

7/1a Gow

Sorry for the delay in replying. I broadly agree with Derek Howe's approach. I believe that a press conference of the kind proposed would be entirely counter-productive. The Home Secretary is more keen on providing a written Q&A feature.

Parkinson

MR. BERNARD INGHAM

Indeed, if one is felt to be a political need to set the Home Secretary's views on the record in a constructive way, we should arrange for him to be interviewed by a helpful ethnic minority journalist, as for the result, assuming it is helpful, to be drawn to the attention of the Home Secretary.

Ethnic Minority Media

1. Mr. Mervyn Kohler, who works in our Research Department, has written as follows to the Chairman of the Conservative Party:-


"Like media everywhere, the ethnic minority media are all keen to have exclusive interviews with the Prime Minister. There are over 20 Asian language papers published in different languages, and West Indian papers or radio programmes. Most reach relatively small audiences, and several are ideologically totally anti-Conservative. Whilst narrowing the field presents some problems, I could certainly recommend five or six journalists who would ask Mrs. Thatcher some searching questions, but who would present a very fair account, generally from a politically friendly point of view.

My main plea is that Mrs. Thatcher should have been seen to have been interviewed, and that her answers are on the record. Exactly what format can be devised would obviously be a matter for the Prime Minister, but a few suggestions may be helpful:-

- (i) Through the Home Secretary, Conservative Central Office, or direct from Downing Street, summons them to a special press conference (perhaps early in the New Year, with the new Nationality Act coming into effect).
- (ii) I could ask one editor to submit a number of written questions, to be answered as a Question and Answer column".

2. Would you be kind enough, please, to let me have your advice about this?

6th January 1983


IAN GOW

c.c. Derek Howe, Esq.

MR INGHAM

IAN GOW

ETHNIC MINORITY MEDIA

Thank you for sending me a copy of your memo to Bernard Ingham.

I hope the following comments may be helpful.

1. The list of requests for exclusive interviews from journalists of all shades is massive and ever increasing. It was ever thus!
2. Whilst the ethnic journals are important in terms of their own community, there are many more publications which are more influential, albeit not necessarily in ethnic terms. Nevertheless, a stronger case could be made for some of the non-ethnic publications if the Prime Minister has limited time available.
3. I would suggest that a preferable course of action would be to invite selected ethnic journals to submit a list of questions (say 6 - 8 each) which the Prime Minister could answer personally on an exclusive basis.
4. In addition, it might be possible to arrange a photograph of the Editor/journalist concerned with the Prime Minister, to authenticate the feature.
5. I have considerable doubts about involving the Prime Minister in any "special press conference".

Their interests are too diverse.

Derek

10th January 1983

✓ cc Bernard Ingham

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6th January 1983

IAN GOW

c.c. Derek Howe, Esq.

6th January, 1983

Ethnic Minority Communities

You sent to me, on the 6th of last month, a copy of a letter dated 22nd November, which you had received from Mervyn Kohler.

I comment on his letter as follows.

1. Could you please let me know the timing of the Buffet for West Indians at the House on Thursday 9th June? Who, please, will be the host on that occasion?
2. Has the date and time of the Anglo-Asian Conservative Reception in the House, scheduled for June or July 1983, yet been fixed? If so, may I please have details?
3. I take it that the revised "Conservative Government and Race Relations" information pack is now almost ready. Could you please ask Mervyn Kohler to let me have a draft of the short introduction which he suggests that the Prime Minister might write for this publication?
4. Of course the Prime Minister would consider the evening with Asian business men, built round Mr. Abdul Shamji, to which Mervyn Kohler refers in the paragraph numbered 3 on page 2 of his letter. However, you will understand that I cannot make any commitment about this; you know how enormous are the pressures on the Prime Minister's time.
5. I have asked Bernard Ingham for his advice about the suggestion which Mervyn Kohler makes in the paragraph numbered 4 of his letter, and will be in touch with you again about that shortly.

The Right Honourable Cecil Parkinson, M.P.
Chairman,
Conservative & Unionist Central Office,
32 Smith Square, London SW1

From

THE CHAIRMAN OF THE PARTY

The Rt. Hon. Cecil Parkinson M.P.

CONSERVATIVE & UNIONIST CENTRAL OFFICE,
32 SMITH SQUARE,
WESTMINSTER, SW1P 3HH,

Telephone: 01-222 9000

CEP / AM

6th December 1982

Dear Ian,

I have had a letter from Mervyn Kohler, who makes a number of suggestions about a possible role for the Prime Minister, in harnessing the Ethnic vote.

Perhaps you and I can have a word about this at one of our meetings in the near future.

Ian Gow,
Esq., MP.

Ian Gow, Esq., MP.

P.S. This arises from a conversation with the Central Office during her visit.

