

AC 2/BI-1-28  
Box 3

MEMORANDUM

19.12.75.

No: 58

TO: KJ

FROM: AS

I enclose a copy of a memo which Patricia sent to me.

I entirely agree with her.

MEMORANDUM

162/ B1-29 Box 3

TO: AS

FROM: PK

19 December -975

THE SUN

I thought it might be helpful to put my thoughts on paper in connexion with the relationship that seems to have developed between Sir Keith and the Sun.

It is obvious that Sir Keith is, at present, filling the role of the Conservative politician they love to hate. This role will probably be inherited by someone else in the party in due course, but in the meantime I believe it is advisable to take steps to minimize any damage if at all possible. The Sun does, after all, have a circulation of 3½million and a readership of nearly 12 million. I know from talking to members of the working mens' club in Paddington that many of them do read the newspaper (as opposed to simply ogling the pretty ladies) and do take to heart what they read.

1. It was obvious to me as an ex-journalist that anyone so inclined could and would have put J. Akass' interpretation onto Sir Keith's Paddington speech. When I was training in the Kenya Broadcasting Service one of the exercises was to re-write articles and speeches for left/right wing newspapers and then for the BBC which was, of course, totally unbiased.

It is very important indeed when releasing a verbatim report of a speech to make it as difficult as possible for a journalist to put a slanted interpretation onto it. "Scrooge" indeed! - the second paragraph on page 3 was a splendid gift to anyone wishing to write a snide article in a hurry.

2. This, as are most of Sir Keith's speeches, was meant to provoke thought, which is why so many are, or should be, read at leisure and in full. The popular press is not in the business of provoking philosophical debate - any popular newspaper trying to do so would rapidly find itself either in the bankruptcy courts or in receipt of large amounts of taxpayers' money.

It is vital, therefore, that a verbatim report of this nature should be accompanied by a short release, highlighting the points Sir Keith wishes to emphasise. You, Gerry and I are more than capable of doing this. Between us we know "tame" journalists would be happy to do so if for any reason we are not available.

I believe very strongly for a number of reasons that it is wrong for Sir Keith to answer any and every uncomplimentary article that appears in the Sun or elsewhere.

He is, after all, in politics and must expect the knocks. The Sun has had enormous fun at the expense of Healey, Castle, Varley et al, who do not bother to reply. Can you imagine a Churchill or de Gaulle doing so? It seems to me that this tendency to explain and/or apologise (for the two can be construed as the same) is a characteristic our party must learn to avoid - viz Mr Moynihan's recent comments in the UN which I think we should take to heart.

By replying each time, he lays himself open to the "methinks he doth protest too much" argument by appearing to be on the defensive.

It reopens the argument and helps cement any doubts in peoples' minds (far better to avoid putting them there in the first place).

The Sun will eventually not print them anyway reacting as did the populace to the boy who cried "wolf" once too often. As a result it will not be amenable to printing something important or relevant that Sir Keith might wish to say in the future.

I believe Sir Keith is on friendly terms with Lady Lamb. May I venture to suggest that instead of replying to this particular article, Sir Keith might offer himself for an in depth "question and answer" interview by any member of the staff deemed suitable by the Editor. Alternatively, readers might be invited to send in their own questions. If Sir Keith accepts this suggestion, I think it advisable to ask a sympathetic and capable journalist (Colin Hamilton of the BBC World Service, and Rosemary Simon of the Evening Standard are only two who spring to mind), to give him a really rough and tough interview first as practice.

Indeed, I think this would be advisable in any case, if Sir Keith can spare the time, if only to give him an insight to the journalistic mind.

I hope these thoughts will be of use.