



FROM THE CHAIRMAN, MARMADUKE HUSSEY

BRITISH BROADCASTING CORPORATION  
BROADCASTING HOUSE  
LONDON W1A 1AA  
TELEPHONE: 01-580 4468  
TELEX: 265781

10th February, 1988

Dear Denis

Thank you so much for your letter of 18th January which, to my horror, was read out to me in Australia by my Personal Assistant. I understand that your office told her you did not want the matter referred to anyone else but left to deal with on my return. I have replied as soon as I could, only arriving back from India very late on Monday night.

I really do not know what to say. If this had been about my wife I should have been absolutely livid.


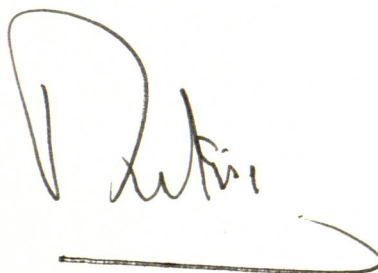
Just to look at the facts: Radio 4, in conjunction with the Sunday Telegraph, run a competition called "Mini Saga" - for which, incidentally, there were 30,000 entries, which to my mind makes it all the more extraordinary that this was adjudged to be a runner-up in the adult section. The judges were Brian Aldiss, novelist and sci-fi writer; Alan Coren, humorist and editor of The Listener; Felicity Lawrence, editor of the Telegraph Sunday Magazine; Brian Redhead, presenter of the 'Today' programme; and Heidi Thomas, whose playwriting career was launched when she herself won a competition - Texaco's 1984 'Most Promising Young Writer' award. It is part of the normal pattern for this contest, which is now in its second year, that Radio 4 undertakes to broadcast the winners and runners-up and the Sunday Telegraph to publish them. However, the Sunday Telegraph Magazine did not publish the runners-up, and I only wish we had shown the same restraint. The Sunday Telegraph has also published a book of the winners and runners-up in January, in association with Alan Sutton Publishing.

How the judges came to select this contribution I find it hard to understand. The use of the word "she" was wholly objectionable in associating your wife with a statement, albeit in a fictional setting, that she legalised hard drugs.

To be fair, it is not actually the producer who is to blame but the judges of the competition. In my opinion, however, this mini-saga should not have been broadcast. You may rest assured that I will make my displeasure very clearly known. On behalf of the BBC I can only apologise most sincerely to you and the Prime Minister.

We have a very long way to go and it is going to take a long time. We are absolutely determined to improve the news and current affairs programmes on both radio and television and have completely changed the entire management team in this area. They are set on this difficult but vitally important task and are, you will not be surprised to hear, meeting opposition. But I hope as the year progresses we will both see the results of their efforts.

I am copying this letter to the Director-General so that he is aware of this private correspondence.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Lewis Weir". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial 'L'.A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Denis Thatcher". The signature is bold and cursive, with a large initial 'D' and a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Denis Thatcher Esq., MBE TD,  
10 Downing Street,  
London, SW1A 2AA

CONFIDENTIAL FILING.

Possible detamation of the Prime Minister  
by the "Today" programme.

PRIME MINISTER

January 1988

Referred to	Date	Referred to	Date	Referred to	Date	Referred to	Date
<del>18.1.88</del>							
<del>19.1.88</del>							
22.1.88							
PREM 19/24/29							

MR THATCHER

(M)

PRIME MINISTER

GUEST LIST FOR THE GENERAL RECEPTION

For reasons that I can readily understand, Mr. Thatcher crossed Mr. Hussey's name from the earlier version of this list. I wondered however whether there is not a case for inviting him.

You want to speak to him informally about the disgraceful "mini saga" on the Today programme. We cannot find an occasion in the near future when you are likely to see him. The General Reception is the only possible one in the near future though Mr. Hussey may find such receptions difficult because of his legs.

