

5 June 1980

PRIME MINISTER

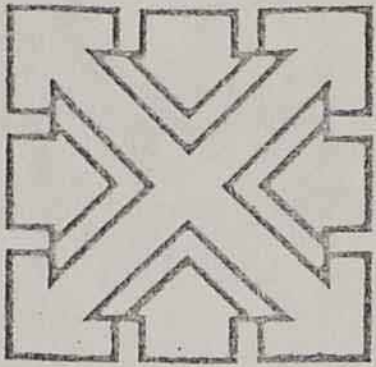
Prime Minister

THE ABCC MEETING

It was most unfortunate that the Daily Telegraph produced their extraordinary report following yesterday's visit by ABCC. Not surprisingly, the delegation were very upset. Not least, it could well destroy any credibility that the delegation have built up with the other colleagues present at the meeting - which after all was an important purpose of the whole exercise. Joseph Egerton, their Economics Director, rang me this morning and told me that he was writing a letter of apology to Jim. I suggested that he copied it to all the other colleagues, which he said that he had already decided to do. Apparently Tom Boardman will be writing directly to you. I suggested that it would be a good thing if Tom wrote a letter to the Telegraph setting the record straight and making it quite clear that no member of the delegation spoke in the terms reported to the Telegraph, or would have dreamt of doing so.

I hope this incident will not have marred what from our point of view was quite a helpful step forward in educating colleagues in preparation for the Green Paper.

JOHN HOSKYNS



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Personal and in Confidence

JRSE/sks

RT Hon James Prior MP,
Secretary of State for Employment,
Department of Employment,
Caxton House,
Tothill Street,
London SW1N 9NA

5th June 1980

Dear Mr. Prior,

You will no doubt have already seen the article on the front page of the Daily Telegraph. You will I am certain be extremely angry, and justifiably so, at the statement which opens 'one Association official'. The Daily Telegraph's earlier (mis) use of the word 'official' to cover (honorary) officers of an Association could be held to throw suspicion on all members of the delegation. I have today telephoned all the members of the delegation and none of them spoke to the Press. Tom has asked me to convey his personal apologies - he is in the North and says he will write to you on his return to London. *I have been asked by all of them to express their view that this is not how they feel.*

I suppose that as the only ABCC staff member on the delegation, the term 'official' more properly applies to me. I did not speak to the Daily Telegraph after or even before the meeting. I did have a short word with Miss Patricia Tisdall of the Times, but I certainly did not make any criticisms of you. Her piece in the Times today is a resume of our submission on immunities. Apart from a factual briefing, the only points I made were that (as on previous occasions) you had given us every encouragement to come to you with problems and comments and that we had been most sympathetically received.

Although as you are aware, I have my doubts about certain aspects of your policy and, in particular, one or two aspects of its presentation, I have nothing but praise for your determination throughout to ensure that at every stage there is full consultation. In the section of the Annual Review for which I was responsible (copy attached, page 7) you will find that I wrote 'it is therefore entirely right to record the great trouble taken by the Secretary of State for Employment, Mr. Prior, and his Parliamentary Under-Secretary, Mr. Patrick Mayhew MP, to discuss their policies with interested parties, including representatives of the ABCC. Such consultation makes it more likely that their policies will work'.

I hope that this provides convincing evidence that I was not the official referred to in the Telegraph. I do not feel that such comment enhances our credibility and inevitably distracts attention from what we are trying to do, namely, to convince you that it is possible to go further and that adjustment of your policies to this end is not so much desirable as essential. Abuse of an individual minister does not seem to me a particularly effective method of achieving this.

Y. Smith

Joseph Egerton

J.R.S. Egerton
Economics Director

encs.