





10 DOWNING STREET  
LONDON SW1A 2AA

*From the Principal Private Secretary*

SIR ROBIN BUTLER

You discussed with the Prime Minister your minute of 22 March. She shared your misgivings about the choice of Mr. Michael Cockerell as the programme-maker, as she doubts whether he can be relied upon to produce an objective portrayal of the Civil Service. She felt that the Civil Service should participate only if understandings could be reached which would limit the scope for editing, for example an insistence that any material recorded is used "as live". If the BBC were not able to agree to this, she too would be prepared to see the proposal drop.

AT

ANDREW TURNBULL

23 March 1990

✓



*Prime Minister  
You will want to  
discuss the pros and cons of  
this.*

*AT 22/3*

Ref. A090/748

MR TURNBULL

c Mr Ingham

BBC Programme on "Pillars of State"

I have been approached by Mr Michael Cockerell who is proposing to make a series of four programmes under the title "Pillars of State", of which the focus would be on the people who reached the top posts in the Civil Service, the Army, the Anglican Church and the Judiciary, each programme being an hour long and devoted to a single institution. The programmes would largely consist of interviews conducted by Mr Cockerell with people at the top of these four professions, plus some background filming. As regards civil servants, the sort of questions which Mr Cockerell has said that he is hoping to explore include:

- how well equipped today's civil servants are to face the challenges of the 90s;
- the importance of managerial skills;
- the extent of the analogy between Government and business;
- politicisation and impartiality;
- the scope for importing outsiders;
- the confidentiality of advice;
- the major challenges facing individual Departments.

2. I have discussed this proposition with senior colleagues and have had Mr Ingham's advice. Mr Ingham thinks that such a programme could be helpful if it were honestly produced and the



civil servants (whose selection I will approve) perform well; but that the decision on whether to participate turned on judgement of Michael Cockerell, who has not in the past been found to be particularly deep or reliable. ==

3. My own view is that Mr Cockerell is not the programme-maker I would have preferred. On the other hand, I take the view that all the subjects raised by him are the sort of questions which senior civil servants have these days to be used to answering when appearing before a televised Select Committee and that, if they perform well and we can obtain reasonable safeguards against dishonest editing, they should be able to project a favourable image of the Civil Service. If the BBC goes ahead with the other institutions described (and I gather from Mr Cockerell that he has not approached them yet) I would not want the BBC to be able to say that the Civil Service had refused to take part.

4. I am inclined to think that the senior civil servants might take part if, and only if, Mr Cockerell is willing to agree to the sort of editing conventions which were negotiated with the makers of the BBC programme in which I took part some 18 months ago - namely that he should only film as much from each person as he intends to use in the programme and that he should not omit material or use it out of context in a way which distorts its sense.

5. It might be impossible to negotiate terms of this sort with Mr Cockerell and, if so, I should be content for the proposition to founder on those grounds.

6. Would the Prime Minister be content for me to proceed with Mr Cockerell on that basis?

*Yes - but I shall  
your acknowledgment*

*Anna Rippon*

ROBIN BUTLER

22 March 1990

*7 - Mr. Cockerell  
mt*

*(dictated by Sir Robin  
and signed in his  
absence)*



101310103

101



le v  
c Bt.

10 DOWNING STREET  
LONDON SW1A 2AA

*From the Principal Private Secretary*

SIR ROBERT ARMSTRONG

Thank you for your minute of 22 December about the proposed programme by Anne Sloman and Hugo Young.

The Prime Minister has accepted your advice that departmental cooperation with their proposed programme is neither practicable nor desirable. Accordingly, I have written to departments as in the letter attached.

