

(7)

2

mb

PRIME MINISTER

The Australian Negus TV Interview

This engagement continues to flare and the latest correspondence with an acutely embarrassed Mr. Coven, the London Director of Kerry Packer's No. Nine Network in Australia, is attached.

Mr. Coven rang me today to say unattributably that he had a great deal of sympathy with my point of view. He met Negus for the first time before his interview with you and felt him to be a man of some charm. He was therefore astounded at his approach and conduct of the interview.

He tended to agree with me that Negus came to London determined to make his name (and therefore increase his price in the market) by reducing the Iron Lady to a scrap-heap. Having failed, he edited the whole thing down to 11 minutes.

Mr. Coven, again very unattributably, said that Packer had given Negus "a tremendous blasting" over the interview and that Negus had told people afterwards that he did not really know how he came to do such an interview.

Channel Nine had had "hundreds of telephone complaints after the interview".

B. INGHAM

11 November, 1981





10 DOWNING STREET

*From the Press Secretary*

9 November, 1981

*Dear Mr Coven,*

Thank you for your letter of October 7 re the Negus interview and your offer to let us see a cassette of it. In fact, I have at last had a chance to see ours.

First of all, the recording is conclusive proof that the Nine Network completely ignored our request that the whole of the interview should be used. I can understand why. Had our request been acted upon, it would have revealed Negus in all his journalistic ingloriousness, which is a kind way of putting what I judged he was up to.

Second, it amply demonstrates how Negus himself was unhappy with the outcome - no doubt because even someone so manifestly self-motivated could not bring himself to claim a victory - since the programme used only 11-12 minutes instead of the intended 20-25.

Third, I do not think the interview was remotely worthwhile. I think it was a complete waste of time, thanks to Negus who, whatever his motives, was clearly not in the business of informed and responsible journalism.

I have no doubt who won. Equally, I am in no doubt that Negus realised he didn't. That may teach him a lesson, though I doubt, from my only encounter with him, his capacity to learn.

*Yours sincerely*  
*Bonnie Ingham*  
B. INGHAM

Frank Coven, Esq.,  
London Director,  
The Nine Network (Australia)



PRIME MINISTER

1. Note for record  
Transcripts made available to lobby only from Friday pm (by Sunday they would all be en route to Labour Party conference)

AUSTRALIAN INTERVIEW

The attached letter to the London director of the '60 Minute' programme company is self-explanatory. It reinforces my request to the interviewer and producer before they left No 10 this morning to use the whole of the interview and not edit it. We have also told our post in Australia of our request to the programme and asked them to reinforce it locally.

released to non-lobby Sunday a.m. J.D. 24/9/81

2. I do not entertain great hopes that the programme will do the right thing, though they are now clearly under some considerable pressure.

3. However, it is our practice, as you know, to give journalists transcripts of your interviews to ensure an accurate account is on-the-record. I think we can best protect you by putting out the full transcript of this interview, embargoed until the time of its broadcast. In doing so we would make the point that we do not know whether or not the interview will be broadcast in full but that the transcript of the full recording is being made available for the purposes of record.

No - do not put it out - in advance!

4. An alternative approach would be to make the full transcript available if we are approached. In fact, however, it is known that you gave an interview to Australian television and we certainly shall be asked for it. It is therefore better in my view to make it generally available at the outset.

Yes

5. Content?

B. INGHAM  
23 September, 1981.

I think the transcript without the script the interview could give a false impression. Do not give it unless approached



KN 281  
CANDAR 456/28

ZZ SINGAPORE

00 FCO DESKBY 280800Z

GRS 350

UNCLASSIFIED  
DESKBY 280800Z  
FM CANBERRA 280545Z SEP 81  
TO FLASH SINGAPORE  
TELEGRAM NUMBER 9 OF 28 SEPTEMBER  
INFO IMMEDIATE FCO

PLEASE PASS TO PRESS SECRETARY TO PM IN TRANSIT 1330Z TODAY.

