

MISS STEPHENS

cc. Mr. James
Mr. Gaffin

Reference "Children of Courage" which we discussed.

The following points occur to me:

1. Having established a link with No. 10 through the previous Administration, the organisers clearly wish to maintain it;
2. given the history, it is not easy, in public relations terms, for the Prime Minister to turn down such a worthy cause though the timing could not be less convenient;
3. the proximity of Christmas - the children's festival - will heighten the event's very considerable news value.
4. It is, however, quite unrealistic to expect the Prime Minister to perform the ceremony and entertain the children at No. 10 after flying back overnight on December 18.
5. To take on the children on December 21 will, however, greatly interfere with the last day's business, always assuming that the event can be moved to then.
6. Nonetheless, I think I must advise that, on public relations/presentational grounds, the Prime Minister should take this on if at all possible; I just feel that, if she declines, it could be the last straw with those who are so ready to criticise her for heartlessness, etc., milk snatcher, etc.

/In short,

In short, very difficult. But we must guard the Prime Minister against any avoidable criticism.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'B. Ingham', with a stylized, cursive script.

B. INGHAM


29 October, 1979

Bernard: You
advise please.
CJ.
26/10.

CAROLINE STEPHENS

We discussed this. The Prime Minister in effect offered to meet the Children of Courage on 21 December. Our joint instinctive reaction was that this was an undesirable chore bearing in mind the inevitable pressures of the last week of Parliament before Christmas and was in fact on the eve of her departure for Chequers.

A second thought I had, though, followed from the manifest success and charm of the meeting with the Wolf Cubs. And this would certainly be a key Christmas story - a sort of postscript of parliamentary passion. We might therefore reconsider our advice, and you will want to discuss with Bernard.


Henry L James
26 October 1979


PRIME MINISTER

I feel I should let you know of this: you are about to be asked by the Dean of Westminster Abbey to present awards (under the auspices of "Woman's Own") to Children of Courage. This has become an annual ceremony: Mrs Callaghan has presented the awards in the Abbey over the last two years, and then invited the children back to No 10 for "coffee and orange juice".

I have in fact suggested to the Receiver General of the Abbey that they might invite the Chancellor's wife to do this this year but the Committee has not been attracted to this idea.

Whether you would wish to or not, there are practical difficulties. It is at 11 am on Wednesday, December 19: just pre-Christmas and the morning of your return from the USA. The only other possible time that week (given that you are out of the country until then and have Cabinet the following morning) would be Friday 21 December, which is virtually on the eve of Christmas.

I have discussed this with Caroline Stephens and neither of us feels inclined to seek to impose this obviously worthy chore upon you after an overnight flight when you will in any case wish to catch up with events. I feel we have to decline and point to the exigencies of the timetable. If you agree I shall try again to off-load.


Henry L James
11 October 1979

Could do on the
21st Dec
~ ~ ~