N.L. WICKS

23 December 1987

W



10 DOWNING STREET

LONDON SW1A 2AA

*From the Principal Private Secretary*

23 December 1987

*Dear Mike,*

Anne Sloman and Hugo Young, who have been responsible for previous series of radio programmes and books on the Civil Service, the Treasury and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, are considering a proposal to produce a BBC radio series and a book on decision-making in Government. The programmes would be based on a scrapbook technique: the producers would hope to select six policy areas, and cover their development over a period of two years, building up recordings of meetings and notes which would then be edited for broadcasting. One issue that has been suggested for this treatment is that of electricity privatisation.

Ms Sloman has approached one or two Ministers and Permanent Secretaries about the possibility of them and their Departments co-operating in such an enterprise.

The previous series of programmes by Anne Sloman and Hugo Young have been programmes based on a process of interviews with individual people. While Ms Sloman and Mr. Young have interviewed people for their previous series and have on occasion sat in on departmental meetings, what is now proposed would focus a good deal more directly on the decision making process itself, and the respective roles of Ministers and civil servants. It would be difficult if not impossible to reconcile this with the preservation of the confidentiality of official advice to Ministers and of interdepartmental discussion; and although Ms Sloman has offered to promise that any information obtained by privileged access to officials would be used exclusively for the radio series and book, it is not possible to guarantee that material collected would not become public by other avenues during the programmes' gestation period.

The Prime Minister concludes that it would not be possible or desirable for Departments to co-operate in the preparation of such a series.

This conclusion is being conveyed to Ms Sloman and Mr. Young, but I should be grateful if you could make sure that

the contents of this letter are made known to your Minister and to the Permanent Secretary, in case they are approached by Ms Sloman and Mr. Young.

I am sending copies of this letter to the Private Secretaries to all Cabinet Ministers and Ministers in charge of Departments.

*his only*  
*Nigel Wicks*

N.L. WICKS

Mike Eland, Esq.,  
Lord President's Office.



Prime Minister's

Agree that I should write as at Annex A?

Ref. A087/3666

MR. WICKS

Yes

N.L.W.

22.12

Government Decision-Making: BBC (Sloman/Young)

Mr Ingham sent you a minute, <sup>attached</sup> which subsequently reached me and which I now return, about Anne Sloman's proposal for a series of radio programmes on Government decision-making.

2. Mr Butler and I have discussed this with Permanent Secretary colleagues. Mrs Sloman and Mr Young have done serious and useful programmes in the past on the Civil Service ("No Minister"), the Treasury ("But Chancellor") and the Foreign Office (the title for the moment escapes me - was it "As Seen from Here"). But we are all agreed that what is now proposed, involving privileged access to the decision-making process over a period of two years on six specific issues, including electricity privatisation, is neither practicable nor desirable.

3. Since Mrs Sloman and Mr Young have approached at least one Minister and may approach others, I propose that you should send out a Private Secretary letter in the terms of the draft attached at Annex A.

4. Anne Sloman approached Peter Gregson directly on this subject. I am writing separately to Peter Gregson, with a draft of a letter for him to send to her: I attach copies of my letter and draft at Annex B.

RIA

ROBERT ARMSTRONG

22 December 1987

I agree with B. I. Civil Servants' advice to Ministers should remain confidential

1. MR WICKS
2. MR BUTLER

It is not in civil servants' interests to take part in this sort of exercise, which is quite different from the earlier

Government Decision Making - BBC (Sloman/Young)

Sloman  
Programmes.

The attached letter is self-explanatory.

It is first of all illustrative of the way in which even reputable parts of the media attack Government rather in the manner of wolves harrying a stricken caribou. It is also interesting to note where the media consider the soft underbelly to be. I am delighted to discover they regard me as one of the antlers or a flying hoof. Having said that, the idea of the BBC's becoming part of the decision-making process is not on because:

