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PRIVY COUNCIL OFFICE  
WHITEHALL, LONDON SW1A 2AT

2 October 1985

Dear Quintin

I am writing to you, after discussions with the Prime Minister and the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, to seek your support in further improving the presentation of the Government's policies.

I believe we have made some progress in the course of 1985 and I am grateful to you all for your contribution and that of your team of Ministers. But it is clear that we can - and need to - do more.

The measures which I outline below will, I am sure, help to achieve greater impact for our policies both within the party and in the country as a whole.

First, I shall be working very closely with the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster to try to ensure that presentationally the Government and party march positively in step. Both Norman Tebbit and I would greatly appreciate the earliest warning of presentational opportunities and likely problems.

Second, I am anxious that we should do much more to have the agenda of political debate set and conducted on ground of our choosing, and largely in our terms, rather than simply react to criticism. This means not only getting the presentation right first time round when an announcement is made, but making sure that in subsequently carrying the message to the people our opponents remain on the defensive. We all feel we must not allow issues to fester. But we must also try to make the presentational running - to decide the ground on which we fight and force our opponents to react. This requires planning. Norman and I are always ready to discuss with colleagues how this is best to be achieved.

Third, I have, as you know, tried to encourage the widest possible use of radio and television, not least of local radio. Reports from colleagues suggest that our effort has been stepped up with the help of Backbenchers, but our supporters would clearly like more. I very much hope that you and your Ministerial team will give the closest attention to both early morning radio and breakfast television. The latter now has an audience of 2.5m. Breakfast broadcasting therefore offers us a real opportunity.

Finally, if we are to get a clear indication of the results of our collective effort, we need to know how each Ministry has got on. It would therefore be helpful to know by mid-December the details of your team's broadcasting effort (both radio and television) and in particular how many times you offered interviews and were refused them by the broadcasters. This should enable us to take stock of what further initiatives, if any, we need to take.

I am writing in similar terms to all our Cabinet colleagues.

Yours truly.

Willie

The Rt Hon Lord Hailsham of St Marylebone

