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Ref. A086/1446

PRIME MINISTER

Cabinet: Community Affairs

The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary will report on the Foreign Affairs Council on 12 May at which the United Kingdom was represented by the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Mrs Chalker. The Council put into effect until 31 May, subject to review, the Community import ban on specified foodstuffs from seven countries of Eastern Europe in the wake of the Chernobyl disaster (there has, of course, been a de facto ban by national or administrative action since the disaster). Mrs Chalker obtained an unequivocal statement from the Federal Republic was applying and would continue to apply its own very rigorous radiation standards to any produce from a German Democratic Republic, so that this is not a loophole. On intra-Community trade the Council agreed that national safety standards for potentially harmful foodstuffs would apply both for domestic produce and to imports from elsewhere in the Community. This suits us, as we shall simply be applying our own standards. The Council also recognised that it would need later to discuss better procedures for similar emergencies in the future, better co-ordination of Community safety standards and action in the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). The Council also had a general debate on the forthcoming GATT Round. Mrs Chalker urged that the Community should complete its internal discussions and get its act together no later than next month's Foreign Affairs Council. The Community should show its readiness to join constructively in the Round by not imposing preconditions. There was considerable support for this view and the French did not create any new difficulties. At the instigation of Greece and Italy there was another debate on the budgetary situation, at the end of which the Presidency was able



usefully to conclude that there was no possibility of an increase in the 1.4 per cent VAT limit in 1986 or 1987 and that all delegations should accept this. On the International Natural Rubber Agreement Mrs Chalker set out our tough interpretation of the mandate, including the conditions which we have put forward and the unequivocal requirement that the buffer stock manager must not exceed his authority and that, if he did, there would be no liability on member states. This is now being reflected in the discussions in Geneva, which are running into satisfactorily great difficulties.

2. The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland is likely to mention a case (Johnston v the Chief Constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary) on which judgment will be given in the European Court of Justice on 15 May. As a result of his policy that women members of the RUC and its Reserve should not carry firearms, the Chief Constable of the RUC was unable to offer Mrs Johnston a further contract of full time employment when the contract under which she had been serving in the Reserve ended in 1980. Mrs Johnston complained that this amounted to unlawful discrimination against her. The case was sent to the European Court of Justice by the Belfast Industrial Tribunal. The Court seems likely to refer back to the Tribunal the question of discrimination but at the same time to state that the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland should not use his power to overrule provisions of the sex discrimination legislation on grounds of national security and public safety without giving reasons. This could have wider implications. We have not yet seen the text of the judgment but it will clearly need to be studied with care.

3. The Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food may refer to his recent discussion with Herr Kiechle, the Federal German Minister of Agriculture.

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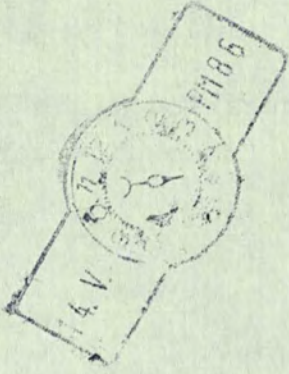


4. There is an informal meeting of Education Ministers on 16 and 17 May. The European Parliament is in session until 16 May.

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ROBERT ARMSTRONG

14 May 1986



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