FCO TELNO 389 OF 23 SEPTEMBER AND KUWAIT TEL MISC 47

PRIME MINISTER'S TV INTERVIEW WITH '60 MINUTES'

1. INTERVIEW AS BROADCAST LASTED 11 MINUTES AFTER ABOUT 1 1/2 MINUTES INTRODUCTION FROM LIBRARY FILM. IT COVERED ONLY DOMESTIC ISSUES: THE BRITISH ECONOMY, UNEMPLOYMENT, RIOTS (NEGUS: QUOTE ALL OVER THE COUNTRY UNQUOTE, WHICH PM REBUTTED FIRMLY AND CONVINCINGLY), AND PM'S ALLEGED QUOT INFLEXIBILITY UNQUOTE.
2. THE OPENING SECTION OF THE INTERVIEW AS SCREENED APPEARED TO CARRY IN FULL THE PM'S COMMENTS ON BRITAIN'S POSITIVE ACHIEVEMENTS (EG INFLATION AND EXPORTS).
3. THE EXCHANGE CONCERNING PM'S SON ALLEGEDLY SAYING QUOTE NO ARGUMENTS IN THE FAMILY. THE BOSS ALWAYS WINS UNQUOTE WAS INCLUDED APPARENTLY IN FULL, AS WAS THE PRIME MINISTER'S CATALOGUE OF ACTIONS WHICH DEMONSTRATED HER READINESS TO BE FLEXIBLE WHEN NECESSARY. THERE WAS AN OBVIOUS CUT IN THE SECTION IN WHICH MRS THATCHER ASKED NEGUS TO JUSTIFY HIS CLAIM THAT ONE IN TWO PEOPLE HAD TOLD HIM THAT SHE WAS QUOTE PIG HEADED UNQUOTE.
4. PRIME MINISTER CAME ACROSS VERY EFFECTIVELY. THIS MORNING'S SYDNEY MORNING HERALD REPORTS THAT CHANNEL 9 RECEIVED ABOUT 40 COMPLAINTS WITHIN HALF AN HOUR OF THE INTERVIEW BEING SHOWN. MOST HAD SAID NEGUS WAS QUOTE ILL-MANNERED, RUDE, CRASS UNQUOTE. THIS IS THE IMPRESSION I GAINED. NEGUS WAS SHOWN UP AS A BOORISH AND TRIVIAL INTERVIEWER WHO WAS EFFECTIVELY BUT POLITELY PUT IN HIS PLACE. EDITING DID NOTHING TO DETRACT FROM THE PM'S COOL DEMOLITION OF NEGUS INEPTNESS AND ILL MANNERS.
5. VIDEOTAPE CASSETTE RECORDING OF BROADCAST INTERVIEW AWAITS INGHAM IN MELBOURNE.

MASON

+

NNNN



File No. ....

OUTWARD

Department NO. 10 PRESS OFFICE

TELEGRAM

Drafted by (Block Capitals) IAN KYDD

Security Classification
RESTRICTED
Precedence
IMMEDIATE
DESKBY ..... Z

Tel. Extn. 930-4433

FOR COMMS. DEPT. USE

Despatched

(Date) .....

POSTBY ..... Z

(Time) ..... Z

PREAMBLE

(Time of Origin) ..... Z(G.M.T.)

(Restrictive Prefix) .....

(Security Class.) RESTRICTED

(Caveat/ Privacy Marking) .....

(Codeword) .....

(Deskby) ..... Z

IMMEDIATE

TO (CANBERRA) (precedence) (post)

Tel. No. .... of .....

AND TO (precedence/post) .....

AND SAVING TO .....

REPEATED TO (for info) ROUTINE TO: MELBOURNE AND SYDNEY  
UKHIS NEW YORK (FOR FENN)

SAVING TO (for info) .....

Distribution:-

No 10 Press Office

[TEXT] From No 10 Press Office

PM's TELEVISION INTERVIEW FOR "60 MINUTES"

1. Interview was recorded today <sup>AND</sup> ran 30 minutes (three 10-minute reels). Negus concentrated almost exclusively on unemployment and charged that the PM was inflexible and tough. This was not <sup>UNEXPECTED</sup> surprise, but Negus went on to claim at length that <sup>ONE</sup> ~~one~~ <sup>TWO</sup> in ~~2~~ people he had met in Britain regarded the PM as pig-headed. When pressed by the PM to substantiate this, he was evasive and unconvincing, but nevertheless he persisted <sup>with the charge</sup>. Continuing in the same vein, he pressed the PM about <sup>the</sup> ~~the~~ relationship <sup>with</sup> ~~between her~~ and her <sup>son and daughter</sup> children.

Copies to:-

News Dept  
SPD  
Mr Day



2. We have no doubt that the PM acquitted herself fully throughout the interview but are less confident that this will come across, should the interview be edited. We have therefore told Negus and MacStoker that, in view of the way in which the interview was conducted, the Prime Minister believes that it should be broadcast in its entirety, as only in this way could a fair balance between Negus' charges and <sup>her</sup> ~~the PM's~~ replies be achieved.

