

THE TIMES

From the Editor

PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL

26 February, 1982

Editorial Authority

1. On January 8 when I was editing and without informing me the Chairman sent for Mr. Owen Hickey, the Associate Editor, and argued editorial policy with him. Mr. Hickey, who reported it to me, and also mentioned it to the Chief foreign leader writer who came to see me in some alarm. I reassured them that I would protect the editorial independence of The Times.

On January 15 the Chairman sent for Mr. Frank Johnson, again without informing me. A message had been left at the House of Commons press gallery for several days and caused some comment there. Mr. Johnson demurred when invited to discuss editorial policy when I wasn't in the room and was told, he says, that it was because the Editor was not present that he was being asked to have this conversation.

On both occasions the Chairman made strong objections to The Times giving ventilation on the page facing the leader page to dissenting views, and he criticised various editorials. None of these criticisms has ever been made to me. The Associate Editor argued that The Times had a duty to provide a platform for varying views while robustly maintaining its own editorial positions.

2. Despite repeated requests both to the Chairman and the Managing Director I have never been given an editorial budget, as assured in the Articles of Association so that I could administer resources with editorial freedom. Nor have I received monthly operating statements. I have had to seek a variety of individual authorisations. I hope in the second year I will have an agreed budget. The Times in its second year will probably be operating on a staff of 235, which is 45 fewer than when I assumed the editorship. It will be a very hard stretch, given our vital need to maintain coverage of Parliament, Law, and so on, but I think we can make it work and it is my determination to try.

I am sure you will respect the confidentiality of this letter which I write to you in appreciation of your position as independent national directors.