

PRIME MINISTERArab-British Chamber of Commerce (ABCC)

The Arab-British Chamber of Commerce have invited you to be principal guest at the official opening of their new premises in the autumn (Flag A). Mr. Tebbit recognises that the ABCC is important to our commercial interests but thinks that an even-handed approach to Arab and Jewish organisations would be satisfied by the attendance of the Minister for Trade (Flag B).

Sir Geoffrey Howe however thinks you should accept in order to maintain balance (not least with your recent agreement to become Chairman of the North London Conservative Friends of Israel) (Flag C).

Having had dealings with the ABCC some years ago I find it hard to believe that it is really a body worthy of Prime Ministerial attention. *The association with the Boycott is unfortunate.*

Agree to turn down the invitation?

CDD

Regret  
not.

22 June 1984





PLF SAHABZ  
cc: FCO  
DTI  
SPC

10 DOWNING STREET

*From the Private Secretary*

12 July, 1984

The Prime Minister has asked me to thank you most warmly for the invitation, conveyed in your letter of 30 May, to attend the official opening of the Arab-British Chamber of Commerce. It was particularly considerate of you to leave the precise date to her choice.

The Prime Minister has reviewed her programme for the autumn and finds that she is already very heavily engaged indeed. In the circumstances, she feels that sadly she cannot accept your invitation. I understand, however, that the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry would be able to take up the invitation in her place, if this were agreeable to you. Might I suggest that you pursue this with his office.

C. D. POWELL

Sir Richard Beaumont, K.C.M.G., O.B.E.

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Secretary of State  
for Trade and Industry

DEPARTMENT OF TRADE AND INDUSTRY  
1-19 VICTORIA STREET  
LONDON SW1H 0ET

TELEPHONE DIRECT LINE 01-215  
SWITCHBOARD 01-215 7877

5422

12 July 1984

P F Ricketts Esq  
PS/Secretary of State for  
Foreign & Commonwealth Affairs  
Foreign & Commonwealth Office  
London SW1A 2AH

*Dear Peter*

ARAB-BRITISH CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

The Secretary of State has seen your letter dated 29 June 1984. In the light of Sir Geoffrey Howe's comments, my Secretary of State has agreed to attend the October opening of the new premises of the Arab-British Chamber of Commerce.

Perhaps the Prime Minister's reply to the invitation could incorporate a suggestion that the Chamber contacts this office to arrange a suitable date.

I am copying this letter to Charles Powell at No 10.

*Yours ever*  
*Edward Blades*

EDWARD BLADES  
Private Secretary



Trade: New tariff barriers  $\beta_4$



CONFIDENTIAL

cc/k



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

Await reply  
from DTI  
CDP 29/6

29 June 1984

Dear Blades,

Arab/British Chamber of Commerce (ABCC)

The Prime Minister has considered the advice about the invitation from the Chairman of the ABCC to attend the opening of the Chamber's new premises in the autumn contained in my letter to Charles Powell of 21 June and yours of 15 June. She has decided not to accept the invitation and, subject to further comment from Sir Geoffrey Howe, to act on Mr Tebbit's recommendation that Mr Channon should attend in her place.

For the reasons given in my letter of 21 June, Sir Geoffrey Howe thinks it important that the Government should be represented on this occasion at Cabinet Minister level if at all possible. He therefore hopes that Mr Tebbit will be able to take this on. It is an important and delicate aspect of our established policy to maintain a balance in dealings with pro-Israel and pro-Arab bodies in this country. The Arabs and their supporters would certainly notice, and could well take offence, if the ABCC function were to be attended by a Minister of State, when the British-Israel Chamber (BICC) annual dinner (a routine event, unlike the ABCC function) on 4 June was attended by Mr Tebbit. If we do not treat the two bodies on an equal footing we risk unnecessary irritation in our dealings with sensitive Arab countries quick to find real or imagined causes of political bias towards Israel.

Sir Geoffrey considers that it would be best if Mr Tebbit were able to spare the time to attend this function. But if necessary he would be willing to try to attend himself if Mr Tebbit were unable to do so.

I am copying this letter to Charles Powell at No 10.

