

cc Mr. Gow
Mr. Ingham
Mr. Howe
Supt. Cawthorne

MR. RYDER

Walkabouts

You will by now have heard something about Friday's Wessex area visit. Most of the day was much more encouraging than we had feared it might be.

The walkabout was quite unsatisfactory. We were not in the Market Square, but in a street-width pedestrian precinct. The assembled crowd was not large, and the Prime Minister would have been able to move quite freely and easily, and to shake hands/exchange words with many people, were it not for the behaviour of the Press and in turn the efforts of the Police to keep the Prime Minister and her entourage and the Press on the move. The result was that a great many small children and older people appeared upset by the knocking and battering many received. There were a few demonstrators present, but they were not the cause of the problem. The real villains of the piece were the Press, who crowded the Prime Minister, and therefore separated her from the people she was supposed to be seeing.

We have discussed this problem before. I thought we had concluded that we should try to arrange walkabouts in areas where some kind of barrier can be used, thus allowing the Prime Minister to see and to be seen by all members of the crowd. In practice, I suspect that she communicates with many more people when there is some sort of barrier.

I raised this with Mr. Roberts, who simply said that he knew that the Prime Minister would never tolerate a barrier. This is not true, as we have raised it with her in the past. I mentioned it to her once again as we left the walkabout in Salisbury and she was quite clear in her mind that her traditional style of walkabout is no longer possible, and that somewhat more formal arrangements will be necessary in future.

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It is probably appropriate for the Party to select sites for walkabouts. Could I ask you to ensure in future that our detectives are given an opportunity to join in discussion of walkabout arrangements, and that regional agents are told that recent experience has shown that free-mingling with crowds no longer works effectively.

M. A. PATTISON

18 February 1980