

CONFIDENTIAL FILING

BBC TELEVISION PROGRAMMES ABOUT
THE PALACE OF WESTMINSTER

PARLIAMENT

APRIL 1981

Referred to	Date	Referred to	Date	Referred to	Date	Referred to	Date
13.4.81							
7.6.82							
16.7.81							
4.8.82.							
PREM 19/866							



10 DOWNING STREET

PRIME MINISTER

PALACE OF WESTMINSTER TV

You have arranged to see Sir Robin Cook to brief you about your room for this programme in your room at the House tomorrow (Thursday) at 12.15.

Gordon Shepherd from press office, who has been liaising with the BBC and D/Environment, will attend.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to be 'Gordon Shepherd'.

B Ingham
4.8.82

PRIME MINISTER

BBC TV SERIES ON PALACE OF WESTMINSTER

We are now gearing ourselves up for the filming of your contribution to this programme in your room at the House on Friday from 10.30am.

We shall be doing a recce with Christopher Jones (interviewer) and John Gau, producer, on Wednesday and will discuss with them the relevant parts of the enclosed brief prepared for you by the PSA.

As you will see from the brief your room is not richly endowed with mementoes of the 15 previous occupants. But the brief says it is due to your imagination that it has regained much that it has lost through the years (P. 10a).

In these circumstances, the programme may be fairly short on the history of the room but you can make it come alive with your thoughts about it and what you have done with it. That will be good TV and show you in a very favourable light. We shall come forward with a fresh brief after next Wednesday's run-through. But it might be useful to you now to recall the facts about the programme and the proposed approach to your contribution and line of questioning.

1. The Programme - a major series about the history, architecture and present day-to-day life of the Palace, approved by the Commons' Services Committee and Offices Committee of the Lords, the Speaker and Lord Chancellor. Many members of both Houses are co-operating in this long-term project.
2. Approach to your contribution - joining you in your office at the very hub of the Westminster system and seeing you at work; your telling the programme about your great predecessors who have occupied the same desk; showing the interviewer the furniture, pictures and other items of interest; your feelings for Westminster etc.

In more detail Christopher Jones may well ask about:

- (1) your feelings on facing the House at Question Time and for major debates;
- (2) how you prepare yourself for the Commons;

Please disregard note - other than being John's look - I have found the - let me know

Can I have a word with Robin Cook?

cc Mr Rickett
Mr Shepherd

the next one - a bit of the 'no idea' - rather round the subject - they are diff. all to think there is a bit of one - he also will know the history - over the window - N. the furniture - not

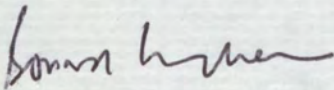
- (3) your memories of the great occasions, including your Private Members' Bill of 1959; defeating the Labour Government in 1979; the Falklands occasions.

I hope this is enough at this stage to stimulate your thoughts about your contribution.

One final point:

The producers in filming you at work in your room will want some life around you; I suggest the easiest way, without going in for fly-on-the-wall, is to have a mini-Questions team in the room with you and a manned office outside, which they would also film.

Content?



B. INGHAM

30 July 1982

July 28th 1982

Dear Prime Minister

BBC TV. August 6th

Here are some notes relating to your room in the Palace.

I have tried to cover everything that could be of interest.

Should you require further information on any aspect of the Palace or Parliament, either by letter or verbally, I am in touch with your Private Office.

With all good wishes for a successful broadcast

Yours sincerely

Robin Cooke



Go Gov Wings
Commands

W.R.

Wed 9.30
pm

Please let me

pm have enclosed

which you requested.

(Spare copy attached)

I am at home

from Friday

030584363

(Athelhampton Dorchester
Dorset)

R.C.

There had long been complaint of the foul-smelling over-crowded conditions endured by Parliament in the ill-assorted but historic buildings of the Old Palace.

The fire presented the long-awaited opportunity to provide a Nation, proud of its past and confident of its future, with a Parliament building that would be the envy of the world.

Charles Barry won the competition but the then hidden hand of Augustus Welby Pugin provided the rich detail which so impressed the Committee.

The New Palace at Westminster underwent many changes during design and construction: Every detail was not completed until 1870 and subtle changes have taken place ever since.

The disposition of rooms within the plan was subject to change as the building took shape. The subsequent occupants have changed with time.