Your ever,

(P F Ricketts)  
Private Secretary

Pete Ricketts

E Blades Esq  
PS/Secretary of State  
Dept of Trade & Industry

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Trade: Non Tariff Barrier A4



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file



cc: Sir P. Craddock

10 DOWNING STREET

*From the Private Secretary*

25 June 1984

ARAB-BRITISH CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

The Prime Minister has considered the advice about the invitation from the Arab-British Chamber of Commerce contained in your letter of 21 June and Edward Blades's letter of 15 June. The Prime Minister has decided not to accept the invitation. I shall write to Sir Richard Beaumont to inform him of this. I propose to tell him that Mr. Channon would be pleased to attend the opening of the Chamber's new premises unless you wish to comment further on the question of representation.

Charles Powell

Peter Ricketts, Esq.,  
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.



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Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

21 June, 1984

*Dear Charles,*

Arab-British Chamber of Commerce (ABCC)

In your letter of 31 May you asked for advice on whether the Prime Minister should accept an invitation from the Chairman of ABCC to attend, as principal guest, the opening of the Chamber's new premises in the autumn.

The Trade and Industry Secretary has drawn attention to the important commercial role of the ABCC, and to the need to maintain a balance in government dealings with pro-Arab and pro-Israeli bodies in this country (Edward Blades' letter of 15 June to you). With these points in mind, Sir Geoffrey Howe considers that the Arabs and their supporters could take offence if the invitation to the Prime Minister to inaugurate the ABCC's new premises were to be taken up by the Minister of State for Trade, whereas Mr Tebbit himself attended the annual dinner of the British-Israel Chamber of Commerce on 4 June. The BICC dinner, unlike the ABCC function, is a routine event; and in trade terms the ABCC represents a much larger volume than the BICC.

Sir Geoffrey Howe believes that there is a case for according the ABCC the special gesture of Prime Ministerial attendance at the inauguration of their new premises. Following the Prime Minister's recent agreement to become Chairman of the North London Conservative Friends of Israel, and in view of Sir Geoffrey's planned visit to Israel at about the time of the ABCC function, such a gesture would serve to maintain the balance in our dealings with both sides. Sir Geoffrey Howe therefore hopes that the Prime Minister will be able to look favourably at this invitation, of which the date has been left completely open to suit her convenience.

I am copying this letter to Edward Blades (DTI).

*Yr ever,  
Peter Ricketts*

(P F Ricketts)  
Private Secretary

C D Powell Esq  
10 Downing Street

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Sir Richard BERNARD

8/6 C.R.'s



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GTN 215 .....  
(Switchboard) 215 7877

Secretary of State for Trade and Industry

16 June 1984

Charles Powell Esq  
Private Secretary to the  
Prime Minister  
10 Downing Street  
London SW1

*Awaiting FCO comments*  
*1. 18/6*  
*FCO. Reminded again 20/6.*  
*Checked again Key*  
*21/6, 22/6*  
*Just look at it soon*

*Dear Charles,*

ARAB-BRITISH CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Thank you for sending me a copy of John Coles' letter of 31 May to Peter Ricketts.

2 The Arab-British Chamber of Commerce is an important commercial representative body in the UK of the 21 member states of the Arab League which take around 10% of our total annual exports. It plays a key role in assisting British exporters to meet the documentary requirements of Arab countries operating their boycott against Israel, and in minimising trading difficulties. Additionally, in parallel with similar chambers in some other European countries, it acts as the voice of Arab exporters in connection with possible difficulties that may be caused by European trade policy. Accordingly the Chamber deserves recognition at a senior level.

3 There is, however, the risk that the Israelis might take offence. We have considered this matter and are satisfied that HMG has treated the Arabs and the Israelis equally well, and without bias. My Secretary of State addressed the annual dinner gathering of the British-Israel Chamber of Commerce on 4 June 1984 and it would be justifiable to accord a comparable privilege to the Arabs.

4 My Secretary of State is conscious, however, that on commercial grounds alone there is insufficient reason for the Prime Minister herself to accept the invitation. Accordingly, unless the FCO

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advise that there are good political grounds for her to attend, Mr Channon would be pleased to do so on her behalf.

5 I am sending a copy of this letter to Peter Ricketts at the FCO.

*Yours ever*

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'E. Blades', written in a cursive style.

EDWARD BLADES  
Private Secretary

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11 5 JUN 1984

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D 11 12 1  
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COMBINATION