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10 DOWNING STREET

9 February 1981

THE PRIME MINISTER

Dear Mr. O'Brien,

Thank you for your letter of 16 January about the possible sale of The Times, The Sunday Times and the three Times supplements.

As you will now know, the Secretary of State for Trade decided to give his consent to the proposed sale, subject to certain conditions which provide legally binding safeguards on editorial freedom and independence.

It was good of you to write to let me know of your support for the proposed sale. As you will be aware, the deal now rests on the outcome of current negotiations you and others are conducting with Mr. Murdoch. I wish you all well and hope that matters will soon come to a successful conclusion.

Yours sincerely,

sgd Margaret Thatcher

Owen O'Brien, Esq.

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From the Secretary of State

Tim Lankester Esq
Private Secretary
10 Downing Street
London, SW1

3 February 1981

Dear Tim,

You wrote to me on 19/January enclosing a letter that the Prime Minister had received from Mr Owen O'Brien, General Secretary of NATSOPA, about Mr Murdoch's bid for the Times, Sunday Times and the supplements.

You will recall that the Secretary of State announced his decision not to refer the bid to the MMC before you were able to send out the original draft that was provided. I now ... attach a further draft that you might like to consider.

Yours ever,

Nicholas McInnes

N McInnes
Private Secretary

-4 FEB 1981

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UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE



DRAFT LETTER FOR THE PRIME MINISTER TO SEND TO:

Owen O'Brien Esq
General Secretary
National Society of Operative
Printers, Graphical and Media Personnel
Caxton House
13-16 Borough Road
St George's Circus
London, SE1 OAL

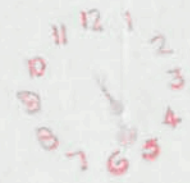
Thank you for your letter of 16 January about the possible sale of The Times, The Sunday Times and the three Times supplements.

As you will now know, the Secretary of State for Trade decided to give his consent to the proposed sale, subject to certain conditions which provide legally binding safeguards on editorial freedom and independence.

I have noted your support for the proposed sale. As you will be aware, the deal now rests on the outcome of current negotiations you and others are conducting with Mr Murdoch.

COMMISSION

- 4 FEB 1981





From the Secretary of State

Tim Lankester Esq
Private Secretary
10 Downing Street
London, SW1

CF. pls ask for
new draft - and
approve for mtg
getting on it

26 January 1981
before Britain's

Statement.

Dear Tim

Thank you for your letter of 19 January enclosing a letter the
Prime Minister has received from the General Secretary of NATSOPA.

--- I enclose a draft reply for the Prime Minister's signature, which
if it is to be ^{used} sent should be sent immediately.

Yours sincerely

Catherine Capon

CATHERINE CAPON
Private Secretary

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DRAFT REPLY FOR THE PRIME MINISTER TO SEND TO:

Owen O'Brien Esq
General Secretary
National Society of Operative Printers
Graphical and Media Personnel
Caxton House
13-16 Borough Road
St George's Circus
London, SE1 OAL

Thank you for your letter of 16 January about the possible sale of 'The Times', 'The Sunday Times' and the three Times supplements.

Now that an application has been received by the Secretary of State for Trade under the provisions of the Fair Trading Act 1973 for his consent to a sale, the Government's response will be carefully considered under the terms of the Act. Meanwhile, your comments have been noted and will be borne in mind.



File No

NATSOPA

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

19 January 1981

Chase on Monday 26 Jan. psc

I should be grateful for a draft reply for the Prime Minister to send to the enclosed letter she has received from the General Secretary of NATSOPA.

It would be helpful if the draft could reach me by close of play this coming Friday - 23 January.

T. P. LANKESTER

Nicholas McInnes, Esq.,
Department of Trade.

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file 10

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

19 January 1981

I am writing to acknowledge your letter of 16 January which I have placed before the Prime Minister. A reply will be sent to you as soon as possible.

J. P. LANKESTER

Owen O'Brien, Esq.



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10 DOWNING STREET

PRIME MINISTER

A letter from the General Secretary of NATSOPA expressing support for Rupert Murdoch's bid for the Times. I will get a draft reply for you to send.

I have asked the Department of Trade for a submission on whether or not there should be a reference to the Monopolies Commission. This should be with us later tonight.

ms

R

19 January 1981



NATSOPA

National Society of
Operative Printers
Graphical and
Media Personnel

OOB/mh

16th January 1981

R17/1

Caxton House
13-16 Borough Road
St George's Circus
London SE1 OAL
Telephone
01-928 2388

General Secretary
Owen O'Brien

National
Assistant Secretaries

J A Selby
E O'Brien
J.A. Moakes

The Rt. Hon. Mrs. Margaret Thatcher, MP
Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
LONDON S.W.1

Dear Prime Minister,

Having read reports in this morning's papers of concern expressed in Parliament over the possibility that Mr. Rupert Murdoch may be given the opportunity to purchase The Times, The Sunday Times and the supplements of those papers, I can well understand the fears of members of the House of Commons at the prospect but I do not share that concern.

As General Secretary of a union with the vast majority of members servicing the national newspaper industry, I am primarily concerned with job opportunities for my members.

I am sure you will appreciate that the Sunday Times readers would not be in the same market as those of the News of the World and neither would The Times readership be in the same strata as readers of The Sun. They are widely differing newspapers catering for an entirely different readership.

Having dealt with Rupert Murdoch I know, using the vernacular, that he is no pushover, and I have no doubt at all that if he were given the opportunity of acquiring these titles, he would be prepared to give a guarantee of editorial freedom to the editorial staff employed upon the publications concerned. Furthermore, I would say that such a guarantee would be insisted upon by the journalists and certainly, I would suggest, by Mr. Harold Evans, Editor of The Sunday Times, who in my opinion is one of the foremost, if not the foremost, journalists in the western world.

Therefore my purpose in writing to you is to assure you that as far as I am concerned, and I am sure that I speak on behalf of my Executive Council, the fears expressed in the House would be groundless if the agreement on editorial freedom was guaranteed, as I am sure it could.

Kindest regards and best wishes,

Yours sincerely,

Owen O'Brien
General Secretary