There were originally more than a dozen substantial Residences in addition to Speaker's House. That of the Serjeant At Arms was of such a size that it could later be divided into two large flats for Serjeants, some offices and Room for the Leader of the Opposition, a Shadow Cabinet Room, and an additional State Room for Mr Speaker. Both Librarian and Clerk of the House had ample Residences facing New Palace Yard.

At first there were no rooms for individual Ministers.

It was not until Mr Balfour's time that the new Prime Minister's Room came into being. Previously it had been the Clerk of the House Drawing Room.

The photograph of 1903 shows the room as Mr Balfour had it. The walls are papered with the large Lion and Rose pattern by Pugin. The ceiling yet retained its coloured painted decoration. The brass chandeliers and all the furniture are by Pugin. What became known as the Prime Minister's Cabinet is prominent, facing the windows.

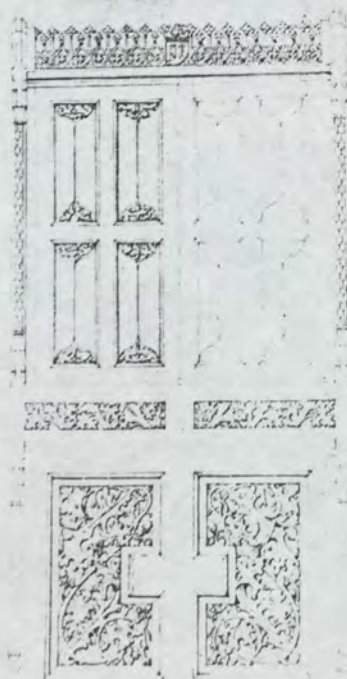
The most beautifully carved and subtly painted and gilded sideboard and frames to the pair of large mirrors give some idea of the richness of the decorated ceiling.



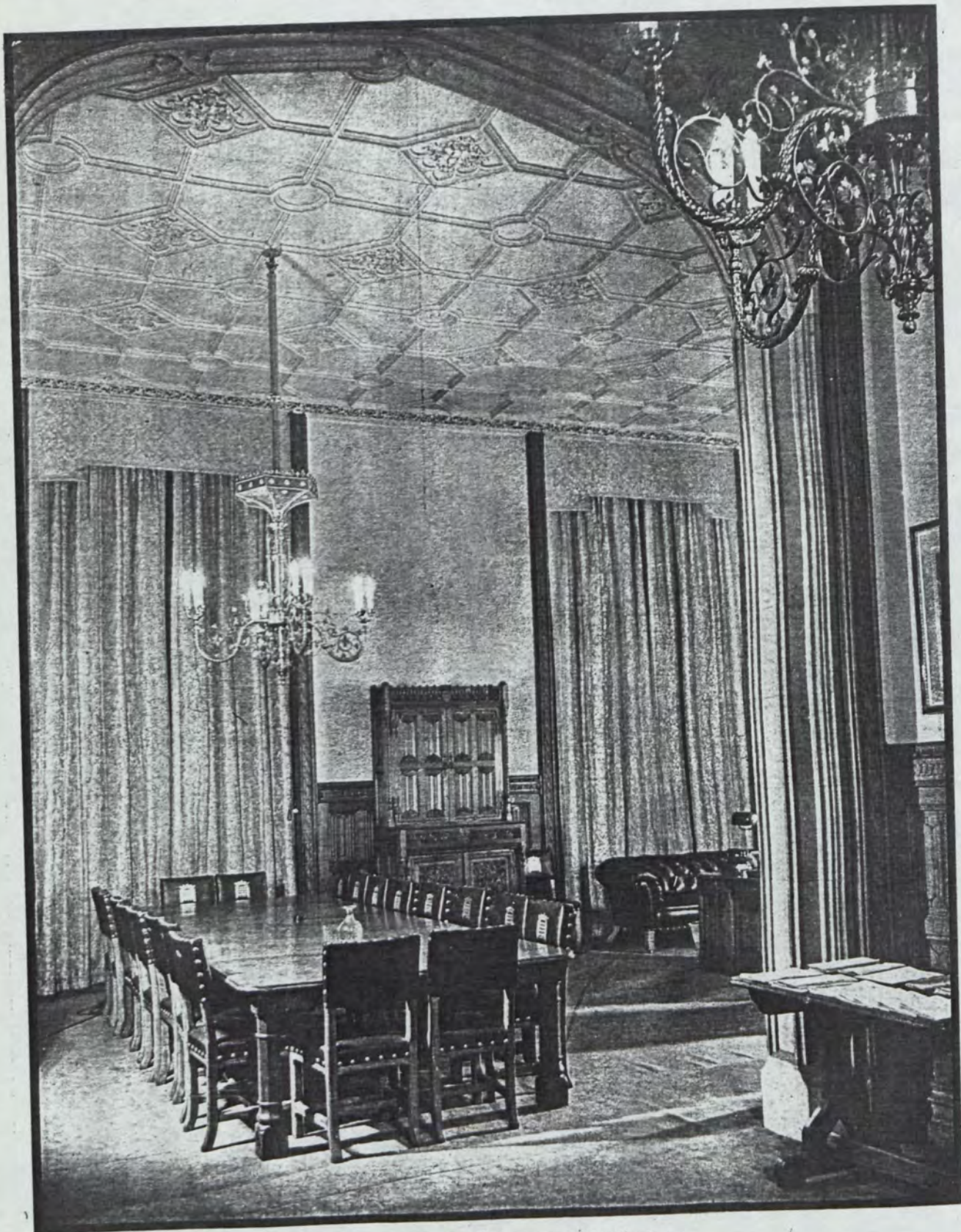
193. (above left) The House of Commons Library in 1868.

