

Press

PRIME MINISTER

SUNDAY EXPRESS

You have agreed to give an interview to Robin Esser, Editor of the Sunday Express, and Tony Smith, their political editor, for an hour from 11am on Monday. I will accompany you. They will be bringing a photographer and could well ask to take shots of you in the garden.

Background

First, a few words about the Sunday Express. After 18 months as Editor, Mr Esser has reversed the slide in circulation. He is now looking to build it up and has appointed a public relations firm to help promote the paper. The current audited sale is around 2.1 million. It is read extensively across the country - unlike the Mail on Sunday, which is rather a creature of the South-East - and has a solid base in the industrial areas of the Midlands and North. It also sells well in Scotland.

Second, the Sunday Express is consistently helpful in its comment and in the way that it makes its columns available to Cabinet Ministers and other supporters. Robin Esser is a staunch supporter.

The Interview

The Sunday Express intend to advertise the interview as you pointing the way ahead for your Government. Their posters are "What next, Prime Minister?" I should therefore concentrate very much on the questions towards the end of the attached list (Annex I) which give you the opportunity to look towards the future of the kind of Britain you want to see.

We have provided you with briefing on each of the questions I have asked them to forget about No 2 which asks if you have any "plans to honour President Reagan".

General Considerations

This will be a friendly, supportive interview. Mr Esser approaches it in an entirely helpful spirit while, of course, wanting to get a good story out of it.

For the Sunday Express readership I think you want to emphasise -

- i) the extent of the changes you have brought about in Britain - socially, economically, attitudinally, and in international standing etc
- ii) the range of reforms still to be achieved - ie the unfinished agenda: housing, education, health, and law and order
- iii) your clear determination in the light of (ii) to make Britain a better place for people to live in - ie you care about people
- iv) your determination to raise standards in Britain
- v) your concern about crime and punishment; (this is a rather important issue with Sunday Express readers)
- vi) Britain's greatly increased standing in the world - and determination to play a helpful role in Washington and Moscow; and in Arabia and Israel; and elsewhere. Sunday Express readers are a patriotic lot.

Other Points

It is important to bear in mind that the interview will not be printed until six days later. This should cause no problems but you should have the fact at the back of your mind.

Please see briefings on the submitted questions at Annex II.

Content?

T.J.P.

P.P.

BERNARD INGHAM

15 July 1988

Draft outline questions for the attention of Mr Bernard Ingham, Chief Press Secretary to the Prime Minister

Re: Sunday Express interview with The Prime Minister on Monday, 18 July

1. You are now in the tenth year of your Premiership and the Reagan era is drawing to a close. We may have a President of the USA who is inexperienced in international affairs. Do you believe you will have an even more pivotal role to play in future arms talks and East-West relations?
2. Do you have plans to honour President Reagan in recognition of the special relationship you and he have forged?
3. Still on international relations, do you feel Britain is doing everything possible to secure the release of the hostages in Beirut - in particular Mr Waite, Mr McCarthy and Mr Keenan? Do you think the developments with the shooting down of the Iran Airbus are going to make things more difficult?
4. You have set out to change society and in particular people's attitudes to self-responsibility. Do you see a change for the better, or does the present day violence on the streets indicate this policy has failed?
5. What sort of measures do you see needed to curb public violence - particularly the violence which is being shown towards the elderly people and women?
6. Do you support the idea that the jury system would be strengthened if you raised the minimum age of jurors from 18 to 21?
7. 1992 is just round the corner. How do you view Britain's position with regard to Europe? Are we going to be swamped? Should we resist at any price any reduction in our independence or in the sovereignty of Parliament?
8. Your Government has cut taxes to promote the enterprise economy. Is tax cutting still a high priority? If so what ideas do you have for protecting the less well off and making sure we don't end up with two nations - the well-off and the poor?
9. Talking of two nations, your administration has moved towards giving women more independence in terms of taxation and pay yet, despite your own example, women are still greatly out-numbered among the leaders of society - in particular in politics. Do you see this changing and are you eager to see it changed?
10. You have spoken in the past of the next Conservative Prime Minister coming from among the younger members of your Government. What qualities do you think the next leader will need and do you think that so called "Thatcherism" will be his or her guiding principles?
11. You have remarked that you hope you will know when the moment is right for you to pass over the reins of power. What sort of factors will influence that decision?

