



10 DOWNING STREET

THE PRIME MINISTER

Dear Keith,

Thank you for your letter of 26 May 1981 about the interview I gave on Southern Television on 20 May.

I am grateful to you for drawing my attention to the Answer which you gave on 6 August of last year to Peggy Fenner's Written Question about the Royal Dockyards.

*Louisa
Payant*

Keith Speed, Esq., R.D., M.P.



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

26th May, 1981.

My Dear Prime Minister

I have been very disturbed to hear from a number of my constituents that in the interview with Brian Shallcross on Southern Television last week, you said that I gave the commitment to retain the four U.K. Dockyards, because I was a Kent M.P.. I frankly thought they must have been mistaken. However I rang Mr Shallcross and listened to the tape of your remarks and with reference to the dockyard commitment you said. " I do not know what commitment Keith gave and in what capacity. I imagine he gave it because he is a Kent M.P. ".

I regret you have been very badly misinformed on this matter, as I believe you have been badly misinformed on other Naval matters. The facts quite simply are that the dockyard study which had been set up under my chairmanship with a variety of members had unanimously proposed to the government that there was a need to retain the four home dockyards over the period covered by the study which was the next two decades. The caveat was entered that levels of employment in each dockyard would depend upon the success of each dockyard's management and their workforce in improving efficiency.

This recommendation and another recommendation relating to private capital was considered by a Cabinet Committee at the beginning of August last year, the Chairman was Keith Joseph and among others in attendance were Francis Pym, as my then own Secretary of State, Paul Channon representing the Civil Service Department, a number of other departmental Ministers, and the Deputy Under Secretary for the Royal Navy, Mr Alan Pritchard. The Committee agreed with the recommendation about the need to retain the four home dockyards and I was authorised on behalf of the Government to incorporate a suitable paragraph in the introduction to the Consultative Paper of the

Please reply to: Strood House, Rolvenden, Cranbrook, Kent TN17 4JJ

From Keith Speed R.D.M.P.,



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

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Dockyard Study Group and to arrange for the announcement to be made in reply to a written P.Q. I attach a photostat copy of the latter and you will see it is quite clear that this was in no way anything to do with my position as a Kent Member of Parliament, but was a government decision, announced to parliament, for which all of us in government, accepted collective responsibility.

I have warned John Nott on a number of occasions before my dismissal of this commitment and I am surprised that he had not made you or your staff aware of it. I believe now that the full facts are before you that you would obviously wish to put the record straight and I of course do not blame you personally for not having been properly briefed.

Finally, much un-necessary speculation and many peoples fears about their jobs can be set at rest if you would confirm that the collective decision we took together as a government less than ten months ago still stands on this matter.

*Yours ever
Keith*

The Rt. Hon Mrs Margaret Thatcher, M.P.,
10, Downing Street,
London SW1.