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Mr Nigel Wicks

21 September 1988

BROADCASTING

MEETING WITH HOME SECRETARY: SEPTEMBER 19th

I had a meeting with the Home Secretary at which the Private Secretary, Philip Mawer, was present.

I outlined the PM's concern with the existing proposals contained in the White Paper; namely that while they would generate a great deal more competition within the commercial sector, as well as and between the commercial sector and the BBC in the areas of soaps, quiz shows and films, an unintended consequence however could well be that in other areas they would enhance the size, status and dominance of the BBC.

More specifically two problems were important:

- a) the dominance of BBC in national network news and the likely demise of ITN
- b) the strengthening of the BBC through the allocation of night hours to other channels, the extension of the transmission system and the commercial exploitation of the archives.

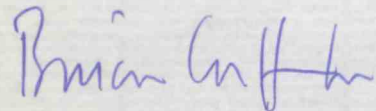
The Home Secretary readily accepted the analysis dealing with the news and ultimately that dealing with the general position of the BBC as well. He proposed to his private secretary that there should be a meeting with Home Office officials in the morning. Following this they should send me a letter outlining their fresh proposals by close of play today. From their point of view it would be useful if this

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could be agreed by the PM fairly quickly so that they could then be circulated to colleagues by this weekend.

The proposals which he outlined were:

- a) a requirement that C3 companies carry a national network news and also accept responsibility for its financing, it would not specifically mention ITN but its terms would be drawn in such a way that ITN would put in a strong position as a contender; he felt it would not be right to include ITN specifically in the White Paper, alongside the BBC and C4 as public service broadcasting institutions
- b) specific proposals dealing within the night hours and transmission which would limit the growth of the BBC, and
- c) possibly a proposal that C4 and C5 should be owned by the same company in order to create a third force in British broadcasting; this he found very attractive but felt needed more thought.



BRIAN GRIFFITHS