

PRIME MINISTER"Weekend World"

1. I have had a talk with David Cox, Editor of Brian Walden's programme, and you will be able to cross-check his approach set out below with that of Brian Walden himself.

First, basic facts

2. The broadcast will be live from in front of the fireplace in the White Room at 12 noon to 12.55 on Sunday. They will start setting up at 7.45. (Instead of a crew of 55 last time we have got it down to 35!).

3. I suggest we meet at 10.30 for a run through and that Brian Walden might join you at 11.30 in the study. You are to hold a briefing meeting on Friday afternoon. Content?

4. The whole of the programme is devoted to the interview: there will be no film, etc. It will concentrate on economic policy.

5. Brian Walden will briefly introduce the programme before the news headlines at noon. Then there will be 20-30 minutes of interview, interrupted at a convenient time after 20 minutes by a commercial break. The interview will then proceed uninterrupted to 12.55.

Objective/format

6. The programme last interviewed you in January, 1980. It then looked at your approach to governing Britain against the background of election promises and what the implementation of "The Thatcher Experiment" was going to mean. You will recall Brian Walden spent the whole of the first half of the programme on industrial relations - a subject they now regard as a dead duck.

/Now

7. Now the programme wants to look back on your first two years and examine how your economic policy is being implemented. What has been achieved - or not, as the case may be? What conclusions can be drawn from the experience and where do we go from here?

First half of the programme

8. The first half of the programme will be devoted to an assessment of the Thatcher experiment and how your Government has accommodated to circumstances. Brian Walden is being asked to start with an open-ended question about how you view your first two years, the lessons you have learned, the extent to which your views have developed or changed and how far you anticipated the problems you have encountered.

9. Mr. Cox made it clear he hopes to pursue three main issues:

- monetary policy - success or failure? How do you measure money supply? Is there a monetary squeeze or not? Or should we believe the M3 growth figure? If we should, are you not likely to encounter a new outbreak of inflation just as you go to polls?
- public expenditure - the difficulties encountered in reducing it; how do you propose to crack those difficulties and reduce expenditure? Or is it impossible at the depths of a recession?
- industrial strategy - how does your massive support for British Leyland (and soon steel), not to mention extending EFLs for steel, shipbuilding, rail and airways, plus your talk of "constructive interventionism", square with your initial laissez faire approach? What exactly is constructive interventionism? Is it a U-turn or what?

/Second half ...

Second half

10. All that should more than fill the first half. After the commercial break, the programme will devote itself to unemployment. What prospect is there of your being allowed by the electorate in 1984 to pursue your 10-year strategy for the recovery of Britain if

- unemployment does not fall; or
- unless you reconcile the British public to higher levels of inflation; or
- persuade the public unemployment is not the Government's responsibility; or
- convince them that longer term the problem is soluble and Britain will be a better place if only your policies have time to work.

11. The main charge they seem likely to make, quoting others, is that the Government is uncaring, heartless, cruel. This will, of course, bring in social security benefits, etc.

12. In addition to industrial relations, Mr. Cox shows no enthusiasm for pursuing the Centre Party; the similarity of Mr. Reagan's policies to yours and the consequences for the world economy if he follows them; your success in bringing down inflation, pay settlements and industrial disruption - he regards the last two as largely a consequence of unemployment; or EC budgetary issues.

Problems/opportunities

13. This is clearly going to be a critical, attacking programme in which you will have to work hard to:

- put over the Government's successes;
- create a positive impression;

- kill the notion that the Government does not care;
and
- end on a high, positive, hopeful note.

14. Presentationally, I think we need to concentrate on the following essentials:

- your opening gambit: this presents a real opportunity to present the Government's approach realistically but positively and confidently; ideally you need to re-present your policies in new terms;
- your peroration: it is important you have a signal from Brian Walden which enables you to get in a last strong, positive word, especially after a second half devoted to unemployment;
- tone - in my view it should be a quiet, reassured, persuasive but firm performance which dispels the idea that you do not care; and
- language - you will recall that many felt the first half of last year's programme on industrial relations to be pretty technical and boring. There is enough in this programme, especially in the first half, to persuade this minority audience to switch off, especially if you embark on an erudite discussion of money supply or public expenditure control. If this audience were the sole concern, this would not matter so much; but there is, of course, a much wider communications need.

/Pitfalls ...

Pitfalls

15. I think there are two main pitfalls, apart from getting too technical or detailed at Sunday lunchtime:

- avoid criticism of colleagues, Departments and leaks; given the press's passionate love of leaks and its personalising of politics, any material of this kind simply takes over unhelpfully from the substance you want to get across; and
- avoid Budgetary issues; it is clear that whatever you say in this area is invested with a certainty that may be quite unjustified.

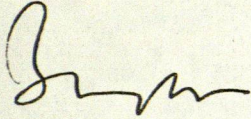
Conclusion

16. The main presentational questions are:

- have you anything new to say?
- if not, how can you represent the essential messages, getting away from the old analogies of medicine, etc., while at the same time destroying the credibility of alternative policies?
- how can you generate hope without losing touch with harsh reality and put a more human face on the Government?
- how can you most effectively reconcile the apparent contradictions in policy? and
- do you wish to get involved in the Centre Party argument?

Annexes

17. I attach a series of indexed briefs. Content?



B. INGHAM

29 January, 1981

ANNEXES

1. 1979 Manifesto.
2. Transcript of your January 1980 "Weekend World" appearance.
3. Transcript of Mr. Foot's "Weekend World" appearance last weekend.
4. Transcript of the Chancellor's last "Weekend World" appearance - October 12, 1980.
5. Nigel Lawson's recent speech in Switzerland - 14 January.
6. An article by Peter Riddell, Financial Times, on the forthcoming Budget's arithmetic - 27 January, 1981.
7. An article by Professor Jim Ball in the Financial Times - 31 December, 1980.
8. An article by Hugo Young in the Sunday Times on your support for industry - 11 January, 1981.
9. Liberal's recent 10 point economic recovery programme.