

MEETING WITH JONATHAN PORRITT

You are meeting Jonathan Porritt at his request (his letter is at Flag C), following the GoodHousekeeping Dinner, and with the Secretary of State for Environment's encouragement. Mr Patten has already held a similar meeting with Mr Porritt and has commented that he is "a serious and decent man who cares passionately about the environment, and is not a point scorer." Mr Porritt is shortly to leave his post as Director of Friends of the Earth (you might ask him why) and so your meeting with him is partly a personal one.

Mr Patten will be present at tomorrow's meeting, at your request.

Carolyn Sinclair has written a very helpful brief on Jonathan Porritt, following a recent meeting. This is at Flag A. Defensive briefing from Mr Patten on some of the points which might be raised is at Flag B.

The meeting would be an opportunity to:

- to hear from someone who - although his views do not coincide with the Government's - has been an innovative force and a extremely successful publicist for environmental interests. Mr Porritt will probably want to raise the White Paper and propose a fundamental shift in the organisation of Government to reflect environmental concerns. You might want to ask about about FoE initiatives on recycling. You might also ask his views on how best to bring environmental questions home to the public in a thoughtful way;

- to underline the Government's and your own personal commitment to solving environmental issues. You might want to say something about the Environmental Protection Bill and about your own initiatives on global problems. Mr Porritt is an enthusiast for Environmentally Sensitive Areas (and dislikes the set-aside scheme) and so you might raise this;

- to consider whether there is any way in which Mr Porritt/Friends of the Earth might cooperate on environmental issues. When a meeting was proposed, you suggested to me the possibility of FoE taking part in the proposed campaign to clean up Britain - the Clean Nineties Campaign. Bernard Ingham reports that Tidy Britain would not welcome this; and DOE think that it may not be appropriate. In a recent interview in, I think, "Country Life," Mr Porritt was reported as saying when prompted that he would consider taking on a temporary position as your Environment Adviser!

Mr Patten advises that FoE have a good track record on the recycling of domestic waste; and suggests that you may like to encourage FoE to collaborate with industry, local authorities and Government in this area. Their line on litter is that the priority should be to reduce litter at source, by reducing packaging. They have been critical of the Government's efforts to promote recycling, although FoE and Government are cooperating in the Recycling City Project now underway in Sheffield (an FoE project to involve consumers in sorting waste for recycling, to which Government is contributing £90,000 for monitoring). The Government has of course set a national target of recycling 50% of household waste by the end of the century.

Carolyn Sinclair's note floats the idea of increasing the number of Environmentally Sensitive areas - which it seems Jonathan Porritt is likely to welcome. This may not be the forum to raise this idea but you might like to bear it in mind for the future.

I shall be present to take a note and, if you agree, Carolyn Sinclair would also like to sit in.

CWS

Caroline Sloccock
30 November 1989

27 November 1989

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JONATHON PORRITT

I went to see Jonathon Porritt the other day. You may find the following useful as background for the Prime Minister's meeting with him on 1 December.

In general I found his views fairly reasonable. I think he may have been consciously distancing himself a little from some of the positions taken up by Friends of the Earth for example, on nuclear power.

The areas in which he is particularly interested are:

- the White Paper on the Environment (as an expression of the Government's attitude across the board)
- energy policy (where he would like more investment in renewable sources)
- recycling (where Friends of the Earth have taken some useful initiatives)
- agriculture and the countryside (where he would like to see a considerable expansion of Environmentally Sensitive Areas).

White Paper on the Environment

This has aroused great expectations. Chris Patten is acutely conscious that warmed up existing policies will not do. But he recognises the difficulty of getting agreement from colleagues to new approaches. Transport policy is likely to be the most controversial area.

Jonathon Porritt seems encouraged at the level of serious interest in Whitehall. (You are launching work on the White Paper at a MISC 141 meeting on 7 December, and two groups of economists are already beavering away under Treasury leadership.) He is likely to argue for a major shift of emphasis within Whitehall, with a powerful and proactive secretariat in the Cabinet Office ensuring that environmental considerations are fully weighed in all policy decisions. The very process of "weighing" will require values to be put on the environment. This in itself will be a major task.

Energy policy

Friends of the Earth feel vindicated by the decision not to privatise the nuclear side of the CEGB. They claim to have been arguing for years that the costs of nuclear energy were higher than anyone would admit. As an organisation, Friends of the Earth represent people who think that nuclear power is evil, and should not be used in any circumstances.

