

PRIME MINISTER

INTERVIEW WITH THE TIMES

You are to give an interview to Robin Oakley, political editor of The Times, tomorrow for an hour from 11am. As you know from Terry Perks' earlier minute, he intends to be accompanied by a sketch artist rather than a photographer. I will attend.

First of all, Robin Oakley is one of the better sort to deal with in the Lobby. Apart from being courteous, he is also straight.

Second, his list of questions (which you saw at the weekend and are at Annex I for convenience) are very well judged for an interview which comes soon after the party conference and before the Queen's Speech.

The questions do not pose any problems and we have chosen not to put in much briefing. We have half an hour before the interview to go through them.

There are three issues however which I would mention:-

- environment
- Europe
- your style - authoritarianism; suppression of freedom etc

On the environment, I think you should explain how the issue became a priority for you; and why you regard problems as manageable; and the concept of balanced development.

We need to get some balance into this issue before the Greens attack you for failing to make enough money available to deal with all future cases of pollution - while they fail to face up to nuclear power.

On Europe I see no benefit in stirring it up further. But I think you might usefully take credit for starting a legitimate debate about what, if anything, lies behind the rhetoric about European union and the need for:

- the greatest degree of economic freedom
- the minimum of Commission intrusion in member States consistent with the operation of a free single market and a single voice in negotiation with the rest of the world
- a greater realism about fashionable notions - eg Central Bank, single currency etc.

On style the first point to make is that this should be a quiet and relaxed interview, without leaving any impression of a softer line on the issues on which you have recently pronounced.

So far as authoritarianism is concerned you might say that this charge has been trotted out frequently over the past nine and a half years. But the people like a Government which gives strong leadership (and is strong in doing only the things which it can do - protecting the currency and the weak and defending the realm) but encourages individuals to seize their opportunities. And so-called acts of centralisation/authoritarianism in rates, education, housing and health are actually the opposite since the objective is to devolve responsibility ever further down society to the individual.

So far as sacrificing freedom is concerned, Governments are there to strike a balance on behalf of the public when terrorism threatens lives - and those who pursue a policy of ballot and bomb have not merely threatened but ended well over 2,000 lives these last 20 years.

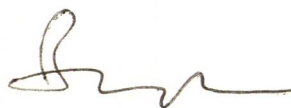
Other points

Lying behind a number of the questions is an assumption that all power and progress lies in the hands of the State - Question 4 on crime, Question 5 on danger of creating an underclass and Question 11 on morality.

I think you should go out of your way tomorrow to reiterate the point that what you are seeking to do is to liberate the individual not merely to exercise his talents and prosper but also to accept his responsibilities to his fellow men. You are succeeding.

As you pointed out before the last election charitable giving has doubled under this Government. And as you pointed and in your address at Brighton we have become the generous society - generous in the amount of time, effort and money we devote to the wider welfare of the community, country and the world in which we live. We must not fail to see what is happening under our very noses simply because some people see a political advantage in dismissing this Government as uncaring.

Content?



BERNARD INGHAM

24 October 1988

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PRIME MINISTER

You are to give an interview to Robin Oakley of "The Times" on Tuesday morning. A list of the questions he will put to you are below.

He has put in, however, a rather unusual request. Instead of bringing a photographer he has asked if he could bring an artist to do a line-drawing of you while the interview is in progress.

Are you content for a drawing to be done?

The questions Robin Oakley will put to you are:

1. How serious are you in your crusade on new "green" issues?
2. How much can the public be made to pay?
3. How serious a threat are federalists in Europe and the question of protectionism and fears in USA?
4. What hopes do you have of progress in this Parliament on violent crime?
5. In developing the concept of active citizenship isn't there a danger of an under class being created?
6. What message might you have for the next US President?
7. Where do we go next on East-West relations?
8. What prospect is there of you visiting the front line States next year?
9. What are your reactions to accusations of growing authoritarianism?
10. Are we not sacrificing freedoms in the battle against terrorism?
11. Should not the State intervene directly to control morality?

12. Should not there be more stringent regulations to protect people from such things as the Piper Alpha disaster and the Barlow Clowes collapse?

T.J.P.

TERRY J PERKS

21 October 1988