

cc Mr Ingham
Professor Griffiths

MR GRAY

BROADCASTING OF POLITICAL MESSAGES

You asked if I had any comments on the Home Secretary's minute on the provisions within the Broadcasting Bill for political messages. I have also seen Mr Ingham's note to you of 1st August.

I share Mr Ingham's concern that to distinguish between Party Political Broadcasts on the one hand and Ministerial and Election Broadcasts on the other may lead to some difficulties. However, this may be an opportune moment to consider whether or not we wish to continue with Party Political Broadcasts at all. Party Election Broadcasts and Ministerial Election Announcements are clearly valuable and the Home Secretary's proposals seem satisfactory. Party Political Broadcasts, on the other hand, require considerable time, effort and expense in preparation, and are generally unpopular and unwatched. Central Office have in the past wondered why we bother to produce them and this would seem a good time to consider it seriously. I have alerted Central Office that this question has arisen and I hope it is possible to delay a decision until they are in a position to provide a view.

JFW
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JOHN WHITTINGDALE

1.8.79