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12. What do you see as your greatest tasks still to be fulfilled within the next few years?
13. If I may ask you to consult your crystal ball, what real achievements would you like to be remembered for in the future?
14. Senior Conservatives have said the Tories could well stay in power until 2000AD. Do you think this is realistic?
15. On behalf of our many Scottish readers, may I ask you one further question. Many people living north of the border feel that a government 400 miles south doesn't care about them and doesn't understand them. What plans have you for aiding Scotland's revival, and altering the attitude of the Scots to your administration? Do your plans include any form of devolution - an Assembly or similar idea?

Question 1 - You are now in the tenth year of your Premiership and the Reagan era is drawing to a close. We may have a President of the USA who is inexperienced in international affairs. Do you believe that you will have an even more pivotal role to play in future arms talks and East-West relations?

LINE TO TAKE

The United States is bound to play the key role on the Western side because of its size and military strength. Our role will be to go on with what we have done hitherto: be good members of the NATO Alliance, give our advice and judgment on the main issues, and continue our own contacts with Mr Gorbachev. Yes, obviously if you have been active on these matters for nearly ten years, it does mean that you have a certain amount of experience to draw upon and I believe that Britain's voice is heard on these crucial issues. We shall go on giving our views and maintaining our close friendship with the United States.

Question 2 - Do you have plans to honour President Reagan in recognition of the special relationship you and he have forged?

LINE TO TAKE

I think the greatest honour President Reagan could have is the satisfaction of his remarkable foreign policy achievements, above all the INF agreement and the new relationship with the Soviet Union. I believe that the special relationship between Britain and the United States has been absolutely invaluable to this country, for instance during the Falklands campaign, and I am confident that it will continue whoever is elected President in the United States because it lies deep in the interests of both countries that it should do so.

Question 3 - Still on international relations, do you feel Britain is doing everything possible to secure the release of hostages in Beirut - in particular Mr Waite, Mr McCarthy and Mr Keenan? Do you think the developments with the shooting down of the Iran Airbus are going to make things more difficult?

LINE TO TAKE

We are deeply concerned about the fate of the hostages and the terrible strain on their families. I sometimes meet them and they are marvellously brave people. We do everything we can to find out information about the hostages: where they are and the conditions under which they are held. But as you know we are not prepared to do deals to secure their release because that only encourages the taking of more hostages and increases the risk to the lives of others. Of course it is worrying when other countries fail to observe their agreements on this, but I am absolutely convinced that our policy is right and we shall continue to observe it, while praying constantly for the safe release and return of the hostages. I do not think the shooting down of the Iranian airliner, which was a tragic accident, affects the issue.

Question 4 - You have set out to change society and in particular people's attitudes to self-responsibility. Do you see a change for the better, or does the present day violence on the streets indicate this policy has failed?

LINE TO TAKE

The crime rate has risen by an average of around 6 per cent a year for each of the last 30 years. Those years have been a time when personal responsibility has been at a discount and tolerance of violence has grown.

People seem to be less tolerant of violence now so more offences are likely to be reported. The growth in the crime rate slowed last year to 1 per cent; substantially below the 30 year average. (But within that total, violent crimes are up by 15 per cent).

Question 5 - What sort of measures do you see needed to curb public violence - particularly the violence which is being shown towards the elderly people and women?

LINE TO TAKE

Action needs to be taken under three headings.

First, preventing violence. That means getting people who are more likely to commit violence to understand the consequences of their actions and to learn respect for others. That process has to start in the family and at school. The Government is taking direct action in an effort to prevent crime:

- Police manpower has been increased by 19,875 since 1979. In London alone, 750 more officers are now on street duty than a year ago.
- Over £11million is being spent on the new crime prevention publicity campaign.
- Communities can help themselves: there are now over 50,000 Neighbourhood Watch Schemes.

Second, those who commit violence need to be caught and; third, punishment needs to be swift and effective.

