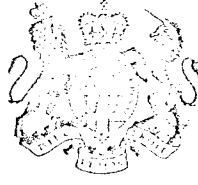


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10 DOWNING STREET

cc Mr L P...
Mr Andrew
Francis
Mr B...
Mr Higginson

From the Principal Private Secretary

25 November 1980

Dear John,

THE YORKSHIRE RIPPER CASE

The Prime Minister raised the case of the Yorkshire Ripper when she and the Home Secretary met this morning. Sir Robert Armstrong and Sir Brian Cubbon were also present.

The Prime Minister said that the local police had so far failed totally in their enquiries into a series of murders which constituted the most appalling kind of violence against women. It was now a question of public confidence. There were doubts whether the investigation was being conducted as effectively as it might be, and something needed to be done to restore the faith of the public in the performance of the police. One possibility which was being canvassed more and more widely in the Press was that Scotland Yard should be associated with the hunt for the murderer. It was quite likely that the matter would be raised with her at Question Time that afternoon.

The Home Secretary said that he too was disturbed by the way the enquiry was going. The fact was, however, that the Chief Constable was operationally independent and he could not be compelled to do what outsiders wanted him to do. Nonetheless, the Home Secretary continued, he had decided yesterday to make use of the Inspectorate of Constabulary in this case and an Inspector had been sent up to see Mr. Gregory, the Chief Constable. They had agreed, subject to the approval of the Police Authority which was meeting today, to change the man in charge of the enquiry and to give him, as a source of outside advice, a Consultative Committee made up of senior officers from outside the area, including a Home Office Inspector of Constabulary. This would show the public that the local force was drawing on outside experience, though without bringing in Scotland Yard. The Yard had been involved in the enquiry earlier on and had generally endorsed the way it was being conducted. If they were brought in again, this would cause a lot of resentment locally: moreover, the Yard themselves were deeply reluctant to get involved.

In further discussion it was agreed that there would be considerable advantage in the Home Secretary visiting West Yorkshire. It would probably not be wise, however, for him to do this before Friday of

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this week, since this was the day when the murderer had threatened to strike again. The best moment for a visit might be on Monday morning when the Home Secretary was returning to London from the north of England, but the precise timing should be kept under review in the light of developments in the case. In the meantime it should be suggested to the Chief Constable that if the Police Authority approved the establishment of an outside body to provide independent advice, it would be better not to call it a Consultative Committee but to find a more dynamic and purposeful name such as a Task Group. If the enquiry was raised with the Prime Minister at her Question Time, she might say that a large team of police officers, including some from outside the immediate area, were already engaged on the case and the resources of all other police forces throughout the country and of the Home Office forensic and technical support services were available for the West Yorkshire Constabulary to call upon. Sir Brian Cubbon said that he would provide a precise form of words for the Prime Minister to use.

I am sending a copy of this letter to Sir Robert Armstrong.

Yours now,

Miss Whitmore.

John Halliday, Esq.,
Home Office.

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