

S
3003

PREM 19/2602

Proposed BBC TV series on the Civil Service
Participation of Civil Servants in
RIPA / Granada Conference.

CIVIL SERVICE

July 1979

Referred to	Date	Referred to	Date	Referred to	Date	Referred to	Date
18.2.79							
1-8-79							
24.9.79							
6.11.79							
29.1.80							
8.2.80							
4.2.80							
27.4.80							
3.10.88							
5.5.89							

89

MATERIAL USED BY OFFICIAL HISTORIAN
DO NOT DESTROY

PREM 19/2602



Prime Minister
Barrow is contact with FGRB's
proposal (and for Sir Donald Acheson
too).

Agree this is a helpful way of
promoting image of Civil Service?

Yes

AT
315

Ref. AO89/1066

MR INGHAM

You saw Anne Sloman's letter of 24 February to me in which she proposed that I should give a radio interview to Mr Jenkins for one of a series of programmes about people who make things happen behind the scenes, to be broadcast in September this year. You advised that this was a preferable project from my point of view to Anne Sloman's second idea for a series of documentaries on the role of the State, to be presented by Hugo Young as a sequel to "No Minister" and "But Chancellor".

--- 2. I have now explored this project further with Anne Sloman and her latest letter is attached, setting out her proposals for the theme and participants in the interviews.

I agree AT

3. As you know, I have pursued a strategy, with your advice, for occasional appearances on the national media when I can talk about the work of the Civil Service and use the opportunity to give a lead to, and communicate with, a large number of Civil Servants in that way. There is no doubt in my mind that, from that point of view, the television interview which was transmitted before Christmas did a lot of good and also helped in a modest way, I believe, to improve the morale of the Civil Service.

4. Given that such appearances must be rare, I had planned the next one might be a radio interview about a year after the television interview. The interview with Peter Jenkins would, I think, fit in well with that.

5. If you agree, and subject to any comments which you have, perhaps Mr Turnbull would be kind enough to check that the Prime Minister would have no objection to my giving an interview to



Peter Jenkins in this series concentrating on the work of the Civil Service (and incidentally/^{would} have no objection to Sir Donald Acheson giving another of the interviews in the series). You will see that the other intended participants are to be David Williamson, Richard Rogers, Nigel Bagnall and John Sainsbury.

I am copying this minute to Andrew Turnbull.

R.R.B.

ROBIN BUTLER

27 April 1989

BBC

CABINET OFFICE	
A	4260
20 APR 1989	
FILING INSTRUCTION	
FILE No.

BRITISH BROADCASTING CORPORATION
BROADCASTING HOUSE
LONDON W1A 1AA
TELEPHONE: 01-580 4468
TELEX: 265781
CABLES: BROADCASTS, LONDON

Direct line: 01-927 4916
Room: 4066

Sir Robin Butler KCB CVO,
Secretary of the Cabinet and
Head of the Home Civil Service,
Cabinet Office,
70 Whitehall,
London,
SW1A 2AS.

19th April 1989

Dear Sir Robin,

I appreciate all the concerns raised in your letter of 10th April. It is obviously better for all of us if the ground is set out clearly before we start.

We have decided to call the series "Louder Than Words" and the billing will run something like this:

Louder Than Words

In the (first) of six conversations with people whose job is to turn ideas into action, Peter Jenkins talks to...

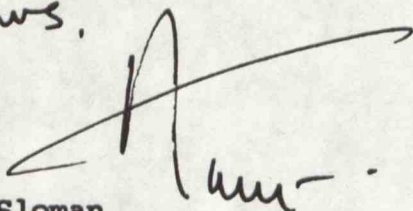
This, as you will see, shifts the theme of the series away from power as such towards the concept of change, and how people in top positions make things happen - things that may have been decided by others, in your case politicians.

I can't promise not to ask you anything about being Secretary to the Cabinet - that will just make us look as if we're pulling our punches - but I know this won't be a fruitful area of questioning to pursue for the reasons you have made clear, so we certainly aren't going to dwell on it. Your role as head of the Civil Service, and how you see the future of the Service will be at the heart of the interview, and there is more than enough material in that to keep us going for a fascinating half hour.

You may be interested to know that David Williamson, Richard Rogers and Nigel Bagnall have all definitely agreed to take part. Donald Acheson I understand has agreed in principle but is waiting for your formal acceptance before making his. I have not yet heard from John Sainsbury.

If you now feel happy to go ahead, perhaps we could now fix a date for the week beginning the 4th September. Would the afternoon of Thursday 7th be a possibility?

As you know the intention is to record about 35 minutes which will just give me a margin to tidy up the minor hesitations and repetitions, but will in no way materially alter the interview between recording and transmission.

Yours,


Anne Sloman
Editor, Special Current Affairs Programmes



MS 2 DOP

eeBT

10 DOWNING STREET
LONDON SW1A 2AA

From the Principal Private Secretary

SIR ROBIN BUTLER

BBC RADIO INTERVIEW

The Prime Minister has seen your minute to Mr Ingham of 27 April. She agrees that your taking part in this series would be a helpful way of promoting the image of the Civil Service.

I am copying this minute to Bernard Ingham.

Andrew Turnbull

5 May 1989

9

Mr Turnbull

de Marlingham
2. Back time

Ref. AO89/1066

MR INGHAM

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27 April 1989

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BRITISH BROADCASTING CORPORATION
BROADCASTING HOUSE
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TELEPHONE: 01-580 4468
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Head of the Home Civil Service,
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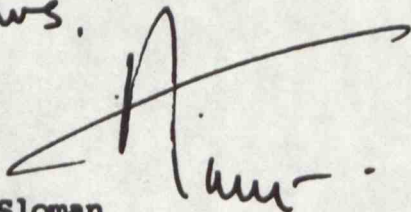
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Lows.


Anne Sloman
Editor, Special Current Affairs Programmes

I should be very wary

They intend to be highly selective
in cutting & interviewing your remarks.

Prime Minister

Ref. A088/2660

You may find the content for FRRB to take part in the proposed programme. edited version bears little

MR WICKS

relation to the general drift of your remarks

REC 6

This is not 'an interview' in the ordinary sense. What kind of questions do they want to ask? 9/9

Proposed Programme for BBC Television on the Civil Service

not

The Prime Minister will remember the proposal which I inherited from Lord Armstrong, that there should be an interview by Peter Hennessy with the Head of the Home Civil Service as the third programme in an LWT series on Whitehall which was broadcast this summer. After reading the transcript of the first two programmes, which were slanted and superficial, I refused (with some regret) to give an interview. Mr Luce also refused to give an interview and the final programme of the series was abandoned by the producers.

2. I have now been approached by Anne Lapping and Sue Cameron about a half-hour programme on the Home Civil Service which is being commissioned by the BBC from them as the first to be made by an independent production company for the BBC's News and Current Affairs Directorate. Their company, Brook Productions, produced the series "A Week in Politics" for Channel 4.

3. It is suggested that this programme would include a formal interview with me and would also accompany me on a visit to the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Centre in Swansea (which is being turned into an agency), the Royal Mint and the Welsh Office in October. It would concentrate on management issues in the Civil Service and would not range on to policy issues or other aspects of my responsibilities such as security matters. A list of subjects proposed for the interview by the producers is --- attached.



4. If the Prime Minister agrees, I am inclined to agree to take part in this programme. It would be a useful opportunity to talk about the direction in which the management of the Civil Service is moving and to redress some of the impressions left by the Channel 4 series in the summer. It should be possible in this context to keep away from matters on which I would not be willing to answer questions.

5. I should be grateful if you could let me know whether the Prime Minister is content that I should pursue discussions with the producers of this programme with a view to co-operating with it.

6. I am copying this minute to the Minister of State, Privy Council Office (Mr Luce).

R.B.

