

STANBROOK, M.P.



10 DOWNING STREET

Prime Minister

1. Herewith letter dated 14th February from Ivor Stanbrook, together with a reply, which I hope you think is appropriate.

2. The views which Ivor expresses are very widely held in the Parliamentary Party. There is also considerable indignation about the unsigned article which appeared in last Sunday's Observer.

3. You may like to consider reading part of the letter from Stanbrook to the Cabinet. If you do decide to do so, may I suggest that you should say that the letter comes from one of your backbenchers, without mentioning Ivor by name. He is intensely loyal to you, but is regarded as being something of a loner in the Parliamentary Party. The letter would, I think, carry more weight if it was not attributed to him.

19th February, 1980

Ian Gow

Seen by the Prime Minister

19/2/1980



14th February 1980

Ivor Stanbrook

I am writing to express the dismay and anger felt by Government backbenchers at the behaviour of some of your colleagues as revealed by Graham Turner in the "Daily Telegraph" yesterday.

It is perfectly proper, even healthy, for the Cabinet to be divided about a particular line of policy. It is quite another matter for that division to be advertised to the world, and disgraceful for individual Ministers to talk openly about it. We have been reminded all too vividly of the appalling state of the last administration.

I was one of those who wanted a stronger policy on trade unions. I am however content to support the Government's position as expounded by Jim Prior to the 1922 Committee last week, because our unity is far more important than the victory of any one faction in an internal party debate. I know this view is shared by most backbenchers, who are very disheartened when individual Ministers appear to reject agreed policies. The credibility of our immigration policy (and hence of our Manifesto commitments) has already been damaged by one of your colleagues telling the press that parts of it will be abandoned. Unity and loyalty on the backbenches and in the country will not be possible so long as the Cabinet itself is feuding publicly.

Your own personal reputation and prestige in the party and in the country is still very high indeed but some people wonder whether you are master of your own ship. If certain of your colleagues wish to disagree in public then, with respect, I believe it is not only desirable for the sake of the Government's credibility but also your constitutional duty for the sake of the country to request their resignations.

*Yours sincerely
Ivor*

Private & Confidential

19th February, 1980

Thank you very much for your letter of 14th February.

I am most grateful for your support.

Ian Gow told me of your anxiety about recent events and I am sorry to have to say that I think that that anxiety is well founded.

I hope that your trip to Rhodesia will be valuable, and I look forward to hearing about it when you get back.

Thank you very much for having written as you did.

Ivor Stanbrook, Esq., M.P.