194. (above) New Palace at Westminster: The Prime Minister's Room in 1903. Note the characteristically Puginian wall paper, as well as the furniture.

195. (right) New Palace at Westminster: The Prime Minister's Cabinet. Drawing by R. Norman Shaw, c. 1852.



No further photographs are available until Winston Churchill's time. By now the Lions and Roses have vanished from the walls and the ceiling has been painted over white and up-lighters put on the chandeliers. The desk still faces the entrance door and the large table for meetings is end-on to the windows. Small portraits of Prime Ministers Peel and Lord Stanley (later Derby) flank the fireplace. ~~_____~~ ~~_____~~ ~~_____~~



The House of Commons: the Prime Minister's Room





(Left): *The Prime Minister's Room: the Desk End;*
 (below): *The Opposition Leader's Room*



(Left): *The House of Lords: the Moses Room. The Fresco, by J. R. Herbert, was completed in 1865*

Attlee was actually photographed in the room in 1947 showing Stanley's portrait.

At about this time the room suffered a savage injury, recovery from which has only just been effected by its present occupant. The fine stone arch was blocked by a partition and the airless area so cut off was filled with office machinery. Some of the original furniture had been dispersed. The famous Cabinet lay broken and discarded in a corner. It had been put there to hide a gaping hole left by a door removed elsewhere.

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THE PRIME MINISTER, THE RT. HON. CLEMENT ATLEE,
IN HIS ROOM IN THE HOUSE, MARCH 1947

be presented to His Majesty for His Majesty's Most Gracious Speech,"
to which Members who wish to express disapproval of the Government's
programme will, by means of an Amendment, endeavour to tack on "... but
regrets that the Gracious Speech contains no reference to ..." or "gives

It was in such a sorry state that the present Prime Minister inherited her historic surroundings.

Although determined to spend no money on herself, the Prime Minister was last year persuaded, in the interests of the staff, to move them into the adjoining lobby which enjoyed some natural light and air.

The removal of the partition has restored the essential quality of the room. It would be possible, when resources permit, to restore the walls and ceiling.

Meanwhile, the long-forgotten pair to the famous Cabinet has been brought home. For the first time in this century, the two stand together, restored, loved and admired.

The XVIII century walnut long-case clock by Richard Gregg of St James's Street is not part of the Palace furnishings. It is more akin to 10 Downing Street whence it may have come.

The Pugin brass andirons in the main fireplace had been taken elsewhere and were eventually retrieved.

It is high up over the main fireplace that the Norman French

is carved FAIS BIEN CRAIGNS RIEN

DO GOOD AND FEAR NOTHING

is, by happy accident, a most appropriate motto for the Prime Minister.

Opposite, the more sober Latin

DISCITE JUSTITIAM MONITI
LEARN JUSTICE BY ADMONITION

and over the small fireplace

VIVAT VICTORIA REGINA

Although so much history has been made within its walls, the Prime Minister's Room bears no visible traces of the fifteen men who were its previous occupants. It is due to the imagination of the present incumbent that it has regained much that it had lost through the years.