ROBIN BUTLER

9 September 1988

WHITEHALL PROFILE - OUTLINE PROPOSAL

1. The proposal is for a half-hour programme which will look at the Home Civil Service, its current role and the direction it is expected to take in the 1990's. The film will examine the Civil Service through the eyes of its new head, Sir Robin Butler, who will have been in the post for almost a year by the time of the broadcast - an appropriate moment therefore to do such a programme.
2. The programme is being commissioned by the BBC and would be the first to be made by an independent production company for the BBC's new news and current affairs directorate.
3. The programme would be aimed at the upper end of the market - the intelligent viewer with an interest in current affairs, likely to watch programmes such as Newsnight and A Week In Politics. It would, of course, be of particular interest to civil servants themselves. The programme will therefore provide an excellent platform for the Head of the Civil Service to indicate his thinking on the future of the Service.
4. The programme would centre on a filmed interview with Sir Robin. It would also include film of Sir Robin visiting diverse groups of civil servants. As well as being visually interesting, this would provide an opportunity to illustrate the huge range of very different jobs done by civil servants and to show the complexities of running an organisation that encompasses Whitehall mandarins and front line social security officers.
5. We would also include some archive material and some footage of Sir Robin at work. Both would be designed to set the man and the Service in context.
6. The film sequences would also be used to introduce some of the main areas of discussion and to "break-up" the interview. Where possible we would hope to use Sir Robin's voice over the film sequences. The interview will include some "descriptive" questions with this in mind.

7. Proposed Areas of Discussion

- THE SHAKE-UP IN THE CIVIL SERVICE SINCE 1979
How the Service is adapting to reforms on a range of fronts including a new emphasis on management.
- Civil Service morale.
- Politicisation - so called - of the Civil Service.
- Recruitment - the ability of the Service to attract and retain its fair share of talented people; secondments in and out of the Service; and the problems of specialisation.
- THE ROLE OF THE HEAD OF THE CIVIL SERVICE
The problems of managing a workforce of half a million people doing a great range of very different jobs.
- The relationship - or potential conflict - between the combined roles of Cabinet Secretary and Head of the Civil Service.
- Sir Robin's own career; what attracted him to the Service and how far things have changed for today's young, high fliers.
- THE FUTURE
The likely implications of the Ibbs Report on separate executive agencies.
- The structure and direction of the Service in the 1990's; further possible changes in the role and organisation of the Service.
- Accountability of civil servants; relationship to the public and Parliament - notably Select Committee - as well as Ministers.

8. Shooting would be in two sections. The first part would be on the day we filmed Sir Robin visiting civil servants at work. The second would be the interview itself plus shots of Sir Robin arriving at work, sitting at his desk, perusing papers, telephoning, etc.
9. The interviewer will be Sue Cameron.
10. The BBC has indicated that it would be flexible on the timing of the broadcast, should you have any particular preferences. They - and we - are, however, assuming that this would be the first serious interview with Sir Robin on television.
11. If there are any topics we have not included which Sir Robin would like to raise on the programme, we would be happy to discuss adding them to our shopping list of subject.

DG2CW

File



10 DOWNING STREET
LONDON SW1A 2AA

From the Private Secretary

SIR ROBIN BUTLER

PROPOSED PROGRAMME FOR BBC TELEVISION ON THE CIVIL SERVICE

The Prime Minister has seen your minute of 9 September to Nigel Wicks.

She has commented that she would be very wary about this proposal. She would not regard it as an "interview" in the ordinary sense. As a result there is a danger of the cutting of the material leading to highly selective use of the material, with the result that the final edited version may bear little relation to the general drift of your remarks. The Prime Minister has also enquired what kind of questions the BBC team want to ask.

BF

I am copying this minute to Eleanor Goodison (Office of the Minister for the Civil Service).

Paul Gray

12 September 1988

PHI 27/9



26th September 1988

BROOK PRODUCTIONS

cc - Mr Ingham } Any comments?
~~Mr J Wright~~

Sir Robin Butler
Cabinet Office
70 Whitehall
London SW1 2AS

Dear Sir Robin,

Thank you for sending me a copy of your speech which was most helpful.

As we promised I enclose a more detailed list of the topics we would like to cover in the interview plus a couple of illustrative questions. You will appreciate that this list is designed just to give you an idea of the way our minds are working. We would need to put in much more thought and research before we came to the interview. We might wish to explore other aspects of the areas listed and clearly there would also have to be a good deal of pruning.

As we have discussed, our intention would be to "break up" the interview with film showing you visiting different sections of the Service and you at work. The film footage would be used purely to introduce and illustrate some of the topics being discussed in the interview. One example would be film of civil servants doing very different jobs with - preferably - your voice over the pictures talking about the size and diversity of the Service.

As we said at our meeting if any other civil servant were to say or do something ill-conceived while we were filming we would undertake not to use it in the film.

Yours sincerely,

Sue

SUE CAMERON
Presenter

Enc.

21-24 Bruges Place
Randolph Street
London
NW1 0TF
Telephone:
01 482 6111
Fax:
01 284 0626

Directors:
A Lapping
U Eichler
P Whitehead
A Shah

Brook Productions
(1986) Limited
Registered in England:
No: 1964351
Registered Office:
124-130 Seymour Place
London W1
VAT No: 429 8927 95

BREAKDOWN OF QUESTION AREAS

. Civil Service Morale

- Psychological impact of cuts in numbers.
- Perceived lack of Ministerial esteem.
- Exit of a small but significant number of younger high fliers.
- Promotion blockages.
- Fewer opportunities than in the private sector for able people to "run their own show".
- The value placed by the public on public service.
- The implications of placing outsiders in top Civil Service jobs.

. The Shake-up in the Civil Service

- The new emphasis on management. The FMI.
- Introducing a managerial ethos to an organisation that cannot be subject to market discipline.
- MINIS style forms and other procedures as a substitute for market forces.
- Management training in the Service compared to that in the private sector and in, for example, the French civil service.
- Cuts in civil service numbers.
- Re-locating staff out of London. The implications of new technology.

. Politicization of the Civil Service

- The risk that the call of leadership will be interpreted further down the line as "an improper act of political propaganda".
- The danger that a future Government could make politicization a reality by sacking senior civil servants thought to be politically partisan.
- Whether promotion prospects in the Service now depend far more than formerly on catching a Minister's eye.
- Movement in and out of the Service. Appointment of partisan outsiders to senior posts.

. Recruitment

- Difficulties of filling some posts. Specialists.
- Secondments in and out of the Service. Impact on traditional ethos.
- Retaining able people.

. Role of the Head of the Civil Service

- Difficulties of managing a huge and extraordinarily diverse workforce.
- Constraints on Civil Service leadership imposed by the need for confidentiality. The role of top managers in defending the civil service staff.
- Doing two jobs at once; advantages and disadvantages; the CSD.
- Potential conflict between the roles of Cabinet Secretary and Head of Home Civil Service e.g. advice may be different depending which hat is being worn.
- Sir Robin's own career - what made him join the Service; how far things have changed.

. The Future

- The Ibbs Report - the implications for the careers and standards of civil servants.
 - Potential conflict between "freedom to manage" in an executive agency and the Treasury's "draconian grip" on departmental/agency budgets.
 - The public accountability of agencies and their chief executives.
 - Civil Servants' relationship with Ministers; further guidance that may be given to the Service.
 - Duty of confidentiality. Implications for civil servants of the white paper - The Reform of Section II of the Official Secrets Act.
 - Accountability to Parliament now that "Ministers cannot reasonably be held personally accountable for the myriad actions of their officials."
-

ILLUSTRATIVE QUESTIONS

Here are a few examples of the type of questions we might want to ask in the interview. We have tried to give examples of what would be regarded as sensitive areas of questions.

1. Would a greater degree of public discussion lead to an improvement in policy?
2. Is there a public interest which could bring civil servants into conflict with their political masters?
3. Why do you think the civil service today is widely regarded as being politicized when it was not under previous governments?
4. Obviously you don't run the Mint or deal with individual promotions. As Head of the Home Civil Service, what does come into your in-tray?

CIVIL SERVICE: TV Series on the Civil Service

July 29.





Wick
Pm
70

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Principal Private Secretary

SIR ROBIN BUTLER

**PROPOSED PROGRAMME FOR BBC TELEVISION
ON THE CIVIL SERVICE**

I have shown the Prime Minister your minute of 29 September in which you asked for her agreement to take part in a programme by Anne Lapping and Sue Cameron on the Home Civil Service.

