

NOTE TO: Ken Little, Vice Chair, Arts and Recreation Committee

FROM: Herman Ouseley, DG/EMU

Thank you for your note of 1st June about clearance of political interviews with the media with appropriate members.

I am not sure which TV appearance you are referring to by Parminder Vir, because I am not aware of any recent TV appearances made by her. However, if your memorandum is referring to Parminder's interview on LBC about the Spring Festival there are a number of comments I will wish to make:-

1. The interview was arranged via the Public Relations Branch and Parminder was asked to do it and naturally assumed that the normal clearances had been made, which is automatically the responsibility of PRB.
2. Parminder took on the task at very short notice and it must be made quite clear that it was on the basis of discussing a major event for which the Recreation and Arts Department had failed abysmally to make public details, and Parminder recognised the interview as being a useful opportunity to publicise the events for which she was instrumental in organising and had the task of co-ordinating.
3. At the outset when radio interviews were being considered by PRB Parminder had indicated that the various co-ordinators of sections within the festival itself should be the people to speak about their input, but the message related back to her was that it was she who was required for the interview, not anyone else.
4. As far as I am aware only two Members attended any part of the activities over that weekend which was after all supposed to have been one of the major new events in the calendar being organised by the GLC. Perhaps that was due to the fact that the weather was appalling or perhaps the bad publicity or perhaps through a lack of interest because it was a black/ethnic minority event.

On a more general note I would confirm that officers in the Ethnic Minorities Unit are under very clear instructions not to speak to the media unless prior clearance is given by the Public Relations Branch. However I must indicate to you that on numerous occasions I am approached by many people from the media who do not want to speak to a politician, and do not want a GLC view, but want to speak to someone from the Ethnic Minorities Unit in a fairly intimate way about aspects of our work. On many occasions I have refused flatly to speak to them because of the public relations constraint, but the difficulty such a reaction creates is that the outside world, and in particular people in the media, regard us as part of the establishment which inevitably affects our credibility as being an independent unit within the GLC that is strategically located to bring about radical changes in response to particular needs of London's ethnic minorities.

Herman Ouseley

DG/EMU
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6th June 1984

Copies to:

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GLC
1981-1986
Working for London
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