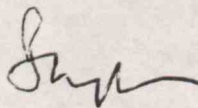
N: L W  
25.11

- i) this should not be the way Government does business in Britain;
- ii) even if the Government could contemplate converting the decision-making process into entertainment, there is no way in which the media could or should be admitted to the decision-making process when that process should be confidential and Government should take care to keep it confidential;
- iii) Government decision-making should be carefully conducted and not subject to the distortions inherent in the presence of microphones and journalists;
- iv) it is surely important - and perhaps more important now than ever before in view of the media's approach to officials - for the advice of officials to Ministers to remain confidential;
- v) Sloman's equivocation over the possible alternative or additional use of the material she collects makes it clear that the Government would effectively lose control over the recorded material; worse, whatever "guarantees" Sloman and Young may give, the reality these days is that once a journalist acquires information he either deliberately or inadvertently ensures it reaches the public prints since gossip is now one of the most prolific sources of news;
- vi) agreement to such a series would render the 30-year rule somewhat redundant; that may of course be part of the grand plan.

Sloman and Young are adopting their sneak tactics because they know my views which I have expressed honestly and openly to them in the past. In the interests of good Government this whole process should be stopped. I am sure that the Prime Minister will wish it to be.

This can perhaps only be done by a Prime Ministerial

minute which makes it clear beyond peradventure to Ministers and PUSs that her policy is to preserve the confidentiality of Civil Service advice to Ministers and that this policy must be upheld.



BERNARD INGHAM

25 November 1987



## CABINET OFFICE

Head of Information Services  
J B Wright

Horse Guards Road  
London SW1P 3AL  
Telephone: 01-270 6370

Mr Bernard Ingham  
Press Secretary  
Prime Minister's Office  
10 Downing Street  
LONDON SW1A 2AA

25 November 1987

*Dear Bernard.*

### GOVERNMENT DECISION-MAKING - ANNE SLOMAN AND HUGO YOUNG

You asked for a note on the proposal by Anne Sloman and Hugo Young to produce a BBC radio series and book on decision-making in government.

Ms Sloman wishes to cover up to six areas. She hopes one might be electricity privatisation. She plans a "scrapbook" technique: building up recordings and notes over two years for subsequent editing. Attendance at meetings between Ministers and civil servants is clearly one of her priorities. She would also be asking people outside the system - Lord Marshall, for example - what they thought of the way decisions were reached. You can imagine the likely format.

Sloman seems to have kicked-off by lunch with Sir Peter Middleton and there appears to have been brief discussion of her proposal at Permanent Secretaries' meeting.

She has seen Anne Mueller twice and is now trying to meet the Permanent Secretary at Energy. Hugo Young has seen Cecil Parkinson and, claims Sloman, received considerable encouragement. Lord Young and William Waldegrave appear to be the next two Ministers targetted.

At her first meeting with Miss Mueller, Sloman said she thought the best way of obtaining agreement to her proposal was persuading a well-disposed Minister to approach the Prime Minister, rather than going through the Head of the Civil Service. She was told firmly that the Head of the Civil Service would have to be involved.

At the second meeting, which I attended, she made it clear that she was avoiding government information channels. For example, she had made no contact with Mike Granatt. I said I found this rather strange as the Information Service was bound to become involved and their influence would be considerable. I added that, at some point, it would all come together centrally and inevitably you would be involved. That wasn't something she wished to hear!

Much discussion concentrated on how such a series could avoid breaching the confidentiality of civil servants' advice to Ministers and on the sort of assurances which Ms Sloman and Young could give. Various ideas were discussed. None seemed really workable in practice.

What it seems to boil down to is that they want privileged access to certain areas of government decision-making over the next two years; in particular the process leading to electricity privatisation. They would then produce a series of programmes in which, in my view, the scope for embarrassment both to Ministers and civil servants is self-evident. They would also have a great deal of material that **could** be used in other ways - for example, if a major news story broke on one of the areas they were examining. Sloman told Miss Mueller that she was prepared to give an oral assurance that any material obtained would be used only for her radio series but said couldn't put that in writing.

What concerns me is their deliberate policy - which up to now seems to be paying off - of direct approaches to Ministers and permanent secretaries in the hope of achieving a **fait accompli**. They do, of course, have a considerable reputation for making "serious" programmes of this kind which gives them a great deal of credibility.

