



10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

28 May 1985

The Prime Minister would like to see in operation the work of some Customs Officers responsible for preventing illegal importation of drugs. It would be very helpful if the Chancellor and Mr. Hayhoe would consider how the arrangements might be made for an interesting and worthwhile visit, which could then be put to the Prime Minister.

Part of the purpose of the visit would be to give publicity to the efforts being made to prevent the illegal importation of drugs and so the Prime Minister envisages that some press and photo facilities would be given for it. Possible locations for the visit need not be restricted to London. We have in mind a half day's visit, but this could be altered if the Chancellor and Mr. Hayhoe so recommend.

I am copying this letter to Hugh Taylor (Home Office).

(Mark Addison)

Mrs. Rachel Lomax,
HM Treasury.

PRIME MINISTER

23 May 1985

DRUGS/CUSTOMS

I attach two useful examples of the good work of Customs which show their difficulties.

Home Office are content for you to visit a Customs Post to witness their work but request you also see the police in action. A good opportunity to see the police might be the work of a drug squad. Would you like me to visit a drug squad for a day to see if this is a good idea?

H Booth

HARTLEY BOOTH

From: THE PRIVATE SECRETARY

CHB

CONFIDENTIAL



HOME OFFICE
QUEEN ANNE'S GATE
LONDON SW1H 9AT

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I don't have these pp's,
I think, could we trace pl.
MGA 2075

23 May 1985

Dear Robin,

with MGA

Thank you for your letter of 15 May. The Home Secretary and Mr Mellor both think that the proposal for the Prime Minister to see in operation the work of Customs Officers responsible for preventing illegal importation of drugs is a good one. They are inclined to feel, however, that it would be best for you to be in touch with Treasury Ministers about the arrangements: details of the visit are very much a matter on which the Prime Minister could be guided by their advice.

If the Prime Minister does make such a visit, we think it might be appropriate for her to follow it with a similar visit to the police, on which we could offer further advice when the Prime Minister was ready. It would be helpful to us if you could let us know when the approach is made to Treasury Ministers about the customs visit so that we can make our own contact with the police before the news of the visit reaches them from other sources.

Yours GW
H H T M L O R

H H TAYLOR

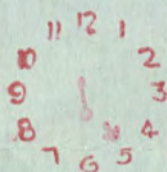
Robin Butler, Esq

CONFIDENTIAL

Home Affairs 12/82

Drugs.

28 MAY 1985





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(20)

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Principal Private Secretary

15 May 1985

I mentioned to Christine Heald this morning that the Prime Minister would like to see in operation the work of some Customs Officers responsible for preventing illegal importation of drugs. It would be very helpful if the Home Secretary and Mr. Mellor could consider how the arrangements might be made for an interesting and worthwhile visit, which the Prime Minister could consider.

Part of the purpose of the visit would be to give publicity to the efforts being made to prevent the illegal importation of drugs and so the Prime Minister envisages that some press and photo facilities would be given for it. Possible locations for the visit need not be restricted to London. We have in mind a half day's visit, but this could be altered if the [Home Secretary and Mr. Mellor] so recommend.

5/1

I have not been in touch with the Treasury or HM Customs as yet: I thought it would be best to establish first in principle whether the Home Secretary and Mr. Mellor think a project of this sort a good idea.

SMH.

Hugh Taylor, Esq.,
Home Office.

Home Affairs: Drug Abuse 12/82

Yorkshire and Humberside. Although unemployment is relatively high in the north region, average weekly manual earnings there are the third highest in Great Britain and about equal to the British average.

Mr. Rathbone: May I press my right hon. Friend further on the Government's plans for legislation on the seizure of assets of drug pushers? Can she put a date to her promise, which was welcomed by the entire House?

The Prime Minister: The legislation could not be introduced before the next Parliamentary Session. My right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary is working on its precise provisions.

Mr. Cartwright: Does the Prime Minister stand by her statement to the House last December that the cost of creating new jobs by capital investment in the infrastructure was between £35,000 and £50,000 each? Does she accept that that figure has been continually challenged by civil engineering contractors, who put the figure nearer to £10,000? In view of that wide discrepancy, will she produce the evidence to support her figures or will she accept that they were a considerable exaggeration?

