

Conservative and Unionist Central Office

F Boyle

32 Smith Square Westminster SW1P 3HH Telephone 01-222 9000

Memorandum from: Harry Boyle
Date: 26 Feb 1980

To: Richard Ryder

I wonder if you might pass on the following to the Prime Minister for a bit of good cheer:

10 a.m.

A lady has just rung up from Birmingham, declining to give her name because she is a magistrate and the views she was about to express would make her very unpopular among certain circles locally. Herewith a condensed account of what she said:

"Six of us, representing three generations (grandparents, parents and two teenage children) together watched Panorama last night. After the Day interview with the Prime Minister was finished we had a discussion about it, and we reached the unanimous conclusion that Mrs Thatcher had made a completely convincing case for the Government's policy. My son, aged 16, said to me, "Mum, you must ring up Mrs Thatcher tomorrow morning and tell her she has got it just right". He added that the only thing against her is prejudice because she happens to be a woman. I don't know whether that is the case or not. But I felt it would do no harm to telephone the Conservative Party headquarters in the hope that you could let her know that three generations of an ordinary British family are right behind her in what she is trying so hard to do. I also know, from conversation with some BL workers from Longbridge at a recent social function, that they voted Conservative last May for the first time in their lives, and rather against the grain; that they think the Government is doing what it said it would do; and that their only doubt is whether it has the nerve to stick to its policy long enough to see the country through the present mess."

The lady went on to tell me that, judging from her experience as a magistrate, the extent of frauds against the Social Security system is far greater than is commonly realised. She thinks this is partly due to the operations of the Claimants' Union, which specializes in assisting people to exploit every possible loophole in the regulations and thus enables them, whether intentionally or not, to become expert dodgers. Meanwhile, in her opinion, people who genuinely deserve help fail to get it because they don't know how to apply for it. She agreed with me that Reg Prentice's decision to recruit a corps of special investigators was a step in the right direction.

In this connection she also said that when speaking to a school discussion group recently she was told by a 15-year-old boy representing

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the National Union of School Students that the Union was organizing what he called "cells" in the schools which would instruct pupils how to live on Social Security when they left. He argued that by not seeking jobs on leaving school they would be making it easier for other unemployed people to get such jobs as were available.

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