This is not Jonathon Porritt's position. He thinks that the present methods of using nuclear power are seriously flawed, and present too great a risk to man and his environment. But he does not rule out the possibility that in future scientists will discover ways of using nuclear power which carry fewer risks.

Meanwhile he would like to see investment in renewable sources of energy, such as wave power. Since these will not be profitable at the initial stages of development, this would require a strategic decision and some public money.

Recycling

Friends of the Earth have been campaigning for recycling, and are running a recycling city project in Sheffield funded

by the Department of the Environment. Jonathon Porritt believes that we still have a long way to go in changing attitudes to recycling (and litter) in the UK. We lag behind the rest of Europe in terms of attitudes.

This may well be a fruitful area for discussion with the Prime Minister. Chris Patten has just proposed giving recycling a prominent part in the Government's proposals on waste management in the Green Bill.

Agriculture and Countryside

Jonathon Porritt is critical of set-aside, which he sees as bringing little or no environmental benefit, but is enthusiastic about Environmentally Sensitive Areas (ESAs). At present these are limited to 120,000 hectares in areas such as the Somerset Levels, Norfolk Broads, Pennine Dales etc. The annual cost of the ESA scheme is £8.4 million.

A substantial expansion of ESAs would be popular with environmental groups and with the Country Landowners' Association. It is likely to be popular with the run of farmers if the take up in the existing eligible areas is anything to go by.

But like other incentives to farm extensively, ESAs are not an instant remedy for the ills caused by intensive farming. In some cases these require heavy investment to restore the countryside/earth to the state it would have been in if intensive farming had never occurred.

ESAs require further evaluation in terms of environmental value for money. So far they are not a "proven" panacea. But their likely value justifies some extension. Such a move would go down well with both farmers and environmentalists.


CAROLYN SINCLAIR

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION - NATIONAL ACTION

Environmental Protection Bill - the Bill will complete a major overhaul of the national framework for the control of pollution begun with the Water Act 1989.

- integrated pollution control (IPC): will mean that all emissions from the most polluting industrial processes -to air, water and land - will be controlled by a single body, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Pollution (HMIP).
- local authority control of air pollution: will strengthen local authorities' powers to control less polluting processes, by introducing a system of prior authorisation as under IPC.
- public access to information: registers with details of authorisations given by HMIP and local authorities will be available for public inspection. Together with the National Rivers Authority's registers of discharge consents, these will give the public extensive opportunities to understand the operation of pollution control systems.
- waste: the Bill will contain a wide range of measures to improve the control of waste, including placing a duty of care on waste producers, new restrictions on trade in waste, and the reform of local authorities' operation and regulation of waste disposal. It will also encourage waste collection authorities to carry out recycling.
- litter and dogs: there will be a package of measures to tackle the problem of litter, above all a new duty on local authorities and others to keep their land free of litter, and an increase in the maximum fine for littering to £1,000. There will also be a new duty on local authorities to keep their areas clear of dog faeces.

The Bill will also include updating of controls imposed by the Radioactive Substances Act; powers for Government to require information on chemicals and their use; controls on the release of genetically manipulated organisms into the environment; and the reorganisation of the Nature Conservancy Council and the Countryside Commission.

Friends of the Earth (FoE) are likely to welcome integrated pollution control, and access to environmental information, although they consider that information held by pollution control authorities and not placed in registers should also be made available to the public. We consider that the use of registers has practical advantages for both the authorities and the public.

FoE's line on litter is that the priority should be to reduce litter at source, by reducing packaging. They have been critical of the Government's efforts to promote recycling, although FoE and Government are cooperating in the Recycling City project now underway in Sheffield (an FoE project to involve consumers in sorting waste for recycling, to which Government is contributing £90,000 for monitoring). We have now set a national target of recycling 50% of household waste by the end of the century.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION - INTERNATIONAL ACTION

- UK at the centre of growing international efforts to gain a better understanding of global pollution and to agree an effective response.
- acid rain - we have a £2 billion programme to clean up power station emissions to meet the targets set by the EC large combustion plants directive. We have agreed tough new EC standards for controlling vehicle emissions of acid rain gases, and want proposals on CO₂ emissions as well.
- depletion of the ozone layer - with our EC partners, we have signed Montreal Protocol and have called for use of CFCs phased out by the end of the century. Next year we shall host a meeting of the parties to the Montreal Protocol which we hope will agree higher targets.
- climate change - we support current scientific efforts through the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), and the new UK centre for the prediction of climate change. We want a framework convention on climate change by 1992, when the World Conference on Environment and Development will take place. Filling out that framework with specific protocols should be based on the IPCC's continuing work. At the Noordwijk conference, we endorsed the need to stabilise CO₂ emissions by the year 2000.
- tropical forests - we have called for a convention to conserve species, for which the tropical forests are an important habitat. We are committing £100 million to tropical forest activities over the next 3 years.