At some stage the system will put this proposal to Sir Robert Armstrong or Robin Butler. But it may be that you wish now to ensure that the energies of Sloman and Young are channelled in the right direction and meet with a co-ordinated response.

I was asked at MIO to copy this note to Stephen Pickford, Jack Gee and Barry Sutcliffe. I am also copying it to Mike Granatt.

Yours sincerely,

John



Civil Service  
File

AA

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Principal Private Secretary

17 November 1982

Dear Douglas,

PROPOSED BBC RADIO 4 SERIES ON THE TREASURY

Thank you for your letter of 15 November.

I have taken the Prime Minister's mind on the suggestion that Alan Walters should be interviewed for the programme about political control of the Treasury and the relationship with No 10 and other departments. The Prime Minister considers that, since the relationship between the Treasury and No 10 is essentially a matter of the relationship between herself and the Chancellor, it would not be possible for Alan Walters to talk about this without straying into the area of the relationship between officials and Ministers and between Ministers and Ministers which officials are instructed to avoid. She would therefore not wish to agree that Alan Walters should be interviewed for the programme.

I am copying this letter to John Kerr and Robert Armstrong.

Yours ever,

Robin

Sir Douglas Wass GCB

AA

PRIME MINISTER

No interview

ms

I have misgivings about the proposition in the attached letter that Alan Walters should be interviewed for the Ann Sloman/Hugo Young series on the Treasury.

It could be argued that if the programme is to cover the relationship between the Treasury and other institutions, the relationship with No.10 is an important part of the picture and Alan would be no more at risk than other officials who are interviewed.

But I have two reservations:-

i) One of the areas Treasury officials will be told to keep off is relations between officials and Ministers and between Ministers and Ministers. But what is the relationship between No.10 and the Treasury other than the relationship between you and the Chancellor? It is hard to see what Alan could say without straying into that territory.

ii) Alan could only give a partial account of relations between No.10 and the Treasury. The channel for most day-to-day transactions is Michael Scholar; and I would be reluctant to start a precedent for your private secretaries to give broadcast interviews.

I should be inclined to say that Alan Walters should not be interviewed, on the basis of the argument at i) above. ✓

Agree?

Yes

F.R.S.

16 November 1982



H M Treasury

Parliament Street London SW1P 3AG

Switchboard 01-233 3000

Direct Dialling 01-233 3620

Sir Douglas Wass GCB  
Permanent Secretary

Mr F E R Butler  
10 Downing Street  
LONDON  
SW1

15 November 1982

*Jean Robin,*

PROPOSED BBC RADIO 4 SERIES ON THE TREASURY

As I think you know, Robert Armstrong and Bernard Ingham have spoken to the Prime Minister about BBC Radio 4's plan to produce a series of five half hour programmes on the Treasury in the Spring of 1983. The Prime Minister said she was content that the programmes should go ahead subject to certain safeguards which Robert Armstrong outlined to me. I have spoken to Anne Sloman, the producer, and am satisfied that the spirit of these safeguards would be observed. We have also agreed other ground rules with her which protect the rights of individual interviewees.

I am writing to you about one specific point raised by Anne Sloman at our meeting. The last of the five programmes she envisages would deal with the question of political control of the Treasury. The idea would be to examine the relationship with No 10 and other departments, and no doubt form a view on how influential the Treasury really is, and what other inputs there are to the process of reaching financial decisions. To this end, Anne Sloman has asked if her co-author, Hugo Young, could interview Alan Walters for the series.

I should be grateful if you would take the Prime Minister's mind on this matter.

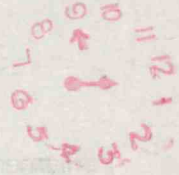
I am sending copies of this letter to John Kerr and Robert Armstrong.

