

cc W Paterson

F/11



DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORT
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Tim Flesher Esq
Private Secretary
10 Downing Street
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Dear Tim,

FAMILY POLICY GROUP

Thank you for a copy of your letter of 20 July to
John Halliday.

I attach a copy of a paper my Secretary of State has
prepared for the next meeting of the Group, on "Family Ties and
Personal Ownership".

I am copying this letter to the recipients of yours
as well as to Jonathan Spencer (Department of Industry).

Yours,

Anthony Mayer

R A J MAYER
Private Secretary

FAMILY POLICY GROUP

NOTE BY SECRETARY OF STATE FOR TRANSPORT ON FAMILY TIES AND PERSONAL OWNERSHIP

The Government should clearly avoid preaching at people and families about how to run their lives. But there are certainly examples which Government and leaders can set, actions it can take and policies it can pursue which will undoubtedly help make family life more worthwhile and significant, and give both parents and children a clearer and more confident understanding of their duties to each other - as well as their duties to their elderly relatives, their friends and all those whom a close knit and happy family, by its very inner strength, can help and encourage in facing life and its problems.

1. Looking for someone else to blame

First, there is the example which Government can set in conducting matters of national policy. The task here is to set about the work of Government, and explain what is being done and why, in a manner which brings home vividly and repeatedly that responsibility cannot be shirked or passed on, that the British Government is not simply a device for reallocating the blame for all national inadequacies to nebulous outside agencies and forces, alleged somehow to be doing us down.

Government has to be - as I believe it is nowadays increasingly seen to be - a determined and confident force, not an excuse factory. It must show that it is wholly unwilling to put up with obvious affronts to the rule of law and obvious abuses of power, whether here at home or in the wider world. It must be a Government determined within the limits of the very considerable power entrusted to it to see justice and commonsense and genuine fairness prevail, over apology and waffle and twisted democracy.

A Government which conducts itself in this way - but only such a Government - is then entitled to expect the rest of the country to face its responsibilities in the same way. Indeed it becomes an inspiration to do so - as it were a reference point and support for all those at all levels who really want to help themselves by their own efforts and face their responsibilities, whether we are talking about the manager of a factory, the local business leaders of an old industrial area, the head-teacher or the mother of a family.

One and all, if people know and read about a Government which thinks and acts this way, they get that much more courage to face up to their own responsibilities, to insist that others do likewise and to shake off the habit which has spread to the heart of family life, of always looking for others to blame - the authorities, the telly, "them", the people at school, always somebody else.

A sense of allegiance grows up - allegiance not to any party line, let alone to any doctrine, but to the idea of seeking to do ones duty, beginning with your own family but extending to your country and its institutions.

Not much has been going for family life in Britain since the 'swinging' sixties. And nothing has placed greater stresses on family cohesion than government policies which actively discourage individual responsibility and promote the idea of Government as the author and source of all things making life good and easy and simple - and therefore inevitably, as the obvious scapegoat for everything that goes wrong at home, at work, or at school.

"Blame someone else" is a hopeless basis on which to bring up children or imbue them with a sense of responsibility to their parents and friends and the immediate community in which they live, and indeed to their country. It is a breeder of surly defeatism in the face of every difficulty. Fanned and fed by the Left, and the far Right (as in inter-war Germany) this alibi for every weakness can quickly be turned into resentful collectivist brutality.

All this lies at the very opposite pole to the attitudes we seek to foster. The opposite of the defeatist view that the world owes us a living and has somehow cheated us, is that we can help ourselves as a nation and that we can and will look after our interests. It is that the firm or factory can and will compete rather than succumb amidst pleas of unfair oriental competition. It is that our cities can and will be revived and pulled together by the efforts of those who live within them, rather than falling back on a ceaseless liturgy of blame on central Government interlaced with demands for more money. It is that a school can and must excel by the efforts of those who attend it and who work in it, that a trade union does have it within its members power to get political extremists off its back. It is that the members of a family do have a duty to each other and together can be strong. It can be done. It is not 'someone else's' responsibility

2. Stable money and stable values

The second way in which the Government can properly use its power and policies to help family life flourish is by stopping inflation. If "they" are debasing the currency, constantly making family income go less far, forcing parents to think how to cope and struggle to stay where they are, gnawing away at family stability and diverting energies from the accumulation of material and spiritual strength, here indeed are the scapegoat forces, the nameless and malign outside influences to blame whenever things go wrong.

The other day Geoffrey Howe aired the thought of life without the annual pay hassle. It is worth reflecting just how much of every day/^{life} has come to be dominated whether at home or work, by arguments about pay increases, about who gets what, who should get what, who gets more, whether its fair, who is being done down this year, how the family is suppose to cope and why the money never seems to go as far this week as it did last.

Life in many homes would be very different if we could be shot of all that.

A world of stable money would be a world of stable values. The energies that go into trying to 'catch up', or run to stay in the same place, would be more likely to go into building up family savings, buying and improving the home, into things that last.

Not that we must start sounding like the party of low pay. That is a trap into which the CBI seem to have once again fallen. We should not. We want to see families get ahead, improve standards, secure high wages coming into the household, investing them and making them grow. The point is that annual pay increase battles about the 'going rate' and 'catching up' push all this further away and demoralise families who really want to better their lot.

3. Personal Ownership and Family Unity

The third area where Government can really do something to strengthen family life follows directly from this. It is to pursue every possible means of encouraging ownership and proud family possession, to tailor all our policies - fiscal, social, educational, industrial - with this goal firmly in mind.

Here, because we saw the central place of this 'ownership' theme long before the start of the present Government we have in fact done much to lay the groundwork in home ownership, employee

share ownership, encouragement to small business growth (small business being the living expression of wider ownership), in privatisation of concentrated State concerns and in de-collectivisation wherever we can. But there is still a lot to do. We should now go over the whole policy area again with a renewed determination to make ownership in all forms possible and attractive to the widest conceivable number of families. For example, while we have got rid of the terrible phrase 'unearned' income, it is still worrying that we have a tax bias against income from personal savings at all, when we should have one in favour, as we do for pensions and life insurance.

Enabling lots more people to be capitalists in a modest way is not only desirable to help family life. The more that people become familiar with capital and profits and how the social market economy works the weaker the political support for attacks on capital and the more widely it is understood that growing capital and good wages go together. The whole political climate shifts in a thoroughly healthy direction.

When 'the workers' and 'the investors' are plainly the same the Marxist analysis and language of class struggle, already discredited, becomes finally ridiculous. The opportunities for good family life grows steadily. The whole purpose for a mother, father, children and the close community around them to work together and to achieve better things is made infinitely clearer and more worthwhile.

There is one further point about personal ownership and the family. All the evidence from societies with a stronger mass capitalist base than ours suggests that the more dispersed and widely shared the ownership pattern in society the greater the sense of common cause and the desire to pitch in together. The more diffuse the power and responsibility the greater the national unity.

This is a paradox which baffles the collectivist mind. We should remember it when our critics talk of 'two nations', 'the divided society' etc.

To sum up: Government can best help family life and ties first by setting still more vividly the example already given by our actions such as the unwavering response to the Argentine and the firmness in face of railway strikes; second by restoring stable currency and destroying the corrosive attitudes inflation generates and, third, by promoting personal ownership of all kinds.

If the Government pursues these ends, then we will do more than anything else to check the demoralisation of countless parents struggling to keep families together and finding their efforts constantly undermined by the shallow values and shifting sands of the collectivist state. We will give each family in the land the maximum possible opportunity, in the most direct sense, to be a strong link in a strong chain.