

SUBJECT
a Master Set

A. J. 16
CDD

NOTE FOR THE RECORD

EUROPEAN COMMISSIONERS

The Prime minister discussed with the Leader of the Opposition in her room at the House of Commons today the nomination of the next British Commissioners. Mr Alison, Mr Clements (Mr Kinnock's office) and I were present.

The Prime Minister recalled that before the present UK Commissioners had been nominated she had held discussions with Mr. Callaghan, Mr Fred Mulley and Mr Joel Barnett (as they then were) had been considered before Mr Ivor Richard was chosen. She had thought that Joel Barnett would be excellent and would be glad to put him forward on this occasion if the Labour Party put him forward and he was willing to accept. She was not prepared to nominate Mr Richard for a second term because she thought that as a general rule people should not serve as Commissioners for too long: also she could tell Mr Kinnock confidentially that he had not been very good. She had considered whether she should nominate Sir Michael Butler, of whom she had the highest opinion; but this would be unpopular with her own Party if she were to nominate alongside him a politician from the Labour Party. She was not however in favour of putting forward someone from the House of Commons since this would involve a by-election. She took the view that the Commission was too large and had proposed that it be reduced to 12; but for the present she was working on the assumption that it would remain at 17 and that the UK would continue to have two places.

The Leader of the Opposition said that he took the view that it was better to have politicians and that ideally they should serve two terms. The Prime Minister was only the second person to give him a poor report about Mr. Richard.

He would have preferred that Mr Richard should serve a second term, but he recognised the force of the Prime Minister's view and the constitutional position and he therefore reluctantly accepted that Mr Richard should not be nominated again. In his view it would be easier to nominate an official if the British Commissioners were reduced to one; failing that, he suggested that politicians should be nominated. He would probably look in the House of Lords for his candidates and would try to give the Prime Minister names by the middle of the coming week.

F.R.B.

20 July 1984