

FISHER
M.P.

16th June 1980

Thank you very much indeed for your exceptionally kind letter of 4th June, which I greatly appreciated.

You asked for anecdotes about Macmillan. Goodness knows who told you I had some. I fear you have been misled! None of mine are much good, Here are three.

1. On a visit to Cambridge at the time of the Profumo crisis Macmillan was met by a large and fierce demonstration as he alighted from his car outside the main gates of Trinity. Stepping from his car Macmillan was welcomed by the Master of Trinity and surveying the milling, chanting masses he ~~explained~~ to his host, "Splendid reception, reminds me so much of Mombassa."
2. Later, the same day, Macmillan dined with officers of the University's Conservative Association in Trinity. Leon Brittan was at the Dinner and will be able to tell you what happened.

Throughout the Dinner there was further loud chanting outside ~~the~~ window where they were eating. Macmillan ignored the sounds. Towards the end of the Dinner he insisted that ~~he~~ address the crowd from a balcony. Macmillan could not be restrained and seemed to be enjoying the occasion. At the sight of Macmillan on the balcony, the mob fell silent (demonstrations were civilised in those days) and Macmillan merely spoke the following words which apparently undermined the demonstrators. "Thank you all for bothering to turn out in this way to give me such a magnificent reception as the Chancellor of the University of Oxford."

3. About three years ago, you will recall that Macmillan addressed a Dinner at the Carlton Club the night before a transmission of an interview on the BBC in which he called for the formation of a sort of coalition government.

During the course of a speech at the end of the Dinner, Macmillan referred to "the chap who looks after money ~~now~~ for the Party - what's his name - that angry sheep chap, Howe, I think is his name". This preceded by at least 18 months, the Healey remark about sheep and the present Chancellor of the Exchequer.

/Continued

During the same speech Macmillan suggested that he had got it wrong about Lord Thorneycroft and that the latter should have received a Dukedom, not a peerage.

Macmillan also declared in forthright terms in the speech his anxiety about Soviet expansionism. He said that we should not neglect "our Army, our Navy and our" at this point Macmillan peered theatrically at short range at his so-called notes and hastily read them through causing a long pause in the proceedings before he added the words "and our Air Force", delivered with suitable Edwardian disdain.

None of these anecdotes seem particularly amusing in cold print. But I suspect with most Macmillanisms it is the delivery which makes them seem funnier at the time than perhaps they might look later.

With best wishes,

Richard Ryder
Political Office

Sir Nigel Fisher MC MP

SIR NIGEL FISHER MC MP



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

18th June, 1980

FISHER MP
pc / hke

Dear Richard

Many thanks for your kind and helpful letter of June 16th. I doubt if I could use the third anecdote without embarrassing Harold Macmillan and annoying Geoffrey Howe, but I enjoyed the second story very much and will certainly incorporate that.

As you say, the quotes from Macmillan are not as effective in print as when he speaks them because one cannot convey his style and timing, but I am most grateful for the trouble you have taken to answer my request so fully.

John Major

Richard Ryder, Esq.,
Political Office,
10 Downing Street

SIR NIGEL FISHER MC MP



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

4th June, 1980

Dear Richard - if I may so call you -

I was amazed (but, of course, delighted) to read the message the Prime Minister kindly signed for inclusion in the programme for the Annual Fete in my constituency. Needless to say, this has gone down like a plate of cake with my people and I ascertained from Ian Gow that you, in fact, drafted it. It really was most kind of you to do so and in such ^{over-}generous terms and I am very grateful.

I am at present writing (with his approval and co-operation) a biography of Harold Macmillan and someone - I forget who - told me you have one or two good anecdotes about him. If so, I should be most grateful if you could dictate a note of them to me for inclusion in the book.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Richard Ryder'.

Richard Ryder, Esq.,
10 Downing Street

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SIR NIGEL FISHER MC MP



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

4th June, 1980

Dear Ian.

Thank you very much for your two letters of May 27th, from which I am so glad to see that Charlie has invited you to attend the Officers Meeting of the Constitutional Committee at which the reform of the House of Lords is to be further discussed. I am particularly glad to note you agree that every measure open to us should be taken to prevent single Chamber Government in this country and I hope and assume that this also represents the Prime Minister's view. Needless to say, I should much like to have a word about this whenever you have time.

Do give the Prime Minister my warmest congratulations on the outcome of the European negotiations, which really is a remarkable success, attributable entirely to the courage and skill with which she played the hand.

Harold Macmillan was dining with me last evening and mentioned (but not, of course, in a complaining way) that Margaret had not been to see him since she became Prime Minister. He added that he realised that she was now too busy to make social calls of this kind, but I was left with the impression that he would greatly appreciate a short visit if she could ever fit it in at a weekend, as he is a great admirer of her's and loves, as you know, to discuss current affairs with old colleagues and especially, of course, with the Prime Minister - so it might be worth just mentioning the possibility to her in case she could fit it in during the Summer Recess.

I know it would give him great pleasure.

Yours ever Nigel

Ian Gow, Esq., M.P.