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17 Grosvenor Place

SWIX 7HR

23 March 1979

Secretary
Department of Foreign Affairs
Attention: Mr Patrick Walsh

cc Mr. Belligan
Mr. O'Connell
Mr. Ciew
Mr. Callaghan *Mr. P...*

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I wish to report that I recently had conversations with Chris Patten and Alfred Sherman. Patten is the Director of the Conservative Research Department and is a prospective Conservative candidate for Bath. The present holder of the seat, Sir Edward Browne, Conservative, has a majority of a little over 2,000 and is retiring at the end of this Parliamentary session. Patten, while not complacent, feels that he has a good chance of being elected. He has a house in the constituency and spends all his week-ends there. He is, incidentally, a Catholic with an Irish background of some generations back. Sherman, who is a part-time contributor to the Daily Telegraph, is Director of the Centre for Policy Studies, which co-ordinates a good deal of Conservative thinking and which receives a great deal of support from Sir Keith Joseph. The following points which arose in these conversations may be of interest to the Department:

1. Both Patten and Sherman considers that Airey Neave will be Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if the Conservatives form the next Government. This is a view which is also shared by Peter Utley of the Daily Telegraph. Neither of them could give any indication as to who would serve with Neave in Northern Ireland, though Sherman thought it quite possible that John Biggs-Davison could take the number two job in Northern Ireland. It will be recalled that Biggs-Davison held this Shadow position until he broke party ranks over Rhodesia last November.

2. Patten stressed that Conservative policy on Northern Ireland, were they to form a Government, would not necessarily be the same as their policies while in opposition. He added that Neave has purposely said little about Northern Ireland so as to enable him to have as free a hand as possible when he obtains power. Similar sentiments have been expressed in the past by,

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for example, Alistair Cooke and have been reported to the Department at the time. Patten said that the section on Northern Ireland in the Conservative manifesto has been agreed. He would not elaborate on it except to say that it contained nothing which would come as a surprise to us.

3. Patten said that those Conservatives who have been in contact recently with British Army Intelligence in Northern Ireland, for example, with those operating in Derry, have been told that it is the army's view that the Provisionals are now operating in small groups and that these groups are based in the South and cross the border for a few days when carrying out operations.

4. Patten stressed that the speech given by John Nott, Opposition Spokesman on Trade, on the 14th March, in which he said that Britain's contribution to the Community budget should be reduced and that the Common Agricultural Policy should be over-hauled, did not represent Conservative policy thinking. Patten felt that changes were desired in both these areas but that these questions needed to be put into perspective. In this connection, he mentioned as did Francis Pim, the Opposition Spokesman on Foreign Affairs, in his speech on the 20th March, that the amount which Britain pays to the Community is less than it gives away in development aid. It was Sherman's view that Nott, whom he pointed out, had been opposed to British membership of the European Monetary System, did not represent official party views.

5. Both Patten and Sherman were of the view that the recent statements by the Prime Minister and by other Government Ministers criticising the Community were designed to attract support for Labour in the coming general election. Patten thought that these views would play an important role in the Labour Party campaign. It was an issue he said on which the Labour Party could not be out-maneuvred by the Conservatives and he did not think that the Conservatives would try to do so.

6. Patten said that Conservative policy towards Europe had been clearly and carefully enunciated by Mrs Thatcher in Brussels last year. Sherman, who informed me that he had edited Mrs Thatcher's Brussels speech, said that she would make another important contribution shortly in a speech to be given in West Germany. Both of them stressed that the Conservative views on the role which the EEC could play in defence affairs should not be over-emphasised. The basic Conservative view in this matter according to Patten is that they would wish to have discussion of defence matters, particularly

announcements
the European industry, in the Nine context. They would not, however, he stressed, wish to have a situation in which U.S. mistrust of what might be happening in the Nine could lead to a weakening of NATO.

7. Patten thought that the issues raised for the Conservative Party by direct elections to the European Parliament had not yet been sufficiently considered in the Conservative Party. He felt that direct elections will result in major changes for the Parties in Britain though he added that this would come about gradually. He said that no real thought had been given as to how Conservative members of the European Parliament would be controlled and as to what type of apparatus might be set up for the purpose of co-ordinating the policies of the Conservative European MP's with Westminster MP's. The nature of the relationship of the Conservative European MP's leader with the leader of the Party also required clarification.

I also understand that the draft passage on Northern Ireland in the Labour manifesto has now been drafted by Dick Barry of the Transport House Research Department. I hope to be in contact with Barry about this when he returns to London. The manifesto has not yet been cleared by the National Executive Committee of the Party.

D. O'Ceallaigh

Daithi O'Ceallaigh
Press and Information Officer

c.c. Mr Hugh Swift
Anglo-Irish Division