

PRIME MINISTER

BBC LUNCH

You may care to send the attached letter of thanks to John Birt.

I stayed behind to have a chat with Mr Birt after the lunch. He was full of praise for the way you had handled it and I am grateful to you for this. I think you emerged as the big person.

John Birt was very defensive of Polly Toynbee, even though, as I told him, I thought her reporting was pretty biased.

He was not in any way defensive of John Cole. He agreed with you that he revealed his socialist/Labour background. Mr Birt added however that Cole would be retiring soon.

What is more interesting is that John Birt, responding to my criticism of John Sergeant, said that he could not defend their coverage of the leadership issue. He had made it clear to John Sergeant (albeit through an intermediary) that if you did not face a leadership election the matter would ^{not} be allowed to rest. In other words, John Sergeant is in potentially serious trouble.



BERNARD INGHAM
November 9, 1990



10 DOWNING STREET
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THE PRIME MINISTER

November 9, 1990

Dear Mr. Birt,

Thank you so much for entertaining me to lunch at Broadcasting House today and for the lively conversation which ensued.

It was very good of you to give me such a splendid opportunity to put over my point of view, even if I thought some of the questions came from a curious angle for impartial BBC correspondents!

I did enjoy my visit and I am most grateful to you for inviting me.

I know we agreed not to write (to save the bureaucracy!) but Bernard likes to see things done properly - and of course ~~he~~ is quite right.

Yours sincerely

Raymond Johnston

John Birt Esq
Deputy Director-General
BBC