We could suggest that he came towards the end of the reception. You could then have a quiet word with him about the mini saga after the reception. Would you like Mr. Hussey invited in this way?

I should also be grateful for your views on the other guests.

N.L.W.

Mr Wicks

N. L. WICKS

22 January 1988

1. I only crossed out Mr Hussey because I did not think a Gen. Recep. is (a) suitable for D. Ke (as you say) and (b) important enough. I did discuss with P.M. 25/1

PMMAPX

P.10

2. I enclose copy of letter  
which I wrote to Duke  
New in the history of  
public broadcasting has  
so far a libel been  
published against Roydon  
let alone a Prime Minister

S

DENIS THATCHER MBE TD

10 DOWNING STREET

LONDON SW1A 2AA

18 January 1988

*Dear Duke,*

With deference may I ask you to study the enclosed transcript (extract) of the Radio 4 "Today" programme of 14 January.

The extent and depth of political bias in the B.B.C. is a matter of opinion, but this is a disgrace judged by any standard however low.

I cannot believe that the management of a public broadcasting system can continue to employ a producer who publishes so foul and deliberate an untruth against anyone on such a subject. Surely such gross professional mis-conduct can neither be excused nor condoned?

*Regards to you both*

*Yours ever*

*Denis,*

Marmaduke Hussey Esqre  
Chairman  
B.B.C.

File

MJ



10 DOWNING STREET

LONDON SW1A 2AA

*From the Principal Private Secretary*

19 January 1988

*Dear Michael,*

Thank you for your letter of today's date which I have discussed with the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister was grateful to have the Attorney's advice on this matter. She would not want him to obtain advice from counsel specialising in the law of defamation.

I am copying this letter to Philip Mawer (Home Office) and to Sir Robin Butler.

*Yours  
Nigel Wicks*

N.L. Wicks

Michael Saunders Esq  
Law Officers' Department.

*SLW*

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*Seen by PM*



M.L. SAUNDERS  
LEGAL SECRETARY

LAW OFFICERS' DEPARTMENT  
ROYAL COURTS OF JUSTICE  
LONDON, WC2A 2LL

19 January 1988

*pa.*

N L Wicks Esq CBE  
Principal Private Secretary  
10 Downing Street  
LONDON S W 1

*Jean Ngel,*

Thank you for your letter of ~~18~~ 18 January enclosing the transcript of the item on the Today programme on Thursday 14 January which we discussed on the telephone.

The Attorney's view is that the item is defamatory. The defamatory elements include:

- "The final solution", in its inherent connotation and a fortiori in its apposition to "The unfit died of freedom", with its innuendo of intention to secure the deaths of the "unfit". The same applies to "ingenious" and "only the worthiest survived".
- "Crematorium shares surged". This is a particularly revolting defamation in its innuendo that this was a consequence desired by the Prime Minister: see "She legalized hard drugs", which personalises her as the target for the sting and not mere "Thatcherism".

Should the Prime Minister wish to take any further action on this, the Attorney considers that it would be desirable to obtain advice from Counsel specialising in the law of defamation.

I am copying this letter to Philip Mawer and to Sir Robin Butler.

