



HOUSE OF COMMONS  
LONDON SW1A 0AA

28th May, 1976

Rather than write direct to Brian Kellest whom I have, of course, met, but know less well than you, I am responding to your comment on Geoffrey Rippon's speech with a mildly querulous comment on his interview in the Daily Telegraph of 24th May.

We both agree, of course, that competitive querulousness about each other is the last thing that is needed, and understand the difficulties very well, although David Watt makes too much of them in today's Financial Times, and surely we are all agreed on the over-riding necessity for all those who are fearful that our entire society will be submerged in Socialism to try to make a common front against this. This is not, of course, just a question of doing the right things, but of ensuring that we all do everything we can to change the climate of opinion in order, hopefully, to persuade even the Labour Party into opinions comparable with those held by the SDP in Germany.

That is why I hope you will feel that I am entitled to complain about the parody of Conservative policy which is contained in this third and fourth paragraphs of the Brian Kellest interview. We have all made many speeches about the problems of middle management which are, in tax terms, exactly the same as those of the small entrepreneur. We have emphasised the necessity to get top tax rates down and so on. But it is fair to remember that those restrictions, when introduced, were supported by the CBI, admittedly, from their point of view as well as ours, as a second best. It is also fair to remember that Tony Barber did cut top tax rates and received, many of us think, less support than he deserved for having done so.

Of course we all would prefer a society that was not built on benefits in kind. But equally we all agree that the Government's changes now proposed on this front would be disastrous in the present tax climate. That is why the Conservative Party is fighting, for example, against such changes as those of which you have complained in Clauses 57 and 58 of the present Finance Bill.

I certainly did not get the impression when I last spoke to Brian Kellest that he was unmindful of these things and hope that he will not mind my writing through you to him - simply to make the point: "Don't shoot the pianist. He's doing his best!" His

best may not be good enough but it will not be helped unless we remember the wide identity of interest between business, small and large alike, and those of us who are trying to argue the case for a free society.

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