

(iv) RTE Broadcasting into Northern Ireland (Defensive)

- Hope technical problems can be overcome: Dept of National Heritage in touch with relevant Irish officials.

EU Issues

(i) IGC

Presidency Handling

- Irish Presidency is handling IGC well; on course to produce draft Treaty text for Dublin II. Very much support this approach.

Dublin I

- Presidency plan an informal brainstorming principally on the IGC, without conclusions. Sensible approach: will make UK priorities clear.

UK Isolated?

- The UK is very much at the centre of discussion. We have or will be tabling a number of proposals - including:

- practical improvements to CFSP machinery;
- subsidiarity;
- improvements to scope and objectives of third pillar;
- animal welfare;
- quality of legislation;
- quota-hopping

- On many of the big issues of the IGC the UK is party to the majority view. In others, we are in minority. But this is far from the media caricature of fourteen to one.

- (if raised) Non-cooperation policy has not affected relationship with our partners. It was an exceptional response to an exceptional problem and is now behind us.

IGC Threatens Irish Neutrality?

- Some of the proposals others have put forward on defence are not grounded in political and defence reality. By forcing the EU and WEU together they could change the status of neutrals.

- But UK proposals carefully considered to allow EU and WEU to work together, while allowing neutrals their place. This is real flexibility and sensitivity in action - and it preserves NATO as the cornerstone of European defence.

(ii) EMU is the world leader in measures to tackle this form of crime. We took a leading role at the Conference in

- As Ecofin Informal in Dublin demonstrated last weekend governments are working hard to make sure that the preparations for EMU are all in place, to permit a 1 January 1999 start date.

- Importance of UK remaining at centre of preparations for EMU. It would be a dereliction of responsibility not to be involved.

(iv) EMU

- It's in our interests for EMU to work whether we are in or out. But as we have consistently said, Britain will only ever take part in a single currency if it is in our national interest to do so, given the circumstances at the time.

Will Member States meet convergence criteria in time for 1999?

- As budgets being unveiled around the EU reveal, considerable and in some cases painful efforts will be needed if countries are to meet the convergence criteria in time.

- We shall see whether the start-date itself remains realistic. It is in any case clear that we are heading for an EMU of ins and outs.

(iii) Third Pillar

Drugs

- We fully support the priority placed by the Irish Presidency Presidency on action against drugs and we are working closely with the Presidency to ensure that there are concrete results by the Dublin European Council in December.

Child Abuse

- We will be consulting further with the Commission on

- The UK is the world leader in measures to tackle this form of crime. We took a leading role at the Conference in Stockholm last month and are showing the way by introducing new legislation to enable us to prosecute "sex tourists".

- [if raised] Nonsense to say the UK is blocking progress in the EU. We fully support action by the Union and are in active discussion with our partners over new instruments to improve cooperation between police and judicial authorities.

(iv) BSE

- Inflation is now 2.1%, the best performance for almost half

- We remain committed to taking decisions on the basis of public health and objective scientific criteria, as agreed at Florence. However the new scientific evidence means that the various culling options available need to be reassessed. This is fully in the spirit of Florence.

- There are two important new scientific findings: the epidemiological analysis by a team of Oxford scientists that suggests a more effective means of targetting the cull and shows that BSE will in any case virtually die out by 2001;

and the preliminary results of the government's own experiment on maternal transmission. The implications of both of these need to be studied.

- Until there is greater scientific clarity, we do not believe it makes sense to proceed with the selective cull. But we have not ruled out any particular culling strategy. We will continue to work with the Commission and the EU Scientific Committees on this as we develop our thinking.

- There are no public health implications in delaying the cull as these are animals that would not in any case enter the food chain.

- We will be consulting further with the Commission on proposals for animals from certified and other herds which have had no contact with BSE.

UK Economy

- The recent IMF Article IV mission concluded that UK economic performance is "enviable". Fifth year of sustained growth. Strongest recovery since 1992 of any major EU economy. Exports, business investment and consumer expenditure are all growing.

- Inflation is now 2.1%, the best performance for almost half a century. Mortgage rates to their lowest for 30 years.

- Employment has grown substantially during this recovery: up 700,000 since end-1992. Unemployment (7.5%) is at its lowest level for over 5 years.

- The climate for investment has seldom been better. Business investment is up 7% on a year earlier and total investment is up 2.2%. The UK remains the No 1 destination for inward investment into the EU.

- Economic prospects are good. The OECD forecasts UK will grow faster than any other major EU economy this year and next.

International Issues

(i) Iraq

- Saddam remains threat to Iraqi people and regional security; demonstrated by attack on Irbil. Clear flouting of SCR 688. Extension of southern No-Fly Zone improved monitoring of SCR 688. Need to protect coalition aircraft; inherent right of self-defence.

- Threat of Kurdish refugee problem diminished; UNHCR doing what necessary. We contribute. Condemn Saddam's threats against local employees of humanitarian organisations. KDP have given assurances about their safety and security; expect them to honour this.

- Iraq's weapons of mass destruction (WMD) capability is a threat. Continues to obstruct UNSCOM; trying to retain WMD; dominate region.

- Saddam must comply with all Security Council Resolutions. Far from doing so; must maintain pressure on him to comply.

- Sadly, Saddam's policies prolong suffering of Iraqi people. Hope SCR 986 (food for oil) will be implemented soon.