Conservative and Unionist Central Office

23 NOV 1982

32 Smith Square Westminster SW1P 3HH Telephone 01-222 9000 Telegrams Constituents London SW1

Chairman of the Party: THE RT HON CECIL PARKINSON MP

Deputy Chairman: THE HON R. ALISTAIR McALPINE

Vice Chairmen: LORD MARSHALL OF LEEDS
SIR ANTHONY ROYLE KCMG MP
MICHAEL SPICER MP
THE RT HON THE BARONESS YOUNG

The Rt Hon Cecil Parkinson MP
Conservative Central Office

22 November 1982

Ita Chairman,

When the Prime Minister visited Conservative Central Office last month, I asked her bluntly if she would express her views more conspicuously on issues which touch the ethnic minority communities. Specifically I asked her if she would be prepared to attend more 'ethnic' events, and to include more material in speeches which we could use in our pre-election activities. Her reply was to invite me to put my points on paper.

Before outlining some suggestions, may I explain why I feel strongly about the importance of my request?

- a) despite the Parliamentary fuss over the recent immigration White Paper, the Party has become much more relaxed in recent years about race relations matters. Many constituencies are actively recruiting Asian and West Indian members: many others take the view that the electoral arithmetic makes it imperative that they should try to do so. We have moved substantially from the position where once we calculated votes gained from the black communities against votes lost from white supporters.
- b) Various ministers, especially the Home Office and latterly the Environment teams, have developed an excellent profile within the minority groups. But - and I think very frankly - the Prime Minister's endorsement of their efforts is essential to carry credibility with these groups, whose view of authority is very hierarchical!

Our opponents are very active in the minorities. They have little to offer in policy, but plenty by way of abuse of Conservatives. Essentially because of the relative shortage of comment from Mrs. Thatcher, she is the prime target: the argument which carries weight with the minorities (who, after all, are not the most sophisticated part of the electorate) is to set the achievements of other ministers aside and ask simply who is in charge and where does she stand?

- c) This Government, in an unfussy, unspectacular way, has built a good record of achievement in race relations matters (I attach a small information pack which I compiled recently - it is now being brought up to date and given a better presentation). The most important point is that we are exhibiting

our concern for the problems besetting the minorities, but our solution is to work through mainstream programmes, not through special legislation. This is a genuinely Conservative approach to equality, and should appeal alike to the Party and the minority groups, and it gets us away from the sterile jargon of 'positive discrimination'. We need to be more proud of this policy, and present it more forcefully.

d) A purely administrative point. As we go into 1983, we at CCO must be helping the Prime Minister to develop a balanced programme of activities vis a vis the minority groups. We should not leave this to chance.

Suggestions for action

1) Our Anglo Asian and Anglo West Indian Conservative Societies would benefit from the Prime Minister's support in an election year. There will be three good opportunities in 1983:

(i) Mrs. Thatcher will probably be addressing the Barnet branch of the Anglo Asian Conservative Society in February. At her request (so I understand), this meeting in previous years has been played as a local constituency function. This time I feel it deserves at least a press release with a few specific observations on the Government's strategy on race relations.

(ii) The West Indians will be holding a House of Commons buffet on 9th June. Mrs. Thatcher spent nearly an hour at the similar event in 1981, and a repeat of that, again with a short press release, would be ideal.

(iii) You attended the Anglo Asian Conservative reception on the House of Commons terrace yourself in July. Another will be organised for June/July 1983 according to Mrs. Thatcher's diary if she could attend.

2) Would the Prime Minister consider adding a short introduction to the revised 'Conservative Government and Race Relations' information pack?

3) I suggest an extra Asian event, because they are our main target in the General Election. Michael Grylls and I urged you some weeks ago to consider an evening with Asian businessmen, and our plans hinged on Abdul Shamji, who hosted a dinner for about 250 businessmen which Mrs. Thatcher attended in 1977. From everything we know about him, we believe we can rely on him to raise not only about 800 important Asian businessmen but also funds! Would the Prime Minister consider this for her 1983 diary?

4) Like media everywhere, the ethnic minority media are all keen to have exclusive interviews with the Prime Minister! There are over 20 Asian language papers published in different languages, and West Indian papers or radio programmes. Most reach relatively small audiences, and several are ideologically totally anti-Conservative. Whilst narrowing the field presents some problems, I could

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My main plea is that Mrs. Thatcher should have been seen to have been interviewed, and that her answers are on the record. Exactly what format can be devised would obviously be a matter for the Prime Minister, but a few suggestions may be helpful:

- i) By prior arrangement, make a special effort with one or two journalists at any of the functions suggested above.
- ii) Through either the Home Secretary, CCO, or direct from Downing Street, summons them to a special press conference (perhaps early in the new year, with the new Nationality Act coming into effect).
- iii) I could ask one editor to submit a number of written questions, to be answered as a Question and Answer column.

Yours sincerely,

Mervyn Kohler

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Enc