



500
 I really want some independent advice from some people who know about Prime Minister
 T.J. but who are not immediately involved
 - difficult!
 I asked Mr. Langdon to prepare this summary of work still to be done then we had to cancel next week's meeting. Are you content for that he knows the second order points to be handled in meetings chaired by the Home Secretary, which he would then report to you?

K01908

MR GRAY

MISC 128

RC 6
25/3

As you know, the meeting previously scheduled for 28 March is not the first MISC 128 meeting that has had to be cancelled to make way for more urgent business. I think that we should now take stock of the outstanding work, and the meetings that will be needed to dispose of it.

Yes not

2. The Home Secretary is anxious to be able to publish a White Paper on broadcasting during July and if he is to meet that timetable, all outstanding decisions ought to be taken by the end of May, to leave good time for consideration of the text of the White Paper.

3. The main decisions that are needed are as follows.

- (i) Additional programme services
- (ii) The future of Channel 4
- (iii) The transmission system
- (iv) Subscription/night hours
- (v) Networking
- (vi) Performance bonds
- (vii) Monitoring the independent production initiative
- (viii) The role of the IBA in the light of all the foregoing decisions.

4. The items above are roughly arranged in diminishing order of importance. Additional programme services is clearly the most important and this is followed by Channel 4 and transmission, which can only be settled when a decision is taken on additional programme services. The Prime Minister may be particularly interested in subscription/night hours, since this has a bearing on the running down of the licence fee. But all the subsequent issues are second order points.

5. We currently have meetings booked for 21 April and 4 May, and a meeting can be arranged for 25 April. Since additional programme services is a very heavy and complex item, I suggest that both the meetings on 21 and 25 April should be devoted to it, starting with a presentation at the first meeting.

6. The obvious agenda for the meeting on 4 May would then be the future of Channel 4 and transmission.

7. Thereafter, there must be some question whether the Prime Minister would be able to find time for a meeting on the less important issues, though I do not think that these could be settled in correspondence. One possibility on which more detailed advice could be prepared, if the Prime Minister wished, would be for the chairmanship of the Group to be delegated into other hands for the less important items. In that event, however, the Prime Minister might wish subscription/night hours to be taken at a meeting under her chairmanship, which would mean adding it to the agenda for 4 May. ✓

8. In short, the meetings on 21 and 25 April should be regarded as a single meeting on additional programme services, and the meeting on 4 May will be needed for Channel 4 and transmission. It may then be possible to find other ways of dealing with the remaining issues, though the Prime Minister may wish to retain the oversight of subscription/night hours at the cost of adding it to the agenda on 4 May. If the Prime Minister wishes to keep the chairmanship for the whole exercise, including the second-order points, then we ought to arrange another meeting in mid-May.

9. All this programme could be allowed to slip if the White Paper were postponed until after the summer recess. Such a postponement would not create any technical difficulties in the preparation of the legislation, but it would be vehemently resisted by the Home Secretary.

A/L

A J LANGDON

25 March 1988



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