*Yours ever  
Douglas Wass*

DOUGLAS WASS



12 NOV 1982



H. M. Treasury  
London SW1P 3AG  
SWITCHBOARD 01-573 2000  
Direct Dialling 01-533

CONFIDENTIAL

SECRET



10 DOWNING STREET

*From the Principal Private Secretary*

SIR ROBERT ARMSTRONG

Thank you for your minute of 9 November (A082/0045) about the proposal by the Producer and Presenter of the Radio 4 programme "No Minister" to do a series of radio programmes on the Treasury.

The Prime Minister had already seen Mr Hall's letter of 3 November to Mr Ingham and indicated that she would not wish to object to this project, although she has no great hopes that it will turn out to be successful. I have no doubt that the Prime Minister would agree with the precautions suggested in your minute.

F.R.B.

10 November 1982

*Aril Service.  
2.6 AH  
copied Bernard Ingham*

Ref. AO82/0045

MR BUTLER

---

I think that the Prime Minister should be aware of the proposal - (described in the letter attached) by the producer and presenter of the Radio 4 programme "No Minister" (Anne Sloman and Hugo Young) to do a series of radio programmes on the Treasury.

2. There have been newspaper series on Departments - for instance, on the Home Office - and occasional "fly on the wall" television programmes about the work of a Minister or of a Department; but so far as I am aware nothing quite like what is now proposed.

3. The timing is not everything that we could wish: the interviews will be undertaken between now and the end of the year (when the Treasury will be digesting the new appointments but they will not have taken effect) and broadcast at about Budget time, when it is felt that they will be topical.

4. This will be difficult to do without officials interviewed being drawn on to ground which they would normally be expected to keep off, such as relations between Ministers and officials, Ministerial consideration of policy, and matters of current political controversy. The preliminary discussions with the producer will have to draw the fence round the difficult areas, and those to be interviewed will have to be warned accordingly.

5. If the Prime Minister is content to let the series go ahead, I will write to Sir Douglas Wass in this sense.

RA

ROBERT ARMSTRONG

9th November 1982

Sir R Armstrong  
To see before your  
lunch on 24 Nov  
R4



Remind me of  
proceedings

H M Treasury  
Parliament Street London SW1P 3AG  
Switchboard 01-233 3000  
Direct Dialling 01-233 3443

CABINET OFFICE  
A ..... 9781 .....  
3NOV1982  
FILING INSTRUCTIONS  
FILE No. ....

M A Hall MVO  
Press Secretary and  
Head of Information Division

3 November 1982

Bernard Ingham Esq  
10 Downing Street

Dear Bernard,

PROPOSED RADIO 4 SERIES ON THE TREASURY.

You will recall the "No Minister" series which appeared on Radio 4 last year. Ann Sloman and Hugo Young have now approach me with a view to doing a series of programmes - probably 5 - on the Treasury. These would be on precisely the same basis as the previous series. The emphasis would be on the Treasury as an institution, and its relationship with other institutions, both in Government and internationally.

The Chancellor is content in principle that I go ahead with preliminary discussions with Ann Sloman, who is coming to see me tomorrow at 11 am. She has obtained planning authority for 5 programmes, beginning transmission on 27 February. The idea is not that the programmes should be about the Budget, but that broadcasting around Budget time would obtain maximum interest in programmes about the Treasury. There is at present all to play for, in the sense that the format of the programmes is very much at the planning stage.

The urgency derives from the fact that November and December are much the most convenient times for us to give time to this project. If we were not to get interviews completed by the end of the year, we should not really be able to contemplate doing the programmes until well into next year, after the Budget.

I do not imagine that this proposition causes you difficulty. But do please let me know early in the morning if it does.

I am copying this letter to the Private Secretary to Sir Robert Armstrong

Yours,  
MAH

M A HALL



IT8.7/2-1993  
2009:02

Image  
Access

IT-8 Target

Printed on Kodak Professional Paper

Charge: R090212