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10 DOWNING STREET
LONDON SW1A 2AA

From the Private Secretary

29 August 1989

Dear Catherine,

NEWS FOR CHANNELS 3, 4 and 5

Thank you for your letter of 24 August which the Prime Minister has seen and noted without comment.

I am copying this letter to the Private Secretaries to members of MISC 128 and to Trevor Woolley (Cabinet Office).

Yours sincerely,
Caroline Slocock

CAROLINE SLOCOCK

Miss Catherine Bannister
Home Office

men

R25/8



Prime Minister²

To note the Home Secretary's concerns about Parliamentary pressure.
HOME OFFICE
QUEEN ANNE'S GATE
LONDON SW1H 9AT

C&BT

You may also like to see Mr Brodke's argument for a local news requirement which is attached.

24 August 1989

Dear Caroline

CRS
25/8

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NEWS FOR CHANNELS 3, 4 AND 5

at flap

Thank you for your letter of 7 August recording the Prime Minister's view that it would not be right to insist on a requirement on the new Channel 3 licensees to show high quality regional news.

The Home Secretary takes the point that it might not always be easy to judge whether news was of the requisite high quality, although the Government is already committed by the Broadcasting White Paper to a requirement on Channel 3 licensees to show high quality news and current affairs programmes dealing with national and international matters. He also understands the general argument against adding further specific requirements on licensees at this stage.

The Home Secretary's concern is that if the Bill were, in effect, to indicate that a lower standard of provision was acceptable in relation to regional, as against national, news, there would be a risk that licensees would consciously cut back on the resources devoted to it, particularly since regional programming is one area in which Channel 3 will face no real competition from any other television channel. This, he thinks, will be a matter on which many backbenchers will have strong views. More generally, any suggestion that the Government attaches lesser significance to regional than to national news may be seized upon by the Opposition as calling into question the strength of our commitment to a regional structure for Channel 3.

Despite these reservations, however, the Home Secretary would be content not to press the requirement for high quality regional news, but to wait to see how the argument develops once the Bill is introduced. If Parliamentary pressure on this point builds up, he may wish to return to the matter later, when it may be helpful to have this potential concession available, if necessary.

I am copying this letter to the Private Secretaries to members of MISC 128 and to Trevor Woolley (Cabinet Office).

Yours sincerely
Catherine Bannister

MISS C J BANNISTER

Ms Caroline Slocock

BROADCASTING: Policy #9

