



Jo Sh

10 DOWNING STREET

THE PRIME MINISTER

20 June 1983

Dear Mr. Bennett

Thank you very much for your letter of 15 June. I was extremely interested to read of your connection with my father and was delighted that you should have taken the trouble to write with some of your reminiscences.

With all best wishes.

Yours sincerely

Margaret Thatcher

Alan Bennett, Esq.

VC

Personal.

15 Westway

Bournemouth BH93DS

15 June 1983

R17 Dear Mr. Thatcher,

The many references to your early family life in Grantham, and its subsequent influence upon you, prompt me to write this letter - though somewhat hesitantly, for I feel it rather presumptuous, but I was privileged in a small way, from time to time over a period of 3 years, to enjoy some of the atmosphere which prevailed in your home.

In 1980 I was appointed National Savings Commissioner for Kesteven & Holland, stationed at St. Peter's Hill, Grantham where I quickly discovered that your father was Chairman of my Grantham Savings Committee - and this meant increasingly frequent calls at No. 10 Parade.

At first I think he viewed a young Civil Servant - complete with black brief case - with a natural suspicion, and our conversations were carried out over the counter - obviously near the bacon-chair! However, on learning accidentally that I was a member of that formidable Fortress of Methodism in Finkin St, my standing apparently improved to such an extent that I was invited from then on to discussions in the parlour, where we found that in so many ways our interests were similar - and we were able to range over all sorts of subjects.

It became increasingly clear to me that he was immensely proud of his family, and a casual 'aside' made on one occasion has stuck in my mind over the years - as can so often happen with a stray remark.

I completely forgot what we were talking about, though evidently you must have figured in the conversation, for he simply remarked in answer to some observation - "That girl could be Prime Minister if she set her mind to it" (I think you were involved in research at the time). There were no qualifications attached - just a 'matter of fact' statement in which he fully believed.

In 1979 I thought it unlikely that he was still alive for I would like to have written and reminded him of his remark. He would have been so proud. In retrospect it seems that although circumstances perhaps limited somewhat his sphere of influence to more local community matters his example and industry were setting a pattern for others to build on. What would he have thought of this present Election triumph?

I thought you might like to have this little insight into a trivial but revealing remark made to a comparative stranger so long ago.

I am so glad that after all the difficulties and awesome decisions you have had to take - particularly during the last 12 months - the Country has shown such renewed confidence in you.

My wife and I join in wishing you every good fortune during the years of Government now before you. Your father, I know, would have no doubt about your ability to cope, and to me he seemed a pretty good judge.

Yours sincerely  
Hank Bennett

P.S. My long-standing young friend - Chris Hayward, seemed to do well at Hull. I've a feeling he'll be back!