



10 DOWNING STREET

Prime Minister

The Public Image of the Government and Party.

1. Herewith Memorandum of today's date from Peter Thorneycroft.
2. I agree with Peter's analysis and with the recommendation which he makes in paragraph 7.
3. Peter included the first paragraph only because he did not want to circulate this document to those who will be attending the meeting on Wednesday, without your consent.
4. Do I have your consent, please, to circulate the Memorandum? Those attending will be:-

Peter Thorneycroft
Geoffrey Howe
Leon Brittan
Nigel Lawson
Francis Pym

5. I wonder whether we are not rather overweight so far as the Treasury is concerned. Clearly we cannot un-invite any of the three Treasury Ministers now. However, I wonder whether you think that it would be tactful to ask Willie as well?

19th January, 1981

Ian Gow.

From
THE CHAIRMAN OF THE PARTY

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THE PUBLIC IMAGE OF THE GOVERNMENT AND PARTY

1. THIS PAPER IS FOR THE PRIME MINISTER ONLY

2. As Chairman of the Party Organisation it is my job to watch and to assess our public image. I have recently heard the views of every Area Chairman in the country and from wider contacts in a good position to know the reactions of a variety of men and women inside and outside the Party and in the media. In my judgement our image as a Party has been declining recently, and even among our loyalest supporters, there is a feeling that we are failing to present our case with the clarity and force that is required. There is a strong faith in the Prime Minister and a respect for her courage and conviction but there is a growing sense that we do not give the impression of a united and determined Government with a clear view as to where we want to go and how we mean to get there.
3. As Chairman of the Party Organisation I must carry some part of the responsibility for this state of affairs myself. I do believe however that there is much scope for far greater co-ordination and punch by a Central group of key Ministers working in close co-operation with the Party Organisation in order to make an adequate presentation of our case.
4. As we stand at present we appear to be taking the whole responsibility for an unemployment situation which stems mainly from a combination of years of Socialist mismanagement coupled with a world-wide recession mainly triggered from OPEC. Almost the only part of our policy which is widely discussed in the media relates to economic measures and this is debated in terms so technical as to be virtually incomprehensible to any ordinary man or woman and even to those normally well versed in these subjects. Meanwhile the voters suffer and wonder why.
5. From the outside at any rate the Cabinet is not giving the impression of a single team supporting one another in pursuit of a general thrust of policy, well understood and mutually agreed. Ministers certainly give the impression of competence and ability but they look like lonely figures defending different portions of an archipelago rather than an army stoutly holding an impregnable fortress.
6. This is no doubt harsh and unfair but the Chairman of a party is concerned with what things look like from outside and fails if he does not reflect these views. I would indeed be surprised if these views were not reflected in some degree within parts of the Establishment.

7. What then should we do? I suggest that we seize the opportunity of the new appointment of Francis Pym to take a real grip of the public presentation of our case. The public relations of a Government is more than lurching from one event to another, seeking to put each in the best possible light. The public relations of this Government needs above all a strategy - and a strategy which has some milestones clearly marked on it as we approach 1983. I realise that the time of Ministers is precious but political graveyards are studded with Governments whose Ministers have failed to spare the time to study what they looked like from the grass roots. I therefore think that Francis Pym should chair a regular meeting of a few key Ministers including, importantly and always, the Treasury, but including too some non-economic Ministers, to consider both the Strategy and Tactics of our PR. I might myself, with advantage, be invited to attend. I would be happy to put a strategy paper to it. It would report from time to time to the Prime Minister and her PPS should regularly attend it. It should meet as often as it itself determined to be necessary. It could invite any Minister to attend.
8. This is not an epoch making suggestion, but it is at any rate an advance on anything that exists so far. Our underlying position is after all immensely strong. We are well led. We stand for a world much closer to the wishes of the majority than that suggested by our opponents. The Opposition is bitterly divided and its policies are couched in terms which are almost a caricature of anything we have ever said about them.
9. We would certainly be in peril of losing a by-election at this moment and we expect to do very badly in the local Elections in May; yet despite the polls we would in all probability win a General Election, even now, against a Divided Labour Party led by Michael Foot.
10. What we need now to contrive, is a Common effort by Ministers to identify our objectives and a carefully planned and structured effort to put our policies across.

