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**SPRING DIRECTIVE 1989**

Dear Observer,

The first theme of this Directive is suggested by the succession of public disasters - manmade and natural ~ over the last few years. Not I grant as enjoyable a theme as some but certainly one that cannot be ignored in the history of the 1980s.

Secondly, we would like comment on the 'food news' from the salmonella panic onwards (see Part II over the page).

Please be sure to read the whole thing through before you set pen to paper or finger to typewriter. As so often I have put points that you might care to think about in question form but I hope that other angles of approach and aspects will occur to you. Please don't treat the Directive as a questionnaire. Take up and develop points that interest you. Finally, do try to be as specific as possible; your reflections on one particular event or aspect of the whole matter are of greater value than generalisations.

**PART I: REPORTS OF DISASTERS**

How do we define such disasters? Is it a matter of scale, intensity of suffering, unexpectedness, or the fact that it receives wide media coverage?

How does reporting shape our reactions? Does visual reporting have a greater impact?

Distance in time and distance in space: if you feel urged to make a cash donation when you first hear the news, how strong is this impulse later? Are you more affected by such events occurring in the U.K. than abroad? Do you react particularly if you hear that British people have been involved in, say, an accident abroad?

Are your travelling plans and activities significantly affected by news of air, sea (ferry), rail or road accidents?

How interested are we in misfortune? Is there a voyeur in us all? Are we likely to linger at the sight of an ambulance outside someone's house, or where there has been a road accident? Or are there particular events that we hurry by or, if reported on TV, switch off because they upset us? If so, can you describe what is it precisely that upsets you?

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What do you think of on-the-spot interviewing of the wounded, the bereaved, the starving? Should there be limits on what may be shown? If you think a public interest is served, could you define this interest?

Closely related is the systematic use of suffering in appeals for Charity, both one-off disaster appeals and ongoing needs. Does this stimulate you to donate? Or in compassion numbed by over-exposure? Do you think that the 'public at large' seems to need a violent stimulus if it is to respond at all? And when people do respond to a disaster appeal what do you think is the most common motive?

Is there do you think an evident need to identify, blame, punish those who are responsible, in any way, for what has happened? Does the call for compensation, as distinct from relief, spur you to comment?

Have you observations to make about the behaviour and motives of the Royal family, the Prime Minister or other public figures on such occasions?

I heard it suggested recently that the bereaved and the shocked are helped by being interviewed on radio or TV; would you care to comment? A connected matter is the development of professional "counselling services" to cope with the sudden and relatively large-scale bereavement. Do you think this reflects on modern society?

People say that 'disasters' are becoming more frequent? Why do you think this is?

P.S: If the recent storms in the Northern of Uk are uppermost in your mind, please tell us about them.

## **PART II: FOOD NEWS\***

Please report your own reactions to the first reports on salmonella in eggs - did you stop eating eggs and if so, for how long?

Next came the soft cheese scare; how are you affected? More generally, please, your views on the dangers inherent in modern food production. Or is it the case that the danger lies more in our kitchens? Have your ways of storing food changed at all?

How much do you think politics enters into the reporting of the handling of these issues?

David Pocock

\* Please start your reply to Part II on a separate sheet of paper.

[Dir.28 13.2.89]