

cc A.D. Ingrid



The Association of
British Chambers of Commerce

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PRESIDENT: TOM BOARDMAN

DIRECTOR-GENERAL: W.A. NEWSOME

24th April 1980

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Dear Prime Minister

First may I congratulate you on your speech to the Birmingham Chamber of Industry and Commerce. It made it clear to us what government has done and is doing to produce the conditions for private enterprise and it placed upon us the responsibility, which should properly be ours, for making this work. We shall do our utmost to respond to this challenge, recognising the appalling consequences should we fail.

Yet there is one area of government policy where the membership of Chambers of Commerce considers that its views, based on wide practical experience, are being ignored by government. This is in the reform of our present legislation on industrial relations.

We welcome the changes that are being made by the Employment Bill and, in particular, the revised approach to the menace of secondary action. We are grateful for the opportunities that we have been given by the Secretary of State for Employment to make representations to him, both in writing and personally, and the care he has taken in consulting individual Chambers.

Nevertheless, it is the view of our combined membership that the Bill falls well short of what is needed to reverse the excessive power of elements within the trade union movement and to enable management to manage their businesses.

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I recognise that it is now too late for any major changes to be made to the Employment Bill and that there will be an opportunity to argue for these on the Green Paper promised later this year. However, the government's rejection of amendments which would enable an aggrieved party to take action against a trade union, instead of pursuing an individual - to cite one of our main criticisms - does not encourage us to believe the present imbalance of power will be remedied.

Our members spend most of their working lives in factories and plants throughout the U.K. and have a wider experience than anyone on what is desirable and practicable to improve industrial relations and to get the higher productivity and earnings of which you spoke in Birmingham. For that reason I ask that I might bring a small delegation of them to meet you and such of your colleagues as you consider appropriate, to put forward our case for further and early legislation.

I am copying this letter to Jim Prior.

Yours Sincerely
Tom Boardman

Tom Boardman

The Rt Hon Mrs Margaret Thatcher MP
The Prime Minister
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