The police give high priority to violent crime and most such crimes are detected.

Violence against elderly people, women and children rightly arouses the greatest revulsion but the most likely victims of violence are young men.

The Government has strengthened penalties against violent crime:

- The Criminal Justice Bill increased the maximum penalty for carrying fire arms in furtherance of crime to life imprisonment and for cruelty to children from 2 to 10 years.
- 1985 legislation increased the maximum penalty for attempted rape to life imprisonment.
- Average sentences handed down by crown courts for serious violence against the person up by 20 per cent since 1983 and for rape up by 40 per cent; most rapists now receive sentences of at least 5 years.

More of the taxpayers' money is going towards care for victims of crime.

- £35million extra is being added to the Criminal Injuries Compensation Scheme this year.
- Up to an additional £11million will be available over the next three years for over 200 local victim support schemes.

Question 6 - Do you support the idea that the jury system would be strengthened if you raised the minimum age of jurors from 18 to 21?

LINE TO TAKE

Maturity is a matter of attitude not age or experience. Young people should incur the duties of citizenship at the same time as they are able to exercise its rights.

But we are determined to protect and improve the jury system. We have:

- increased the range of disqualification for people with a criminal record;
- abolished the right of peremptory challenge and increased maximum age for jury service to 70.

Question 7 - 1992 is just round the corner. How do you view Britain's position with regard to Europe? Are we going to be swamped? Should we resist at any price any reduction in our independence or in the sovereignty of Parliament?

LINE TO TAKE

No of course we are not going to be swamped by the European Community and those who talk of national Parliaments being made redundant in a matter of a few years are talking nonsense. We are committed to various common policies by the Treaty of Rome. Now and again new proposals come forward for doing things on a European basis and we treat each one of those on its merits and of course each of them has to be approved by Parliament itself.

But the whole basis of our approach to Europe is to reduce the number of unnecessary regulations and burdens on business, not increase them. It's socialists who want constantly to increase bureaucratic controls over people's lives and introduce ever more regulations, and we shall fight that.

More generally Britain is playing a more active role - a leading role - in Europe than ever before. We have shifted the debate away from vague concepts like European Union and on to practical issues like completing the Common Market. That will be of tremendous benefit to British industry, which will have a market of 320 million people with no barriers to our trade. And of course completion of the Channel Tunnel in 1993 will be an extra step, which will greatly improve our access to Europe.

Question 8 - Your Government has cut taxes to promote the enterprise economy. Is tax cutting still a high priority? If so what ideas do you have for protecting the less well off and making sure we don't end up with two nations - the well off and the poor?

LINE TO TAKE

Tax cuts have played a crucial role in bringing back to life the enterprise economy, and we want to go further. The Chancellor set a goal of 20p income tax in his last Budget, but we shall only move towards that when it is safe and prudent to do so. Lower taxes have been essential for bringing increased prosperity to all groups. It is nonsense to talk about two nations. Because before you can consider the distribution of wealth you have to make sure the wealth is created in the first place.

The tax changes we have made have been essential to get us back on the path of growing wealth. And that climate has brought increased prosperity to people at all levels of income.

Question 9 - Talking of two nations, your administration has moved towards giving women more independence in terms of taxation and pay yet, despite your own example, women are still greatly out-numbered among the leaders of society - in particular in politics. Do you see this changing and are you eager to see it changed?

LINE TO TAKE

Since 1979, nine other women have held Ministerial appointments in Conservative Governments. Six do so today.

The number of women becoming solicitors has doubled; the number of women doctors graduating is up by 50 per cent and the number of women becoming chartered accountants has increased three-fold.

I want to see this change continue.

We support the right of women to choose their own lives for themselves. If women wish to be lawyers, doctors, engineers, scientists, they should have the same opportunities as men. More and more they do.

But many women wish to devote themselves mainly to raising a family and running a home. And they should have that choice too. Very few jobs can compare in long-term importance and satisfaction with that of housewife and mother.

Question 10 - You have spoken in the past of the next Conservative Prime Minister coming from among the younger members of your Government. What qualities do you think the next leader will need and do you think that so called "Thatcherism" will be his or her guiding principles?

