

Ref. A02665

MR. PATTISON

Prime Minister

Please see attached letter from Mr Finsberg's office, and this advice.

Agree:

1: we should advise Mr Finsberg not to respond
2: Ministers generally should be discouraged from responding to this type of request?

Market and Opinion Research International (MORI)

In your minute of 15th July, you asked for advice on the letter from Mr. Geoffrey Finsberg's Private Secretary about MORI's approach to Mr. Finsberg about participating in a sample survey of MPs' attitudes.

2. I see from Peter Loosley's letter that Mr. Finsberg is minded to decline this request, largely on the grounds of the guidance contained in Questions of Procedure. As Peter Loosley says, MORI have made similar approaches to members of the Government and senior civil servants in the past. According to the Cabinet Office Precedent Book, when they approached Ministers in 1973 and 1975, the Cabinet Office advised that although there was no absolute objection in principle, it would be preferable not to agree to give interviews to MORI. As well as possible objections from the point of view of security in view of the risk of disclosing confidential information, it was pointed out that there was bound to be some difficulty in Ministers having private views on matters within their responsibility, that to agree to an interview on non-contentious issues might make it more difficult to resist either questions or other interviews on more politically sensitive questions, and that once it became known that Ministers had agreed to participate in an interview of the kind requested by MORI, it might be difficult to resist similar requests from other firms. There is in addition, the objection raised in your minute, namely that Ministers might express personal views on subjects which at a later date could be of some embarrassment because of the development of the Government's position on certain issues.

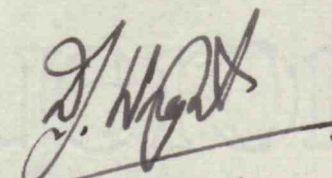
3. I therefore agree with your judgment that Mr. Finsberg should be advised not to participate in this survey. Since MORI clearly have a history of approaching Ministers to request interviews, and there is a risk that some Ministers might agree to these requests without consulting the Prime Minister or the Cabinet Office, it is for consideration whether members of the Government



might be advised more explicitly that requests for interviews or for them to take part in sample surveys conducted by market research organisations need very careful consideration. It would obviously be unwise to issue a letter to Ministers' Offices which mentioned MORI alone. But the general point could be made if paragraph 114 of Questions of Procedure were amended to include a specific reference to market research organisations. For instance, the first sentence of paragraph 114 could be changed to read:

"Ministers are sometimes asked to give interviews to historians, or to other persons engaged in academic research or in market opinion surveys or to fill in questionnaires at the request of such people or organisations. Ministers should bear in mind the possibility that their views may be reported..... etc."

4. Sir Robert Armstrong has seen and agreed this minute.


(D.J. Wright)

18th July, 1980

CONFIDENTIAL



JS
cc(2)
Minister

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

MR. WRIGHT

Thank you for your minute (Ref. A02665) about a survey currently being undertaken by Market and Opinion Research International.

The Prime Minister agrees that Mr. Finsberg should be advised not to respond, and I have written to him accordingly - copy attached.

The Prime Minister also agrees that Ministers in general should be positively discouraged from responding to this kind of request, and agrees that this might be achieved by an amendment to paragraph 114 of 'Questions of Procedure for Ministers'.

I am sending a copy of this minute and enclosure to Jeremy Colman (CSD).

M. A. PATTISON

21 July 1980

GC.



10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

21 July 1980

Thank you for your letter of 14 July, about an approach by Market and Opinion Research International to Mr. Finsberg to participate in a survey among Members of Parliament.

The Prime Minister would prefer Mr. Finsberg not to agree to give an interview to MORI. She regards this kind of request as covered by the guidance in paragraph 114 of 'Questions of Procedure for Ministers' and is grateful to have been consulted about the approach made to Mr. Finsberg. Despite claims of confidentiality for the results of such an interview, there remains a possibility that the private views of individual members of Government might emerge in some form in a manner incompatible with their responsibilities and duties as members of the Government.

I am sending a copy of this letter to David Wright (Cabinet Office).

M. A. PATTISON

Peter Loosley, Esq.,
Department of the Environment.



10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

MR. WRIGHT
CABINET OFFICE

We have spoken about the approach from Market and Opinion Research International (MORI) to Mr. Geoffrey Finsberg to participate in a sample survey on MPs' attitudes towards a range of issues affecting British industry. I enclose a copy of Mr. Finsberg's Private Secretary's letter to me.

Presumably MORI would claim that their respondents' answers remain confidential, and cannot individually be identified from the circulated results of the survey. MORI appear to include several Ministers in their survey. If Ministers' answers are to be a genuine reflection of personal views, there must be a risk that they will express personal views on some subjects which will be out of line with the later development of the Government's position. This would inevitably be a hostage to fortune, regardless of undertakings of confidentiality. It seems to me, therefore, that Ministers ought to be firmly advised not to participate in the survey.

Mr. Loosley's letter to me records that Mr. Fowler has already taken part in the survey. I do not think that this affects the view to be taken on future participation.

I would be grateful for your advice. I am also sending a copy of this minute to Jeremy Colman (Civil Service Department) as CSD have had to rule on civil servants' participation in the same survey series.

M. A. PATTISON

15 July 1980

ms

JJ



DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT
2 MARSHAM STREET LONDON SW1P 3EB
01-212 3434

My ref: FI/PSO/44096

Your ref:

14 July 1980

Market and Opinion Research International (MORI) have asked Mr Finsberg to participate in a survey among Members of Parliament "to assess MP's attitudes towards a range of issues affecting British Industry and to ascertain the most effective and appropriate ways of communicating with Members". I attach a copy of their letter of 16 May, Mr Finsberg's reply of 20 May and their further letter of 2 June.

