

SUBJECT
cc Master.



10 DOWNING STREET

29 October 1985

From the Private Secretary

Dear Len,

CHOGM: GROUP OF EMINENT PERSONS

The Prime Minister had a brief discussion this morning with the Foreign Secretary on whom we should nominate to the Commonwealth's Group of Eminent Persons on South Africa. The Prime Minister's continuing strong preference was that the Foreign Secretary himself should take it on. It was clear to her that several other members of the Group and Ramphal would not want it to succeed. We must put ourselves in a position where the blame for failure, if that was the outcome, was clearly attributed to them. We could only do so if we ourselves demonstrably tried to make a success of it. This would require the Foreign Secretary's authority and prestige. The Foreign Secretary explained the reasons why he hesitated, principally the extent to which the government would be exposed in the event of failure.

The Foreign Secretary reported that he had asked Lord Carrington whether he would accept nomination. But he had declined. A number of further names were canvassed in discussion but put aside for one reason or another. It was agreed however that the Foreign Secretary should approach Lord Barber and invite him to accept nomination. If he also declined the matter would need to be discussed again between the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary, with the Lord President and the Chief Whip, before a final decision was reached.

Yours sincerely
Charles Powell
Charles Powell

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Foreign and Commonwealth Office

LP