

10.11.11

A. Addendum

Yes, but I hope Murdo is  
present and gives them the  
form addendum at X.

*[Signature]* 21/3

1. Murdo Yes.  
2. ~~Mr Powell~~ N.C.U.  
OIC? Yes 21-3  
MOT 2/3

MR INGHAM

PRESS CONFERENCE TRANSCRIPTS

Thank you for your minute of 16 March in response to mine.

I take all your points. Like you, I should prefer not to be under any obligation whatever to pass these transcripts over (and it is a pity that we appear to have got into this position by inadvertently passing one over in the first place).

In fact, I had already asked Murdo to have a go at resisting the request, on grounds very much like those set out at the end of your minute. It didn't work, and Charles Clarke expressed himself content to take the documents as and when we provided them to the press. So the question we now have to deal with is why we cannot agree to that.

We may have to be prepared simply to say 'no', in the end. But for the next round I suggest we ask Murdo to take the following line:

"As I said before, I understand that we do not, by any means, systematically make transcripts of all the Prime Minister's press conferences. Even when we do, we do not always make them available to the media. In all cases, they are provided essentially for the use of the Prime Minister's office and only secondarily for the use of journalists. However flexible any arrangement might be with the Leader of the Opposition's Office, difficulties are bound to arise on occasions when transcripts may not be available, or may not be available in time, or may not be handed out to all the press, etc. It would not be fair on No 10 - who commission and pay for these transcripts - to be put in the position of constantly having to consider whether what is basically an internal working document was suitable for passing across. We would also, inevitably, have to do it for the other

Leaders too.

X {If pressed: we are not prepared to accept that everything provided to the press should also be provided to the Leaders of the other Parties. That process would be very difficult to stop snowballing.}"

Content with that line?

MEA

M E ADDISON

18 March 1988

DS2AFZ

1. S.P. Me too  
2. NEA

1.

NR 4/2/65

I am content with B.I's suggestion at end.

MR ADDISON

PRESS CONFERENCE TRANSCRIPTS

N. C. W

17-3

Reference your minute of March 14.

The present practice of Press Office is to apply belt and braces and not merely to record through COI the Prime Minister's press conferences at home and abroad, but also interviews with individual journalists. We invariably have them transcribed immediately afterwards because the cost for immediate, as distinct from later, transcripts is no greater.

The transcripts are made primarily for No 10's defensive purpose of having an authoritative record. They are not automatically or invariably made available to the media.

What typically happens is that:

- with interviews at home we record and supply a transcript to the interviewer if they want one; since The Independent asked the FT for the transcript of their interview with the Prime Minister last year, I have introduced strict new rules trying to ensure that neither we nor the interviewer make the transcript more freely available, and certainly not without clearing it with the other;
- with most, but not all press conferences at home and abroad we tend, on the more important occasions, to make transcripts available of the more important events to specific groups of journalists - eg American; regional; European - if we judge it to be to the Prime Minister's advantage. The issue of these transcripts is not automatic; it is a matter of judgement and it is usually well after the event. Moreover, the COI do not travel with the Prime Minister on every visit abroad, though they are usually asked to cover the major events.

Consequently, we are not presently in a position to guarantee to supply anyone with transcripts of any Prime Ministerial press conference within, say, 24 hours of a particular press conference. We could by dint of some effort and at some cost put ourselves in that position, but I could not justify doing so for the benefit of the Leader of the Opposition when I would not judge it essential to the Prime Minister's interests.

In these circumstances, I believe it would be reasonable to refuse to provide transcripts of the Prime Minister's press conferences to the Leader of the Opposition on the simple grounds that:

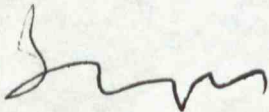
- i. we cannot provide a regular, consistent or comprehensive service;
- ii. still less can we guarantee to provide such transcripts as are made within 24 hours;
- iii. we do not as a matter of course issue transcripts to the media; sometimes we issue them on request or on others only that part of a press conference in which journalists are particularly interested.

Unfortunately, I have established by telephone that the FCO issues transcripts of Foreign Secretary press conferences or statements by broadcast interview to the media on request, and have done so on request to the Opposition. They would also do so if asked in the future. But ideally they would like to confine such transcripts as are issued to the media.

Notwithstanding this, I believe we should tell the Whips' office that No 10:

- i. does not systematically make transcripts of all the Prime Minister's press conferences;
- ii. does not regularly or normally make transcripts available to the media; and
- iii. consequently cannot undertake to supply the Leader of the Opposition with transcripts of press conferences.

I suggest we wait and see whether Mr Kinnock's office returns to the charge and ask to be supplied on request.



**BERNARD INGHAM**  
16 March 1988

*M. Addison*  
MR. INGHAM

c. Mr Wicks  
Mr Powell

#### PRESS CONFERENCE TRANSCRIPTS

Neil Kinnock's office have been in touch with Murdo to request that communiques and statements which are published after summits etc., attended by the Prime Minister, and COI transcripts of any press conferences, should be made available to them as soon as possible.

There is no difficulty with published communiques. I have already been in touch with the Foreign Office and they will make the appropriate arrangements on our behalf. (None of this affects the arrangements for laying documents in the House.)

The press conference transcripts request is a little more difficult. It seems clear however that Mr. Kinnock's office are keen to press it. Their argument is that these are documents which have been effectively made public, and the press have free access to them.

The disadvantages of making the transcripts available are I think the possible precedent set for other Ministers, and possibly for other transcripts. But these arguments are not, I think, compelling. And it is hard to make a strong enough case on grounds of inconvenience. I therefore suggest we should make transcripts available, subject to two conditions:

- (i) we cannot guarantee to do so at any particular moment or in every case. Each one will be different and the timing will depend, among other things, on when the transcripts were available back in this country;
- (ii) such transcripts would only be made available if they were being provided generally to the press. The arrangements would certainly not cover interviews -

which may not have been broadcast in full and where the press generally did not have access to the full discussion.

I doubt if this will involve us in making such documents available more than half a dozen times a year. Before Murdo passes on the message to Mr. Kinnock's office that we shall do what we can to meet the request, I should be grateful to know you see no difficulties.

*Mark Addison*

MARK ADDISON

14 March 1988

VC4AVR