



*Not health
file DW*

10 DOWNING STREET

THE PRIME MINISTER

10 September 1982

Dear Mr. Clay,

Thank you for your letter of 9 September. I share the concern of the Council of the Royal College of Nursing about any prospect of further industrial action in the Health Service which, as you say, would affect the care of patients. To take such action would be totally contrary to the traditions of the nursing service in this country, and I greatly hope that the nurses will not take part in it.

The Government's record does not support any contention of unfair treatment by the present Government. Between March, 1979 and this year's pay settlement date nurses pay had increased on average by 61 per cent before the latest offer, 12 per cent more than the increases in prices over the same period. Numbers of nursing and midwifery staff have increased by 41,000 between 1979 and 1981. The combined effect of this increase in numbers and the increase in pay, including a reduction of the standard working week from 40 hours to 37½ hours, has been to increase the nurses pay bill from under £1½ billion in March, 1979 to over £2½ billion in March, 1982, an increase of 82 per cent.

The offer made to the nurses is higher than that accepted by the other large groups of public service workers. I am convinced that it would not be right to ask the taxpayer to make even more money available. The way forward is for negotiations

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to be resumed through the normal machinery on the basis of the offer which the Government has made.

Yours sincerely,

Margaret Thatcher

Trevor Clay, Esq.

LPO



10 DOWNING STREET

Prime Minister

Mr. Clay's letter
reached us too late for me
to be able to clear the
attached reply with DHSS
tonight. If you are
content with the line, I will
clear it with DHSS in the
morning and re-submit if
they want to suggest any
amendments.

F.E.R.B.

9.9.



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

Royal College of Nursing

of the United Kingdom

Henrietta Place, London W1M 0AB
Tel: (01) 409 3333

Telegraphic address: Remedial London W1

9 September 1982

In reply please quote:

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

Dear Prime Minister,

The Council of the Royal College of Nursing of the United Kingdom meeting today is appalled at the prospect of further widespread damage to the National Health Service which will be caused by continuing and escalating industrial action. In the situation which is expected on the 22nd of September, adequate patient care cannot be guaranteed. The Council is disgusted at the Government's refusal to respond to the Rcn's most recent initiative following the ballot result, and the apparent lack of concern at the impending crisis. The Rcn Council believes that the recall of Parliament is imperative. It therefore seeks an urgent meeting with you to discuss the whole situation and the need for immediate Government action.

Yours sincerely,
Trevor Clay

Trevor Clay
General Secretary

SEP 9 1982

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