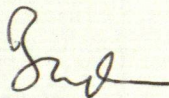


Press/Publicity

MR. GOW

NEWS OF THE WORLD

I taxed Gordon Leak when I saw him on Friday about his piece the previous week which caused some concern. For what it's worth, he confirmed my suspicions that he had come to Lobby already armed with the line he took from conversations with unnamed M.P.s. I did not push him.



B. INGHAM

23 November, 1981

cc 7/5 ✓
FP ✓

Press /

18th November 1981

News of the World - Sunday 15th November

I enclose a copy of my note to Bernard Ingham dated 16th November, which was sent following our talk on Monday morning.

I also enclose a copy of Bernard Ingham's reply of yesterday's date.

Perhaps we could have a word about this.

Ian Gow
Parliamentary Private Secretary

The Rt Hon Francis Pym MC MP

cc. The Rt Hon Michael Jopling MP

MR. GOW

You asked about Gordon Leak's story headed "Rebel wets sink as Mrs. T. takes cover". I assume from the tone of your note that somebody is stirring it - with No. 10 Press Office, and perhaps myself, the objective of the stirring. I am beginning to find this just a little tiresome.

First, Gordon Leak is so 'dry' as to be Saharan. Thus, he no doubt took a great deal of pleasure in writing the first half of his story about the sinking of the wets. He certainly wrote it without reference to me. The source, in so far as it needs one, bearing in mind the public nature of the events, no doubt lies in the Party.

The second part of the story on the Rates Bill could also have been written without reference to us. In fact, rates were raised at my lobby for the Sundays and I suspected that Gordon Leak had already written his piece from his line of questioning.

Essentially, he wanted to know how we had got into this Rates Bill mess; how was it we could put forward a Bill which would be so badly received on the backbenches; and why was it that our intelligence of backbench feeling was apparently so poor.

I specifically rejected any idea of Prime Ministerial criticism of the Chief Whip and Lord President when the point was put to me.

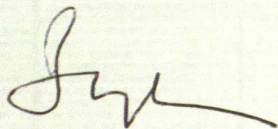
But the truth is that our discussion of the Rates Bill was a substantive one which, in my view, did not lend itself to Gordon Leak's treatment. Neville Gaffin and Ian Kydd have notes of our discussion and this shows that it covered:

- attraction of local referenda as a means of putting a single issue before the public;

/- the

- the precedent established by the 1972 Act for towns polls (which had been held under its aegis);
- the possibly unfortunate use of the word referendum, though that was possibly unavoidable, bearing in mind how some politicians have their eye on the main chance (see Teddy Taylor, Sunday Express);
- Mr. Heseltine in the House had, in fact, faced backbenchers with some responsibility for producing alternative ideas, given the bedrock of agreement in the Party for controlling public expenditure, especially by profligate local authorities;
- my acknowledgement that the Government clearly had had to put its thinking cap on, in view of backbench reaction and that it was under some time constraint, given the need to have powers in place before the next financial year;
- finally, there was no point in kidding ourselves that backbench opinion needed to be cultivated and convinced of the chosen method, as distinct from the principle.
- We followed this up with some discussion of options and the wider issue of rating reform.

This, as you will see, was the sort of bowling that is wasted on the News of the World. It was probably wasted on a lot of others present too. But no one else present so far as I know wrote the kind of stuff Gordon Leak did.



B. INGHAM

17 November, 1981

Bernard Ingham

1. Herewith cutting from the News of the World of 15th November.
2. Understandably, this report has given no satisfaction either to the Leader of the House, or to the Chief Whip.
3. Do you have any idea, please, as to where Gordon Leak might have obtained this story?

16th November 1981

IAN GOW

REBEL WETS SINK AS MRS T TAKES COVER



DU CANN:

AMID Labour's ructions, see how Premier Margaret Thatcher has thrived. Three weeks ago the Wets were in full flood.

Mrs T was to be challenged as leader of the Tory Party. Her days were numbered.

Edward Du Cann was to be ousted as chairman of the influential Back bench 1922 Committee for supporting her.

Maggie's loyalists were to be purged from the Committee's executive. But what has happened? The Wets have got a drenching.

Mrs Thatcher is endorsed as leader, unopposed.

Mr Du Cann sits comfortably in the chair he has occupied for the last nine years.

The membership of the 1922 Committee is unchanged, except for one new Right-wing member, Cranley Onslow.

And one of the vice-chairmen, Charles Morrison, whose criticisms of Mrs Thatcher's economic policies brought a loyalist backlash down upon him, saved his seat by a mere three votes after two recounts.

Spenders

Arch critic Mr Geoffrey Rippon may not be so lucky this week when he defends his job as chairman of the Back Bench Foreign Policy Committee.

Mrs Thatcher is not amused, however, about the 20 Tory abstentions on the Government's Bill to curb spendthrift councils. It really spoiled her week.

She wants to know why Michael Heseltine got so far as publishing the Bill without any consultation with Back bench MPs.

She wants to know why Francis Pym, Leader of the

By GORDON LEAK

Commons, and chief whip Michael Jopling allowed the revolt to grow without taking it seriously until the 11th hour.

And she wants to know why her non-Ministerial political advisers failed to pick up the danger signals.

Damned good questions, I'd say.

■ THERE was more than an ideological difference behind the rumpus Tony Benn caused when he said Labour would renationalise, without compensation, any State industries sold off by the Tories.

What really worried Benn's critics were the substantial union investments which have gone into hived-off concerns.

Like the NUR's interest in former British Transport Hotels.

Nor were the nine out of ten British Aerospace workers who have not only taken up their £50 free shareholding in the enterprise but sunk hundreds of pounds of their own savings into their company, far from Michael Foot's mind.

If Benn gets his way it is not just rich capitalists who will get their fingers burned, but many of Labour's own supporters.