The Prime Minister is content for you to take part in this programme on the basis of the conditions set out in your minute.

I am copying this letter to Eleanor Goodison (Office of the Minister of State, Privy Council Office), and to Bernard Ingham.

N. L. WICKS

3 October 1988

Pm



File AN
ccs MOD
CO

Civil Service

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Principal Private Secretary

SIR IAN BANCROFT

I have shown the Prime Minister your minute of 24 April 1981 about the invitation which Sir Frank Cooper has had from the BBC to take part in "Platform One".

She is concerned at what might happen if a Permanent Secretary takes part in this programme. A particular cause of her concern is that it is intended that the interview should cover, amongst other things, the question of secrecy. Her own comment on your minute was

"It is a fundamental mistake to let oneself in for such an interview. Sir Frank will inevitably have to avoid some questions and will finish up by looking evasive".

The Prime Minister would clearly prefer Sir Frank Cooper to decline the BBC's invitation.

I am sending copies of this minute to Sir Frank Cooper and Sir Robert Armstrong.

27 April 1981

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~
~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

tan.

AN

Survey? It is a
fundamental mistake
to let oneself in for
such an interview.
Sir Frank will
have to avoid
some tricks and will
finish by looking
evening
not

MR C A WHITMORE

We spoke about Sir Frank Cooper's letter of 22 April to me - attached - seeking advice on how he should reply to the BBC's invitation for him to appear on "Platform One". As you know, I am not normally at all keen on serving civil servants giving public interviews of the kind proposed. In this case, however, it is clear that the BBC are determined to have an interview about the Civil Service, and, as Sir Frank says, if we do not provide a serving civil servant they may well call on someone, such as Lord Crowther-Hunt, who is notoriously hostile to the Service.

In my opinion, Sir Frank would be very well able to deal with Professor MacKenzie's interviewing technique. Given that the Secretary of State for Defence would be content for him to appear, I would, on this occasion, think that Sir Frank might be permitted to take part in the programme.

The issues are very finely balanced, however, and the Prime Minister will no doubt wish to make up her own mind on the question.

I am sending copies of this minute to Sir Frank Cooper and Sir Robert Armstrong.

ABJ

IAN BANCROFT
24 April 1981

Prime Minister.

The Civil Service - and Government generally - is likely to emerge from this interview better if Sir Frank Cooper does it than if it is left to someone like Lord Crowther-Hunt.

I know that generally you do not like serving civil servants taking part in this kind of programme, but given the alternatives, are you prepared in this case to agree that Sir Frank Cooper should take part?

ABJ
24w



MR C A WHITMORE

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JB

IAN BANCROFT
24 April 1981

C Whitmore Esq

CLIVE



Yours...

MS

22/4

With
the Compliments of
Sir Frank Cooper, G.C.B., C.M.G.
Permanent Under-Secretary of State

MINISTRY OF DEFENCE
SW1A 2HB



MINISTRY OF DEFENCE

Main Building, Whitehall, London SW1A 2HB

Telephone (Direct Dialling) 01-218 2193

(Switchboard) 01-218 9000

PERMANENT UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE: SIR FRANK COOPER GCB, CMG.

PUS/81/879

46/4

Sir Ian Bancroft GCB
Civil Service Department
Whitehall
LONDON SW1

22 April 1981

Dear Sir,

As I have already mentioned to you, the BBC have asked for a senior civil servant to appear on a programme in their "Platform One" series. A letter from Richard Francis - who was Controller there when I was in Northern Ireland - is attached.

2. I am totally easy about it either way although I think it would be a pity if we ended up being completely "stand-offish" about the whole business. From our preliminary contacts with the Producer, it is clear that they are going to do a programme on the civil service and, if we cannot provide someone, they will look to the free market; Crowther-Hunt has been mentioned, for example.
3. My own Secretary of State has said that he would be entirely content for me to appear on the programme but, as you will see from the letter, someone else could do so instead. I understand that final approval for this kind of appearance rests with the Prime Minister on advice from you. Could you be kind enough to advise me how to reply?
4. The BBC have rescheduled the programme on the civil service for 5 May so as to give us more time to reply but I think we should try to give them an answer this week if we can.
5. A copy goes to Clive Whitmore and Robert Armstrong.

Yours sincerely
Frank Cooper

FRANK COOPER

BBC Television Centre London W12 7RJ

CABLES AND TELEGRAMS: TELECASTS LONDON-PS4 · TELEX 265781 · TEL 01-743 8000

from the DIRECTOR, NEWS & CURRENT AFFAIRS

3rd April, 1981

Mr, dear Frank,

I am writing to invite you to take part in our TV interview series, Platform One.

We have planned a short series of conversations in which Professor Robert McKenzie discusses with leading public figures the effectiveness and accountability of our institutions. We hope to devote the first of these programmes to the civil service; in a 30-minute conversation with a leading civil servant -- ideally yourself -- Professor McKenzie would explore the question of how well the British public is served by our civil service system. We would expect the interview to cover areas such as efficiency, cost-effectiveness, accountability and secrecy; we would not want to raise issues immediately concerning defence policy.

The programmes -- which are not edited -- are usually recorded on Monday evenings for transmission the next evening on BBC-1 at about 11 p. m. The recording date for this programme would be Monday 13th April. However, should that be inconvenient for you, we could reorganise our schedule to record on the Monday or Tuesday of any of the following three weeks.

If you would like any further information, our deputy Head of Current Affairs Group, Christopher Capron, would be happy to help. He can be reached on Extension 3218 or 3219 on the above number.

These straightforward interview programmes have always proved valuable and I do hope you will feel able to accept this invitation.

Yours ever,

Richard Francis

(Richard Francis)

Sir Frank Cooper, K. C. B., C. M. G.,
Permanent Under Secretary of State,
Ministry of Defence,
Whitehall,
London SW1A 2HB

Civil Service

SIR ROBERT ARMSTRONG

The Prime Minister has seen your minute AO1376 of 8 February 1980 about the approach you have had from Granada Television to take part in a series of programmes on "Public Office".

The Prime Minister feels very strongly indeed that you should not appear in this series. She takes the view that you would not be able both to talk about your job and to keep the confidence of those on whom the job itself depends.

F C. A. WHITMORE

11 February 1980

GRANADA TELEVISION LIMITED

A MEMBER OF GRANADA GROUP LIMITED
Registered office 36 Golden Square London, W1R 4AH
Telephone 01-734 8080

Sir Robert Armstrong
The Secretary of The Cabinet
The Cabinet Office
70 Whitehall
London SW1

31 January 1980

CABINET OFFICE
A 8581.....
31 JAN 1980
FILING INSTRUCTIONS
FILE No. 413/4.

Dear Sir Robert

I would very much appreciate the opportunity of discussing the possibility of your taking part in a new ITV series "PUBLIC OFFICE".

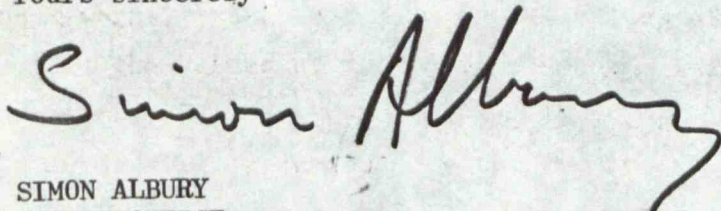
The series will consist of six half hour interviews with people who have been appointed to significant public office about their responsibilities and what is involved in practice in carrying out the duties of the office.

Granada Television is proud of its tradition of producing programmes which make complex ideas accessible to a general audience. PUBLIC OFFICE is designed to interest a wide audience in basic information about government which is seldom discussed in television or in the popular press. We would like to plan the content and presentation of each interview with its subject with a view to communicating as effectively as possible with a television audience that has no specialist interest or background.

The attached note spells out the aims of the series in more detail. The Lord Chancellor, the Chief of Defence Staff, the Chairman of British Rail and The Ambassador to the United States have agreed to take part in the series, and we hope that the Governor of The Bank of England will also participate.

