



Handwritten signature and number 756

10 DOWNING STREET

THE PRIME MINISTER

30 March 1981

Dear Nicholas,

Thank you for your letter of 5 March with which you enclosed one from Mr. Keith Whitcomb of 11 Beeston Terrace, Macclesfield.

I am also grateful to you for your kind comments about my United States visit in your own reply to Mr. Whitcomb. I hope your letter will have helped to set his mind at rest.

I am concerned to keep the cost of my overseas visits to the essentials. As Mr. Whitcomb says, there are security reasons for using R.A.F. aircraft on these occasions. My overseas visits also have a very tight timetable, and it is therefore convenient for me and the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary, with our small staffs, to have a plane at our disposal. As you pointed out to Mr. Whitcomb, the remaining space on the aircraft is made available to media representatives, who pay for their seats. When we travel my office meets the cost of chartering an aircraft from the Ministry of Defence. On European journeys, I use a much smaller plane. For inter-continental travel, the VC10 is the only appropriate R.A.F. plane. It also has the advantage of being British built, unlike most of the aircraft now flying commercially on the North Atlantic route.

/ My husband

My husband does not normally accompany me on overseas visits. Occasionally members of my family have travelled with me in a private capacity on overseas missions, and in all such cases the costs are met privately. On this occasion, Mr. Thatcher was an official guest of the United States Government.

Y
ours ever

Margaret

Nicholas Winterton, Esq., M.P.

RB