15~n

The greater part is still taken up with the massive oak Pugin (dining) table which, by means of some subtle engineering beneath, can be altered in size.

The more intimate area round the smaller fireplace enjoys a colourful heraldic window which commemorates the Clerk of the House who first lived here - Sir Denis le Marchant. His Arms, consisting of three owls, here appear alongside those of his wife, who had three martlets.

His motto was

ME MINERVA LUCET

MINERVA IS MY LIGHT

Wisdom

There are many other inscriptions in the Palace.

NISI DOMINUS

EXCEPT THE LORD BUILD THE HOUSE

runs round the floor of the central lobby.

The Librarian's window has WISDOM IS POWER.

A clerk's room has ASSIDUITY and

HE THAT HATH KNOWLEDGE SPARETH HIS WORDS is
carved over the original Members' Entrance.

The portraits of Nelson by Abbott and Wellington by Lawrence are the personal choice of the present Prime Minister (on loan from the National Portrait Gallery).

Nelson's victory at Trafalgar made the seas round Britain safe for more than a century. He died in the moment of victory because he insisted upon personally leading his men in the heat of the battle.

The Iron Duke was never a man to shrink from difficult decisions. He lived through much unpopularity upholding Authority against the forces of Revolution and died the best loved public figure of his age.

Even when Britain's enemies have been beaten in war, the parliamentary battle for the minds of men will ever continue.

The great Clock BIG BEN can be heard to strike in this room. Mr Speaker Morrison at the 1959 Centenary said that, like our parliamentary Constitution, it was born in controversy yet keeps excellent time and serves us admirably.

The chimes are designed to speak the message:

ALL THROUGH THIS HOUR

LORD BE MY GUIDE

THAT BY THY POWER

NO FOOT SHALL SLIDE

The Jubilee Fountain in New Palace Yard was the gift of Members of the House of Commons (the Prime Minister was herself a generous subscriber).

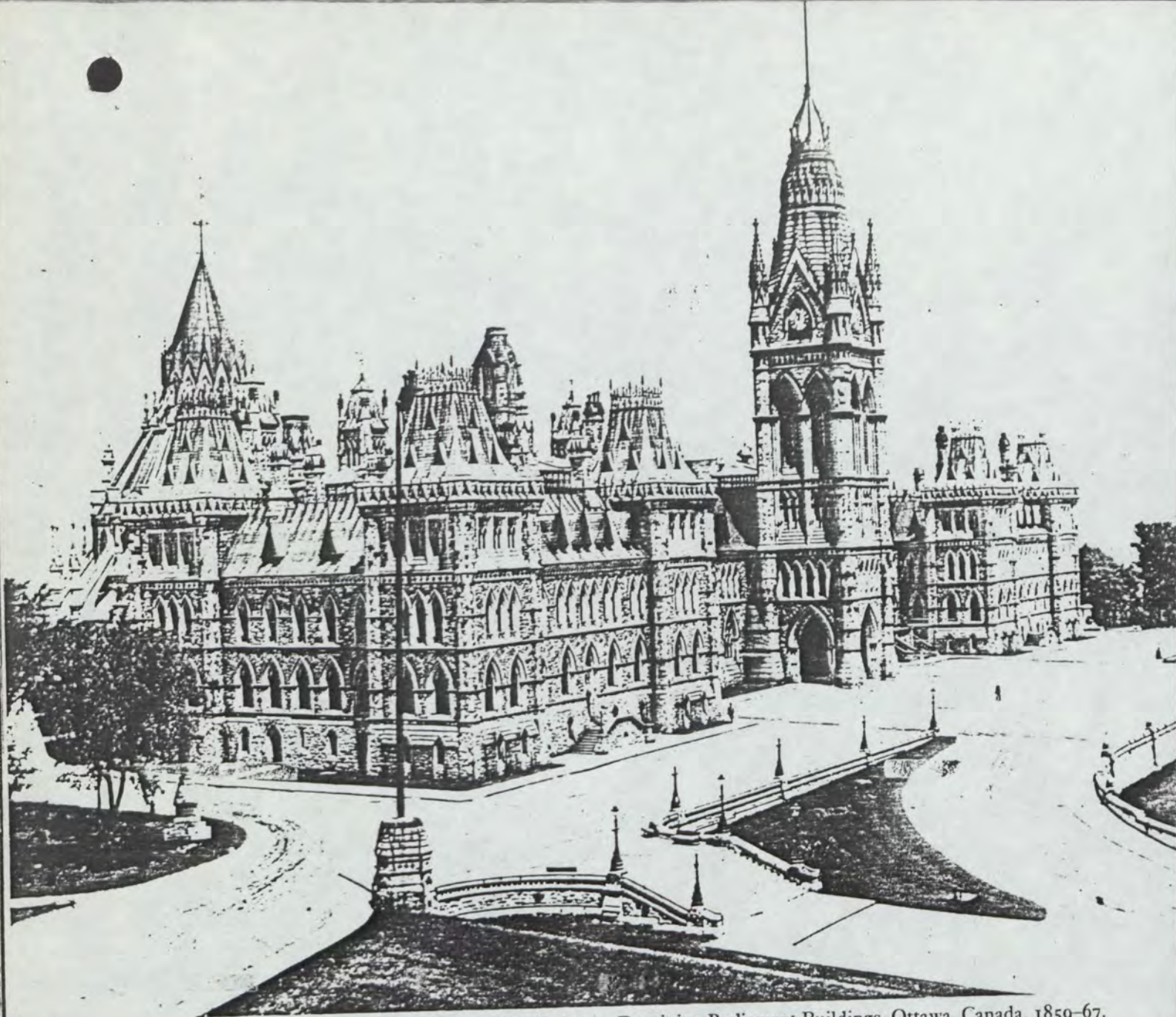
It is by Walenty Pytel and symbolises, by means of heraldic beasts, the continents of the world over which the British Commonwealth has spread. They support the St Stephen's Crown of Westminster.