The Prime Minister: The cost varies according to the infrastructure or capital expenditure per job. It also varies according to whether it is provided by local government or by central Government. The hon. Gentleman will have seen the many questions and answers on this topic.

Mr. Favell: Has my right hon. Friend seen the result of the Gallup poll taken recently near Heathrow, which shows that 62 per cent.—[*Interruption.*]

Mr. Speaker: Order. This takes time.

Mr. Favell:—of the residents there were in favour of terminal 5, and 24 per cent. were against? Does that not show that it is much more sensible to expand the airport in the south-east that the airlines wish to use and to which people wish to fly, rather than Stansted, which is to be only a charter flight airport, and whose expansion would remove jobs from the north?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend made his point effectively. I hope that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport will make a statement on his decision after we return.

Q4. Mr. James Lamond asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 23 May.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Lamond: Is the Prime Minister's determination to build a classless society reinforced when she sees that the sum of money that she and her Government believe can support 30 families in unemployment benefit for a year can be spent on a birthday party by a young man of 21?

The Prime Minister: That is a highly artificial question. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will also address his mind to some of the costs of running the House.

Sir John Biggs-Davison: Having regard to the generous contribution of the British people to relief in Ethiopia, will my right hon. Friend examine reports that the Ethiopian dictatorship is levying heavy customs duty

on British aid going into that country, and will the appropriate Minister make a statement at the earliest opportunity?

The Prime Minister: I shall pursue my hon. Friend's point. I am sure that he agrees that it is right to continue to give aid to Ethiopia, although it is important that we ensure that it gets to those for whom it is intended.

GCHQ, Cheltenham

Q7. Mr. Dalyell asked the Prime Minister what representations she has received from Civil Service trade unions about the directive she issued on 22 December 1983 about trade union membership in Government communications headquarters; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: Following representations from the Council of Civil Service Unions, I met its representatives and those of the Trades Union Congress on 1 and 23 February 1984.

The Council of Civil Service Unions has recently made representations about the position of 12 members of GCHQ who originally accepted the revised conditions of service and the management's offer announced on 25 January 1984 and accordingly resigned from union membership, but subsequently rejoined unions after the High Court judgment in July 1984. Those representations are still being considered, but it has been made clear to the unions that there will be no change in the Government's general policy on this matter.

Mr. Dalyell: So has not the time come for an amnesty?

The Prime Minister: If the hon. Gentleman was listening to my first answer, I said that there will be—[*Interruption.*] I am so delighted with the reference from the hon. Gentleman. There will be no change in the Government's policy.

Mr. Bill Walker: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the problems at Cheltenham have their roots in the fact that the trade union leaders in the Civil Service reneged on a written agreement that Cheltenham would never be involved in industrial activity?

The Prime Minister: The action was taken, as my hon. Friend knows, because of the action taken by GCHQ when it went on strike and put very sensitive services at risk.

Mr. James Lamond: On a point of order Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Does it arise from questions?

Mr. Lamond: I am wondering whether the Prime Minister misunderstood my question—

Mr. Speaker: Order. That cannot be a point of order for me, because I do not know. The hon. Gentleman might ask that question, if he has an opportunity, when we return from the Whitsun recess.

Mr. Lamond: I am trying to clear up a misunderstanding.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Lamond *rose*—

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is a very experienced Chairman. He knows that it is not our practice to extend Question Time. There are very many right hon. and hon. Members who wish to speak in the subsequent debate.

Mr. Sheerman *rose*—

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for underlining the points that I made yesterday. May I point out, in regard to the National Health Service, that the only cuts we have made are cuts in waiting lists and they are very welcome.

Mr. Kinnock: On Tuesday the Prime Minister gave a forecast for the inflation rate at the end of the year. Will she be as forthcoming today about the unemployment figures? At the end of the year will they be up or will they be down?

The Prime Minister: No one has ever given a specific forecast on unemployment when answering from this Dispatch Box either, as a Labour or as a Tory Minister. No one really can.

