

Mufaxed to Chequer
20. 23.1.88.

8 Douro Place
London W8 5PH
Tel. 01-937-5177

Saturday A.M.

Dear Prime Minister,

The position seems to be getting steadily worse, so I am writing this urgent note as next week may be too late.

Yours ever,

David (Wofen).

NATIONAL HEALTH SERVICE

LISTENING TO RADIO LBC, NOT BBC, I HEARD THE COMMENTATOR SAY, (IN A REASONABLE AND FRIENDLY VOICE),

"OF COURSE, MRS. THATCHER CAN REPEAT HER VERSION OF 'CRISIS, WHAT CRISIS?' AS OFTEN AS SHE LIKES, BUT WE ALL KNOW THAT THERE IS A CRISIS IN THE HEALTH SERVICE". THE TONE OF VOICE WAS MATTER-OF-FACT: SHE KNEW NO LISTENER DISAGREED WITH HER. AND SHE WAS RIGHT.

I BELIEVE THAT WELL OVER 90% OF THE POPULATION NOW ARE CERTAIN, NOT JUST BEYOND REASONABLE DOUBT BUT BEYOND ANY DOUBT, THAT THERE IS A CRISIS IN THE NHS. WHEN YOU DENY, EXPLICITLY OR IMPLICITLY, THAT THERE IS A CRISIS, YOU DON'T CHANGE THEIR PERCEPTIONS OF THE NHS BY QUOTING STATISTICS ABOUT CHANGES SINCE 1979. YOU NOW ONLY DAMAGE THEIR PERCEPTION OF YOUR CREDIBILITY AND COMPETENCE. FOR THEY WANT, AS YOU SO RIGHTLY PERCEIVED, A GOVERNMENT WITH WHOM "THE NHS IS SAFE". IF THE HEADS OF THE ROYAL COLLEGES, THE NURSES, THE DOCTORS, THE AMBULANCEMEN, THE MEDIA, NEIL KINNOCK, JOHN BIFFIN, JILL KNIGHT, ET AL ARE TELLING THEM THE HEALTH SERVICE IS AT RISK, AND THEY ARE, THEN THE CONCLUSION IS OBVIOUS.

I BELIEVE YOU ARE NOW MORE AT RISK THAN WITH THE FALKLANDS OR WESTLAND. IN BOTH THOSE CRISES YOU WERE ABLE TO LOOK AT THE FACTS AND FORMULATE A STRATEGY TO DEAL WITH THE FACTS. YOU ARE NOW UNABLE TO FORMULATE A STRATEGY TO DEAL WITH A CRISIS WHICH YOU MAINTAIN DOES NOT EXIST.

I HAVE BEEN WORRIED ABOUT THE NHS SINCE THE SUMMER, AND FORESAW THE SERIOUSNESS OF THE INTERVENTION OF THE ROYAL COLLEGES. AS THE AMERICANS SAY, IT CHANGED THE GAME. I ADVISED THEN THAT THEY SHOULD BE "EMBRACED" AS A MEANS OF GETTING IMMEDIATE REMEDIAL ACTION, AND OPENING UP THE DEBATE ABOUT THE FUTURE OF HEALTH PROVISION AND FUNDING. THAT OPPORTUNITY HAS BEEN VIRTUALLY REJECTED. BUT THE REQUEST FOR A MEETING BY THE ROYAL COLLEGE OF NURSING COULD BE A REINSTATEMENT OF THIS LIFELINE. THERE IS A WAY OUT AND IT ONLY REQUIRES A LITTLE THOUGHT AS TO HOW TO PRESENT IT.

BUT IF YOU GO ON PANORAMA WITHOUT A STRATEGY TO DEAL WITH THE CRISIS, WITHOUT OF COURSE USING THAT WORD TO DESCRIBE IT, I FEAR THE WORST. YOU WILL INEVITABLY BE FORCED TO DENY THAT THERE IS A CRISIS, SOMETHING YOU HAVE JUST ABOUT AVOIDED SO FAR. YOU WILL PROBABLY BE FORCED TO DENY THE POSSIBILITY OF FURTHER FUNDING, WHICH YOU HAVE AGAIN JUST AVOIDED SO FAR. IT WILL BE A QUESTION OF "SAUVE QUI PEUT", AND I READ GEOFFREY HOWE'S SPEECH TODAY AS PUTTING HIMSELF IN A GOOD POSITION TO AUTHORISE AN "INQUIRY INTO THE NHS", AND SOME INTERIM FUNDING WHILE THE STUDY GOES ON.

I MAY, OF COURSE, BE WRONG: BUT I BELIEVE THAT THIS ADVICE IS THE MOST CRITICAL AND BEST I HAVE EVER OFFERED OR I WOULDN'T BE WRITING IT AT 2 A.M ON SATURDAY MORNING! AND IT REQUIRES ACTION ON SUNDAY, OR PANORAMA WILL ARRIVE BEFORE YOU HAVE FORMULATED A WAY TO DEAL WITH THE NHS WHICH WILL CALM THE FEARS OF THE GENERAL PUBLIC. MAKE NO MISTAKE, THE NHS IS VERY HIGH ON THEIR LIST OF EMOTIONAL PRIORITIES. AND THEY NOW FEAR IT IS NOT SAFE WITH YOU. ONLY ACTION, NOT P.M'S QUESTIONS STATISTICS, WILL REMOVE THAT FEAR.

COPY OF TEXT

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London
W8



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Yours ever,

David (Wolfson)