



with Mr Ingham
for advice

MAD 19.

PRIME MINISTER

BBC RADIO SERIES ON THE CIVIL SERVICE

Following an original approach to Sir Patrick Nairne, Sir Ian Bancroft has now been approached by a BBC Radio producer, Mrs Anne Sloman, for help in preparing a series of five programmes on the Civil Service to be broadcast on Radio 4 in late May/early June; each would last for 25 minutes.

Each of the programmes, which will be presented by Hugo Young, the Political Editor of the Sunday Times will, as I understand it, deal with a specific area of controversy about the Civil Service: Is It Too Big? Is It Too Powerful? Is It Efficient? Is It Sufficiently Accountable? Should It Be More Political?

The producer wants to interview some serving Ministers and former (Labour) Ministers on these questions. She would also like to interview some serving senior civil servants - mainly Permanent Secretaries - as well as some now retired. It is for this reason that she approached Ian Bancroft.

The series would offer a good opportunity for the Government to give an account of the work it has been doing in this field, particularly with regard to reductions in manpower and improvements in efficiency - and we would encourage the producer to make as much use as possible of serving Ministers on these topics. She has (I am told) a good reputation for producing serious, sensible programmes, including two previous series - Talking Politics and Talking Law: in the latter both serving and retired members of the judiciary appeared. From their point of view it was a notable success.

Clearly the thrust and tone of the broadcast would be in the producer's hands, and these things can of course go wrong. But on the whole I think the programmes could be of benefit to both the Government and the morale of the Service. I would be grateful for your views as to whether we should take it further, before arriving at a decision.

I am copying this to the Chancellor of the Duchy.

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9 February 1981



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