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WHITE PAPER

- the mainspring will be the objective of sustainable development, nationally and internationally, to ensure that the growth which is essential to all countries of the world is achieved in a way which protects and enhances the environment.
- we have made our commitment to sustainable development clear, principally in UK's 1988 response to the Brundtland Report.
- the purpose of the White Paper will be to demonstrate the integration of environmental concerns into our policies in areas such as transport, energy, agriculture and industry, with a more coordinated approach than hitherto.

POSSIBLE FoE CONCERNS

"Greening of Government" - FoE support the recasting of the machinery of Government to give primacy to environmental policy. Their ideas include flanking DOE with an environmental coordinating unit in the Cabinet Office, and a Cabinet Committee; combining the pollution control functions of HMIP, the National Rivers Authority and local authorities in a single environmental protection agency; and creating an independent statistical bureau and an environmental ombudsman.

Line To Take - our commitment to a White Paper involves the Government as a whole. What matters is the political will; institutional changes are of lesser importance. We have made some changes, as with the establishment of HMIP in 1987 and the NRA in 1989. But to give major responsibilities for environmental policy, eg to an environmental protection agency, would erode Ministerial powers and hence accountability to Parliament.

Climate Change - FoE support firm undertakings on reductions of CO₂ emissions within a specific timescale. Mr Porritt may refer to press reports of a DEn paper which contained a range of estimates for future energy use in the UK; at the upper end, UK emissions of CO₂ would increase significantly. FoE also argue for increased Government spending on energy efficiency. They have recently claimed that expenditure of £4 billion on energy efficiency measures could produce savings of £12 billion, and a 30% reduction in CO₂ emissions.

Line To Take - our call for a framework convention on climate change has been supported by UNEP, CHOGM and the Noordwijk conference. In the Noordwijk Declaration, we joined with many other industrialised countries in recognising the need to stabilise our CO₂ emissions by the year 2000. Details must be worked out on the scientific basis to be provided by the IPCC next year.

We continue to support the role of the Energy Efficiency Office. Its budget (although reduced) stands at £15 million this year, and will allow effective and targeted operation. FoE's line on energy efficiency spending overlooks individual responsibility of different sectors; if energy efficiency measures are economic, those who will benefit should implement them.

The Roads Programme - FoE recently published a response ("Roads to Ruin") to the Government's White Paper "Roads to Prosperity". The main theme was that the growth in road transport envisaged in the White Paper was unacceptably harmful to the environment and that the Government should take active steps to choke off the demand for road transport and stimulate public transport.

Line to take - We must have an adequate road network. Underfunding the roads programme would lead to congestion and inefficiencies in the economy which would be harmful to the environment. We are not neglecting investment in public transport. For instance, investment in BR and LRT over the next 3 years will exceed £5bn. Transport policy, along with other major economic activities, will be reviewed in the process of preparing the White Paper.

Atmospheric Pollution - FoE's recent campaigning has focused on local air pollution issues. They have complained to the EC Commission that the UK is breaching the EC directive on nitrogen dioxide, after a short-term survey of pollution levels carried out by FoE themselves. Mr Porritt may also press for the introduction of a "pollution alert" system, with daily reports on levels of different pollutants at various UK sites - an extension of the low-level ozone system announced in August.

Line To Take - The UK nitrogen dioxide monitoring network was specifically designed in compliance with the EC directive to assess human exposure in areas of highest concentrations. It has been commended by the EC Commission to other member states. It shows that the limits set in the directive have not been breached. More widely, we are now considering the range of air pollution information that is made available to the public.

Drinking Water Quality - FoE have mounted a strong and often misleading campaign about the quality of drinking water. Their latest move has been to question the validity of programmes to improve water quality agreed between the water service companies and the Secretary of State.

Line To Take - UK drinking water is of high quality, and most public water supplies regularly comply with the stringent standards in the EC drinking water directive. Still higher standards will be achieved under the regime established by the Water Act 1989. There can be no point in taking enforcement action against a company which is implementing an investment programme as quickly as practicable, which has to be the case before the Government will accept an undertaking.

