

Prime Minister

Chief Whip

1. Michael Jopling dined with me on 9th August.
2. He may have mentioned this to you already, but he would welcome the opportunity, when the House is sitting, of having quarter of an hour with you, each week. I think that this is a sensible suggestion. If you agree, may we please write this in to your Diary, only when the House is sitting? *W*
3. You did mention the possibility of reviving the former Business Committee. Michael had considerable reservations about this, because he thought that this would provide an opportunity for Back Benchers to question not only the business for the following week, but also the decisions of the Whips Office so far as whipping is concerned.
4. For my part, I see certain advantages in the revival of the Business Committee, but we certainly ought not do this without the approval of the Whips' Office.
5. I wonder whether you would consider trying to fit in to your Diary, possibly over lunch at Downing Street, meetings with the Officers of our Back Bench Committees, at which, of course, the Minister concerned would be present. *- on evening drinks.* *Diary*

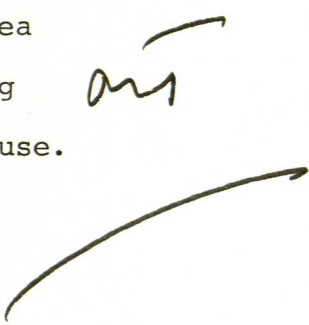
I think that this would be valuable for you, and certainly it would be appreciated by the Officers of the Committees concerned.

6. Generally, there is a feeling among Back Benchers (reported to me from several sources) that with the undoubted exception of the Prime Minister and the Chancellor, Ministers have been seen rarely in the tea room, smoking room and dining room. Although there are obvious reasons why, in the first few months of the Government, Ministers need to spend a great deal of time in their Departments, this is exactly the criticism which was made between 1970 and 1974 and the criticism has real validity. You have reminded Junior Ministers (verbally) of the importance of spending time in the House, and I wonder whether you think that this verbal reminder to Ministers might be repeated, in writing, to all Ministers, including the Cabinet. *W*

7. The composition of the Parliamentary Party has been changing significantly, and particularly so after 3rd May 1979.

They are much more 'activist' and much less 'passive'.
Our handling of the Parliamentary Party needs to take account of this really very profound change. //

8. While I think there does still need to be a certain reserve (for all sorts of reasons) between yourself and the Parliamentary Party this argument does not apply to other Ministers.

9. You should know that your own frequent visits to tea room, smoking room and dining room have produced the most ^{valuable} comment, not least from the young turks. We will continue to write in to your Diary regular commitments to be "around" in the House. 

Ian Gow

13th August 1979