The new Commons Chamber contains contributions in furniture and design from all over the Commonwealth.

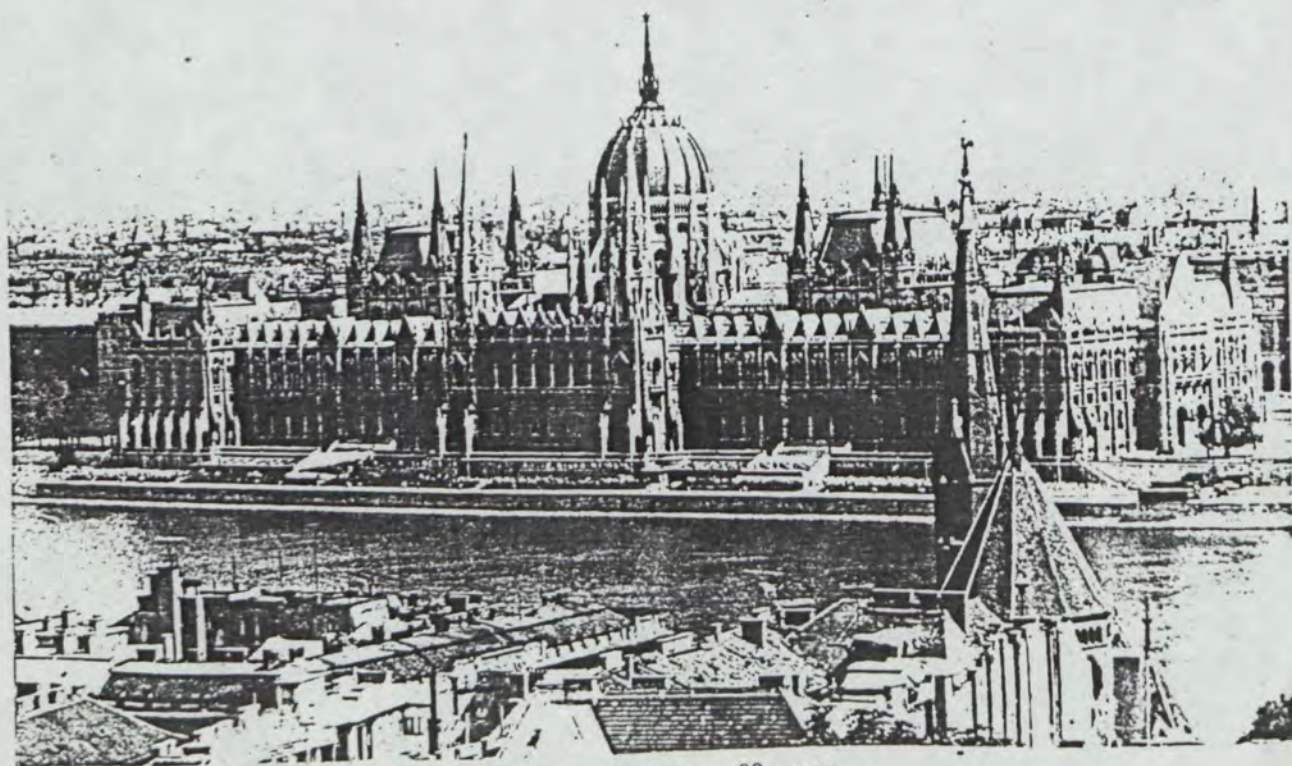
The Arms of Airey Neave, which the Prime Minister first saw on Polling Day 1979, are the latest addition to its history.