Mr. Kinnock: How can the Prime Minister be so specific about inflation rates in six months' time and so vague and evasive about unemployment rates in six months' time? How could she be so bold yesterday with the Tory ladies conference and so coy today with the House of Commons and the public? Is it not the case that she knows very well that unemployment will continue to go up and that that is a disgrace and a strain on her Government? What will she do about getting the unemployment rate down?

The Prime Minister: The real answer to the first part of the right hon. Gentleman's question is that inflation is generally easier to predict over the short term than unemployment. Every Minister has recognised that. With regard to asking me to underline the message I gave yesterday, I am delighted to do that. Doctors and dentists are up nearly 10,000, nurses and midwives are up 57,000, home helps are up 3,000, health visitors are up 900, district nurses are up 1,700, patients treated are up 3.5 million each year, and teachers' pay on average is up 9 per cent. in real terms over what it was under Labour.

Mr. Kinnock: I am glad that the right hon. Lady said that. There are now more nurses unemployed, more qualified doctors unemployed, and more qualified teachers unemployed than ever before. When will she get unemployment down? What will the trend be at the end of the year?

The Prime Minister: There are also 600,000 more jobs than two years ago. The way to tackle the unemployment is to create more jobs.

Mr. Wheeler: Has my right hon. Friend had an opportunity to read the report of the Home Affairs Select Committee on hard drugs, which was published today? Does she agree that one of the most serious problems facing the British people is the menace of hard drugs? Does she agree with the recommendations for new legislation to deal with the seizure of assets and to stop the traffickers in their tracks?

The Prime Minister: The Government will consider the report of the Select Committee carefully. As my hon. Friend knows, we have already made a statement of our strategy for drugs, and I am happy to confirm that we intend to introduce legislation to seize and confiscate the proceeds of drug traffickers.

Mr. Merlyn Rees: The Prime Minister does not believe the old public opinion polls, does she?

The Prime Minister: No, Sir—whatever they say.

Mr. Sayeed: Does my right hon. Friend accept that "restoring standards" appears to mean—to the National Union of Teachers—raising teachers' pay, while to the rest of us it means improving standards of education, discipline and apolitical commitment to students? Will she, therefore, take time today to confirm that the unions cannot hope to achieve what they want unless they are prepared to give the country what it needs?

The Prime Minister: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science has tackled education in the right way, that is, by trying to raise standards in schools. That has been most welcome among parents and most teachers. He is also tackling the pay problem in the right way by saying that we should know precisely what teachers' duties are and that, as in most other careers in the United Kingdom, teachers should be subject to an assessment of performance. That being so we should like to be able to provide more money next year for teachers, providing those things are satisfied.

Q2. Mr. Terry Fields asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 23 May.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Fields: In sending in the district auditor to try to sack local authority workers, especially young workers, in Liverpool, does the Prime Minister intend to create a reserve army of part-time scarecrows to benefit her rich farming friends? In attempting further to strip workers of their dignity and self-respect, is she not becoming immortalised, like Marie Antoinette, by a new slogan "Let them eat bird seed", or some similar epithet?

The Prime Minister: As the hon. Gentleman knows the district auditor acts independently. I hope the Liverpool will follow the example of most other authorities and set a legal rate. I hope that the hon. Gentleman is not encouraging it to act illegally.

Mr. Powley: Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is simple to achieve a temporary improvement in unemployment, but that we need a permanent improvement in employment without increasing inflation and interest rates, and without dragging the country to its knees, as we would do if we followed the Opposition policies?

The Prime Minister: I agree with my hon. Friend. He will be well aware that the economic policies that the Government are pursuing were affirmed by the seven industrial countries which met at the Bonn economic summit, including Socialist France.

Q3. Mr. Blair asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 23 May.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Blair: Has the Prime Minister read the latest regional trends? Is she aware that it discloses a growing gap between north and south in unemployment, redundancies, lost job opportunities, homelessness, poverty and deprivation? How does that conform with her view of a classless society?

The Prime Minister: Last year, the Government spent more than £600 million in regional preferential assistance, £260 million of which went to the north, the north-west