I hope it will be possible to discuss this project further with you or one of your staff in the near future.

Yours sincerely



SIMON ALBURY
PUBLIC OFFICE

PUBLIC OFFICE - BACKGROUND NOTES

Number of Programmes: 6
Transmission: 1980
Running Time: 26 minutes
Medium: Film or Video tape

A series of six interviews with people who have been appointed to significant public office about their experience of the breadth and limits of their power and influence and the nature of the work.

The aim is to introduce to a wider audience the kinds of insights about the nature of government and public office which have emerged in recent years in books, memoirs and academic journals.

CONTENT :

These insights will be drawn out of an exploration of the personal experience of our interviewees of what is involved in practice in carrying out the duties of their office. What are the responsibilities of this office? How is their day organised? What kind of decisions are they asked to make?

How do they make them? What kind of decisions are they prevented from making? How did they view the office before they were appointed? How did this original view change through experience? What qualified them for appointment? To what extent can they change the office and how it works? To what extent do the values of the office conflict or parallel the values of the man?

To whom are they answerable in theory, in practice, and in their own view? What influences their decisions - public opinion, government opinion, or some other group? What are the public consequences of the decisions they take?

How could their job be improved? What are the most satisfying aspects of holding the office? What are the frustrations? How is the office likely to change in the future?

POSSIBLE INTERVIEWS

The Lord Chancellor

The Ambassador to the United States

The Governor of the Bank of England

The Chairman of a Nationalised Industry

The Secretary of The Cabinet.

A Permanent Secretary

A Chief Constable

The Chief of Defence Staff

(Not all the above office holders will be approached)

1.

Prime Minister.



My feeling is that Sir Robert
Hawtrey should not do this witness.
I say this not out of natural conservatism
but because of the nature of the job
of Secretary of the Cabinet - which he himself
refers to. I doubt whether the precedent of Sir
Ian Bancroft's witness counts for much: it is
more cases for the House of the Civil Service to do this
kind of
thing than the Secretary of the Cabinet. Agree?
K.H.
8/11

Ref. A01376

MR. WHITMORE

I have been approached by Granada Television with a request to take part in a series of television programmes on "Public Office". I attach a copy of the letter conveying this request. Requests to take part in other programmes in the series have been made to and accepted by the Lord Chancellor, the British Ambassador in Washington, the Chairman of British Rail and (subject to the Secretary of State for Defence's agreement) the Chief of the Defence Staff.

2. The Prime Minister will remember that my predecessor was invited to appear on Panorama after his retirement to talk about the duties of his office. As the Prime Minister had indicated that, if the BBC did a series of programmes on the Civil Service, she would want it not to cover No. 10 or the Cabinet Office, he declined.

3. I have consulted Mr. Ingham and Sir Ian Bancroft about this request. Mr. Ingham thinks that the proposed series should be taken seriously, as part of Granada's commitment to public education. Simon Albury was at one time but is no longer in "World in Action", and is regarded as intelligent and serious, and likely to do a good job on this series. Given that other office-holders are accepting, Mr. Ingham does not advise me not to participate, and would be inclined to recommend acceptance, subject to very clear agreement on what I can and cannot talk about. Clearly I could not talk about (for instance) specific policy matters; about confidential relationships; about details of the Cabinet Committee structure; or about my responsibilities in intelligence and security matters.

4. Sir Ian Bancroft would also be inclined to recommend acceptance, subject to those conditions. He himself did a rather similar programme some time ago, without any difficulty arising. He would see some advantage, for the "image" of the Civil Service and for its morale, in another senior civil servant appearing to explain what is the nature of the work and to dispel some of the myths.



5. I am swayed by the argument that, if one complains about the media's treatment of the Civil Service and the image which the Civil Service is given, one should not lightly turn down an invitation which gives one an opportunity to do something about it; and that someone who is lucky enough to hold high office should accept a responsibility for "telling it how it is" when he has the chance of doing so. But I am also conscious that my predecessor refused more than one invitation of this kind to appear on television - at least until after he had retired. I think that the Secretary of the Cabinet is in a position which requires a special discretion of him, and I am not clear that I could preserve that discretion, and the trust and confidence of Ministers on which my ability to be effective depends, if I appeared on a programme of this kind. If I were to succeed in preserving discretion, I suspect that the result might be a very boring programme; and, as Mr. Ingham says, it would not do the cause of open government any good if I was forced to adopt a repetitively secretive stance.

6. But I have to admit to a bias in favour of the reasons for declining, because purely selfishly I do not much want to do it. I should be ready to take it on, if it was thought that I ought to do so.

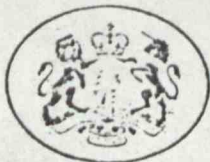
7. Mr. Albury's letter leaves it open to me to agree to discuss the project further with him, without at this stage committing myself to do a programme. But there would be no point in going even that far, if the Prime Minister took the view that it was out of the question for me to appear. I should be grateful if you could consult her, and see what view she takes.

RA

(Robert Armstrong)

8th February, 1980

I feel very strongly indeed
 that you should NOT appear.
 You can't talk about this job
 and keep the confidence that
 on which the job itself depends.
 R.A.



SIR BRIAN CUBBON KCB
PERMANENT UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE

HOME OFFICE
QUEEN ANNE'S GATE
LONDON SW1H 9AT

Civil Service
29 January 1980

Dear Ian

RIPA/GRANADA CONFERENCE

Thank you for sending me a copy of your letter to Pat Nairne of 28 January. I am content with your proposed reply to William Plowden. I would hope that we might come to admit some media people, perhaps editors, to an entirely private "hypothetical". But I see the merit in getting people used to more restricted attendance first.

I am a bit doubtful about Plowden's idea of having an invited audience. They would add an artificial dimension to the sessions. There might be a tendency to bring in the audience discussion before the real participants had established the necessary rapport, which is essential to the success of these occasions and takes a good deal of time. But I would not suggest that you insist on Plowden dropping the idea of an invited audience.

I am copying this letter to the recipients of the earlier correspondence.

Yours ever
Brian

Sir Ian Bancroft, GCB.



CIVIL SERVICE DEPARTMENT
WHITEHALL LONDON SW1A 2AZ
Telephone 01 273 5400

Sir Ian Bancroft G.C.B.
Head of the Home Civil Service

Sir Patrick Nairne KCB MC
Department of Health & Social
Security
Alexander Fleming House
Elephant & Castle
LONDON SE1

*1 telephone to
Lans' office 31/1/80
to say I was relaxed
on the terms proposed,
but ^{some} felt that he
kept over who was
to be in the invited
audience*

28 January 1980

J 87

Dear Pat,

RIPA/GRANADA CONFERENCE

I was grateful to have your views and those of other colleagues in response to my letter of 9 October about William Plowden's proposal that civil servants should take part in a conference to be organised jointly by the RIPA and Granada Television. In the light of these replies I arranged to have a talk with Plowden and this finally took place on 22 January.

Plowden fully accepted that serving civil servants could not appear in hypothetical discussions of this type on television and said that he would not pursue this idea further, although he indicated that Granada might choose to do so later. Against this possibility I gave him the names of a few ex-civil servants drawn from those kindly suggested by you and other colleagues, making it clear that none of them had been sounded in any way.

Plowden was however interested in Brian Cubbon's idea that the RIPA might run some entirely private discussions, with the object of educating the participants in the attitudes and problems of other sectors of the community. He thought that the sessions could involve role-playing in a hypothetical situation by members of a group which might include civil servants and people from the private sector, nationalised industries and local government. There would also be a specially invited audience so that there could be some general discussion of the exercise at the end.

He also sought my reaction to the idea that MPs and representatives from the media might take part. I told him that I had considerable reservations about this, because even though the discussions would be wholly off the record, the presence of MPs and journalists would inevitably cause the participants to be inhibited in what they said and this would destroy the value of the exercise. I also threw out, for his consideration, the suggestion that he might have a pilot session involving civil servants only. I said, too, that I would see no objection if the sessions "nibbled into official time a bit" (his words). The sort of officers we are talking about would obviously make it up in their own time.

