

PRIME MINISTER

MONDAY LUNCHESES

You will recall that Lord Young is very keen that you should have occasional contact with some of the more sympathetic editors and suggested inviting an editor along to perhaps every alternate Monday lunch. I know Bernard has some reservations about this, but I do think that informal and private social chats of this kind would have a great benefit.

As you know, Geoffrey Howe made considerable use of Chevening to entertain both Members of Parliament and editors and undoubtedly the coverage of the reshuffle has reflected this. Some of our supporters in Fleet Street do occasionally feel taken for granted and to have an editor in to the odd lunch would, I believe, produce considerable dividends. I would obviously talk to Bernard about which would be the most appropriate to invite, but one obvious candidate would be Nicholas Lloyd, whose excellent editorial yesterday I attach in case you have not already seen it.

Content in principle that we should occasionally invite a particular editor to a Monday lunch?

JHW  
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Yes - but I will discuss  
full procedural problems  
with Bernard  
mb

JOHN WHITTINGDALE

2.8.89

## Daily Express *Opinion*

# Now is the time for all good men to belt up

**S**ir Geoffrey doth protest too much. The former Foreign Secretary's parliamentary gofer, St Ives MP David Harris, issued an authorised statement yesterday denying that Sir Geoffrey has any intention of mounting a leadership challenge to Mrs Thatcher.

We stand by our story. We did not say Sir Geoffrey was personally involved. We simply exposed the plot being hatched by some of his supporters. Naturally Sir Geoffrey is now intensely irritated at being linked with such disloyalty and as a result, has been forced to offer his first public statement of unqualified support for the Prime Minister since the reshuffle.

### Team

It is perfectly clear, however, that his own response to being moved from the Foreign Office must have encouraged such foolishness from his more starry-eyed friends. Sir Geoffrey's apparently unshakeable belief that he has the political skill and appeal to lead the Tory Party and the country continues to lead him astray.

He is an intelligent, thoughtful and capable minister, but no more than that.

But he is born to be a member of the team rather than its captain

Worried Tory backbenchers were only too willing to fall for the Howe team line, totally unaware that Home Secretary Douglas Hurd actually wanted to leave his department and fancied being Leader of the Commons.

As the Government slipped ever deeper in the mid-term opinion polls, its backbenchers had been among the most insistent that Mrs Thatcher invigorate her Cabinet.

Yet no sooner had she done precisely that than those same MPs were grabbing any passing lobby correspondent to bemoan the way "poor Geoffrey" had been treated.

Had it not been for the unique appeal and abilities of Mrs Thatcher, many of those now sniping at her would still be gainfully employed outside Westminster.

*Ten years is a long time. But even the feeblest Tory memory should need no jogging about the achievements of the Thatcher Cabinets:-*

**THE** restoration of Britain's economic health and influence

**LOWER** taxes and a sharp

increase in individual prosperity

**THE** sale of council houses  
**RECORD** levels of home and share ownership

**MAJOR** expansion of small businesses and the number of self-employed

**UNPARALLELED** job creation

**LOWER** inflation (despite the current blip)

**GREATER** freedom of choice in health and education

**PRIVATISATION** of State-run monopolies and their removal from the taxpayers' backs

**CURBING** of trade union power

**THE** return of Britain to an

important role on the world stage

**REBATES** for Britain from the EEC budget and the beginning of reform in long running scandals like the Common Agriculture Policy

Does any Tory MP — indeed, does *anyone* — seriously believe that these have been achieved without the leadership of Margaret Thatcher?

Britain's revival, and the benefits to millions of Britons, would have been unthinkable without Mrs Thatcher. Tory MPs and Tory Ministers should stop whingeing and back the greatest asset they possess.