

MR WICKS

cc Sir Geoffrey Littler HM Treasury
Sir John Fretwell FCO
Rodric Braithwaite FCO
Christopher Meyer FCO
John Gieve HM Treasury

ECONOMIC SUMMIT BRIEFING

You have agreed to give an unattributable briefing on the Toronto Summit to the media - home and overseas - in the main Treasury conference room at noon on Wednesday. I will preside and you will be supported by Sir Geoffrey Littler and Sir John Fretwell. Rodric Braithwaite is unable to attend. Chris Meyer (FCO) and John Gieve (Treasury) will also be present.

Background

Normally these occasions last about 30 minutes. I intend to close it at the very latest after 45 minutes.

In general, the briefing will be attended by those British correspondents who are to cover the Summit and the leading North American, European and Japanese correspondents resident in London. This means they will be a mixed bag of political, economic and financial correspondents.

The format of the briefing is for you to set the scene for say, 5 minutes. After inviting Sir Geoffrey and Sir John to add any observations from their point of view, I will call and select the questions.

For sake of completeness, it would be useful if, in your opening statement, you could refer to the Prime Minister's visit to Ottawa at the end of the summit at Mr Mulroney's invitation to address the Canadian Parliament.

Summit

Interest in this Summit is the lowest I can recall. This is curious since it follows the October stock exchange crash and will be Reagan's last and Takeshita's first. The host, Mulroney, will be electioneering like mad.

Moreover no topical issue has yet emerged. The media expect:

- i) Reagan to report on Moscow and the Summit to take stock of East-West relations, but this is a bit stale by now.
- ii) Terrorism to be discussed, but nothing much new to emerge (especially as the French object to any real Summit competence in this area).
- iii) A review of the economy, but the media are rather bored by it all because we seem to have weathered the October crash uncommonly well and the OECD is rather bullish; in short there doesn't seem to be much blood on it;
- iv) some sort of agreement to be reached on Third World debt now that the French have belatedly come good; but agreements are pretty dull as compared with rows.

The media also expect trade, GATT and agriculture to be discussed. So far they do not seem to have realised that this could be the anti-protectionist summit. Once this sinks in - and in the absence of any other obvious area of potential disagreement - they will want to explore its row-making potential: the Japanese dimension; strains in the EC; likely protectionist sentiment in the USA after Reagan. I think it will be important to give a good briefing on this issue and to put the UK position in a positive light.

The other main danger I see for Wednesday - and for the whole of the Summit - is a consistent attempt by the British media to try to stir up trouble and identify divisions between the Prime Minister, Foreign Secretary and Chancellor. We need to be on our guard against this. It will be particularly important for Press Secretaries to keep close together and to appear together at each Toronto briefing.

For the rest the media will be on the look-out for anything unusual - any national initiative in prospect; any novel issues likely to arise; any Summit spill-over of Euro issues - central bank, EMS etc; and any Mulroney eccentricities in the conduct of the Summit.

Briefing

Could I suggest you give in opening:

- i) UK representation;
- ii) programme and agenda; how many meetings by Sherpas; how the Summit is shaping up;
- iii) what the UK wants out of the Summit;
- iv) other issues likely to be discussed and broad indication of where we stand
- v) Ottawa programme and Prime Minister's plan to return home in time for Thursday's and ? Statement.

Content?



BERNARD INGHAM

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