



Tap copy a  
Strategy Pt 13

Cabinet

10 DOWNING STREET

*From the Private Secretary*

MR. WRIGHT  
CABINET OFFICE

Presentation of Economic Policy: Questions of Procedure

The Prime Minister read with interest Sir Robert Armstrong's minute to me of 26 January, together with a note from Mr. Ingham of 27 January (copied to yourself).

The Prime Minister believes that the relevant paragraphs in "Questions of Procedure for Ministers" need redrafting. She thinks that the general tone of these paragraphs is restrictive, "so much so that one is quite surprised to find encouragement at the end of paragraph 105(d)ii."

We have had a go here at redrafting so as to meet the Prime Minister's wishes. It seemed to us that paragraphs 101-105(c) did not need any change; nor do paragraphs 106-107. We concentrated our attention on paragraph 105(d), and suggest the following:

"(d) The broadcasting authorities invite whom they please, including Ministers, to be interviewed on radio and television. Ministers should generally respond positively to requests, subject to their being satisfied that they will be given an adequate opportunity to explain Government policy and measures or to correct a misunderstanding. This applies to invitations to give interviews for both news bulletins and magazine and feature programmes.

In the interests of effective co-ordination of the Government's presentational effort, Ministers should ensure that No. 10 Press Office is informed of their intentions. This will enable them to deploy their broadcasting to best advantage and to avoid duplication with colleagues. The Chief Press Secretary is available to advise and help Ministers to secure their overall objective of propounding Government policies."

I should be grateful if you would let me have advice on what the next step should be.

MS

17 February 1982

MR SCHOLAR

Top Copy a  
Strategy Pt B

PRESENTATION: PROCEDURE FOR MINISTERS

You asked me to have a shot at a re-draft of the above to make the existing guidance more positive.

I do not believe paras 101 to 105(c) inclusive require attention or for that matter paras 106 to 107.

We need therefore to concentrate our attention on para 105(d) which the Prime Minister identified as requiring particular treatment. I do not accept that the present wording is - or intended to be - restrictive but it might be expressed more positively and the suggested revision below seeks to do that. I think the best way of doing this is to end the distinctive treatment of news and magazine and feature programmes and to offer general advice which is more in line with current practice in any case.

The suggested re-draft is:

"(d) The broadcasting authorities invite whom they please, including Ministers, to be interviewed on radio and television. Ministers should generally respond positively to requests, subject to their being satisfied that they will be given an adequate opportunity to explain Government policy and measures or to correct a misunderstanding. This applies to invitations to give interviews for both news bulletins and magazine and feature programmes.

"In the interests of effective co-ordination of the Government's presentational effort, Ministers should ensure that No 10 Press Office is informed of their intentions. This will enable them to deploy their broadcasting to best advantage and to avoid duplication with colleagues. The Chief Press Secretary is available to advise and help Ministers to secure their overall objective of propounding Government policies."

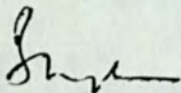
The suggested re-draft offers more positive encouragement while at the same time safeguarding No 10's essential co-ordinating function. We could soon be in potentially serious trouble if we

were not informed of Ministers' activities. There is a distinction to be drawn between news and magazine and feature programmes but not in terms of Ministers' approach which should be uniformly positive. The distinction is catered for by the proviso that they should be satisfied that they have an adequate opportunity to explain policy and by the requirement to inform No 10 to avoid duplication.

Although Departments at present feel under less compulsion to let us know of Ministerial news broadcasts, we really do need to know of them - especially on Tuesdays and Thursdays when the Prime Minister is answering Questions.

I believe the suggested re-draft will accentuate the positive while preserving co-ordination.

If it is accepted, I shall have to re-instruct Heads of Information. This in itself could be useful in emphasising the need to respond positively to requests for interviews.



B. INGHAM

15 February 1982