that last year preparatory work done in the quadripartite forum (at which Sir Michael Palliser and Mr Bullard were our representatives) played a valuable role in establishing broad objectives

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for the Summit discussion - particularly on Afghanistan - without tying down the Heads of Government to excessive detail. Having reached agreement among the Four, we were able to steer the preparatory meeting of the Seven, so far as we could tell, without the Italians, Canadians or Japanese being aware of our prior concertation. Lord Carrington's view is that we should aim to do so again this year. There is, of course, a danger that the Canadians may themselves want to stage-manage that part of the Summit and that in consequence they may rumble what is going on; but the quadripartite group has shown itself adept at discreet work behind the scenes and Lord Carrington believes that we should be able to manage matters successfully on this occasion.

Most of those who will be attending ^{the} ~~next~~ week's meeting will not be the right people with whom to discuss these political preparations in any detail. Lord Carrington thinks that the line taken by Sir Robert Armstrong with Mr Gotlieb on 12 February is the right one. The Personal Representatives might be told that we favour holding one, or at most two, preparatory meetings of the Seven on political subjects. The need for a political section of the Communiqué or separate political declaration can only be discussed usefully nearer the time; and that these matters might best be looked at when the Summit arrangements are rather further advanced. Meanwhile we shall need to check with our quadripartite partners that they can go along with these thoughts. It should be possible to take matters further with the Americans in the course of the Prime Minister's visit to Washington later this month.

*Sideline passage
in attached letter*

I am copying this letter to David Wright in Sir Robert Armstrong's office.

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8/5/80*

(G G H Walden)
Private Secretary

M O'D B Alexander Esq
10 Downing Street

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Jup



10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

18 February 1981

Handling of Political Questions
at the Ottawa Summit

The Prime Minister has seen George Walden's letter to me of 17 February and has approved the line proposed in its final paragraph. This is just as well since the relevant discussion among Personal Representatives took place last night and Sir Robert used the line suggested!

I am sending a copy of this letter to David Wright (Cabinet Office).

M. O'D. B. ALEXANDER

KRP-

F.J. Richards, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.