

cc Mr Whitmore  
✓ cc Mr Alexander

PRIME MINISTER

THIS WEEK - THE MEDIA

The formidable news diary this week - and the Crosby by-election - make this a very sensitive period in relation to the media. I would, therefore, like to get your broad approval as to how we might play it from now on.

Northern Ireland, Disarmament/Brezhnev, Middle East, proposed IR legislation and Scarman could all come up in your Question Times and I am not too concerned about them, though we shall have to watch Northern Ireland particularly carefully, bearing in mind Crosby's very substantial Catholic vote.

My main presentational worries stem largely from the European Council and the opportunities that it will offer for journalists to question you on "extraneous" matters or to play political games.

The first opportunity will arise on Wednesday when first the TUC come in with their European brothers and then the CBI, with their European team. The TUC have asked for facilities here for a press conference afterwards and I think we should respond, as we have done in the past (No. 12 will be available).

But I hope you will agree I should sit in on the TUC meeting and give a briefing afterwards to ensure our line gets out. We can consider at the time whether a briefing needs to be supplemented by a Minister going on the record. It would also be sensible for me to have a press officer at the CBI meeting.

Content?

*Is it customary for them to have press conferences?*

So far as the Euro Council itself is concerned, I attach at Annex I, a factual note on the media arrangements affecting you as President.

But we need to consider how to play the Council in the most positive way from your point of view: if we do not want it to be portrayed as a failure - and we don't - we shall have to work very hard to achieve a better result. This means that

/presentation

presentation becomes crucial.

We have succeeded in advance in damping down expectations and I shall be giving a briefing tomorrow (Tuesday) evening for the assembled press immediately after your internal briefing. But there is still a lot of work to be done if we are to rescue the Council from failure and secure acceptance of its modest success. Of course, we are in the end in the hands of reality - both about mood and events. But we are more likely to achieve positive presentation if we can spread the risks - i.e. brief as fully as possible on the Council in the round on all the subjects discussed.

As Presidents, we have a dual role as spokesmen - to act impartially for the presidency and brief fully and objectively on the Council; and then to don our national hats and argue the UK case. The better we do our job as Presidents, the more the media are likely to listen to us as national agents.

Accordingly, I need:

- a thorough service out of the Council, as usually provided by Lord Carrington;
- possibly an on the record briefing by Lord Carrington at the end of the first day; if not, I shall need to have a good steer from you personally after the first session;
- a rundown from you or your representative immediately after the Heads of Government dinner as I am expected to brief late at night on that event;
- a good steer at the beginning of the second day - Friday morning; and

/- a rundown

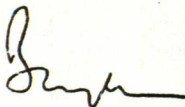
- a rundown from you, or your representative, at the end of the Friday morning session (because of evening paper and radio/TV interest and the fact that continental papers go to bed earlier than here in Britain; we must get the foreign press right).

The media will also be chasing you for a comment on the Crosby by-election, especially if you lose. It would be sensible to give them a quote as soon as possible after the result is announced to try to damp down interest at your Council press conference on Friday afternoon.

By the same token, it is very important I get a public line after Cabinet on the public expenditure discussion. We need to control presentation immediately after Cabinet (in view of afternoon and evening news bulletins before the polls close) as well as in Friday's newspapers. A clear line would be helpful.

Content to:

- a) meet my requests for briefing on Euro Council events? ✓
- b) give me an on the record quote on Crosby as soon as possible after declaration of the poll? ✓
- c) provide a briefing line on Cabinet's public expenditure decision? ✓



B. INGHAM

23 November, 1981

EUROPEAN COUNCIL: PRESS ARRANGEMENTS

Thursday, 26 November:

- Photocall - Her Majesty's lunch in honour of Heads of State and Government, Buckingham Palace
- Photocall - Arrival of Heads of State and Government at Lancaster House for first session
- Photocall - Heads of State and Government in Long Room, Lancaster House, immediately before first session begins

Friday, 27 November:

- Photocall - Traditional "Family Group" (Heads of State and Government with Foreign Ministers), foot of Grand Staircase, Lancaster House, immediately before morning session begins

Press Conference, Grand Hall, Connaught Rooms.  
Yourself as President of Council, accompanied by Lord Carrington and M. Thorn.

Radio and TV interviews - the usual BBC radio and TV, ITN and IRN interviews after your press conference