



mb

10 DOWNING STREET

Prime Minister

I suggest that on
the platform you should
have:

- Home Secretary
- Lord Young
- Ch / Ex
- R Hyde (Home Office),

Everyone else would sit
where they wish.

Content?

DKS

16/5.

PRIME MINISTER

SEMINAR ON BROADCASTING: BRIEFING MEETING

You have a one and a half hour briefing meeting tomorrow for the Seminar on Broadcasting. Those present will be: Lord Young, Wilfred Hyde and Quintin Thomas (Home Office), Alistair MacDonald (Department of Trade and Industry), Dr. Shotton (Head of Broadcasting Engineering, Department of Trade and Industry) and Anthony Langdon (Cabinet Office). Brian Griffiths and Bernard Ingham will also be there. The Home Secretary will come if he returns from Austria in time.

Either at the beginning or at the end of the briefing meeting you will want to discuss the objectives of the Seminar. The guests coming from the broadcasting industry will all have their own axes to grind, and of course a major objective is to listen to the grinding. But what does the Government want to put across, without prejudicing later decisions?

I suggest that the main purpose should be to bring out the fact that competition is coming willy-nilly, and whether or not the Government or the industry wants it. It will come from European satellites and it will be forced sooner or later by public pressure for greater choice once people see other countries in Europe gaining a wide spread of channels. The task now is to try to create a framework for broadcasting which is capable of adapting to changing technology. A framework which is tied too specifically to particular technologies will soon become out-dated. We need a framework which can cope with change.

A message along these lines would make it clear that the Government is not hostile to broadcasting and indeed recognises that there are many areas of excellence. But fundamental change is now inevitable.

You will want the briefing meeting to work through the agenda and the steering brief. Brian Griffiths has provided some detailed questions to be discussed at the meeting.

There is a risk at the briefing meeting of being diverted on to the question of what the Government's policy should be. That is a matter for MISC 128 over the coming months. The main purpose of your meeting should be to draw out the questions to be addressed at the Seminar.

Similarly, it would be a mistake to become too hooked on a discussion of future technologies. MMDS may or may not be the right way forward and it may or may not be achievable in the early 1990s. The real point is that technologies will continue to change and the essential question in those circumstances is how far, if at all, the Government should protect existing television services, cable and DBS.

Of the detailed briefs, Brief B is well worth reading.

DNW

David Norgrove

16 September 1987