

General Dental Practitioners' Association

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Liaison Officer

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23rd March, 1981

Dear Madam,

Awaited 11th Report of the Review Body on Doctors' and Dentists' Remuneration

When it met recently the Council of the General Dental Practitioners' Association which represents well over two thousand general dental practitioners, was appalled to learn of your action in summoning the Chairman of the Review Body on Doctors' and Dentists' Remuneration (and those of two other Review Bodies) to a meeting at which according to 'hansard' you had "emphasized that national economic circumstances should be taken into account in reaching their decisions."

It is appreciated that even a Prime Minister cannot be expected to be aware of all the relevant background circumstances relating to the original recommendations of the Pilkington Committee, the consequential terms of reference determined for the new Review Body on Doctors' and Dentists' Remuneration which had Parliamentary approval on the clear understanding that the Body's annual reviews should be totally 'independent' in character, but it is surprising that your senior advisers failed to draw your attention thereto and especially to the fact that whilst future proposals and recommendations of the Review Body were still under discussion and undefined, your ill-advised intervention at that moment was an act of Executive power contrary to the principles under which the Review Body is required to conduct its activities - a temptation to which so far as is known to the Association no previous Prime Minister, Conservative or Socialist, has succumbed.

May I stress to you that the 'independent' Review Body on Doctors' and Dentists' Remuneration is required to act 'independently' in reaching its conclusions and recommendations without being subjected to pressure by anybody, not even the Prime Minister, more especially as when the Review Body's 'independent' views have been finalized the procedure requires such to be submitted to the Prime Minister of the day for acceptance, rejection, or modification, without any right of appeal against such existing.

The Review Body on Doctors' and Dentists' Remuneration is required to take into account during its deliberations a variety of circumstances, including relativity in terms of other professions etc., etc., but the General Dental Practitioners' Association can find no evidence or record that one of the circumstances so required to be taken into account is the (political) view of a particular Government at a particular time that "national economic circumstances" warrant restraint of what otherwise might be the 'independent' conclusions and recommendations of the Review Body based upon its terms of reference.

Of course the General Dental Practitioners' Association is very conscious of the present state of the country, and concedes without any argument the right and privilege of a Prime Minister to ignore or modify the recommendations of the Review Body after its finalized independent views on what changes in remuneration (if any) would be appropriate in relation to its terms of reference have been duly determined, but the Association neither accepts that the consideration of "national economic circumstances" as such comes within the Review Body's terms of reference nor that an attempt to influence the members of the Review Body in regard to what should eventually appear in their 'independent' Report can be justified in any way.

The attempt by 'Executive' pressure to wittle away the intended truly 'independent' thinking and judgment of its members, if successful, can only result in the Review Body on Doctors' and Dentists' Remuneration becoming a non - independent creature of the Government of the day.

Yours faithfully,

H. R. Murray Shaw

H.R. Murray Shaw
G.D.P.A. Liaison Officer

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The Rt. Hon: Margaret Thatcher, P.C., M.P.
Prime Minister,
10, Downing Street,
London. S.W.1.