

From: THE PRIVATE SECRETARY

*cc
N. Taylor*



Prime Minister

HOME OFFICE

It is clear

QUEEN ANNE'S GATE

LONDON SW1H 9AT

that Mr Hurd

28 January 1986

has been grossly
misreported.

*Thank you
M*

Dear Nigel,

N.L.W.

28.1

attached

Charles Reiss has a story in today's Standard reporting the Home Secretary's remarks on the Today programme this morning. The Home Secretary is anxious that the Prime Minister should have a transcript of his remarks, which were inaccurately presented in the story.

.....

I attach a transcript. The essential point is contained in the Home Secretary's answer at the foot of page 2 running on to page 3.

A copy of this letter and its enclosure goes to Joan MacNaughton in the Lord President's Office

*Jan
Stephens*

S W BOYS SMITH

Nigel Wicks, Esq.

BBC RADIO 4: TODAY PROGRAMME, INTERVIEW WITH THE HOME SECRETARY, 28 JANUARY 1986

Interviewer Will normal service be resumed from No 10 today or will things never be the same again for Mrs Thatcher? Three hours is a long time in politics. Did the three hour debate in the Commons yesterday restore Mrs Thatcher's reputation at least in the eyes of her party. Well now with me is a member of her Cabinet the Home Secretary Douglas Hurd. One Sunday columnist, I notice was speculating on you as Prime Minister and even named your Cabinet, clearly you will have to be patient now.

Home Secretary Yes, the chatterers don't seem to have noticed that there isn't a vacancy or likely to be a vacancy and indeed they don't seem to have noticed that its very difficult history suggests, for a conservative Home Secretary to get any further.

Interviewer But do you think Mrs Thatcher's reputation is dented beyond recovery?

Home Secretary No, in six months time people will still in the darker recesses of Westminster be asking questions about Westland but in the country people will say well what was that about, that was last year, wasn't it, wasn't that something to do with some helicopters.

Interviewer But you know her reputation even among those who didn't like her was one of kind of obduracy anyway, to put it at its lowest, you don't think she's now thought to be devious.

Home Secretary No I don't think so, I think that you could feel the disappointment in the Opposition yesterday as one by one she answered the questions which had been put, and, it of course its, she gave an account of a ragged state of affairs in which mistakes were made, but people know that that is

what real life is like, that there are loose ends and particularly when you work at No. 10 where the pressure of different things coming in all the time is very intense.

Interviewer

Do you think that Mr Kinnock made it unnecessarily easy for her yesterday?

Home Secretary

Yes, I think he made a bad speech but worse than that he showed his real weakness, you see we were talking about the workings of Government, how things actually happened. He doesn't know anything about that at all. So when actually he had to get behind the generalities which he can ^{?toss away} ~~tussle~~ easily, into the actual details, he was well astray.

Interviewer

Now Mr Heseltine contributions ^{were} described in one paper this morning as a wonderful spasm of hypocrisy, but do you think that that spasm has in fact helped unite the Party.

Home Secretary

Yes, of course it is, and Michael Heseltine obviously felt unhappy at the way, the way it was still rising as it were and he didn't want that and had been his intention and so he did his best to, to calm the sea down and that was very welcome to everybody.

Interviewer

But ^{aren} ~~earn~~'t you all now in the same lifeboat that no longer may you rock that boat because ^{with} two Cabinet Ministers gone is beginning to look more than coincidence. The third one will be the death of the Government.

Home Secretary

No, I think today we all drawing a great breath of relief and saying well now we can get back to real life and real work, but real work does involve discussion and it involves discussions in Cabinet and the, I think, the good thing

that that it should appear to be so and that Cabinet Government should appear to be a reality. It is in fact, I mean, I don't think there is any secret but over recent weeks we had a go in full Cabinet on rates, social security, on Northern Ireland and lots of other things and I don't think that there is any harm in that appearing at all. People don't like to feel that they live under some other form of Government.

Interviewer

But it is a long time before you will have a go in full Cabinet at Westland and may be the one virtue about this whole affair is perhaps now the Cabinet will be privy to everything that is going on.

Home Secretary

But we can't be privy to everything and when you have something like Westlands it is absolutely sensible that the people involved in discussing the substance should be the Ministers actually concerned. What happened then was that there follow a breakdown on collective responsibility and we paid the penalty for that. But that lesson has clearly been learned and that won't happen again.

Interviewer

Would you welcome Mr Heseltine back when you have a Cabinet?

Home Secretary

I am not going to have a Cabinet but he is a, he is a remarkable man, with lively ideas out of his own brain and the; I think it would be a pity if those talents weren't used.

Interviewer

Would it be an equal pity if Mr Brittan's talent were lost?

Home Secretary

Yes it would because I think of all the Ministers I've actually served under for quality of decision and weighing up of the pro's and con's of a particular situation, I think he was unmatched so the same holds.

Interviewer

But it went very wrong for him over this business.

Home Secretary

Yes, I think that it's now clear what happened and the opposition won't manage to obscure this reality. There was a mistake, a bad mistake on his part when he decided on the way in which P ^{Mayhew's} ~~Mayle's~~ letter should be brought into the public domain. There was also a muddle in discussions between his officials and discussions at No 10 which led to the Prime Minister having been kept in the dark about something. I think those two things have now emerged very clearly and Leon Britain has resigned which is a sadness and quite a loss. But I think the position is now clear except to those whose business it is to grub about and find extra questions and of course that process can go on forever.

Interviewer

But the rest of you will return to normal work.

Home Secretary

The rest of us will return as I say with a great sigh of relief to getting on with the things that matter.

Interviewer

Mr Hurd. Thank you.

Hurd: Let Cabinet govern...

by Charles Reiss

MRS Thatcher was told by one of her senior ministers today that, after the Westland affair, she must not run the Government as a one-woman band.

The warning came from Mr Douglas Hurd, the Home Secretary. He said that it was important that cabinet government should be a reality "and should appear to be so." And he added: "People don't like to feel that they live under some other form of government."

Mr Hurd said that there had been "a great sigh of relief" after Mrs Thatcher's strong speech yesterday over the Westland leak.

It meant, he told the BBC's Today programme, that the Government could get back to real life and real work. But he went on: "Real work does involve discussion, and discussion in Cabinet."

Attack

"It is a good thing that that there should appear to be so and that cabinet government should be a reality."

Mr Hurd, who has played an increasingly important role in rallying the Party through the recent days of the Westland crisis, was speaking for many Conservative MPs.

Most clearly feel that, after Mrs Thatcher's defence yesterday, and her apology for admitted errors, the worst is over. But there is also a belief that the crisis might never have blown up had it not been for Mrs Thatcher's known preference for taking decisions herself, or among small groups of trusted ministers.



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Given an ideal chance to attack a severely weakened Prime Minister, he fluffed and rambled his way through.

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Viewers of BBC Breakfast
Continued Page 2, Col 3

Hurd's warning

Continued from Page 1

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