

CONFIDENTIAL  
DEDIP  
FM OTTAWA  
TO IMMEDIATE FCO  
TELNO 102  
OF 101615Z FEBRUARY 88

FOR HEAD OF NAD

TELEVISION IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS

1. THE CANADIAN PRIME MINISTER (NO DOUBT PROMPTED BY THE NEWS OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS VOTE ON THIS SUBJECT) TELEPHONED ME THIS MORNING TO CONVEY A PERSONAL MESSAGE TO MRS THATCHER THAT SHE SHOULD AT ALL COSTS RESIST PROPOSALS TO ALLOW DEBATES IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS TO BE TELEVISED. DISCLAIMING ANY INTENTION TO INTERFERE OR INDEED ANY MOTIVE OTHER THAN HIS PERSONAL FRIENDSHIP AND ESTEEM FOR MRS THATCHER, MR MULRONEY SAID THAT THE CANADIAN EXPERIENCE HAD BEEN AN UNMITIGATED DISASTER. AS A CONSEQUENCE OF ALLOWING TELEVISION INTO THE HOUSE OF COMMONS, MEDIA AND PUBLIC ATTENTION WAS NOW DEVOTED ALMOST EXCLUSIVELY TO THE DAILY 45 MINUTES QUESTION PERIOD WHEN THE PRIME MINISTER AND OTHER GOVERNMENT LEADERS WERE EXPOSED TO A BARRAGE OF IMPROMPTU QUESTIONS: THERE WAS OFTEN NO WAY OF PREPARING FOR THEM AND THEY DISTORTED THE WHOLE POLITICAL PROCESS. AS A RESULT ALL THE GOOD AND EFFECTIVE WORK DONE BY GOVERNMENT TENDED TO BECOME OBSCURED BY TRIVIALITIES. THREE SUCCESSIVE CANADIAN ADMINISTRATIONS, LIBERAL AND CONSERVATIVE, HAD SUFFERED IRREPARABLE DAMAGE THROUGH THIS PROCESS. EVEN IF TELEVISED DEBATES WERE ONLY PERMITTED AS AN EXPERIMENT, IT WOULD OPEN A DOOR WHICH COULD NOT THEREAFTER BE CLOSED. HE THEREFORE BESEECHED THE PRIME MINISTER, AS A GOOD FRIEND, NOT TO GO DOWN THIS ROAD.

2. MR MULRONEY, WHO SPOKE WITH GREAT FEELING (HE IS IN DEEP TROUBLE AT THE MOMENT AS A RESULT OF A SUCCESSION OF POLITICAL SCANDALS AND ALLEGATIONS OF FINANCIAL IMPROPRIETY), SAID HOW MUCH HE WAS LOOKING FORWARD TO SEEING MRS THATCHER AT THE NATO MEETING IN EARLY MARCH AND THAT HE WOULD BRING WITH HIM A VIDEO TAPE OF QUESTION PERIOD IN THE CANADIAN HOUSE OF COMMONS TO SHOW HER ITS FULL HORROR (EXCLAM).

3. MR MULRONEY ASKED ME TO CONVEY THIS MESSAGE TO THE PRIME MINISTER WITH THE UTMOST DISCRETION AND AGAIN REPEATED AT THE END THAT HE WAS IN NO WAY SEEKING TO INTERFERE, BUT THAT HIS ADVICE CAME FROM THE HEART AND WAS THE FRUIT OF HIS OWN VERY BITTER EXPERIENCE.

4. I SHOULD BE GRATEFUL IF YOU WOULD PASS THE FOREGOING TO NO. 10.

URWICK

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ODWBAN 6585

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Foreign and Commonwealth Office  
London SW1A 2AH

12 February 1988

Prime Minister  
A bit late: but  
an awful warning

CDD  
... 13/2

Dear Charles,

Message to the Prime Minister from Mr Mulroney

I attach a personal message which Mr Mulroney has asked our High Commissioner in Ottawa to convey to the Prime Minister "with the utmost discretion". It sets out Mr Mulroney's experience of television in Parliament.

Yours ever,  
*A C Galsworthy*

(A C Galsworthy)  
Private Secretary

C D Powell Esq  
10 Downing Street

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