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FOREIGN SECRETARY

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PUBLIC EXPENDITURE WHITE PAPER: NET CONTRIBUTIONS TO COMMUNITY INSTITUTIONS

I have been thinking about your latest - <sup>13.1.84</sup> undated - minute on whether the White Paper figures should assume that the disputed £42 million balance of our 1982 risk-sharing money will be paid by 31 March 1984.

2. I take your point that the £42 million is not subject to the same 31 March deadline as our 1983 refunds. But in practice the two issues have frequently been linked (e.g. in the Prime Minister's Channel 4 interview). And, if we broke the link, we might well be asked whether the £42 million had in practice been written off, for the impression conveyed would be that we had dropped our claim. That would of course be quite wrong.

3. Nevertheless I agree that we don't have to go out of our way to signal 'a formal public assumption' of payment by 31 March. I have therefore decided that the simplest way of getting round the problem is to leave the White Paper figures unchanged but to omit all reference to the £42 million in the text. I hope that you regard that as a satisfactory compromise - though we shall, of course, have to be prepared to say, if asked, that the figures do in fact assume payment by 31 March.

4. Copies of this minute go to the Prime Minister and Sir Robert Armstrong.

*N.L.*

(N.L.)  
24 January 1984

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