Bathing Waters/Long Sea Outfalls - FoE are concerned about the health risks of bathing in water contaminated with sewage, and the environmental effects of sewage discharges on fish, flora and fauna in the sea.

Line To Take - In 1988, 67% of our bathing waters complied with the EC directive. We have an investment programme of £1.4 billion to bring our bathing waters up to the directive's standards within the next 10 years. We are concerned about risks to health, but medical advice is that there is a negligible risk of contracting a serious illness from bathing around our coasts. We are also concerned about the potential effect of sewage discharges on the marine environment. The main problem here is dangerous substances, and the way to tackle these is through controls at source, as we propose in the Environmental Protection Bill, rather than relying on sewage treatment works.

Inland Sewage Discharges - FoE have orchestrated a campaign against the granting of temporary relaxations of consent standards to substandard sewage treatment works where improvements are planned as part of an accelerated investment programme announced in December 1988, and costing around £1 billion.

Line To Take - The campaign appears to fail to recognise the scale of the improvement programme which is underway. The 1985 River Quality survey showed a slight net decline in quality; the most recent data show that an improving trend has been resumed. But we are not complacent about the need to protect the water environment. That is why we have set up the National Rivers Authority, and why the investment programme to improve sewage treatment works has a value of around £1 billion.



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Caroline Slocock
Private Secretary to
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30 November 1989

Dear Caroline

MEETING WITH JONATHON PORRITT, 1 DECEMBER 1989

The Prime Minister is to see Mr Porritt on 1 December. My Secretary of State will attend the meeting as well.

I enclose with this letter briefing for this meeting, as follows:

- A: Government action at national level (essentially the main components of the forthcoming Environment Protection Bill)
- B: Government action at international level (essentially climate issues and tropical forests)
- C: the likely main theme of next year's Environment White Paper
- D: short defensive briefing notes on possible concerns Mr Porritt may raise.

Mr Porritt's desire for a meeting at this time may well be principally inspired by his interest in seeing a fundamental shift in the organisation of Government to reflect environmental concerns. The prospect of next year's White Paper will have encouraged that interest. FoE's thinking is summarised in the paragraph on the "greening of Government" in section D of the enclosed briefing.

In your letter of 6 November, you also raised the question of Mr Porritt's possible involvement in the proposed campaign to clean up Britain - the Clean Nineties campaign - which is being organised by the Tidy Britain Group (TBG). Neither we nor TBG would have any objection to the suggestion that Mr Porritt should discuss with TBG how FoE might become involved. However, FoE's stance on the litter problem - that the issue is one of reducing litter at source and promoting recycling - may fit awkwardly with the main thrust of the TBG campaign. Mr Porritt is of course shortly to be succeeded at FoE by Mr David Gee, and this may increase the political element in FoE's approach, which could also be at odds with TBG's essentially apolitical approach.

As FoE have a good track record on recycling, and the Government is mounting a new initiative, it might be more appropriate for the Prime Minister to encourage FoE to collaborate with industry, local authorities and Government on post-consumer recycling of domestic waste. Several local authorities are interested in following the Sheffield project in which FoE are participating. More details of that project are given on the first page of the enclosed briefing.

*Yours sincerely,
Roger Bright*

R BRIGHT
Private Secretary

MISS SLOCOCK

3 November 1989

BF for papers
for Porritt
meeting.

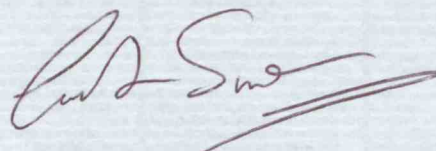
JONATHON PORRITT

Jonathon Porritt is still director of Friends of the Earth. His departure has been delayed from December of this year until June 1990. As you will see from the attached press cutting, the new director designate is David Gee. He is currently working more or less full time in FOE as Jonathon Porritt spends more and more time developing his career in television.

DOE tell me that FOE have been much involved in recycling recently. They are organising a recycling city project in Sheffield funded by DOE.

This does not mean they have abandoned their campaigning activities, to which Jonathon Porritt has devoted much time. They are consistently critical of water standards, often with justification. They remain something of a thorn in the DOE's side, but this has not prevented the development of a reasonably good working relationship.

I am going to see Jonathon Porritt on 14 November. I should then be able to let you have a fuller brief for his meeting with the Prime Minister on 1 December.