*Yours faithfully*  
*Michael Saunders*

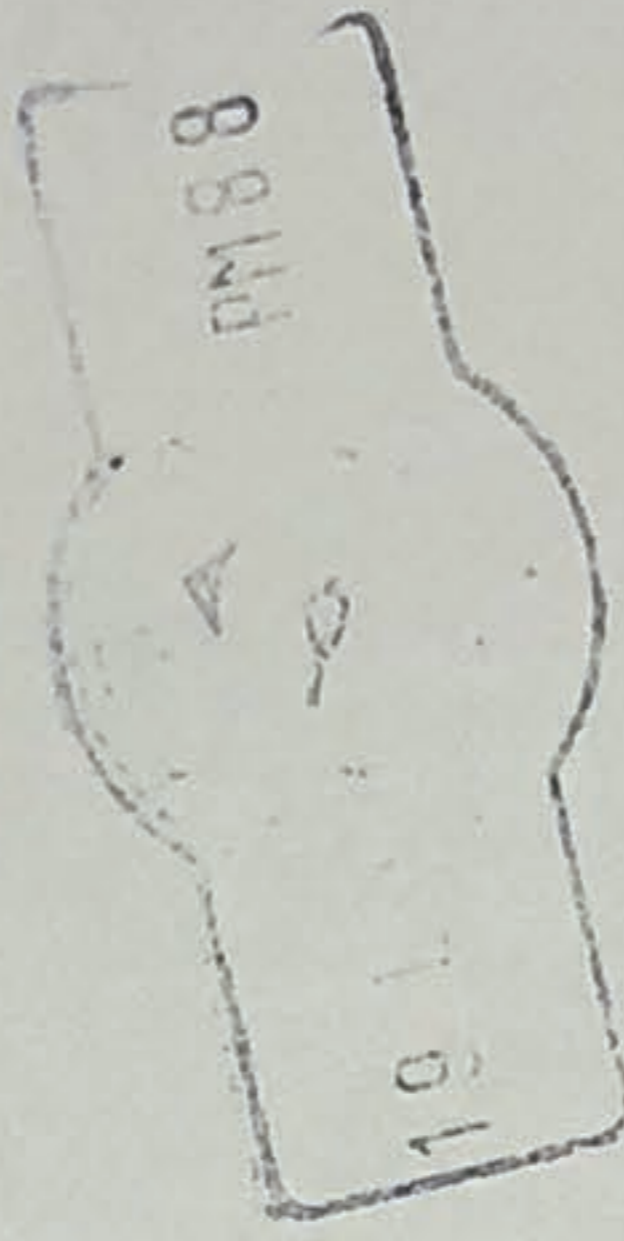
M L SAUNDERS

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Pu: Detention of the PM, Jan 88.

ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE  
DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE  
OTTAWA, ONTARIO



CHIEF OF POLICE  
OTTAWA, ONTARIO



10 DOWNING STREET

LONDON SW1A 2AA

*From the Principal Private Secretary*

18 January 1988

*Dear Michael,*

Here is the transcript of the item on the Today programme on Thursday 14 January about which I told you on the telephone.

I should be grateful if you could let me have the Attorney's advice on whether the item is defamatory.

It is not the Prime Minister's normal practice, or indeed wish, to send solicitors' letters to media organisations which issue statements which defame her. But I wonder whether this item might not prove an exception to the Prime Minister's normal practice.

I am sending a copy of this letter to Philip Mawer (Home Office) on a personal basis. I should be grateful if this is only seen by his Secretary of State and his Permanent Secretary. A copy also goes to Sir Robin Butler.

*Yours sincerely  
Nigel Wicks*

N. L. WICKS

Michael Saunders, Esq.,  
Law Officers' Department

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TRANSCRIPT OF "MINI SAGA" ON THE TODAY PROGRAMME ON THURSDAY 14  
JANUARY 1988.(08.30)

"THATCHERISM THE FINAL SOLUTION" BY VINCENT HILL OF LONDON.

INGENIOUS: INDIVIDUAL CHOICE MUST BE PARAMOUNT. WITH GROWING  
CONFIDENCE SHE LEGALIZED HARD DRUGS. PRICES FELL SHARPLY.  
LEGITIMATE OUTLETS REPLACED BANKRUPT DRUG SYNDICATES. CRIME  
FIGURES PLUNGED. CREMATORIUM SHARES SURGED. CITY POPULATIONS  
THINNED AS THE WEAK SPIRITED SUCCUMBED.UNEMPLOYMENT VANISHED.  
ONLY THE WORTHIEST SURVIVED. NOBODY COULD COMPLAIN. THE UNFIT  
DIED OF FREEDOM.

IB  
PRESS OFFICE  
14.1.88