

General Secretary:
Trevor Clay
MPhil RGN RMN FRCN

20 Cavendish Square
London W1M 0AB
Telephone 01 409 3333
15 June 1989



Patrons:
Her Majesty the Queen
Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth
the Queen Mother
Her Royal Highness
the Princess Margaret
Countess of Snowdon

Rt Hon Margaret Thatcher MP.
10 Downing Street
London
SW1

Dear Prime Minister,

As you will know, in recent weeks I have written to you and to the Secretary of State about the NHS Policy Board and the deliberate exclusion of a nurse from its membership. I saw the Secretary of State yesterday and this decision was reaffirmed.

I reported these matters to the RCN Council this morning. The Council is extremely concerned that on the key body to shape health care policy nursing is not guaranteed a permanent voice and will be involved only as and when it is deemed to be appropriate. This suggests that a value judgement has been made about the nursing profession which is wholly at odds with your often voiced praise and admiration for the skills and worth of nurses.

It is difficult to understand or to appreciate the rationale underlying this decision. The RCN is not concerned that there should be nurse representation on the Policy Board simply for its own sake; nor is this a quest for parity of treatment with medical colleagues. Any determination of health policies will be prejudiced if nursing considerations, which are germane to health care, are not taken into account fully. The Government repeatedly states its commitment to the NHS and to the improvement of care for patients and clients. However valuable the experience of those from industry and commerce may be in assisting the future development of the NHS, their contribution needs to be informed and challenged by those with direct experience of health care if the Government's stated objectives are to be met.

In what could be a period of major change it is not reassuring, or conducive to the responsible debate the Government has requested about proposed changes in the NHS if a considerable body of skill, experience and knowledge is cast aside.

... /over

15 June 1989
Prime Minister

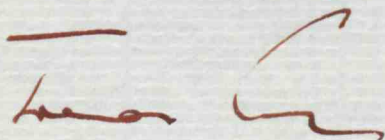
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The RCN regards this matter with the utmost seriousness. I ask you not to underestimate the strength of feeling amongst nurses nor to doubt that they will interpret this decision as a true reflection of the value placed on nursing by the Government.

The Council of the RCN thinks the Government has made a serious error of judgement and would welcome the opportunity to state its views to you personally. I hope that you will agree to meet with representatives of Council as soon as possible, and the Council has required me to write to you in these terms.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Your sincerely



Trevor Clay
General Secretary

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