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From

CONSERVATIVE & UNIONIST CENTRAL OFFICE,  
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THE CHAIRMAN OF THE PARTY

The Rt. Hon. Cecil Parkinson M.P.

Telephone: 01-222 9000

17th September 1982

Dear Colleague,

All of us have heard and read a great deal about the dispute in the National Health Service, yet the excellent record of this Government in health care and the fair pay offers which have been made are often ignored.

It is absolutely vital that the Government's position be clearly and fully understood and that as few people as possible are misled by trade union propaganda, especially with the so-called day of action on 22nd September.

In particular, nothing can justify the decisions deliberately to deny sick people the medical attention that they badly need. Patients should come first and the callous disregard for their welfare is a disgrace to decent trade unionism.

I hope that the enclosed Briefing Note will be read with care and will be used by members of the Party. As attempts are made to widen the dispute, by challenging our legislation on industrial relations, the facts of the matter must be brought home.

Yours sincerely,

# Briefing Note

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16.9.82

## THE NATIONAL HEALTH SERVICE DISPUTE

### The NHS Record 1949-79

The National Health Service is a heavy user of national resources. Between 1949-its first full year of operation-and 1979, expenditure on the NHS as a proportion of the national income rose from 3.9% to 5.4%.

In terms of treatment provided, the Health Service has grown out of all recognition. Many operations are feasible today that after the war were technically impossible. Furthermore, the rising number of elderly people since the war (who now account for about half of all NHS beds) has imposed very great strains.

Between 1949 and 1979 the number of in-patients leaving hospital in England rose from 2.9 million to 5.4 million. Moreover, this has been achieved at the same time as the number of hospital beds occupied daily fell from about 398,000 to 293,000 over the same period.

These improvements have also been accompanied by a huge increase in the number of staff, including ancillaries. Between 1949 and 1979 the number of staff employed in England alone doubled to 806,000 (whole-time equivalents), and the number employed throughout Britain totalled one million last year. An article in 'New Society' on 26th August 1982 pointed out that "over the decade to 1980 there was a 48 per cent increase in doctors, a 17 per cent increase in nurses and a 148 per cent increase in administrative staff.....But in-patients (including day cases) rose by only 27 per cent and outpatients by 6 per cent".

### The Cost

How much can be afforded on the National Health Service is a political judgement. The amount being spent this year is equivalent to the entire yield of Value Added Tax, and if the current demands of the NHS unions for a 12% pay rise were conceded it would cost an extra £370 million in addition to the present offer. Furthermore, there would be every probability of other unions putting in for similar increases in the forthcoming pay round.

### The Conservative Record since 1979

The record of the Conservative Government since returning to office is an excellent one and underlines its commitment to the NHS:

- \* Expenditure in Great Britain will have almost doubled from £7,700 million to £14,500 million between 1978-9 and 1982-3, representing a real increase of about 5 per cent.
- \* Greater simplification has been achieved by the removal of Area Health Authorities in England, and £30 million per annum will be saved on administration.
- \* Efficiency will be improved by regional reviews of plans and performance and by the trial use of commercial auditors.
- \* Between 1979 and 1981, the number of nurses and midwives who provide direct patient care increased in Great Britain by 41,200.
- \* The working week for nurses and midwives has been cut from 40 to 37½ hours.

\* Hospital waiting lists in England alone fell from 752,000 in March 1979 to 619,000 in September 1981.

### The Pay Dispute

Since the Conservatives returned to office the pay of nurses and midwives has been substantially improved. Between March 1979 and March 1982 (before the present offer) nurses' pay had increased on average by 61% compared with a rise in prices of 49%.

The present offer to nurses and midwives (7.5%) and ancillaries (6%) is comparable to those accepted by teachers (6%) and the armed forces (6.1%). In addition to negotiating new permanent pay arrangements for determining the pay of nurses and midwives from next April, the Government has also offered to discuss similar arrangements with other staff.

### Trade Unions and Labour

The trade unions are exploiting the health dispute for wider political reasons.

As early as June Mr Scargill was saying that "The best way to oppose the Tebbit Bill is to support the nurses and health workers" (Sunday Times, 13th June 1982) and the recent TUC Conference has supported this approach. As emphasised in 'Labour Weekly', referring to the so-called day of action on 22nd September: "Although the health dispute is the motivating force behind the demonstration, there is no doubt that the government's whole anti-union posture is on trial" (10th September 1982).

Encouragement to break the law on 22nd September came from a surprising source when Mr James Callaghan endorsed illegal secondary action. On a "Panorama" programme he said: "I don't like backing action that is unlawful", but then added: "I would not disagree with this action" (The Times, 7th September 1982). This goes clear against Mr Callaghan's own statement in Parliament that: "political parties should neither advise others to break the law nor encourage others to do so, even when they strongly disagree with the legislation put forward by the Government of the day. Political parties in a democracy live and survive by the acceptance of the law by the nation as a whole" (Hansard, 1st December 1972).

### The Patient

The welfare of patients has been callously disregarded by picketing and strike action. For example, in the Royal Hallamshire Hospital in Sheffield the usual average of 50 operations a day, many on seriously ill cancer patients, had to be reduced to 10 a day; at the Royal United Hospital in Bath there was a significant increase in the number of cases, particularly those involving gynaecological problems, which were returning as genuine emergencies after earlier treatment had been postponed; at the Risbridge Hospital in Suffolk eleven mentally handicapped adults have been refused admission as adult day patients (Daily Mail, 14th July 1982; Daily Telegraph, 6th August and 11th September 1982).

Mr Norman Fowler disclosed last month that, as a result of the dispute, hospital waiting lists in England had increased by about 65,000 and about 60,000 operations in England had been postponed or cancelled.

Yet at the TUC Conference Mr Albert Spanswick, General Secretary of COHSE, pretended that the welfare of the patients was a major concern. The truth is that sick people are being treated with contempt by Mr Spanswick and his colleagues. The sheer increase in human suffering is a disgrace to the health service and to the trade union movement.