Question 11 - You have remarked that you hope you will know when the moment is right for you to pass over the reins of power. What sort of factors will influence that decision?

Question 13 - If I may ask you to consult your crystal ball, what real achievements would you like to be remembered for in the future?

LINE TO TAKE

You should be aware of what you told Brian Walden. I have edited the interview to retain the substantive points:

Interviewer

Are you going to run again in '91?

Prime Minister

Well, I hope so, I hope so.

Interviewer

And how about '95?

Prime Minister

It is not only up to me, Brian. The fact is that I have to be reappointed as Leader of the Party. That is a strength - it is not a weakness.

Interviewer

There is not going to be any competition is there?

Prime Minister

Well, you never know. It is a strength, it is not a weakness. I hope so. I hope so.

But eventually there will come a time, you know, when people will say: "Well, she has had a good go and is it now time for one of the younger ones to have a go?" Now that time will come when there are several who are there who are capable of taking on.

What I am saying to you is I do not know when that time will be.

I am equally saying to you that I do not hang on for the sake of hanging on. I hang on - and then when I believe there are people who can take the banner forward with the same commitment, belief, vision, strength, singleness of purpose.

Interviewer

And you are not going to pack up and leave us just because you have struck some arbitrary date, are you?

Prime Minister

Oh no, no, because that would be throwing away everything for which I have fought.

What I am saying is the things for which I have fought and believe in passionately are the most important things and the question is who can take the banner forward best, but there will come a time, as I say, when people will say: "Well, she has had a good run and look, there are those several young people!" I will tell you when the microphones are off who I think at the moment could take it forward.

Interviewer

There is one great advantage which you said yourself: that if you go on and on, it will be one of the younger Thatcherite generation. It will be somebody perhaps I can trust and not people who from the past I have several suspicions of.

Prime Minister

Not people who constantly compromise.

Interviewer

If God allowed you only one sentence to say the good that you had done as Prime Minister, what sentence would you choose, what topic?

Prime Minister

I cannot put it into one particular policy. I can only say this:

That I believe that our policies have brought out the very best in British character. This fundamental British initiative coupled with a sense of responsibility towards your fellow men.

Question 12 - What do you see as your greatest tasks still to be fulfilled within the next few years?

LINE TO TAKE

I suggest you take the line covered by the points in my covering minute, viz -

- the range of reforms still to be achieved - ie the unfinished agenda: housing, education, health, and law & order
- your clear determination in the light of the above to make Britain a better place for people to live in - ie you care about people
- your concern about crime and punishment;
- Britain's greatly increased standing in the world.

Question 14 - Senior Conservatives have said the Tories could well stay in power until 2000AD. Do you think this is realistic?

LINE TO TAKE

We must take each election as it comes. But there is no earthly reason why we should not continue to govern into the next century provided we maintain a sound, low inflationary and steadily growing economy, keep in tune with people's aspirations and continue to bubble with ideas.

We are very much on top of that job now and my aim is to keep us on top of it indefinitely. That, I believe, is what the country wants us to do.

Question 15 - On behalf of our many Scottish readers, may I ask you one further question. Many people living north of the border feel that a government 400 miles south doesn't care about them and doesn't understand them. What plans have you for aiding Scotland's revival, and altering the attitude of the Scots to your administration? Do your plans include any form of devolution - an Assembly or similar idea?

LINE TO TAKE

Scotland is, and under this Government will remain, an integral part of a single United Kingdom. We have no intention of going down the path of devolution. That would be fundamentally wrong.

This Government has done a great deal for those north of the border. In very many of the public services, other parts of the UK look enviously at the levels of provision in Scotland (examples attached). But the most important thing we can do for Scotland is to lay the right foundations for the Scottish people to create growing prosperity for themselves and their families. Some people have said that the spirit of enterprise has been slow to reach Scotland. I do not believe that. It was always there and this Government has liberated the energies of the Scottish people as well as those in other parts of the United Kingdom. The results - falling unemployment and growing prosperity - are evident to all.

