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1. MRY LASKEY
 2. MR. MOULTON
 3. FILE
- B/F 10/10/67

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NOTE FOR THE RECORD

Counter Subversion Committee

I went over to discuss this with Sir John Nicholls on Friday, 7th October and spoke to him on the following lines.

I said that in the course of our periodic look at Cabinet Committees we had considered the position of the Counter Subversion Committee. This had prompted one or two thoughts which I wished to discuss with him. I started from the point that this seemed to me a Committee which was in certain respects more in the nature of an interdepartmental committee for which one particular Department was responsible (of which there are many examples in Whitehall) than a Cabinet Committee. I went on to explain that by this I meant that the Committee was heavily weighted on the "consumer" side i.e. the Departments which were interested in doing counter subversion were represented in considerable number, but the other side of Whitehall e.g. the Treasury and the Department of Economic Affairs, were not represented at all. If we were to look at this Committee as one which should reach conclusions as a true Cabinet-type committee, then there would I suggest be a case for reducing the representation of the oversea Departments, and particularly the Foreign Office, and for putting on representatives of the Economic Departments. I recognised, however, that this might not be appropriate to the purposes of the Committee and I should be glad of Sir John's views.

Sir John Nicholls said that he quite recognised the points that I was making, that the Committee was admittedly a "consumer interest" committee and that the discussions with the Treasury and other Departments concerned about expenditure on counter subversion all took place after the Committee had met and in the light of its discussion. His own view was that there was advantage in this. The Committee served a very useful purpose in enabling the Departments concerned with doing counter subversion to discuss what was necessary on this basis, and, as it were, to clear their minds before putting a case to the Treasury. It would not be nearly so easy for them to do this at the same time as discussion in a committee meeting with the Treasury and DEA on whether or not such expenditure could be afforded.

I then asked whether in this case it might not be better for the Committee to be run as a Foreign Office committee, but Sir John said that the change

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some little while ago by which we had formally taken it over had in his view helped the Committee by giving it some extra prestige and standing and he hoped very much that we would accept its continuance as it was.

I told Sir John Nicholls that in the light of what he said I would not press further on the points I had made and that we would accept the continuance of the Committee on its present basis.

I should add, for the record, that I am not wholly convinced by the case in that I think there is rather a dangerous tendency for the Counter Subversion Committee to propagate on an interdepartmental basis in Whitehall a view about counter subversion which is (ex hypothesi on the basis of what Sir John Nicholls said) biased in favour of the "counter subversionists". Nevertheless, the considerations on the other side are in my view not substantial enough to justify our running counter to those who carry the main responsibility for this particular work.

I think the best we can do is to bring this up in a year's time to consider whether it is worth while consulting Sir John Nicholls' successor and seeing if he takes the same view.

T.R.

(P. ROGERS)

10th October, 1966

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