



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

✓ Press
✓ Lord Privy Seal
✓ AHSS
✓ Murdoch M'Leh.

cc: MA 11/10

The Office of the Leader of
the Opposition

11 October 1983

Dear Prime Minister,

Thank you for your letter of 7 October responding to my request for a debate in Government time on the Health Service. I must record my disappointment with your response.

I gather from your reply that you appear to think that your Government has a creditable record in Health Service matters. And yet you will not give Government time to presenting that record.

Your Secretary of State feels obliged - according to recent press reports - to address a meeting of Conservative MPs on the matter. But it seems that he would not, without the prompting of the Labour Opposition and the facility offered by an Opposition Day, be fulfilling the same obligation to the public.

As you are aware, because of the recent changes in procedure from Supply Days to Opposition Days, the Opposition has less flexibility in the timing of debates. We will, if there is no other means of securing a debate on the Health Service, use one of those days because it is an issue of critical importance to the country. But a Government which obviously does not have such severe constraints upon the Parliamentary time at its disposal should surely not require an Opposition to use up its restricted time. This is particularly true of an issue recognised by the Government itself to be of a significance that is so great as to require private explanations by Cabinet members.

With these factors in mind, I must ask you to reconsider your initial reply and arrange for Government time to be given to a Health Service debate within a week of the return of Parliament.

In view of the importance I attach to this matter, I am releasing this letter to the press.

Yours sincerely

Robert Killick

Rt Hon Margaret Thatcher MP



10 DOWNING STREET

PRIME MINISTER

Attached is a letter from Neil Kinnock returning to his request in Government time for a debate on the National Health Service. Since Mr. Kinnock is already aware of the answer he will get I suggest that you reply in rather cursory tone and a draft along these lines is attached. I gather that Mr. Kinnock at present intends to lead in the proposed debate. I see, however, no reason why this should alter your earlier view that we should not treat the debate as being a particularly special occasion and that, therefore, DHSS Ministers should respond to it.

12 October, 1983