SCOTLAND

- MANUFACTURING PRODUCTIVITY INCREASED BY 5.6% PER ANNUM SINCE 1979 COMPARED WITH 3.9% PER ANNUM IN THE UK AS A WHOLE.
- AVERAGE WEEKLY EARNINGS FOR MEN AND WOMEN (£214.60 AND £139.90 RESPECTIVELY IN APRIL 1987) ARE HIGHER THAN IN ANY OTHER PART OF THE UK EXCEPT THE SOUTH EAST.
- PUBLIC EXPENDITURE IN 86/87 PER HEAD IN SCOTLAND WAS 22 PER CENT HIGHER THAN IN THE UK. HEALTH AND PERSONAL SOCIAL SERVICES EXPENDITURE PER HEAD IN 1986/87 WAS £380 IN ENGLAND; £480 IN SCOTLAND.
- THE SCOTTISH DEVELOPMENT AGENCY SPENDS UPWARDS OF £146 MILLION A YEAR.
- SINCE 1979 OVER 118,000 PUBLIC SECTOR TENANTS HAVE BOUGHT THEIR HOMES. OWNER OCCUPATION UP FROM 35 PER CENT TO OVER 43 PER CENT.
- OVER 171,000 NEW HOMES BUILT SINCE 1979. 263,000 PRIVATE SECTOR GRANT APPLICATIONS APPROVED SINCE 1979.
- SINCE 1979 £720 MILLION INVESTED IN MOTORWAYS AND TRUNK ROADS. 242 MILES OF TRUNK ROADS BUILT INCLUDING 28 BY-PASSES BUILT.
- OVER 132,000 PEOPLE COVERED BY GOVERNMENT EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING MEASURES.
- EXPENDITURE PER PUPIL IS HIGHER THAN EVER BEFORE. MORE STUDENTS IN FULL TIME HIGHER EDUCATION THAN EVER BEFORE.
- ANNUAL GROSS CAPITAL ALLOCATION TO LOCAL AUTHORITIES FOR EXPENDITURE ON COUNCIL HOUSES IN 1988/89 UP BY 8.2% COMPARED WITH 1987/88.

HEALTH

- SPENDING ON THE HEALTH SERVICE IN SCOTLAND HAS RISEN FROM £1,053 MILLION IN 1979/80 TO £2,325 MILLION IN 1987/88 - 26 PER CENT IN REAL TERMS. PROVISION FOR 1988/89 IS £2.4 BILLION - AN INCREASE OF £120 MILLION.
- SINCE 1979 THE NUMBER OF CONSULTANTS HAS GONE UP BY 8 PER CENT, THE NUMBER OF GPs BY 13 PER CENT, AND THE NUMBER OF QUALIFIED NURSES BY 29 PER CENT.
- SINCE 1979 DOCTORS AND DENTISTS PAY HAS GONE UP BY 33 PER CENT IN REAL TERMS, NURSES AND MIDWIVES PAY BY 29½ PER CENT.
- SINCE 1979 53 MAJOR HOSPITAL DEVELOPMENTS COMPLETED PROVIDING 5803 BEDS AND 481 DAY PLACES. FURTHER 33 DEVELOPMENTS UNDERWAY PROVIDING 4484 BEDS.
- SINCE 1979 THE NUMBER OF IN-PATIENTS IS UP 14 PER CENT, THE NUMBER OF DAY CASES UP 87 PER CENT.

7 JULY 1988

KK13/6

MR POWELL

MR GRAY

MR MORRIS

Attached are the questions which the Sunday Express propose to ask the Prime Minister on Monday. You may care to provide short briefing notes as follows:

Mr Powell

Questions 1, 2 (which the Prime Minister will presumably dismiss as being not for her), 3 (bearing in mind that the Sunday Express has carried a lot of dubious stuff about Terry Waite in recent months) and 7.

Mr Gray

Questions 8 and 15 (where a brief on what the Government has done for Scotland would be useful).

Mr Morris

Questions 4, 5 and 6 on law and order.

I will deal with 10 (where the Prime Minister will have to tread carefully in view of the trouble caused by the Walden interview), 11, 12, 13 and 14.

It would be helpful if you could let me have the material by 5pm Thursday.



BERNARD INGHAM

13 July 1988