Unless any of the recipients of this letter feel differently, I propose to write to Plowden saying that I see no objection to serving civil servants taking part in the sort of session he has in mind, provided that MPs and journalists are not involved. I would suggest that it would be for him to approach individuals about taking part as he saw fit. Perhaps I could take it that colleagues are content unless I hear by Friday 1 February.

I am copying this letter to the recipients of the earlier correspondence.

Yours ever,

Ian

IAN BANCROFT



PERMANENT UNDER SECRETARY OF STATE
K. R. STOWE C.B. CVO

Civil Service

NORTHERN IRELAND OFFICE
STORMONT CASTLE
BELFAST BT4 3ST

Telephone Belfast (0232) 63011
Telex 74272

6 November 1979

PUS/627/B

Sir Ian Bancroft KCB
Permanent Secretary
Civil Service Department
Whitehall
London SW1

Dear Ian,

RIPA/GRANADA CONFERENCE

Thank you for sending me a copy of your letter to Pat Nairne of 9 October.

I agree, of course, with the view that serving Civil Servants should not participate either in the preliminary conference or in any of the works of fiction with which RIPA/Granada will follow it up. One could guess with some confidence that sooner or later one or more of the many issues of policy arising in Northern Ireland would appear on the agenda, and one hardly needs to state the case against officials becoming involved in such matters. As to retired Civil Servants, one's fear is that if they are any good and have a sense of responsibility they will be very wary of becoming involved. If not I would prefer to stand well back.

I am copying this letter to the recipients of yours.

*Yours sincerely,
Ken Stowe*



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & SOCIAL SECURITY
Alexander Fleming House, Elephant & Castle, London SE1 6BY

Telephone 01-407 5522 ext 6981

From the Permanent Secretary

Sir Patrick Nairne KCB MC

Sir Ian Bancroft GCB
Civil Service Department
Whitehall
LONDON SW1A 2AZ

19 October 1979

Dear Ian,

RIPA/GRANADA CONFERENCE

I have thought carefully about your letter of 9 October, and about William Plowden's initiative which stimulated it.

2. I would, like yourself, wish to be as constructive as possible. I would also want to help the RIPA at the present time if it was open to us to do so. Unfortunately, however, I see all too clearly the same objections as you do to what Plowden has proposed.

3. There would be no advantage at all to the Service to arrange (if Ministers were content) for civil servants to take part in the kind of occasion proposed and then find that they had to 'shuffle their feet', and enter reservations, in the discussion in a way that would damage their value and impact as participants. I can readily imagine (as I am sure that colleagues can too) how some Ministers of the previous Administration would readily take part, and that this could hardly fail to create embarrassment for the serving civil servants present. In short, the risks are obvious - and, I would judge, overriding. What I find less obvious is why William Plowden should apparently feel so strongly that one must have people "who are still involved in government, rather than those who have left it". Provided that lively participants are invited, I am unconvinced that the kind of programme which Granada and the RIPA have in mind - and it strikes me as somewhat artificial in character - would not be just as "interesting and valuable" with those who have relatively recently withdrawn from active responsibilities in government.

4. In short, I support your view. I shall be scratching my head about ex-civil servants who might be suitable; but I doubt if there are any DHSS names to offer - and I also agree with you that perhaps the most suitable people would be those who had left the Service before retirement age and are now at work in the private sector.

5. Copies to the same colleagues.

*yours ever,
pat*

(PATRICK NAIRNE)



CIVIL SERVICE DEPARTMENT
WHITEHALL LONDON SW1A 2AZ

Telephone 01 273 5400

*Sir Ian Bancroft G.C.B.
Head of the Home Civil Service*

cc Miss Badham
Mr Charkham
Mr Beastall + pps
Mr Tobias
Mr Davie

Sir Patrick Nairne KCB MC
Department of Health &
Social Security
Alexander Fleming House
Elephant & Castle
LONDON SE1

9 October 1979

Dear Pat,

RIPA/GRANADA CONFERENCE

... I attach a copy of a letter I have had from William Plowden suggesting that serving civil servants should participate in a conference, to be organised jointly by the RIPA and Granada Television, in which they would be asked to say how they would act in situations which would be hypothetical but of the kind which might well occur in government.

Clearly we should not turn down a suggestion of this sort lightly, because it does the Service no good in the long run if we are felt to be uncooperative without sound reason. The initial conference would be private and there would be no commitment to participation in any subsequent televised performances. On the other hand, since Plowden has been quite frank in saying that the purpose of the initial conference would be to help to secure agreement to a televised version, there would be little point in allowing civil servants to take part in the former if we were to conclude that there was no prospect of Ministers agreeing to the latter.

My initial view is that there would be no advantage in allowing serving civil servants to take part. The issues raised for discussion, although hypothetical, are bound to be related to matters of current interest on which it would be extremely difficult for civil servants to talk freely. And the difficulty would be compounded as the Ministers involved would be former Ministers, I would judge. So why not former civil servants? Plowden's examples of the arrival in office of a new administration, or a slush fund by a nationalised industry to obtain sales, well illustrate the difficulty. Ex-civil servants would not suffer from the same inhibitions and would be perfectly well able to illustrate how the government machine works - as was demonstrated in the recent programme mentioned by Plowden, which included Antony Part, Plowden himself and Gerald Flanagan (ex-DOE). I have read the

transcript of this, and they did well. I have also talked to Antony Part, who tends to share my view.

However, I would be grateful to have your views and those of other colleagues. If we were to conclude that serving civil servants should not take part, it would be useful to be ready with the names of a few more ex-civil servants who might be suitable, perhaps people who have left the Service recently in mid-career. I would be glad to have any suggestions.

I am copying this letter to those colleagues whom I consulted on the recent BBC proposal for a television series on the Civil Service and also to Douglas Wass.

Yrs ever,

Ian

IAN BANCROFT

CIRCULATION FOR SIR IAN BANCROFT'S LETTER OF 9 OCTOBER 1979

Sir John Hunt GCB
Sir Robert Armstrong KCB CVO
Sir Kenneth Barnes KCB
Sir Kenneth Clucas KCB
K R Stowe Esq CB CVO
Sir John Garlick KCB
Sir Peter Baldwin KCB
H L James Esq
Sir Frank Cooper GCB CMG
Sir Douglas Lovelock KCB
Sir Michael Palliser GCMG
Sir Douglas Wass KCB

Cabinet Office
Home Office
Dept of Employment
Dept of Trade
Northern Ireland Office
Dept of Environment
Dept of Transport
No 10
Ministry of Defence
Customs & Excise
Foreign & Commonwealth Office
HM Treasury

Royal Institute of Public Administration

3 Birdcage Walk London SW1H 9JJ

TEL 01-222 2248

Director-General

WILLIAM PLOWDEN

28 September 1979

Sir Ian Bancroft GCB
Civil Service Department
Whitehall
London
SW1

letter only

ACTION	<i>Mr Beestall</i>
FOR INFO	<i>IPB / + am.</i>
	<i>Mr Bullock</i>
	<i>Mr Davie</i>

to 2/10

Dear Ian

I am writing to ask if the Civil Service Department would have any objection to the participation by serving officials in a somewhat unusual conference, to be organised jointly by this Institute and Granada Television. The form of the conference would be based on a technique pioneered at Harvard Law School and recently seen on British television in Granada's six Sunday morning 'State of the Nation' programmes. The technique consists of a series of exchanges between a 'moderator' and the members of a panel of participants, in which the former posits various 'hypothetical' situations and asks the latter how they would behave if confronted with these. The original objective was to increase the participants' understanding of the relationships between the situation, the law and themselves; the televised version aims also to increase the viewers' understanding. The enclosed transcript of one of the Granada programmes is a good example.

