

8 October 1977

Urachstrasse 27  
D-78 Freiburg i. Brg.  
West Germany

Mr. William Rees-Mogg  
Editor, The Times  
London

Dear Mr. Rees-Mogg,

Your highly important article in The Times of the 5th inst. (the issue containing the first part did unfortunately not reach Freiburg) makes me now want to write to you about what I had hoped to have an opportunity during the second half of last month which I spent in London. But unfortunately an upsetting infection kept me in bed for almost the whole of that stay and I had to abandon all my plans for various discussion.

The point I wanted to talk with you about is this: I had been rather disappointed with the response to the three letters on trade unions which you kindly printed and somewhat doubtful whether it would be expedient, or welcome to you, if I persisted further. Yet current news while I was in London made it clear to me that there is bound to be a division within the Conservative party as between the expediency of short term tactics and the desirable strategy, and with Mrs. Thatcher on the right side needing support. I would readily concede to Mr. Prior that the chances of the party of gaining a large majority would probably be considerably better if it avoided a direct clash with the trade union leaders. But I am also convinced that Mrs. Thatcher does not get a sort of mandate to deal with the fundamental issue she would have no chance of successfully dealing with that issue and making the British economy viable again the conservative part would in office merely prove that it can do no better than the Labour party. It was for this reason that in my first letter I suggested the phrase of "revoking the special privileges which the trade unions had been granted by law" and I believe that for such an announcement Mrs. Thatcher, though she might risk winning the election, would get considerable credit even from the rank and file (though certainly not the leaderships) of the trade unions.

I had started while in bed at the Reform Club sketching such a letter, but it tended to grow to the length of an article and as I felt not quite up to the task and doubted whether you would wish such a long piece. But now, having read at least your second article and find how much we agree on the fundamental causes of the British disease (with which I tried to deal, avoiding to concentrate on the trade unions, in two talks I taped for the BBC --crawling out of bed for the purpose), I rather regret that I did not persevere and would like to learn your opinion on the matter.

I now rather doubt whether in the four weeks before I have to start for New Orleans (where I hope to see you) I still could find time doing such an article, but if you think it important I would try. Unfortunately the availability of The Times on the newsstands here is so irregular, that I shall not be able really to follow the discussion (Although a six weeks subscription to The Times to my summer holiday in the Tyrol brought it regularly by post, a similar written request to send it for the limited period till I leave again for overseas to Freiburg brought no result.

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It is ~~not~~ hardly worth-while trying once more before I leave again for six week on November 6th). Except for the few days of October 15-16 I can ~~not~~ however be regularly reached at Freiburg, and, if you should wish, in the evening fairly regularly at my home by telephone under Nr. (060761) 77 2 16.

Yours sincerely,

F.A.Hayek