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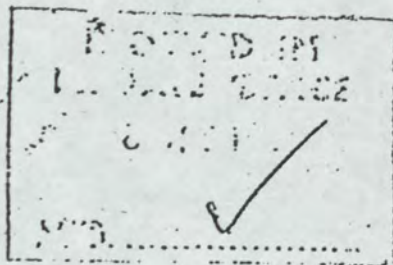
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The Rt Hon Neil Marten MP
Minister for Overseas Development
Foreign and Commonwealth
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7 December 1981



D. Nest,

ODA GRANT TO THE TUC

Douglas Hurd wrote to me on 16 October about the future of your grant to the TUC.

I am now considering with Keith Joseph the grant which my Department and his jointly provide to the TUC for trade union education and training in the UK. My own view is that we should continue that grant at a slightly reduced level for 1982/83, and review the position again in a year's time.

Whatever decision is reached on the main TUC grant, however, I believe that there are similar strong reasons for continuing the ODA grant for the TUC's overseas activities. While it is not for me to pronounce on the developmental or political value of this grant, I am in no doubt about the enormous symbolic importance which the TUC attach to it. I have already mentioned in an earlier letter that Len Murray went out of his way to raise the issue with me personally, and the decision which we take will directly affect both my relations with him and the TUC and the public presentation of our policy.

For these reasons I very much hope that you can find the money to continue this grant to the TUC. I recognise the many other claims on the aid programme next year, and I would be content if the



amount of the grant were to be reduced to, say, £50,000 if this would help. I am confident that such a reduction could be justified to the TUC and would not prejudice the aims I have set out above in order to give no chance to the TUC to substantiate their ill-founded charges of anti union bias on our part (which so far have gained no public credence) and to bring pressure upon them to take up the funds available for ballots.

J. Norman



Prime Minister ²
A small aid item
which might cause
disproportionate
publicity

Treasury Chambers, Parliament Street, SW1P 3AG

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MP 2/11
Overseas
Ad

1 December 1980

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2. PA
MP 3/11

Dear Neil,

ODA GRANT TO THE TRADES UNION CONGRESS

Your letter of 20 November 1980 asked for my agreement to a renewal of the ODA grant to the TUC for training of trades unionists from developing countries.

You do not feel that there is a very strong developmental case for this expenditure but you are prepared to include it in the aid programme because it promotes better relations between ourselves and the TUC. I share your scepticism about the developmental value. I understand that the grant has in the past been the butt of hostile questions from government supporters in Parliament. We may face such criticism again, particularly in view of the other worthwhile programmes we are obliged to forego.

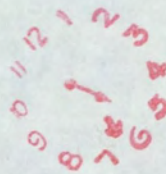
But if you accommodate this grant from savings in existing programmes, and remain convinced that it is an appropriate use of aid funds, then I would not wish to quibble over a comparatively trivial amount. But can steps be taken to bring it to an end after 1981-82?

Copies of this letter go to Jim Prior, Peter Carrington and the Prime Minister.

John Biffen

JOHN BIFFEN

- 1 DEC 1980



Spoken Mr Biffen's
office Reply on its way.

BLU 3/12

P.O. d/c
J. Bunn

20 November 1980

1/12

I understand that your officials have questioned a proposal that we should extend, on a reduced scale, our grant to the Trades Union Congress. The amount of money involved is small but its political significance perhaps disproportionately large. I should be grateful if you could look at this.

The grant began with our predecessors in 1977. The reasons for considering it a good use of aid funds were set out at some length in the correspondence between Departments at that time. They were briefly that the development of trade unionism is an important aspect of economic and social development in developing countries, in particular as a means of ensuring improvements in the incomes and working conditions of the poorer sections of the working population. Without trades unions it is very difficult in all developing countries, the poorest as well as the better off, to get governments to make essential improvements in such questions as safety at work, child labour, hours of work, as well as levels of income. There is a general interest in such improvements being made. The development of trades unionism is directly related to the Programme of Action adopted at the 1976 World Employment Conference, to which Britain subscribed.

The grant to the TUC was initiated to help forward such processes. In some respects this is a matter of access: many governments in developing countries are not particularly well-disposed towards free trade unions in their own countries, and do not give priority in our government-to-government programmes, for instance in training, to such needs as their trades unions have. TUC may be able to get through and have been doing so. Also some trades unions here have excellent training facilities and the capacity to send people overseas to run training courses in developing countries. That is pretty much the "development" case.

For my own part I had the greatest doubts as to whether, in the light of the constraints on the aid programme and the other worthwhile things I was having to do without, this grant rated a

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high enough priority. Len Murray himself however has taken the question up and Jim Prior particularly wishes the grant to continue so as not to add upsets to relations with the TUC at this time. Peter Carrington and I came to the conclusion that the overriding argument was the significance that the grant and its future had assumed in our general relations with the TUC. That would not of itself have justified the use of aid funds but we felt, and feel, that we can justify the small sum on developmental grounds.

I hope in the light of this - among your many much larger problems - you can agree to the continuation of this grant for the two years 1980/81 and 1981/82, and to the provision of £75,000 for 1980/81.

I am sending copies of this letter to Jim Prior and to Peter Carrington.

NEIL MARTEN

The Rt Hon John Biffen MP