3. They have agreed to convey <sup>his</sup> to Stone (the Executive Producer) but thought it likely, because of the format and style of the programme, <sup>that</sup> editing would be necessary. *We have pointed out that format and style are not overriding considerations.*

4. We should be grateful if you would ~~strongly~~ reinforce the PM's view with Stone informing us of the outcome.

5. Please also ensure that a synopsis of the interview as broadcast, together with your initial impression of how it will be received, is telegraphed to the PM prior to her arrival.

*JH*  
*22/9.*

NOTHING TO BE WRITTEN IN THIS MARGIN



PRIME MINISTER

COMMONWEALTH HEADS OF GOVERNMENT MEETING: MEDIA

I gather that you and Carol have decided that her interview with you, tentatively scheduled to take place in Melbourne, should be postponed for the time being.

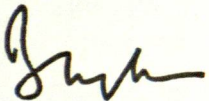
2. My earlier recommendations for media commitments in the context of CHOGM were for:

- i A half-hour television interview with the Channel 9 programme '60 Minutes' before departure, which would cover the Commonwealth Conference, major international issues and UK/Australian relations.
- ii A meeting with British correspondents in Melbourne, on or off the record, towards the end of the Commonwealth Conference. You agreed to do this. (Flag 'A').

3. After consulting our High Commissioner in Canberra and the FCO, I strongly recommend that you should give an interview to the Channel 9 programme '60 Minutes' before departure. It has the highest rating of any current affairs TV programme in Australia and any interview they did with you would be broadcast at a peak viewing time on a Sunday evening. You would probably get fairly hardhitting questions along the lines of the 'Panorama' format here, but you would be talking to a sympathetic viewing audience of an important and friendly Commonwealth country. We would, of course, ask for notice of the broad thrust of questions to be asked so that we could prepare any necessary briefing.

4. I have tentatively arranged with Caroline that you might record this interview on Wednesday, 23 September, for transmission in Australia on Sunday, 27 September.

5. Content that I now offer the '60 Minutes' programme an interview with you on 23 September?



B. INGHAM

4 August, 1981.



PRIME MINISTER

cc: Mr Alexander

Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting:

Media

The Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting is still some way off but I would like to obtain your agreement in principle on interviews you might be prepared to do in connection with your visit to Australia. We already have a large number of requests from the Australian media and no doubt more will be forthcoming between now and September.

You have already agreed to give Carol a short 5-10 minute interview for Channel 7 "11 a.m. Programme". She would like to do this interview shortly after your arrival in Melbourne and plans to cover both CHOGM and UK/Australian relations.

Both Australian Television and the main newspaper publishing groups there have also requested interviews either in Melbourne or before departure. If you are prepared to give interviews to the Australian media before departure (so that they do not impinge on the CHOGM meeting) then the choice would be:-

- (1) An on-the-record briefing for representatives of the four main newspaper publishing groups in Australia all of whom have correspondents based in London.

and/or

- (2) A 30-minute television interview for the Channel 9 network programme "60 Minutes". This programme has the highest rating of any current affairs TV programme in Australia and any interview they did with you would be broadcast at a peak viewing time on a Sunday evening.

/I would



I would not wish to recommend you to do both the press conference and a television interview for the Australian media before departure as there are a number of worthwhile competing claims for foreign interviews which I shall be putting up to you separately in the context of our EC Presidency and the Franco-British Bilateral with President Mitterrand in September. After consulting the FCO and our High Commission in Canberra, I recommend that if you are prepared to do one interview for the Australian media before CHOGM, we should go for the Channel 9 "60 Minutes" programme. *I think it would ruin Carol's interview.*

As regards CHOGM itself I suggest that we decide nearer the time what you might do in terms of the media, apart from the short interview you have already agreed to give Carol. At Lusaka you gave a full-dress press conference at the end of the meeting but those were unique circumstances in the light of developments over Rhodesia. At previous Commonwealth Conferences the normal practice has been for the Secretary-General of the Commonwealth to give a press conference rather than for individual Prime Ministers to hold their own. But we could consider nearer the time whether you should see the British correspondents in Melbourne either on-the-record or on a background basis towards the end of the meeting.

#### Conclusion

To sum up I suggest the following media commitments in the context of CHOGM:-

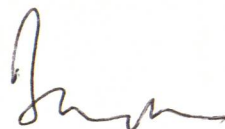
- No*
- (1)  $\frac{1}{2}$  hour interview with Channel 9 programme "60 Minutes" before departure covering CHOGM, major international issues and UK/Australian relations.
  - (2) Short interview with Carol on Channel 7 soon after your arrival in Melbourne.
- Yes*



(3) Possibly a meeting with the British correspondents  
in Melbourne on or off the record towards the end  
of the meeting.

*Yes*

Content to proceed on this basis?



BERNARD INGHAM

12 June 1981