

Bernard Ingham

*In future - there will not be a full text. I find the idea that every speaker should be dictated is ridiculous*

Thank you for sending me a copy of your Memo to the Prime Minister. I have the following observations:

1. I am not aware of any requirement for a speaker to provide a text (or even an extract) of any speech in advance or later.
2. Journalists are invited to attend meetings by the sponsoring organisations. In the case of this year's Conservative Women's Conference, all sections of the media were invited.
3. I do not believe the Lobby have any special locus in so far as reporting a public meeting is concerned. It is hardly taxing for them to get to Central Hall from the Palace of Westminster.
4. I have never believed it wise to be dogmatic about whether to issue a text or extract or nothing at all. Often time is the key factor and sometimes it may be a matter of political or news judgment. I can see no reason why any speaker, let alone the Prime Minister, should be dictated to as to what he or she should put out.
5. The fact that most papers and both main TV News Programmes concentrated on terrorism and defence would suggest that the extract hit upon the right news. After all, there were numerous journalists present and they could have chosen to write on other topics had they wished to do so.
6. On this occasion, as she always does when she makes a speech to a Party meeting, the Prime Minister discussed with me the media presentation. We agreed that an extract would be more appropriate for a number of reasons, and that better publicity would follow. I think that we have been proved right.

*Agreed!*

Since receiving your copy Memo, I have read your letter to Sir Harry Boyne and his reply. I am surprised, to say the least, that you should have sought to persuade Conservative Central Office to publish a 'text' of the Prime Minister's speech, after the event, without bothering to check the final, spoken text. The result is that we have issued a speech text which does not relate to the words spoken by the Prime Minister, in every respect. Reproduction of the whole text does cost a great deal more money for the Party and in view of the fact that only four Members of Parliament have asked for texts, was it a worthwhile exercise.

*Who issued the text? I did not. I am not sure to it.*

Do you really want to become involved in political speeches?

Derek Howe

22nd May 1981

cc Prime Minister

# Conservative and Unionist Central Office

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Bernard Ingham, Esq.,  
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21st May, 1981

*Mr. Bernard,*

Many thanks for your letter of today's date. I shall see to it that our people here are made aware of its contents.

You are quite right in assuming that when a request for a radio or television interview with the Prime Minister reaches you through this office it carries implicit approval. By no means all requests of this kind are passed on. We exercise a fairly high degree of selectivity, on grounds that (a) the proposed interview isn't really worth the Prime Minister's time or (b) the request comes from a source which, in our opinion, isn't calculated to do the Prime Minister or the Government any good.

We shall continue to exercise our discretion in this way, but from now on we shall explain specifically why we recommend that a request be granted. In the case of Southern TV, for example, we could have pointed out that Brian Shallcross, in addition to being a reliable journalist representing an organisation with wide regional coverage, is a good friend of the Party in various helpful ways.

Apropos the Prime Minister's party speech yesterday, you will recall that on the telephone this morning I agreed with you that it was a pity the full text was not available to the Lobby, who in my opinion are quite entitled to make their own choice of passages to report or comment upon. However, you will see from the enclosed copy-letter that in this case the decision to issue only an extract, not the full text, was No 10's. We duly adhered to that decision - indeed there was no alternative, because the copy did not reach this office until 2.15pm and it would have been impossible for us to reproduce full texts in time to get them to the Press table before the Prime Minister had begun to speak.

As you mention, copies of the full texts of the speech and the TV interview are now available in this office. Up to the moment of writing we have had four requests; curiously enough, not from members of the Press but from MPs.

*Yours sincerely,*

*Harry*

Sir Harry Boyne

cc Mr D. Howe



10 DOWNING STREET

20th May, 1981

David Boddy

Attached is the start of the Prime Minister's text of the Womens Conference. The remainder will follow. \*

Please note that we are only issuing an extract and not a text. The extract starts on page 14. "In a period of ....  
The extract concludes on page 19 with the words ".... defence of the realm".