CAROLYN SINCLAIR

criticism

By Thomson Prentice and Sam Kiley

Professor Sir Mark Richmond, vice chancellor of Manchester University, is one of Britain's leading microbiologists.

He is an expert in salmonella and other bacteria and has investigated the resistance that some bacteria develop against antibiotics. He was professor of bacteriology at Bristol University between 1968 and 1981 and was a member of the board of the public health laboratory service for 10 years until 1985.

"He is extremely well qualified to chair a committee which is looking at the bacterial contamination of food," a senior microbiologist who has worked with him said yesterday.

Sir Mark, chairman the Committee of Vice Chancellors and Principals, has been an outspoken critic of the Government's policies for higher education and won key concessions on the issue of academic freedom during the passage of the Education Reform Act 1988.

He has been widely credited with forging the committee into a cohesive political pressure group which is currently involved in negotiations with the Department of Education and Science for extra funds to finance a pay rise for academics.

Experts agree that as head of the Government's new committee on food hygiene and production he is likely to take a "hard headed and independent view" of problems given his commitment to the right of academics to publish their work free from political pressures.

Sir Mark is the "independent and external" chairman which the Government said earlier this month would head the new committee. His key task will be to lead investigations into the scientific basis of the current bacterial contamination of foods.

This will involve examining every link in the food chain, from production to marketing. Senior health advisers, including the Government's chief medical officer, Sir Donald Acheson, believe that there are hygiene problems at every stage which need to be tackled.

Sir Mark is believed to have maintained close contacts with microbiologists and other scientists within the public health laboratory service.

Sir Mark said last night that his appointment required him to take on a "challenging and daunting task".

During the passage of the Education Act he led the

eggs were withdrawn from sale in the store for an hour while the rest were checked. More than 100 other stores in the region made checks and 1,000 Co-op milkmen were subjected to random checks of their egg stocks.

The new telephone "hotline" (freephone 0800 282 407) set up by Asda, Gateway, Morrisons, Sainsbury, Safeway and Tesco, amid fears over salmonella and listeria, will be manned by a panel led by Professor Will Waites, head of the Department of Applied Biochemistry and Food Science at Nottingham University's agricultural school.

their campaign to take advantage of heightened public awareness of food risks. Less than two months ago the ALF claimed responsibility for a spate of fire bomb attacks on fur trade outlets in London and other cities, and the organization is feared to be on a new wave of militancy.

Mr Tom Meffen, assistant chief constable of the West Midlands, said yesterday: "We are taking the matter seriously. There was a similar case in Coventry involving confectionery three years ago and we have had the same thing involving bread."

Taking on green mantle



Mr David Gee, who is to be the new director of Friends of the Earth, in Somerset yesterday where he is to give evidence for the environmental group at the Hinkley Point power station public inquiry today. He will join as campaign co-ordinator in May, and will early next year succeed Mr Jonathon Porritt,

the present director, who is leaving to work in television. Mr Gee, aged 41, is a member of the Labour Party and a consultant to Friends of the Earth and Greenpeace. He is a prominent trade unionist and authority on occupational hazards.

Richmond by-election

Poll satisfaction for Owen

By Nicholas Wood, Political Correspondent

Dr David Owen predicted yesterday that SLD MPs will force Mr Paddy Ashdown to abandon his strategy of seeking to smash the SDP.

The SDP leader's statement came after a Survey Research Associates opinion poll showing the Conservatives profiting from the bitter struggle between the two centre parties in the in the Richmond by-election. Dr Owen said that

would be a potent force in persuading Mr Ashdown to embrace electoral pacts once the North Yorkshire result had been declared on Friday.

Mr Ashdown said that Dr Owen was becoming over-excited with his talk of candidates standing down in favour of their rivals. The last two days of a by-election campaign were not the time to talk about such "frivolous

third since the general election because of public concern about controversial government policies such as reform of the health service.

He said: "If there is anything poetic in this opinion poll, it is that those who tried to live by opinion surveys now look as if they are about to die by opinion surveys."

Mr Frank Robson, the Lab-

st night: "The eggs in east were marked sufficiently to the person who bought them that they were poisoned."
overtry, two cartons of marked were found by a woman shopping at the Central Midland Co-Op store on Monday.
activists claim they have found eggs in several east London shops but would not say why.
and Yard said last night: "We are investigating an incident in that eggs discovered last

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