The proposed conference would be financed by Granada but organised jointly with this Institute. It would probably take a whole day, either during the working week or at a weekend. It would not be televised or filmed. The participants would be chosen for their close first-hand knowledge of the working of central government. The situations which they would be invited to consider would be ones which, as a general type, might well occur in government and the working-out of which would help to illuminate the nature of the governmental process, of the attitude to their jobs of those concerned and of the relationships between them. Such situations might include, for example, the arrival in office of a new administration with a totally new set of commitments which would reverse many established policies, or the kind of conflict between national economic self-interest and professional ethics that might arise in cases such as bribery by a nationalised industry to obtain foreign sales.

A discussion of this kind seems likely to be inherently interesting and valuable in its own right. Beyond this, the underlying aim of the conference would be to examine the practicability of repeating the same sort of discussion, on another occasion, in front of the cameras. Granada are indeed considering whether to make several programmes which would examine the workings of government in this way. The participants

Sir Ian Bancroft
Civil Service Department

would probably include people with experience as Ministers, MPs, civil servants, and others. For the civil servants, Granada could, as they have done with earlier programmes, invite retired officials as surrogates for those still serving; this was their original intention. My own view is that this would be a pity from every point of view, since if the object is to have a serious look at the working of government in 1979, one will get something much closer to the truth if one talks to people who are still involved in government, rather than those who have left it. In principle, the great advantage of the 'hypothetical' approach is that it allows people to discuss how they would react in a situation without needing to touch on actual current events. (It incidentally also removes any need to film actual goings-on on location, eg. inside government departments.) A preliminary, private conference of the kind suggested might of course show either that serving officials would not feel able to discuss their activities openly with outsiders, even in hypothetical terms; or that, even if they did, the discussion would not be suitable for public showing. In either case Granada would simply have to rethink their approach to the subject and, presumably, go back to their original idea of inviting former officials.

The RIPA's interest in all this derives naturally from our general task of helping to increase understanding of the public service. The proposed private conference would be very illuminating in its own right, for those present. A televised series would clearly spread the illumination a great deal further. I know well all the difficulties of talking frankly about government in public. But Granada have a long recent history of rather successful efforts in this direction, and the 'hypothetical' technique can help to side-step some of the normal problems of confidentiality. If Granada are really interested, as I know the producers concerned are, in presenting the civil service to the public in a serious and responsible way, there is much to be said for helping them to get the result as nearly 'right' as possible.

I do hope that you will feel that the proposal is at least worth considering. I have talked about it in a very preliminary and informal way to John Beastall. If it seemed worth discussing in more detail one of the Granada people and myself would be glad to come and do so. Granada could also, of course, easily arrange a showing of one of their earlier programmes if this would be helpful. (In the enclosed script, interventions by former officials are at pp 29-40 and 69-70.)

Yours sincerely

William Plowden



Civil Service A74.

Civil Service Department
Whitehall London SW1A 2AZ
01-273 4400

14 September 1979

The Rt Hon Angus Maude, TD, MP
Paymaster General
Privy Council Office
68 Whitehall
LONDON SW1A 2AT

Dear Angus.

PROPOSED BBC TV SERIES ON CIVIL SERVICE

I was grateful for the note of caution in your letter of 28 August. The programmes will not go ahead unless I get a satisfactory agreement about the conditions and I shall be talking to Ian Trethowan in about ten days time.

I am copying this to Sir John Hunt and to Henry James.

Yours ever

Christoph

SOAMES



PRIVY COUNCIL OFFICE
WHITEHALL, LONDON SW1A 2AT

28 August 1979

The Rt Hon Lord Soames GCMG GCVO CBE
Lord President of the Council
Civil Service Department
Whitehall
SW1

PAL
Prals

Dear Christopher,

PROPOSED BBC TV SERIES ON CIVIL SERVICE

I have seen your memo of 16 August to the Prime Minister on the above proposal, and the Press Secretary's letter of 24 August to your Private Secretary.

While the decision is obviously one for the Prime Minister and yourself, I think you should know that facilities were given two years ago to the BBC to do an exactly similar series on Conservative Central Office - and the result was widely considered to be something of a disaster. We had of course been told that the programme would be friendly, impartial and helpful.

Unless you can impose much more rigid and watertight conditions than we were able to secure, I fear you may have a similar experience.

The damage was caused not by the 'fly-on-the-wall' sequences or the internal interviews but by interpolated comments and interviews with hostile critics (all members of the Party!) from outside. The whole flavour of the programme was dictated by these.

The opportunities for this kind of sniping (and we were totally unaware that the programme would include it) are obvious where the Civil Service is concerned. It is a technique much favoured by these people, and it can be very damaging.

I am copying this letter to Sir John Hunt and to Henry James.

Yours ever,

Angus

ANGUS MAUDE



51

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Press Secretary

24 August 1979

The Lord President wrote to the Prime Minister on 16 August suggesting that the BBC might be offered facilities for a series of straight documentaries on the work of the Civil Service outside London and in Whitehall. This might include interviews with Ministers and senior civil servants.

He took the view that the Prime Minister would not want Cabinet Office or No 10 to be included in this series.

The Prime Minister has now considered this minute and accepts the recommendation that a straight documentary might be acceptable. And that she would not "want anything about No 10 or the Cabinet Office included".

She expressed some reservations on the personalities involved: she does not rate them highly and implicitly she accepts that there would have to be a very clear arrangement with the producers on the terms of reference under which they would operate.

I am copying this letter to the Paymaster General and to Sir John Hunt.

J Buckley Esq
Private Secretary to
The Rt Hon Lord Soames GCMG GCVO CBE
Lord President of the Council
Civil Service Department
Whitehall
London SW1A 2AZ

Original returned
to Press Office

PRIME MINISTER

PROPOSED BBC/TV SERIES ON THE CIVIL SERVICE

I thought the Granada
effort was disastrous and helped
no-one. A straight documentary would
be acceptable but I would not leave it
in the hands of the three proposed people.
I do not want anything about my
Office in the
Cabinet Office involvement.

The Lord President's minute represents the outcome
of a great deal of discussion between Departments.

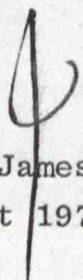
It is a problem which has vexed Whitehall for many
years and one which has been subject to a fashionable
response. Probably the peak period for actuality filming of the
Civil Service at work was in 1973 when Granada, through their
"State of the Nation" programmes, claimed to be showing
the lay public how Government operates. There is a fundamental
difficulty in illustrating the essentially advisory role
of the civil servant - and it is on the relationship with
Ministers that television journalism tends to focus.

In the event the State of the Nation series gave an
artificial picture since definitive meetings often had
to be restaged off camera. There is the additional problem, to which
I have drawn attention, that there must be a right of
conscientious objection to appearing in such a programme (I have
myself exercised that right on occasion).

The CSD conclusion that the BBC might be offered the
opportunity and facilities for a series of straight documentaries
seems the right one. But I think the Lord President is right
in suggesting that this might not be an acceptable format for the
BBC.

On the whole the format is in any case best suited to the
policy-making Departments. I believe it would be inappropriate
both to No 10 and to the Cabinet Office - not least because
of security requirements.

I think, therefore, that you may wish to go along with the Lord President's proposal to offer facilities - with clearly defined guidelines - for a documentary in an appropriate Department, preferably one with executive responsibilities.


Henry L James
17 August 1979



PRIME MINISTER

PROPOSED BBC TV SERIES ON THE CIVIL SERVICE

The BBC "Panorama" team have sought my Department's agreement to their making a series of TV programmes about the Civil Service, to be transmitted early next year. Their thinking is still in its early stages, but their present idea is to do 3 programmes: one about a local office or establishment outside London; one about a Whitehall Department, with the participation of Ministers; and one about the work of your own office and the Cabinet Office. We need to decide whether discussions with the BBC should continue and if so on what basis.

The BBC have presented their proposal as an opportunity to portray the work of the government machine in a positive way, as an antidote to the criticism of it which is all too familiar. Moreover, if we gave a favourable response we could take credit for allowing this degree of openness about the workings of government. I rather like the idea. It is important to let the public see some of the things which go on in the Civil Service which are of direct benefit to individuals.

