

From: David Watkins, M.P.

cc EG 2



HOUSE OF COMMONS  
LONDON SW1A 0AA

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R3/2

Dear Prime Minister,

Further to your reply this afternoon at Question Time, to the effect that you would be prepared to meet Members whose constituencies are the location of major industrial closures, I would like to meet you as soon as possible.

As you are aware, the Consett Steel Works closure in my constituency last October brought 3,700 redundancies. The Ransome Hoffman Pollard ball-bearing factory is now in the process of closing, with 1,250 redundancies. Almost every other firm in my constituency is facing or has already experienced major contraction and redundancies.

Yours sincerely,  
David Watkins.

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

Linwood car factory will cause to the economy of Scotland? Does she recall that when she was elected it was pointed out that her Government represented the South and the South only? Will she therefore look at what has happened in the car industry, which has been supported by the Government through British Leyland and allowed to continue at Coventry while the Scottish car industry has been smashed into the ground?

**The Prime Minister:** Scotland has a number of opportunities in connection with the oil industry which are not available elsewhere. Although I share the hon. Gentleman's concern about the closure at Linwood, I doubt very much whether the people there would begrudge their fellow car workers a reasonable future in the plant at Ryton.

**Mr. Anthony Grant:** Will my right hon. Friend find time today to consider relations between Britain and Canada? Is she aware that the Canadian Prime Minister is insisting publicly that she undertook to impose a three-line Whip to put through this House his proposals on patriation of the constitution? Will she confirm that that is not correct? Will she also confirm the view of the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs that the duty of this House is to consider the wishes of the Canadian people as a whole and not the diktat of Mr. Trudeau?

**The Prime Minister:** Three-line Whips or any other Whipping are not decided upon until some 10 days before the business of the House, when we know exactly what the position is and exactly what the request is that we may have to honour. I wholly confirm what I have said previously on this matter. We have not received any request from the Canadian Government. When we receive a request, I believe that it is our duty to deal with it as expeditiously as possible.

**Mr. Parry:** When the Prime Minister meets the Prime Minister of Mauritius later today, will she discuss with him the implications and the possible effect that the proposed closure of the Tate and Lyle factory will have upon ACP countries? Will she also reconsider her decision about meeting an all-party parliamentary delegation to discuss this matter, because we all believe that a Government initiative could save the refinery?

**The Prime Minister:** I fully expect that the Prime Minister of Mauritius will raise the question of sugar refining, although I understand that an undertaking has been given to refine most of the sugar under the ACP agreements. I believe that the hon. Gentleman represents the constituency in which the Tate and Lyle factory is found. My right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food flew back from Brussels to receive a delegation. I do not think that I can duplicate his receiving that delegation. I will always see the hon. Member himself in whose constituency a factory closure is about to occur.

**Mr. Speaker:** Mr. Allan Stewart.

**Mr. Foot** *rose*—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. I have already called the hon. Member for Renfrewshire, East (Mr. Stewart). I shall call the Leader of the Opposition afterwards.

**Mr. Allan Stewart:** With regard to Linwood, will my right hon. Friend confirm that the Secretary of State and Department of Industry will now do everything possible to put to Nissan-Datsun the fact that it could be in that company's best commercial interests to reconsider going to a green field site and to build on the site at Linwood, using the skilled work force there?

**The Prime Minister:** Linwood is, of course, located in my hon. Friend's constituency. I understand that Nissan is studying the feasibility of coming to a green field site in this country. I do not think that there is any possibility of dissuading it from that, because that is what it wants.

**Mr. Foot:** I thank the right hon. Lady for the generous reply which she made a few minutes ago. Will she be dealing with the correspondence herself, or will some Minister be put in charge of these requests? Will she undertake to publish each week in the *Official Report* the requests from all my hon. Friends to visit the factories that are due to close? May I straight away put in my request to her to come and look at the closures in my own constituency? Will she publish her diary in the next week?

**The Prime Minister:** As usual, the right hon. Gentleman has got it wrong. I said that I would see the Member of a constituency in which a main factory closure occurs. A large delegation must always go to the Minister concerned, just as the main delegation went to see my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. I personally shall see the Member. I am sorry that the right hon. Gentleman greets such a courtesy in such a churlish manner.

## Royal Family (Speech References)

**Mr. David Lambie (Central Ayrshire):** On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I recall that some years ago, when I asked a question at Prime Minister's Question Time about a speech made by the Duke of Edinburgh, you quite correctly gave a ruling that such a question was not permitted if it was critical in any way. Does that ruling still stand? Today there was a question about a speech by the Duke of Edinburgh, which brought a response from the Prime Minister. Both the question and the reply were highly complimentary, because, as it happens, what the Duke of Edinburgh said seems to agree with Tory policy. Does not that place those of us who wish to put a contrary view about a speech by the Duke of Edinburgh—which by implication would be critical—at a disadvantage, under the rules of House? Should not that point be looked at?

**Mr. Speaker:** The whole House is aware that I am its servant. I do my best to ensure that the rules of the House are observed. One of our fundamental rules is that any reference to a member of the Royal Family must be couched in courteous terms.

**Dr. M. S. Miller (East Kilbride):** On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Is it in order for me to suggest that I could apply my medical services to the Secretary of State for Scotland, who was not present today or yesterday to answer questions—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. I do not want to enter into a discussion on private medicine today.