Echoes of the Palace of Westminster are to be found across the world. Both Ottawa and Budapest are children of our New Palace.

The Commons Chamber has been the prototype for Commonwealth parliaments the world over.



201. Thomas Fuller and H. C. Jones: Dominion Parliament Buildings, Ottawa, Canada, 1859-67.



205. Imre Steindl: Hungarian Parliament Buildings, Budapest, 1883-1902.

CONFIDENTIAL



10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

16 July 1982

Parliamentary
File 10

cc Mr Whitmore
Mr Gow
Mr Tatham
Miss Porter

I mentioned to you this morning that the Prime Minister has agreed to take part in a BBC television series on the Palace of Westminster. Her contribution is to be filmed on 6 August in her Room at the House. The aim will be to show her Room in the Palace, and allow her to say what she feels about Westminster, and more particularly the House of Commons.

There is one aspect of the programme on which you can help us. The Prime Minister will inevitably be asked about the history of the Prime Minister's Room, and it would be useful if you could let us have briefing on this and on the sort of questions that will be of interest to the public, (e.g. who has used the Room, any relics or gifts from previous Prime Ministers, and any interesting features such as Churchillian cigar burns on the table, etc). One of the topics on which she will be questioned will be the changes that she herself has made to the Room.

BB1
It would be very helpful if you could let us have this brief as soon as possible, and at least by 30 July.

W.F.S. RICKETT

Mrs. Helen Ghosh,
Department of the Environment.

CONFIDENTIAL

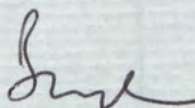
do

MR W RICKETT

The Prime Minister has agreed to take part in a BBC TV series of a most prestigious kind, on the Palace of Westminster. Her contribution, which is to be filmed on 6 August in her room at the House, will be in part to show her room in the Palace and then for her to say what she feels about the Palace and, more especially, the House. Christopher Jones, the interviewer, will be providing me with a list of questions. I am arranging to show him the room along with his producer, John Gay, next week.

I wonder whether you could help me with one aspect of the programme: the history of the Prime Minister's room; who has used it; any relics, gifts from previous Prime Ministers; and such interesting items as, for example, any cigar burn on the table left by Winston Churchill. One of the features will, of course, be the changes that the Prime Minister has made herself to the room.

Could you let me have any information you have on the history of the room and could we have a word about how far I might go with the production team?



B INGHAM

16 July 1982

File

Parliament

Dr. B. Ingham

CF

7 June 1982

BROADCAST ON THE PALACE OF WESTMINSTER

The Prime Minister has seen your letter of 2 June. She is content for the BBC to go ahead with their programme, with advice and participation from the Lord Chancellor as outlined in your letter.

M. A. PATTISON

M.H. Collon, Esq.,
Lord Chancellor's Office.

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10 DOWNING STREET

~~Mr. Ingham.~~

Seems harmless.

What do you think?

Mr

avi

Mr WHITMORE

Entirely OK. I think we
should encourage.

J 3/6

FROM THE PRIVATE SECRETARY



HOUSE OF LORDS,
SW1A 0PW

2nd June, 1982

Our Ref: BBC 19B

Prime Minister

*Bernard sees no problem in this
Agree that it should go ahead as
proposed?*

*MAD
4/vi*

Yes no

Dear Clive,

Broadcast on the Palace of Westminster

BBC 2 are planning a series of television programmes about the history, art, architecture and present day-to-day activities of the Palace of Westminster. They have been considering such a programme for some time, and I enclose a copy of a note dated 7th April 1981 in which they set out what they then envisaged to be the outline of the programme.