You might like to tell the press at the hall that the extract comes a minute or so after a quote from Sir Robert Peel.

Derek Howe  
Political Office

\* Time has passed; it is complete.



10 DOWNING STREET

From the Press Secretary

21 May, 1981

*Derek Harry,*

I am grateful to you for the way in which CCO Press Office has liaised closely with No. 10 Press Office recently when you have received requests for radio and TV interviews for the Prime Minister on Party occasions. It was particularly helpful yesterday to have the transcript of the Southern TV interview before the evening duty press officer left the office.

I am concerned, however, about one point. We put these requests to the Prime Minister without explicit comment or advice (though, by implication, CCO approves - otherwise, presumably, the request would not have reached us - and we do copy, of course, to Derek Howe). I think it would be helpful if, in future, your press officers would explain specifically why they favour acceding to the request. The general view here is that, when the Prime Minister makes a speech, interviews can, though not necessarily always, get in the way of the basic message of the speech. The counter-argument, presumably, is that an interview for a regional current affairs programme such as yesterday's serves the Prime Minister an added opportunity to explain policy, though not necessarily in a regional interest.

When we spoke this morning, we discussed the problem that arose over yesterday's speech to the Conservative Women's Conference. I ran into some flak at the Lobby, as I explained, because the full text was not available and the Chairman put it very forcibly to me that the Lobby likes to make its own judgment about the news value of the Prime Minister's speeches; that it will, in any case, do so when the press is present (as they were yesterday); but the full text is helpful for those who cannot get to the Conference. As mentioned, I minuted the Prime Minister recommending that, whenever possible, full texts of her major speeches should be issued when they are made in public with the press present. It was helpful later to be able to tell the Lobby that the speech and interview texts were now available from CCO.

*John Ingham*  
*B. Ingham*

B. INGHAM

Sir Harry Boyne

cc. Mr. Howe

PRIME MINISTER

YOUR WOMEN'S CONFERENCE SPEECH

You should know that I ran into some flak at the Lobby this afternoon because there was no full text available of your speech. The chairman put it forcibly that:

- i the Lobby likes to make its own judgment on the news value of your speeches;
- ii it will, in any case, do so when speeches are delivered in open conference to which the press is invited;
- iii this being so, it would be considered helpful, for those who could not get to the conference, if they could have made available the full text.

2. I made the point that this was a Party occasion and that all complaints should be addressed elsewhere. While they understood the distinction between Government and Party, they are also sophisticated enough to recognise that whenever you speak you speak on behalf of Government; consequently they feel entitled to ask me questions about such speeches.

3. Clearly we have to draw the line between Government and Party presentation but the crucial point is the need to put the best possible gloss on all your speeches. That can be done only when:

- a) the best possible journalistic practice is applied to their presentation;
- b) I am in a position to brief upon the substance and content.

4. Much of the text was familiar territory to me. But included in it were references to the media's performance in Northern Ireland. The Lobby took this to be a criticism of the media and asked me what you were getting at. I made the point that you were clearly concerned, as are many members of the media, about the effect of cameras, microphones, journalists etc on behaviour in Northern Ireland. In the event I got away with it lightly, though there may be rumblings in tomorrow's papers. The press, like everyone else, is sensitive to criticism and not least to what it perceives to be Prime Ministerial criticism.

5. I have plenty to do without getting involved unduly, or cluttering up, the speech writing process. But I think it essential that when you make references to the press, whether by way of praise or criticism, I should be consulted. There can be few people as robust as myself in my approach to the press but I do not believe in rubbing them up the wrong way unnecessarily. Still less do I believe in your passing comments about the press without my being in a position in present them in the most informed, helpful, and positive light.

6. Could I suggest that for the future you should:

- a) issue, whenever possible, full texts of your major speeches made in public with the press present; and
- b) consult me on references in your speeches to the media?