




10 DOWNING STREET

Prime Minister

1. I think that you ought to see copies of the attached two letters which have been sent by our backbenchers to Michael and to Peter Thorneycroft.
2. The letter from John Wilkinson, in particular, is an excellent one.
3. John Wilkinson is P.P.S. to Adam Butler, and is an excellent man.

28th February, 1980


Ian Gow

IAN

16.



*with the
compliments of
Tony Marlow.*

*This is the only copy
apart from that sent to
Lord T. It is for your
information and is obviously
in the strictest confidence.*

HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

TO THE RT HON LORD THORNEYCROFT CH



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

IN CONFIDENCE

Dear Lord Thorneycroft

We are very concerned at the unprecedented campaign being mounted by and on behalf of individual Cabinet Ministers against the policies on which the Government was elected, and for which the Prime Minister so persistently, courageously and effectively is working. It would appear that there is a network whose main purpose is to leak to the press, occasionally attributably, but more frequently non-attributably, highly unrepresentative views unfavourable to the Prime Minister, which are purported quite inaccurately to have widespread support within the Party.

You are as aware, as we are, of the damaging nature of these actions at a time when the determined posture of a united Government is almost as vital as the policies it pursues. We are naturally reluctant to take steps to counteract in public these mischievous and disloyal allegations - as no doubt this could be used by the press as evidence of a disunity which does not exist.

We were elected to support a Government of Margaret Thatcher's making on a manifesto bearing her imprint. We intend to sustain both her Premiership and her programme with the utmost vigour. It is open to those in authority who do not share these aims to resign.

While we have
letter
you

the contents of this

John Browne
Michael Brown
John Wells
Tony Beaumont Dark
Nicholas Winterton

Robert Dunn
Richard Shepherd
Michael Brotherton
K. Harvey Proctor
Albert McQuarrie

Peter Griffiths
Billy Rees-Davies
Chharles Irving
Nicholas Baker



22nd February, 1980

I do not like to add to your burdens but I have been becoming increasingly perturbed by the apparent dissension in the Government which is damaging morale, not just among the backbench members of the Party, but in my constituency as well.

If there were just a feeling of anxiety and despondency among backbenchers I would not feel it my duty to write this letter but I have been in close touch with my constituency officers and workers and have attended a number of A.G.M.s in the last few weeks.

It is clear that unless something is done fast to restore discipline and coherence in the Government, we shall lose not just supporters in the country but also a number of our best workers and members in the constituency parties.

It is not right that we should be asked to explain inspired leaks, public philosophising and openly dissenting but anonymous opinions expressed by ministers and reported prominently in the press.

Those who voted this government into office did so in the belief that they could expect some coherence, consistency and discipline in our approach to the dreadful inheritance we have received from the Labour Government.

I believe that the Prime Minister is fully entitled to reshuffle her Government if the dissension continues in a way that ensures that her ministers more closely reflect her opinions and objectives. This surely is the prerogative of all Prime Ministers.

On policy questions the matter over which there is deepest incomprehension on the part of our supporters is trade union reform. There is no doubt in their mind that we were elected to take firm and unambiguous action to make secondary picketing illegal, to encourage secret ballots and to curb the worst excesses of the closed shop.

This clearly has not happened and certainly my own constituency party regret the fact that the EMPLOYMENT BILL was introduced relatively late in the session. As a result we shall be continuing a process of consultation for many months to come.

- 2 -

Please do not regard this as any criticism of you or your colleagues in the Whips' Office personally. I understand that there is no way we can prevent ministerial colleagues talking to the press if they wish to, but I just feel that at a time when the Labour Party is so manifestly divided it would greatly help our Party if by contrast we could be very firmly and loyally united.

Yours ever,

JOHN WILKINSON

The Rt. Hon. Michael Jopling, M.P.,
Government Chief Whip.

c.c. The Hon. A. BERRY, M.P. - for information
Ian Gow Esq., M.P. - " "

WILKINSON, P.P.

Private &
Confidential

28th February, 1980

Thank you very much for having sent me a copy of your letter dated 22nd February to the Chief Whip.

I have shown your letter to the Prime Minister.

If I may say so, it is an excellent letter.

Ian Gow

John Wilkinson, Esq., M.P.