They have asked both the Speaker and the Lord Chancellor whether they would be prepared both to advise on the programme, and to participate in it. In accordance with paragraph 106 of Questions of Procedure for Ministers, the approval of the Prime Minister is needed before the Lord Chancellor can agree to participate, and I would be most grateful if you could seek that approval. I cannot imagine that the Prime Minister would have any objection to the Lord Chancellor discussing the history, art or architecture of the Palace. If the programme on its present day activities follows paragraph 3 of the outline which I enclose, I would have thought that this too would not be controversial.

Yours ever,

Richard

M.H. Collon

Clive Whitmore Esq.,
Private Secretary to the
Right Honourable Prime Minister,
10 Downing Street,
London SW1.

ROYAL PALACE - PEOPLE'S PARLIAMENT

A DRAFT TREATMENT

The B.B.C. would like to make a major film series about the history, architecture and work of the Palace of Westminster. The style and format would follow that set by the "Royal Heritage" programmes. In similar fashion a series on the Palace of Westminster would show how history and tradition have shaped the way Parliament is today.

The Palace of Westminster is one of the most famous buildings in the world. The democratic system that has grown up through the centuries on that site has been exported to many countries. Yet despite the fame of Westminster, how the Palace became a People's Parliament, how the building works, what it looks like inside is little known.

The aim of the series, therefore, would certainly be to show a worldwide public Barry's magnificent architecture and Pugin's inspired decoration. But, the programmes would need to be more than an illustrated guided tour of a splendid museum. They would also have to show the Palace of Westminster as a working institution, where 5,000 are employed in the various businesses of the State.

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Obviously, therefore, if such a project is to do justice to the importance of the Palace of Westminster, both as part of Britain's democratic heritage and as a modern hardworking legislature, the programme makers would need permission to film many of the routine activities that take place in the Palace and most of the building's architectural and artistic splendour.

However, the B.B.C. is mindful of the sensitivity of Members of both Houses towards cameras in the Chamber and would state categorically that it would not seek in the making of these programmes to film either House when it was sitting.

At this stage it is difficult to say how many films need to be made adequately to tell the story of the Palace. Any format or treatment of the subject is, therefore, necessarily tentative at the moment. But we would expect the series to divide most appropriately into 5 50-minute films.

1. The Birth of Parliament

The first film would start by introducing the audience to the Palace of Westminster - a brief guide to its size, its layout and its functions. Then by concentrating on Westminster Hall, the programme would tell the story of how Parliament grew from its early origins in the 14th century to the destruction of the old palace in 1834.

/continued....

It would have to make extensive use of many of the historical objects that survive in Westminster - prints, records, bills, pictures, statues. It might be possible to re-enact some of the key events that shaped the present people's Parliament, including Sir Thomas More's trial, and Speaker Lenthall's historic reply to Charles I. Where possible the programme would like to use a present day ceremony, (for instance, the barring of the door to Black Rod) to throw light on the history of the Palace. In this way it will be possible to illustrate how our modern parliament is still very much part of our ancient heritage.

2. A New Palace out of the Ashes of the Old

This programme would be devoted to an account of the destruction of the Old Palace and the building of the New. It would be an opportunity to show off the architecture of the Palace, its decorative glories and some of its more interesting but lesser known corners. This programme would naturally feature the Clock Tower and the Victoria Tower for instance. One of the themes of the programme would inevitably be how Sir Charles Barry won the competition to design the Palace, and the difficulties he overcame in building it. It would also touch on the problems he left behind. Perhaps the two most important are the

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dilapidation of the stonework and the difficulty of creating a modern place of work with 20th century requirements out of a 19th century palace with very different needs. This programme would certainly want to feature the work continuously being done by present day masons and other craftsmen.

3. The House of Lords

This programme would illustrate the work of the House of Lords. It would focus naturally on the Lord Chancellor - it would look at the traditions of the Upper House, its ceremonies and some of its functions. It would be necessary to film in the Chamber, though obviously not when their Lordships were sitting - if only to illustrate how Barry succeeded in translating into reality his vision of the House of Lords "as a Chamber in which a Sovereign surrounded by the Court, summoned the 3 Estates of the Realm".

