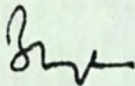


PRIME MINISTER

ROBERT MAXWELL - DRUGS

Robert Maxwell has sent, attached, his paper on drugs as promised. I have acknowledged receipt, saying that you have duly noted his points. I have marked up the salient points. They do not take us much further than my original note of the meeting, also attached, though his warning about cocaine coming on top of heroin is stronger than I recall it at the lunch. His elaboration of the inter-departmental coordination problem is also more detailed.



BERNARD INGHAM
1 April 1985

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MCA 1574



10 DOWNING STREET

From the Press Secretary

1 April 1985

Dear Mr. Maxwell,

The Prime Minister has asked me to thank you for your paper on the drugs problem. I can assure you your points about the need for a Supremo and for legislation to confiscate the gains of convicted drug pushers have been duly noted.

Thank you for entertaining me to lunch along with the Prime Minister.

James
Bernard Ingham

BERNARD INGHAM

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From the Publisher Robert Maxwell MC

XM/RM/mf

28 March 1985

The Rt Hon Margaret Thatcher MP FRS
Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
LONDON SW1

Dear Prime Minister

It was a great pleasure to have you to lunch yesterday and we at Mirror Group Newspapers were grateful that you were prepared to spare time to be with us.

I enclose a paper describing why we think that a Supremo or Overlord ought to be appointed to lead the fight against hard drug abuse. If there is anything you would like us to substantiate or elaborate upon, we shall be glad to do so.

I hope you will bear in mind our other contention, linked to the drugs problem, that it is necessary to have legislation soon which will enable ill gotten gains to be recovered from those convicted of offences.

I am very glad that you are prepared to listen to our arguments and I hope that you will find them convincing.

Yours sincerely

Robert Maxwell

28 March 1985

Drug Abuse: The Case for a Supreme
A Paper by Mirror Group Newspapers

1. The use of hard drugs is increasing at an alarming rate. The latest Home Office figures issued today show that between June 1983 and June 1984 registered heroin addicts increased by 25%. Notifications are just the tip of the iceberg and must be multiplied, at least by five - some say 12 - to give an indication of the likely total. The spread of heroin and cocaine usage affects all sections of society and people of all ages, but particularly the young. This is debilitating to the nation and if not checked will destroy the very fabric of our society. It is destroying young lives among rich and poor.
2. There is so much more heroin available that professional criminals have moved into the drugs racket because it is extremely lucrative and, at the top level, has less danger of detection than most other criminal activities. They even create their own customers and make fortunes in comparative safety. The income of organised criminals from drugs is so great that the criminals involved can spread their influence and reward well those who help them. There are already signs that a new, immensely powerful, underworld, assisted by corruption in high places, is springing up and exerting its influence in many quarters. This is conceded by the police and by the Home Office. On another level, individual drug users are driven to crime to finance their craving and they and the professional pushers have a vested interest in creating more addicts.
3. There is no doubt that the nation is under threat from drug abuse and that exceptional measures are called for now if we are to deal with this national crisis.
4. How then do we tackle the nationwide problem which is sapping our way of life?

At present, at least 10 Government Departments have some responsibility for some aspect of the problem; and, on the ground, the Police, Customs & Excise, Local Health Authorities and Local Authorities are all involved. Today's report "Tackling Drug Misuse" issued by the Home Office is signed by seven Secretaries of State and has all the evidence of a defensive document produced in response to a demand for action to attack a problem which the public feels is getting out of control.

Cont/2

5. Even the description of the interdepartmental committee chaired by David Mellor has a ring of complacency and compromise about it.

"In July last year the Government established an interdepartmental Ministerial Group on the Misuse of Drugs under the chairmanship of David Mellor, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State at the Home Office with special responsibility for drugs matters. Other Ministers who have regularly attended meetings of the Group are John Patten (Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, DHSS), Bob Dunn (Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, DES) and John MacKay (Minister for Health and Social Work, Scottish Office). Other Departments have been represented by Ministers or senior officials as appropriate." It is difficult to see how such a group can do more than arrive at the lowest common denominator of action on the part of the departments concerned.

6. It is also difficult to believe that the Government accepts this as the social problem of 1985 and that it is determined to deal with it. At present we have a number of loosely co-ordinated actions from various departments, some of which have no direct power to influence events, to deal with the problem. Where is the Clarion Call, the invitation to society to defeat the problem? How many times has the Ministerial Committee met since it was appointed in July 1984?
7. The only way to ensure that Government action is properly conducted within an overall plan is to put it in the charge of a Minister who reports directly to the Prime Minister or to the Cabinet. Only then can a major drive involving all those with responsibility be mounted. Such a Minister supported by a Chief Executive, and a small staff drawn from the agencies currently involved, would speak on equal terms with Cabinet colleagues. He could resolve problems of demarcation and, because of his great authority, when necessary put pressure on Local Authorities, the Police, the Customs and Excise and others.
8. In addition to the practical steps which such a Supremo could take, his very appointment would be a sign that the Government was taking the matter seriously. This in itself would create greater co-operation from parents, social workers etc. and the Supremo, by publishing reports, would draw attention to deficiencies in the machinery for dealing with drug problems.

9. The Supremo would set targets and be in a position to call for an explanation when they were not fulfilled.

The Supremo would also monitor police and customs activities and ensure that they had the machinery to work in tandem in every area. This would involve a central intelligence service which does not exist effectively at present.

10. There is also the question of trying to deal with the production of the drug at source. How is this dealt with at present? Who goes abroad and to whom do they report? To what extent do the countries of origin make representation and report back on production and export and hand in the information collected to the appropriate authorities?
11. The essential point is that we have now arrived at a position where the misuse of drugs is a national problem which is afflicting the health and probity of the nation. It can no longer, even with the best co-ordination in the world, be dealt with as a spare time responsibility of a multitude of Ministers and institutions. It calls for a professional single minded approach which can be achieved only by a leader whose role, or at least major responsibility, is to tackle and defeat the problem.
12. There seems little doubt that the present heroin problem, the seeds of which were sown in the 1970's has taken us by surprise and that the limited activity being mounted now to deal with it has been hurriedly cobbled together in the last few months. The problem has reached its present proportions precisely because there has been so little co-ordinated intelligence and action. The responsibility to monitor the situation has fallen to such a multiplicity of departments and organisations.
13. The warnings now are that, in addition to the heroin problem, we are about to be hit by an increase of cocaine as a result of the surplus production in the United States.
14. The Government will not be easily forgiven if it is not prepared to take drastic action to tackle the present and future problems in this field.

15. It will gain much credit and support for an all-out war on pushers and users. This can be done only by the appointment of a single authority responsible and accountable for dealing with the problem.

16. Nothing above should be construed as criticism of those who are dealing with the problem at present. But if their drive, initiative and imagination is to be properly used, they must be given the tools to do the job and the leadership to see it through.