On the other hand, there are clear risks of embarrassment, particularly in the "fly on the wall" filming of meetings etc as they happen, which is a key part of the BBC proposal. These risks can be kept to a minimum by agreeing a firm set of rules with the BBC in advance which would, inter alia, exclude filming of civil servants giving policy advice to Ministers. But the BBC would insist on retaining editorial control. A lot depends on the integrity and sense of responsibility of the people making the programme. I understand that those involved in this approach (Mr Chris Capron, Mr Michael Cockerell and Mr Clive Syddall) are generally well thought of. ~~~~~

Not very -

I think we should offer the BBC limited access and that we must come to a clear arrangement with them about the restrictions under which they would operate. This rules out "fly on the wall" filming and points to a series of straight documentaries on the work of the Civil Service outside London and in Whitehall. It might include interviews with Ministers and senior civil servants.

This might of course not be an acceptable format for the BBC. But if they are willing to do it I think we should take a chance on it. However, I do not imagine you would want the Cabinet Office or No 10 to be included in the programme.

I am copying this minute to Angus Maude and to Sir John Hunt.

S.

SOAMES
16 August 1979

✓
MAD
CIVIL SERVICE

NOTE FOR THE RECORD OF A MEETING HELD ON 1 AUGUST 1979 TO DISCUSS
SIR IAN BANCROFT'S LETTER OF 5 JULY TO SIR PATRICK NAIRNE (BBC PROGRAMME)

Present: Sir Ian Bancroft
Sir Patrick Nairne
Sir Robert Armstrong
Sir Kenneth Clucas
Sir Kenneth Barnes
Sir Frank Cooper
Sir Douglas Lovelock
Sir Peter Baldwin
Sir John Garlick
Mr Jarmany

Opening the meeting Sir Ian Bancroft said he was sorry that the timing did not allow of Sir John Hunt, Mr Whitmore or Mr James being present. If those present decided that the BBC's approaches should be followed up Sir Ian would approach the Lord President and the Prime Minister.

The BBC had suggested doing three programmes - one about a regional or local office; one about a Whitehall department; and one about No 10 and the Cabinet Office. Sir Ian had rather prompted them as regards the first of these, and they were not very hopeful about the last. The team which would be handling the programme seemed well-disposed and were widely regarded as competent and responsible. Mr Cockerell had been the Chief Reporter on the programme about Mr Hattersley and the DPCP.

Sir Ian invited colleagues to comment on whether they thought the concept of the series should be encouraged and whether the series would be in the interest of the Civil Service.

In discussion Permanent Secretaries were chary about the filming of civil servants and Ministers in Whitehall offices. It was generally agreed that staged meetings did not make convincing television, and even filming of meetings with Ministers on innocuous subjects held the perils of political asides or unguarded remarks. The point was made that in meetings of either sort, civil servants were not seen to be doing much of a job; much of their work was done on paper and the viewing public would be left with a misleading impression.

Permanent Secretaries noted the relative success of the Panorama programme on Mr Hattersley and were impressed by the degree of control that the BBC had allowed the Department to have over what was shown. They felt however that one could not rely over much upon the integrity of producers and reporters or on the BBC accepting again the sort of conditions the DPCP had laid down for this programme, and had suggested as guidelines for future programmes.

It was understood that the producer's acceptance of the DPCPs conditions had caused some argument within the BBC. It was generally felt that the DPCP programme was a unique example and that the BBC team's cooperation on that occasion was probably given so that they could get a foot in the Whitehall door.

A programme about a regional office or a Research and Development establishment did not present so many problems. There were interesting areas where the Civil Service had a good and interesting story to tell showing ordinary people doing worthwhile work. Sir Patrick Nairne however commented that when it had been suggested that local DHSS offices might be the subject of a TV programme, local staff sides were very much against the idea. Although no programme would do good for any department, such a programme should generally benefit the Service. The timing of the showing would need to be watched: it would be better for programmes on the Civil Service to be shown after the results of current economy exercises had shown that the Service was doing its bit in the search for savings in Government expenditure. It was suggested that the BBC could be offered a series of short interviews with Permanent Heads of Departments describing their jobs, possibly including documentary material about the departments. Although some expressed reservations about this it was generally felt that a "Money Programme-Panorama" type audience would find this interesting but Ministers would probably not agree to such a format - although they would agree to a similar format built around interviews with Ministers.

Permanent Secretaries were disposed to be helpful to the BBC and were sensitive to the general wish for greater openness about the Civil Service. The problem was that all reporters wanted to burrow in the corridors of power, and were especially interested in the closed area of civil servants' advice to Ministers. Even if conditions for filming were agreed and rules about areas of likely difficulty defined in writing, the programme makers could still be awkward about editorial control. Also, no one knew what happened to film not used for the programme itself which might be used in other documentaries or investigative programmes or even on the news.

One way of tactfully refusing the BBC entry to Whitehall might be to offer it, hedged about with conditions which the BBC would never accept. But there was no way of knowing what conditions they might accept in order to get in at all.

Summing up the discussion Sir Ian Bancroft said there were four options the BBC could be offered:

- i. a non-Whitehall series (local offices, R & D Establishments and laboratories);
- ii. a series of Permanent Secretaries talking about their jobs;
- iii. straight documentaries on departments;
- iv. documentaries on departments anchored around Ministers.

The last of these would probably most appeal to Ministers. Sir Ian felt that the discussion had usefully clarified colleagues' views and he would now consider what to put to the Lord President and the Prime Minister with a view to resuming negotiations with the BBC.

Tof Churchill

TOBY CHURCHILL
Assistant Private Secretary
2 August 1979

2

Distribution:

Those present
Sir John Hunt
Mr James
Mr Whitmore



CLIVE (ae)
! MS
JWH
9iii

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Press Secretary

27 July 1979

PROPOSED BBC TV SERIES ON THE CIVIL SERVICE

Before I sink slowly in the South, I thought I should report that 48 hours after my return here I was approached by Clive Sydall about earlier proposals which had gone past the tentative stage for staging a programme in this series within No 10.

At the time, I had not seen the earlier correspondence or been aware that the tentacles of the programme were so widespread. But I am bound to say that I offered very little encouragement that it would be possible to film either by "Fly on the wall" techniques or by set pieces.

I have not discussed this with the Prime Minister as a specific proposal, but I know her every instinct is against the intrusion of cameras or microphones into No 10 which has the unique character of being both office and home.

I have unequivocal views on the exposure of the Civil Service in this way, and they utterly reject "Fly on the wall". I believe that no true picture can emerge in this way, and despite the pretensions of the technique and the faith of the producers that it is a true representation of an actual happening, practice has shown that it cannot be. The famous "State of the Nation" programmes by Grenada so eloquently promulgated by Roger Graef and Brian Lapping contained massive unrealities. And to that extent the technique is dangerous.

Far more honest, but possibly also more subjective, is the planned documentary, and where the subject lends itself to television I should have no objection. Though I am bound to say that I would have as a civil servant myself a conscientious objection to appearing in it, and have in fact in the course of my career exercised that right.

If I can help in any way in your discussions I should be happy to do so, but meantime must mark a clear note of reservation which I am sure the Prime Minister would share in including No 10 in the series.

