



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & SOCIAL SECURITY

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Telephone 01-407 5522

From the Secretary of State for Social Services

Miss Stovell PA

could you check that
DSS tell us in advance
1) Mr Fleisher
2) pm
who has announcement
is going to be made
DMS 22/3

The Rt Hon Viscount Whitelaw PC CH MC
Lord President of the Council
68 Whitehall
LONDON
SW1

IT
23/3
17 March 1984
1) Mr Fleisher
2) Prime Minister (2) : To note.

Dear Willie.

This closure decision could easily become a "cause célèbre."

CLOSURE OF THORNTON VIEW HOSPITAL, BRADFORD

DMS 19/3

I am writing to let you know about a difficult announcement which we propose to make shortly.

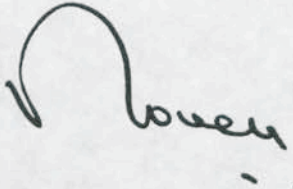
We have had the task of deciding whether to agree to Bradford Health Authority's proposals to close two hospitals - the Thornton View geriatric hospital and the Shipley GP and pre-convalescent hospital. There are strong service grounds for closing Thornton View: it is an old hill-top workhouse, difficult to reach and ill-suited to modern geriatric practice. Unfortunately one of the several wards which the Authority proposed to use in place of Thornton View was itself not of a good standard. We have, therefore, decided to agree to the closure of Thornton View but not to the use of the unsatisfactory ward. Shipley Hospital will be retained for outpatient use by the local GPs and its beds transferred to geriatric use in place of the ward proposed by the Authority.

Both closure proposals have attracted substantial opposition. In the case of Thornton View the opposition has been sustained, widespread and sometimes violent. At one stage the Chairman, Administrator and Information Officer of the Regional Health Authority were forcibly detained by a large deputation of opponents. Threatening telephone calls have been made. The car of the Chairman of Bradford Health Authority was recently vandalised, in its garage, at a protest. The hospital has been "occupied" since last August - preventing senior management gaining access - and was featured in a recent Labour Party Political Broadcast which showed Mr Meacher visiting the hospital. He is but one of a stream of well-known visitors to the hospital since the occupation began, including Messrs Kinnock, Benn, Livingstone, Scargill, Bickerstaffe, Vanessa Redgrave and Glenda Jackson.

L.R.

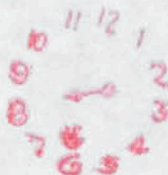
We intend that the run-down of Thornton View Hospital will be gradual as alternative accommodation is found for the patients. This will avoid the appalling prospect of a mass evacuation of some sixty elderly patients in the face of hostile opposition. In our statement we shall be stressing the improvements which have been and are to be made in services to the elderly, paying tribute to the devoted care given in the past to patients at Thornton View, and encouraging those staff to participate in the improvement of services. At local level the DHA Chairman has a carefully prepared presentation ready for the day of the announcement. This, we hope, will defuse the opposition, but we cannot be confident of this, and there could be strong reactions. Hence this letter to let you know what is afoot.

I am sending copies of this letter to the Prime Minister and to members of H.

Yours ever 

NORMAN FOWLER

19 JUN 1964



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① ~~Press Office~~
② ~~NBPM~~

PRIVY COUNCIL OFFICE

WHITEHALL, LONDON SW1A 2AT



*W/B
D/S*

26 March 1984

Dear Norman

*write AT
if not will request
if requested.*

Thank you for your letter of 17 March about the closure of Thornton View Hospital in Bradford.

I am grateful to you for letting me know of the forthcoming announcement, which is bound to cause some difficulty. I understand that your officials are keeping in close touch with the No 10 Press Office and will seek to ensure that the case for closure and for the use of the proposed alternative accommodation is presented as positively as possible.

I am sending copies of this letter to the Prime Minister, to members of H Committee and to Sir Robert Armstrong.

*John
Lester*

The Rt Hon Norman Fowler MP

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27 FEB 1984



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