

MR MORRIS
cc. Mr Guise

Prime Minister²
Hugh Rossi at least is not
disposed to make waves. 10 March 1989
Jm MK

PRIME MINISTER'S INTERVIEW ON THE NATURE PROGRAMME - SEWAGE

Hugh Rossi has written to George Guise drawing attention to the fact that the Prime Minister's statement on the 'Nature' programme that only treated sewage was put into the sea was open to misinterpretation.

The position is that quite considerable amounts of UK sewage are pumped more or less untreated into the sea via outfalls. In order to clean up our beaches, considerable money is being invested in extending those outfalls further out to sea.

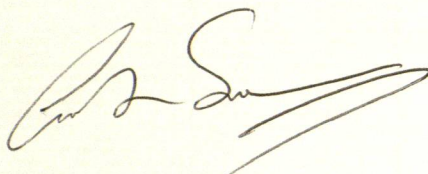
Other sewage, particularly from large metropolitan areas, is treated. The residue is called sewage sludge. This sludge is either

- i. incinerated;
- ii. buried in land fills;
- iii. dumped at sea.

These ways of handling sewage sludge have been used in the UK for many years. We will come under increasing pressure from the EC to incinerate all sludge. But both incineration and land fill are unpopular in local areas. So we are reluctant to abandon dumping at sea. The effect of such dumping is regularly monitored by MAFF, and is thought to have no serious effect on the marine environment.

It is clear from the attached letter that Sir Hugh Rossi and the Environment Select Committee do not agree with this view. They, like the Germans and certain others in the EC, favour incineration.

I shall tell Sir Hugh Rossi that we are most grateful to him for drawing these points to our attention, and that we have ensured that the Prime Minister is aware of the facts.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Carolyn Sinclair', with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

CAROLYN SINCLAIR



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

HR6

9th March 1989

George R J Guise Esq
Prime Minister's Policy Unit
10 Downing Street
LONDON SW1

Dear Mr Guise

It was pleasant talking to you at the highly successful Ozone Layer Conference last Sunday.

I am now writing as promised regarding an aspect of the Prime Minister's interview on the recent "Nature" programme which gave me some cause for concern. Fortunately, the opposition have not latched on to the point but it may be as well to have it in mind.

I think it was in the course of questions relating to the state of Britain's beaches that the Prime Minister was challenged with the proposition that we discharge a great deal of sewage into the surrounding seas. To this the Prime Minister replied that only treated sewage was put into the sea.

If the question had been limited to the practice, mainly by the Thames Water Authority, of dumping sewage sludge at sea then the answer was indeed accurate. Although, it must be pointed out, the Netherlands criticised this practice to my committee on the basis that even tertiary treatment, which is not always used, does not remove heavy metals which are toxic to marine life. The Select Committee, in considering all the evidence, came to the view that incineration is a preferred disposal route for sewage sludge (Report on Pollution of Rivers and Estuaries May 1987).

However, it did not seem to me that the "Nature" question was limited to sewage sludge and, if taken to refer to all sewage disposed of at sea, then I am afraid the answer was inaccurate. The vast bulk of sewage is pumped raw directly into the sea and is responsible for those of our beaches which remain polluted. The practice is based upon the philosophy of "dilute and disperse" which has governed so much of our thinking regarding disposal of unwanted matter. We have found the philosophy to be wrong with regard to emissions from the combustion of fossil fuels into the atmosphere and of radio-active nuclides into the Irish Sea. The lessons we have been learning is that neither the

cebt Carolyn: Would you like to add a comment before I pass this on to the print office? I believe Rossi mentioned the matter briefly to the PM on Sunday evening at the Ozone reception

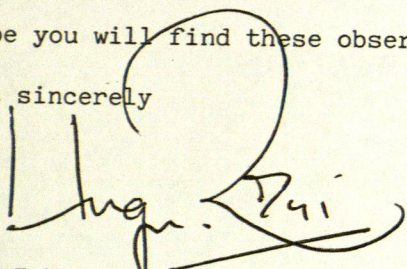
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atmosphere nor the oceans are so vaste nor so dilutive, that we can continually discharge unwanted matter into them with impunity.

During the course of a Debate on Sea and River Pollution (4th November 1988), Nicholas Ridley addressed himself to the problems associated with the discharge of raw sewage into the seas. The solution offered was the rebuilding of the outfalls and "extending them" three or more kilometres out at sea, where dilution and the effects of the sea and sunlight rapidly break down the effluent and kill off all the bacteria. This is not a view shared by all scientists, particularly as regards viruses, and again I believe the more prudent course would be to treat all sewage and then incinerate the resultant sludge.

I hope you will find these observations helpful.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Hugh Ridley". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping flourish at the end.

P.S. I have managed to have my 2.9 Jaguar converted to lead-free petrol. It had to be done in Coventry, but I understand that kits are to become available in London in the near future.

R .