4. The House of Commons

This programme would probably concentrate on the Speaker and his role, as a way of seeing how the House of Commons works. It would tell the story of the Lower House from when it first entered Barry's redesigned Chamber, through its destruction in 1940 to the modern day. Again, though it would be necessary to film in the

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Chamber, the programme makers would not seek to do so while the House was sitting. On the other hand, it would be important to film some of the ceremonies and functions of the House of Commons that do not take place in the Chamber. One of the aims of this programme would be to explain the meaning of the traditional symbols like the Mace, the Speaker's wig and dress and how they have become incorporated so successfully into a modern workaday institution. Today's House of Commons is the product of 600 years of history and is still evolving.

5. The Working Palace

This programme would illustrate how the Palace of Westminster is run. 5,000 people are employed there - it is a small town in itself. Security, catering, press reporting and a host of routine activities are carried out for the smooth running of a modern legislature - all done in a 19th century palace amidst constant reminders of a heritage that bears witness to the hard fought struggle for parliamentary democracy.

John Gau/Christopher Jones

7th April, 1981.

13 April, 1981

The Prime Minister has seen your letter of 10 April, about the BBC's proposal to make a series of television programmes on the subject of the Palace of Westminster.

The Prime Minister has no objection in principle, and has glanced at the outline for the series enclosed with your letter.

I should be grateful if you could keep us informed as plans become firmer.

M. A. PATTISON

N P M Huxtable, Esq
Office of the Chancellor of the Duchy of
Lancaster

SSG

010

1.

cc/Mr Gow
Mr Ingham



PRIVY COUNCIL OFFICE
WHITEHALL, LONDON SW1A 2AT

Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster

10 April 1981

Dear Nick

Yes Mr.

Prime Minister
Content in principle for BBC to pursue this?
Any comment on the attached outline of
their approach?

MP 10/4

During a recent engagement Christopher Jones, the BBC's Parliamentary Correspondent, mentioned to the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster that the BBC would like to make a series of television programmes on the subject of the Palace of Westminster.

The Chancellor of the Duchy considers that the Prime Minister should be aware of the BBC's plans and I therefore attach a copy of a letter from Christopher Jones which sets out the sort of approach which the BBC might adopt in making these programmes. You will see from this letter that Mr Silkin is being kept in touch with the development of this project.

I am copying this letter to Sir Noel Short in the Speaker's Office and to David Edmonds in the Secretary of State for the Environment's Office.

Yours sincerely
Nick Huxtable

N P M HUXTABLE
Private Secretary

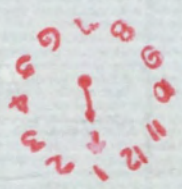
Nick Sanders Esq
10 Downing Street
LONDON SW1

PRIVY COUNCIL OFFICE
WHITEHALL, LONDON SW1A 2JL



CONFIDENTIAL

10 APR 1981



BBC

BRITISH BROADCASTING CORPORATION

PRESS GALLERY HOUSE OF COMMONS LONDON SW1

TELEPHONE 01-222 9586 or 01-219 4765

8th April, 1981.

5
DURING

Dear Francis,

This is the preliminary draft, which I mentioned to you, of our thoughts and suggestions for a series of television programmes on the Palace of Westminster. You will, of course, realise that it is only our first thoughts, but it would be a great help if you were able to tell us whether you think they are on the right lines. If you think that they are, I wonder if you would feel able now to mention it informally to the Prime Minister in the hope, of course, that she, too, would give our plans her support.

Mr Silkin has already seen this draft - it arrived just before today's Press Gallery lunch, so I took the opportunity of showing it to him then. He much approved.

Of course, if there is any point which you - or, of course, the Prime Minister - would like explained or expanded, either John Gau or I would be delighted to do our best to help.

Very Sincerely,
Christopher Jones

(Christopher Jones)
Parliamentary Correspondent.

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster,
The Rt. Hon. Francis Pym M.P.,
House of Commons.

ROYAL PALACE - PEOPLE'S PARLIAMENT

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Obviously, therefore, if such a project is to do justice to the importance of the Palace of Westminster, both as part of Britain's democratic heritage and as a modern hardworking legislature, the programme makers would need permission to film many of the routine activities that take place in the Palace and most of the building's architectural and artistic splendour.

However, the B.B.C. is mindful of the sensitivity of Members of both Houses towards cameras in the Chamber and would state categorically that it would not seek in the making of these programmes to film either House when it was sitting.

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John Gau/Christopher Jones

7th April, 1981.

