

Correspondence with Geraint
Morgan has been mis-filed.
@Wayland, 13 Sept. 2012

10 DOWNING STREET

THE PRIME MINISTER

24 November 1981

Dear Geraint,

Thank you for your letter of 3 November about British Rail.

I was sorry to hear about the difficulties you have had. I know what great inconvenience this sort of thing can cause. I hope you are taking up your particular complaint with the railway managers.

In running a business like the railways, I agree that service to the customer must be paramount for the Chairman, within the inevitable constraints faced by any public sector industry. I understand your view that in such industries an insider is often best placed to fulfil this function. But, in the case of British Rail, these questions are academic at the present. We believe that we already have the best available Chairman, and that is why we have asked Sir Peter Parker to continue for a further limited spell.

Yours sincerely

Raymond Stobart

Geraint Morgan, Esq., Q.C., M.P.



C.F.
NO
yes it is!

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORT
2 MARSHAM STREET LONDON SW1P 3EB

Mike Pattison Esq
Private Secretary to the
Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
LONDON SW1

Red c/c 19/11
AJ

17 November 1981

Tyrefa PM, RL

MAJ 19/11

Dear Mike,

I enclose a draft reply to Mr Geraint Morgan's letter to the Prime Minister about British Rail, which you sent me with your letter of 10 November. Mr Morgan has made several earlier complaints to the Secretary of State's predecessor about difficulties he has met in using the railways. He has suggested that the right remedy was to remove Sir Peter Parker and appoint somebody else.

We believe that the Prime Minister will not want to accept Mr Morgan's suggestion that it will necessarily be better to have a chairman of the Board from within the railway industry.

Yours,

Anthony Mayer

R A J MAYER
Private Secretary

DRAFT LETTER FROM PRIME MINISTER TO MR GERAINT MORGAN QC MP

1. Thank you for your letter of 3 November about British Rail.

2. I was sorry to hear about the difficulties you have had. I know what great inconvenience this sort of thing can cause. I hope you are taking up your particular complaint with the railway managers.

3. I am sure that giving a better service to the customer is a very important part of running the railways.

But the Chairman of the Railways Board has to deal with other problems as well. I am not at all sure that I agree with your view that a chairman from inside the industry would necessarily be better - that would very much depend on the man.

4. But these questions are of course academic at the present, since we have decided that the right course at this juncture is to ask Sir Peter Parker to continue for a further limited spell, and he has accepted.



Ind. Pol. ^{HU}

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

10 November 1981

I enclose a letter to the Prime Minister from Geraint Morgan, M.P.

This is in response to the Prime Minister's reply to an earlier approach about the salaries of nationalised industry board chairmen in general. That draft was provided by the Treasury, but Mr. Morgan has now come back to the Prime Minister on the specific point of the quality of management in British Rail.

I should be grateful if you could let me have a draft reply for the Prime Minister's signature by Tuesday 24 November.

MP

Anthony Mayer, Esq.,
Department of Transport.

SB

10 November 1981

I am writing on behalf of the Prime Minister to acknowledge your letter of 3 November. I will place your letter before the Prime Minister and a reply will be sent to you as soon as possible.

M A PATTISON

Geraint Morgan, Esq., Q.C., M.P.

From GERAINT MORGAN, Q.C., M.P.

House of Commons,
LONDON SW1A 0AA.

3rd November, 1981.

MORGAN
EF
Dear Prime Minister,

attached
Thank you for your reply of the 27th October to my letter of the 3rd October about the salaries of Chairmen of Boards of nationalised industries.

I am bound to say that I am dismayed by what you say in the last paragraph of your reply, from which it can only be inferred that you consider that British Rail is being well managed. With the greatest respect, that is not, I am sure, the view of the huge majority of ordinary passengers, like myself, who have frequently to endure the frustration and misery of railway travel.

Let me give you just one example from my own experience, significantly enough, on the very day I received your reply. I had a most important meeting arranged that day with representatives of a firm who are striving hard to create more employment in my constituency - an unusual state of affairs anywhere in Britain these days! Because my train - incidentally, one of B.R.'s much-vaunted inter-city expresses - was 35 minutes late I was obliged to curtail the meeting, which should have taken about an hour, to less than half that time, in order to keep a later engagement at a Ministry.

That did not mark the end of my sufferings that day. I had to make an overnight journey from Euston and was told that I could board the train, and occupy a "sleeper", at 11.30 p.m. In fact, the train did not come in until 12.25 a.m., and in the meantime, along with dozens of other passengers, I just had to stand on the concourse. (The sole waiting-room was some distance away from our particular platform and was choc-a-bloc with people anyway, and the concourse boasts no seats.) No one of the B.R. staff at Euston had the courtesy even to come along and explain to us the reason for the delay. We were just treated like so many travelling animals, in the best B.R. tradition!

This sort of experience could, of course, be repeated a thousand-fold, and more, all over the country, and such a state of affairs is just not good enough. If the Government really feels that this reflects

"good management" then I can only say with regret that it augurs ill for its prospects in the next General Election.

I cannot help feeling that a great deal of the trouble stems from the fact that, with the sole exception of Sir Henry Johnson, none of the B.R. Chairmen we have had since nationalization came to the job with any previous experience of running a railway. One was a rather undistinguished retired General, and two, including the present one, were not very successful politicians. I cannot for the life of me understand why the job is not given to someone who has spent his life in the railway service. There must be plenty of people with such experience who would be pleased to take it on and, like Sir Henry Johnson, make at least a comparative success of it.

I find a curious inconsistency between the Government's policy in appointing B.R. Chairmen and the one it adopted - very rightly, in my view - in choosing a Chairman for the British Steel Corporation. In the latter instance, it went to a great deal of trouble - and, admittedly, a considerable amount of expense - to find someone who really knew the industry thoroughly. The wisdom of that policy has been proved by Mr. McGregor's success in, at long last, making the Llanwern works, at least, really competitive by European steel production standards.

Yours sincerely,
Clement Davies

Ms.
The Rt. Hon. Margaret Thatcher, M.P.



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