Sir Ian Bancroft GCB
Civil Service Department
Old Admiralty Building
Whitehall
London SW1

DISTRIBUTION:

Sir Patrick Nairne KCB MC	DHSS
Sir Michael Palliser GCMG	FCO
Sir Kenneth Clucas KCB	DT
Sir Frank Cooper GCB CMG	MOD
Sir Douglas Lovelock KCB	C & E
Sir Peter Baldwin KCB	DTp
Sir John Garlick KCB	DOE
Clive Whitmore	No 10



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

18 July 1979

Sir Ian Bancroft GCB
CIVIL SERVICE DEPARTMENT

Sir Ian,

PROPOSED BBC TV SERIES ON THE CIVIL SERVICE

1. I am sorry not to have replied sooner to your letter of 5 July. I was unable to see the two BBC programmes "Our Man in Lusaka" and "Our Man in Caracas" on the nights they were originally screened and I wanted to let you have my views in the light of our latest experiences.
2. Of course we have had some other relevant experience in this field. In the fairly recent past, there have been programmes about the Washington and Moscow Embassies; the Panorama team filmed Dr Owen's visit to South Africa and Namibia last autumn; and, somewhat longer ago, there was a programme about the work of our United Nations Mission at Geneva. One clear conclusion to be drawn is that a better impression is generally created when the programme has an identifiable theme to it. And obviously the more that theme is understood by the public at large, the more interest it will arouse in the viewers and thus the more effective the programme will be.
3. The Washington and Moscow programmes both suffered from having no central focus for their rather impressionistic observations of our Embassies' various activities. The Panorama programme about Dr Owen's visit to Southern Africa, although not strictly of a "fly on the wall" character, in reality gave a clearer idea of what diplomacy might be about (though it inevitably concentrated more on the Ministerial role). The earlier Geneva programme was well focussed, but its subject matter - a UN negotiation on a pretty non-political subject - was inevitably somewhat recondite and rather beyond the grasp of the lay viewer.
4. I thought on the other hand that the recent Caracas programme met the bill rather better by concentrating heavily on the Mission's commercial work - though this introduced some distortion as a consequence. The Lusaka programme was perhaps less well put together and the rather more political themes gave it less bite. We must recognise however that neither made compulsive viewing to the man on the Clapham omnibus.



5. As regards working with television teams on programmes of this kind, our experience is that, given plenty of patience and goodwill, the work can be accomplished without serious friction; but the 'right' to insist on the omission of unwelcome passages can only be exercised very sparingly in practice and it is noteworthy that the film crew for the Caracas programme (the better of the two) was very much less easy to handle than the one that went to Lusaka.

6. To sum up, we have become involved in these programmes because we were asked, not because we took the initiative. I am sure we were right to respond positively. It is good for the Diplomatic Service not to hide its light under a bushel. It is good for the public to know what we do. By being cooperative and open one avoids the worst pitfalls or publicity. But I doubt that we have gained great benefit overall.

*I suspect that 85% of viewers will have switched to
I.T.V. after 15 minutes!*

— — — — —

Michael Palliser

Michael Palliser

cc: Sir Kenneth Clucas KCB, DOT

Sir Kenneth Barnes KCB, Department of Employment

Sir Frank Cooper GCB CMG, MOD

Sir Douglas Lovelock KCB, HM Customs & Excise

Sir Peter Baldwin KCB, Department of Transport

Sir John Garlick KCB, Department of Environment

C A Whitmore Esq, No 10

H James Esq, No 10



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & SOCIAL SECURITY

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From the Permanent Secretary

Sir Patrick Nairne KCB MC

Sir Ian Bancroft GCB
Civil Service Department
Whitehall
LONDON SW1A 2AZ

9 July 1979

Dear Sir,

PROPOSED BBC TV SERIES ON THE CIVIL SERVICE

Many thanks for your letter of 5 July. I shall be delighted to join in a discussion within the small group you have in mind.

May I offer three (pretty obvious) points which immediately come to mind:-

a. On the assumption that Mr Cockerell and Mr Syddall are to be the key figures, we must reflect on what evidence we have of other work they have done. The implication of paragraph 5 of your note is that they dealt with the DPCP programme, and it will be very interesting to hear what Ken Clucas has to say. All our experience goes to show that, whether we are dealing with the BBC or IBA, the key factor in terms of integrity and balanced treatment is usually the personal style and behaviour of the producer and the interviewer.

b. You naturally mentioned the "fly on the wall" problem at the lunch. It looks as if we shall need to be clear whether there is some valid distinction to be drawn between the kind of "fly on the wall" TV filming which we cannot accept and the sort of documentary filming which we can accept. It is in part a question of level (eg local offices have been the subject of television films, and the films have naturally included civil servants talking to clients) and in part a question of the occasion's character (eg the TV film some years ago of civil servants working on a bill was as boring as anybody could wish for).

c. It is, I think, inescapable that, if Ministers agree to the programme at all, they must accept the BBC's right "to transmit anything they filmed". But this makes paragraph 4 of your note especially important. What we shall need to do is to exercise the maximum influence and control over the subjects, areas of activity, and specific occasions which will be exposed to the TV cameras.

E. R.

But we all know the problems... I very much hope that we shall be able to resolve them, and to establish conditions which both Ministers and the BBC can accept.

Copies to those mentioned in your letter.

Yours ever,
Pat
(PATRICK NAIRNE)



CIVIL SERVICE DEPARTMENT

WHITEHALL LONDON SW1A 2AZ

Telephone 01 273 5400

*Sir Ian Bancroft G.C.B.
Head of the Home Civil Service*

Sir Patrick Nairne KCB MC
Department of Health &
Social Security
Alexander Fleming House
Elephant & Castle
LONDON SE1

5 July 1979

Dear Pat,

PROPOSED BBC TV SERIES ON THE CIVIL SERVICE

You exchanged correspondence with John Herbecq last December about an idea which the BBC had put to us for a series of television programmes about the Civil Service. The BBC have developed their thinking somewhat since then, and they invited me to lunch last week to explain what they had in mind. I attach a brief note of the discussion.

I suggest that a small group of us might get together and consider the next steps, and in particular what advice to give to Ministers.

I am copying this letter to Ken Clucas, who was involved with last year's programme about Mr Hattersley, to Ken Barnes, Frank Cooper, Douglas Lovelock, Peter Baldwin and John Garlick. Copies also go to Clive Whitmore and Henry James at No 10, whom the BBC will no doubt also be approaching, if they have not already done so; and to Michael Palliser in case he has any comments to offer in the light of the FCO's experience of working with the BBC on the programmes "Our Man in Lusaka" and "Our Man in Caracas." My office will be in touch about a time for a meeting.

Ys ever,

Ian

IAN BANCROFT

Note for the Record

PROPOSED BBC TV SERIES ON THE CIVIL SERVICE

1. Sir Ian Bancroft and I had lunch at the BBC on Wednesday 27 June with Mr Chris Caprom (Editor of "Panorama" and the BBC's Deputy Head of Current Affairs), Mr Michael Cockerell (a senior reporter on "Panorama") and Mr Clive Syddall (Producer and Deputy Editor of "The Money Programme"). The purpose of the lunch was to enable the BBC representatives to explain in more detail their idea for a series of TV programmes about the Civil Service.
2. Their present idea is that there should be three programmes of perhaps 45 minutes to one hour each: one showing the work of civil servants outside London, eg in a local office; one dealing with the Whitehall machine; and one dealing with the Prime Minister's office. It is envisaged that filming might take place some time in the autumn and the programmes would be transmitted early next year.
3. The BBC representatives made it clear that they would want to include action shots of, eg, work in a local office and meetings and discussions between Ministers and civil servants in Whitehall. They were not interested in filming simulated meetings. They were also clear that the BBC would retain editorial control of the programmes. They would not surrender the right to transmit anything they filmed. However we would have access to the film material before it went out and they would be prepared to listen to arguments about its content. They stressed that they were anxious to present a fair picture, and quoted their recent coverage of the Times newspaper dispute, when they had received tributes to the programme's fairness from both management and the unions.
4. They said they had not yet decided what subjects or areas of work they wanted to cover and indeed would be grateful for any suggestions. They were not asking for a decision on their proposal at this stage, but were hoping for a continuing dialogue.
5. After lunch they showed us an extract from the Panorama programme of April 1978 about Mr Hattersley, which included film of officials from DPCP advising the Secretary of State about a Price Commission report on the price of tea. They claimed - with justice, it seemed to me - that this showed the civil servants concerned in a good light. They explained that they had taken into account the Department's comments on certain points in the film, to the satisfaction (they believed) of the Department. On the question of the burden on Departments of making a programme of this sort, they said that all the filming at DPCP had taken place during one day. This had been preceded by discussions with the Department, but they did not feel that these had been excessively time-consuming.

6. In reply, Sir Ian Bancroft was non-committal. He pointed out the anxieties felt both by civil servants and, he expected, by Ministers about programmes of this sort, and in particular about "fly on the wall" filming. However, he undertook to reflect further and would be in touch with the BBC later when he had done so.

JSB

J S Beastall
Information Division

3 July 1979