

European Trade Union
Confederation



Den Europeiske Faglige
Samorganisasjon

Europäischer Gewerkschaftsbund

*Prime Minister
You offered them - and the Employers -
meetings with the Foreign Secretary & Lord
Young. The employers accepted,
but the Trade Unions are standing on their dignity.*

Brussels, 19th November 1986

Mrs. Margaret THATCHER
Prime Minister
10, Downing Street
Westminster
LONDON W1

*CDP
20/11
R28*

*We shall have to write a considered
reply after the Council. In the meantime
perhaps I can sign a letter thanking them for
their thoughtful wishes.*

Dear Mrs. Thatcher,

It has become customary for the Heads of State or Prime Ministers holding the office of President of the Council of Ministers of the European Community to receive a delegation from the European Trade Union Confederation in order to listen to the ETUC's analysis and proposals.

Notwithstanding the differences of opinion which have emerged at times in the course of these talks, we have always appreciated their value since they have promoted mutual understanding - of the governments' rôle and of the concerns of the workers of Europe, which it is our duty to express. These concerns have centred on the employment situation for several years now.

At a time when acute unemployment and the disgrace of spreading poverty persist in our industrialised countries, it is all the more regrettable that you should have been unable to find the time to receive us in your capacity as President of the EC Council of Ministers.

We are writing to you to point out our main claims and proposals for action, which are placed in the context of a policy for economic development which is essential for stimulating employment growth.

Furthermore, in the context of the social dialogue prompted by the European Commission, we have issued a joint opinion with UNICE and the ECPE on the cooperative growth

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strategy for employment which was developed in the Commission's Annual Economic Report. The social dialogue is continuing and should lead to concrete results. At all events, as far as the ETUC is concerned, we are firmly resolved to achieve this. Yet, where social dialogue and, if possible, agreement between employers and trade unions at the European level are desirable, it is nonetheless the responsibility of the Commission and Council of Ministers to pass legislation whenever it is necessary for harmonising and improving social standards in the countries of the Community.

In this context, we wish to underline the need to elaborate a real European social programme which would be implemented in conjunction with the completion of the internal market. Indeed the urgent need for this European social dimension in the battle for employment and the role to be played by the Commission in promoting its creation have just been confirmed by a large majority in the European Parliament.

We wish to alert your attention to the fact that many of the Council's recent commitments have gone no further than statements on paper. Perhaps it would be useful to make a critical survey of the initiatives already taken so as to establish any discrepancy between intentions, realities and results. This is in fact what we requested at the last session of the Standing Committee on Employment. Under pressure from the British Chairman, we agreed to hold yet another general debate on the question of unemployment at that session, but we finally had to stress once again that it was imperative to carry out such a survey rather than to produce yet another resolution which would have no practical consequences. In our opinion, such lucidity is essential for deciding on any effective future action.

Precedence should be given in future action to measures to combat long-term unemployment, which is affecting young people and women in particular. It is up to the Commission - on your responsibility - to launch a large-scale European initiative to fight this curse.

Allow me in conclusion to point out the main lines of our proposals for employment:- action to launch major infrastructural projects of European interest, increase in public and private investments, reduction and re-organisation of working time, re-organisation of the labour market based on the regional and local structures of forward-looking employment planning, the creation of socially useful jobs, local employment initiatives, greater utilisation of social and structural funds for employment.

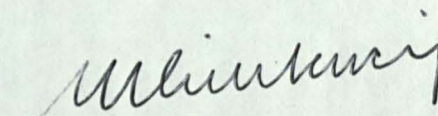
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The Single Act concluded in Luxembourg provides a sound basis for a more effective and a more dynamic policy for creating both the internal market and the social dimension. We urge you to use all of your influence to have that Act ratified by the British Parliament, should this not yet have been achieved, and to ensure that its interpretation is broad and constructive with a view to achieving the objective of "economic and social cohesion".

We furthermore emphatically endorse the appeal made to the Council of Ministers by the ETUC, UNICE and ECPE in the joint opinion mentioned above calling for prompt and practical action by that Council as a body with a view to achieving better growth of our economies and of employment.

We thank you for the attention which we trust you will devote to the present letter, and we remain,

Yours sincerely,


Mathias HINTERSCHEID
General Secretary