

IN CONFIDENCE



F

10 DOWNING STREET

20th April 1983

*Ken Tomy*

Thank you for your letter of 15th April, with which you enclosed copies of correspondence which you had had with George Carey.

The Prime Minister has approved the enclosed reply.

If you or the Chairman would like to make any changes before it is sent off, would you please have a word with me?

*7* *over* *(initials)*

IAN GOW

Tony Shrimpsley Esq

*cc Chairman ✓*

DRAFT OF A LETTER FROM TONY SHRIMSLEY TO THE EDITOR  
OF PANORAMA

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Thank you for your letter of 13th April.

When the House is sitting the Prime Minister faces the Leader of the Opposition during Questions, twice a week, in addition to other debates.

The Prime Minister considers that it would not be in the best interest of British politics to have a debate with the Leader of the Opposition of the kind that you suggest.

During the next Election, the Prime Minister and the Conservative Party will be concentrating on putting over the positive policies of the Conservative Party; in addition, of course, the Prime Minister will be holding frequent televised Press Conferences.



## Conservative Central Office

32 Smith Square Westminster London SW1P 3HH  
Tel. 01-222 9000 Telex 8814563 Fax. 01-222 1135

IN CONFIDENCE

15th April 1983

AS/cjr

Ian Gow, MP.,  
10 Downing Street,  
LONDON, S.W.1.

I have received a further letter from the editor of Panorama asking to stage a debate between the Prime Minister and Michael Foot during a General Election.

As it is obvious that he is also canvassing the idea with the other parties I feel that we should give him a refusal now rather than wait until such time as an election is actually called.

I enclose a draft of my proposed reply together with copies of the two letters from the BBC and would be most grateful if you could seek the Prime Minister's approval for this course of action.

Anthony Shrimmsley  
Director of Press and Public Relations

ENCS

Ian

I spoke to the Chairman this morning.

His comments on the Draft Letter were as follows:-

1. "It says too much".
2. He thinks that the third paragraph is not quite right and does not like the phrase "contrary to the best interest of British politics" which he thinks is a bit pompous!
3. The letter could also mention the fact that the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition, apart from facing each other at Question Time, take part in many other debates in the Commons during the year.

Tessa

19.4.83



DRAFT OF A LETTER FROM TONY SHRIMSLEY TO THE EDITOR  
OF PANORAMA

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Thank you for your letter of 13th April.

When the House is sitting the Prime Minister faces the  
Leader of the Opposition during Questions, twice a week,  
*in addition to other debates.*

The Prime Minister considers that it would be ~~contrary~~<sup>NOT</sup>  
~~to~~ the best interest of British politics to have a  
debate with the Leader of the Opposition of the kind  
that you suggest.

During the next Election, the Prime Minister and the  
Conservative Party will be concentrating on putting over  
the positive policies of the Conservative Party; in  
addition, of course, the Prime Minister will be holding  
frequent televised Press Conferences.

*Says too much  
longer*

*17 L L - 9 2 6 -*



GC/hp

**BRITISH BROADCASTING CORPORATION**

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TELEGRAMS AND CABLES: TELECASTS LONDON TELEX

24th March, 1983

Anthony Shrimpsley, Esq.,  
Director of Press and Public Relations,  
Conservative Central Office,  
32 Smith Square,  
London, SW1.

*Dear Anthony,*

I am glad you were able to meet for lunch yesterday to discuss tentative plans for the General Election coverage. I think it would be useful if I summarised our discussion on paper.

My first preference would be to organise a debate between the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition. We would obviously have to discuss details later, but the general guidelines would be as follows:-

- 1) Both party leaders would make an opening statement of around five minutes outlining the case for voting for their party.
- 2) Under the chairmanship of someone agreeable to Mrs. Thatcher, Michael Foot and the BBC, the two leaders would then take questions from a panel of journalists.
- 3) There would be a closing statement from each party leader.

The other proposition I put to you was that Panorama would produce a series of three programmes during the Election Campaign in which we would examine the Conservative Manifesto, the Labour Manifesto, and the Alliance Manifesto. We would do this by inviting, in successive weeks, a spokesman for the Alliance to be questioned by a Conservative and a Labour MP; a spokesman for Labour to be questioned by an Alliance and a Conservative MP; and a spokesman for the Conservative party to be questioned by an Alliance and a Labour MP.

Obviously we can discuss later who your candidates for such a series of programmes might be, but what I would like to do is secure an agreement in principle that you would take part so that we can plan more effectively than last time the best way of presenting each party's manifesto before the questioning begins.

Yours sincerely,

GEORGE CAREY  
Editor, Panorama.



## Conservative Central Office

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AS/cjr

28th March 1983

George Carey, Esq.,  
Editor,  
Panorama,  
BBC TV,  
Lime Grove Studios,  
LONDON, W.12.

I much enjoyed our discussion over lunch about your ideas for General Election coverage.

We are not at this stage making any firm commitments but you can be sure that your proposal to repeat the series of programmes on the manifestos will be given the most serious consideration.

I also note with interest your ideas for a debate between the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition. No decisions have been taken at this stage on what, as you know, would be a break with convention, but I will of course let you know as soon as the situation becomes clearer.

I look forward to seeing you soon.

Anthony Shrimmsley  
Director of Press and Public Relations





GC/hp

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TELEGRAMS AND CABLES: TELECASTS LONDON TELEX

13th April, 1983

Anthony Shrimmsley, Esq.,  
Director of Press and Public Relations,  
Conservative Central Office,  
32 Smith Square,  
Westminster,  
London, SW1P 3HH.

*Dear Anthony,*

Just a note to up-date my last letter on election coverage.

In the hope that you are giving positive consideration to my suggestion for a debate between the Prime Minister and Mr. Foot, I have been thinking about the form of the other two programmes which fall during the election campaign.

What I would like to suggest is that there is one debate between someone of the Alliance choice (presumably Mr. Jenkins or Mr. Steel) and a senior Conservative, and a second between the Alliance and Labour. The final debate between Mrs. Thatcher and Mr. Foot would then be the culmination of the series.

I would expect each debate to be wide ranging and to take in the central issues of the moment, but clearly we can discuss highlighting certain themes in each debate to avoid either repetition or significant lacunae.

*Best wishes*

GEORGE CAREY  
Editor  
'Panorama'



# Conservative Central Office

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DRAFT

DRAFT REPLY

AS/cjr

14th April 1983

George Carey, Esq.,  
Editor,  
Panorama,  
BBC TV,  
Lime Grove Studios,  
LONDON, W12 7RJ

*Face the Press.  
or Andrew  
Printed letter on John  
not - the last interest of  
Richard Johnson*

*You*

Thank you for your further letter about election coverage. Although, of course, the situation is still a hypothetical one I thought I would take some soundings about your proposal for a debate between the Prime Minister and Mr. Foot.

I am afraid I have to tell you that ~~at present there is no likelihood of the Prime Minister being willing to take part in such a programme.~~  
*SEE NO DEBATE*

Your further suggestions therefore of other programmes in which a senior Conservative and someone from the Labour Party would debate with nominees from the Alliance would not seem to arise.

Sorry to disappoint you but I thought you would like to know the situation even at this early stage.

Anthony Shrimpsley  
Director of Press and Public Relations