You will see from Mr Finsberg's reply of 20 May that his own feeling is to decline.

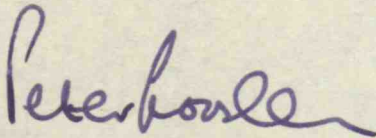
From past experience we know that MORI are keen on making surveys of the opinions of members of the Government and senior civil servants. They made approaches in 1976, 1978 and 1979 to civil servants but on each occasion the invitation was declined for two main reasons. It was clear that MORI were hoping to make regular surveys so they would be able to monitor civil servants' views on a number of politically contentious topics over a period of time. Also CSD were concerned that the official resources could be used in the interests of commercial organisations.

"Questions of Procedure for Ministers" contains the closest guidance on this topic:

"Ministers are sometimes asked to give interviews to historians or other persons engaged in academic research or to fill in questionnaires at their request. Ministers should bear in mind the possibility that their views may be requested in a manner incompatible with their responsibilities and duties as members of the Government. Careful consideration should therefore be given to such invitations before they are suggested; in cases of doubt, the Prime Minister should be consulted".

CSD have not been approached by MORI concerning this latest survey. I understand that the Minister of Transport, Mr Norman Fowler has been interviewed by the firm as an MP.

Mr Finsberg has asked me to seek your guidance on the question.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Peter Loosley', with a stylized, cursive script.

PETER LOOSLEY
Private Secretary

Market & Opinion Research International

*Advice R. for Mr. Finsberg
(Mr. Calvert)*

Registered Office 29 Queen Anne's Gate
London SW1H 9DD England
Telephone 01-222 0232
Telex 917373
Telegrams OPINRES LONDON SW1

2 June 1980

Mr. Geoffrey Finsberg, M.B.E., J.P., M.P.
The House of Commons
LONDON SW1A 0AA

Dear Mr. Finsberg,

Bob Worcester is abroad on business at the moment, and has asked me to reply to your letter of the 20 May 1980.

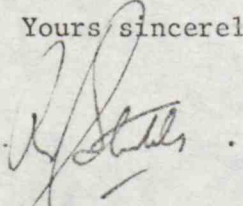
I am disappointed to see that you feel your being in the Government precludes you from taking part in our survey of Members of Parliament. Appointments with other Ministers have already been set up, and we interviewed Ministers in our previous 1976 and 1978 surveys. Indeed, for our study to be representative of the House, it is important that Ministers be included in our sample.

I know your every minute is important, and I would not have presumed to ask you to take part in anything which would be a waste of your time. But I would stress, once again, that the survey is being done for over a score of the largest companies and organisations in this country, and will be of no less value to you and your fellow MPs in that these companies will learn how you feel about them and a number of important issues currently facing them. I'm sure you will agree that it is in the national interest for top corporate management and MPs to communicate well with each other, and our survey is a practical, efficient and sensible way of achieving this.

As regards timing, if you have not got the time during office hours, perhaps we could see you over lunch or dinner? Alternatively, could one of our executives accompany you on your travels, perhaps interviewing you on a train journey?

We are offering a fee of £25 to all the Members who help us, and while we understand that you are unable to accept this yourself, you might like to donate it to your local party, or to a charity, as other Ministers have done. I do hope you will be able to help us.

Yours sincerely,


Roger J. Stubbs
Director

E2

20th May, 1980

Dear Mr. Worcester,

Thank you for your letter of May 16th.

I do not think it would be appropriate for me, as a Minister, to take part in this particular survey. I do hope you will understand.

Yours sincerely,

GEOFFREY FINSBERG

R. M. Worcester, Esq.,
Market & Opinion Research International,
29 Queen Anne's Gate,
London SW1H 9DD.

Market & Opinion Research International

Registered Office 29 Queen Anne's Gate
London SW1H 9DD England
Telephone 01-222 0232
Telex 917373
Telegrams OPINRES LONDON SW1

MORI

16 May 1980

Mr Geoffrey Finsberg, MP
The House of Commons
Westminster
LONDON SW1A 0AA

Dear Mr Finsberg,

In 1976 and again in 1978 we undertook an extensive survey among Members of Parliament, and I am writing to ask for your help in our 1980 study.

We conduct this survey on behalf of some of the largest companies and business organisations in this country. The purpose of the survey is to assess MPs' attitudes towards a range of issues affecting British industry and to ascertain the most effective and appropriate ways of communicating with Members.

The study has been designed so that the needs of some twenty or so companies and business organisations can benefit from your views and those of your colleagues without taking up more of your time than is strictly necessary.

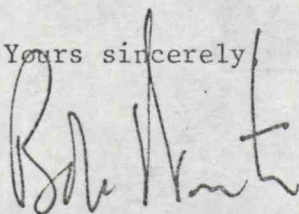
As we do appreciate the demands made upon your time, we would like to offer you a fee, or alternatively a contribution to your political party or a charity of your choice.

You have been scientifically selected from the 623 British Members, so your views are important to the reliability of the results. Your answers will be treated in the strictest confidence, clients receiving reports based on the whole series of interviews.

One of our executives will telephone you to arrange an interview at a time and place that would be most convenient to you. Perhaps you could fit the interview in at the House one evening? Alternatively, could we see you in your constituency during the recess?

Thank you for your co-operation.

Yours sincerely,



Robert M. Worcester

*I'd like to meet
you some time
after reading about
your role with
Research before 2
at home*