PCR / INGHAM

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary 22 April 1985

The Prime Minister has seen Mr Clark's letter to London MPs. While this will help them to rebut the GLC's arguments, she has asked what can be done to tell all those who will have seen the GLC's advertisement that the statements in it are false. She has asked whether the COI should prepare another advertisement giving the facts.

x

I am copying this letter to John Ballard (Department of the Environment), and Steve Godber (Department of Health and Social Security).

(Andrew Turnbull)

Miss Judith Rutherford
Department of Employment

MR TURNBULL

We discussed x above.
It is simply not possible for the COI, or any Department, to respond to political advertising of this kind. To do so would legitimise the very practices Government hopes to outlaw, via the Widdecombe inquiry.
The answer to the GLC advert in present circumstances is for Departments to use their ingenuity in getting Ministers' space for articles in newspapers and on radio and TV.

29/4

Prime Minister (2) AT 19/4

cc BI

CCAO

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Parliamentary Under Secretary of State

It's no good telling us - we know. How does the Mgr. propose to tell all those people who read the advertisement - except by another advert for - CO1 giving the facts

The Rt Hon Mrs Margaret Thatcher MP
Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
LONDON SW1

18 April 1985

Dear Margaret

mt.

You may have seen the recent full page advertisements taken out by the GLC in a number of national newspapers and magazines, which highlight the many problems faced by the disabled. One of these advertisements, headlined "With 3½ Million Looking for Work, What are His Chances?", focuses on the difficulties disabled people have in finding and keeping employment.

While I welcome any initiative to promote more positive attitudes among employers towards disabled people, we must refute the implication that the GLC is alone in helping the disabled and it may be helpful if I remind you of the Government's vigorous commitment to, and record in promoting the employment of disabled people.

We are providing direct assistance through the Manpower Services Commission to place disabled people in employment and are doing all we can to encourage employers to give disabled people full and fair consideration in recruitment, training and promotion. During 1984/85, the Manpower Services Commission's specialist Disablement Resettlement Officers and other staff in Jobcentres are together estimated to have placed some 72,000 disabled people in work or onto the Community Programme. Moreover some 4,500 disabled people received direct financial or practical assistance from the Commission during the year - at a total cost of some £2.6 million - to help them to cope with specific problems at work. I am sure you will agree that these are substantial achievements.

The Prime Minister last November launched a new Code of Good Practice on the Employment of Disabled People which urges employers to adopt and put into practice positive policies. The Code is believed to be the first of its kind in Europe and has the full support of both the CBI and TUC and has already received a very favourable response from employers. To promote the Code we have set up a new Disablement Advisory Service, consisting of 62 specialist teams which advise employers about the assistance which is available to help them in employing disabled people. Already these teams have made some 17,000 visits to employers during 1984/85.

The Government's Fit for Work Award scheme provides recognition to those employers who have demonstrated an outstanding record in employing disabled people. The Prime Minister, Guest of Honour at last year's national reception for Award winners, expressed her appreciation of their achievements in this field. I myself make a point of presenting these awards to Employers personally whenever it is possible for me to do so.

The Government also recognises and supports the important role played by voluntary organisations in promoting the employment of disabled people. The Royal Association for Disability and Rehabilitation has organised a series of seminars aimed at potential employers of disabled people. Tony Newton, as Minister for the Disabled, spoke at the London conference earlier this week. At a similar conference in Manchester today I shall be announcing that the MSC will be making £½ million available in each of the next three years to voluntary organisations which can make a distinctive contribution to placing the disabled in work. I believe that this will lead to a continuing improvement in the breadth and variety of placing services available to disabled people.

You will also know of our very substantial and continuing commitment to sheltered employment and employment rehabilitation at a cost of some £90 million during 1984/85. We continue to look at ways of making both these programmes still more effective.

I hope this makes clear both my own and the Government's continuing commitment to help promote improvements in the position of diabled people in or seeking employment, and will help you to refute the kind of charges which are implicit in the GLC advertisements.

Yours ever

Alan

ALAN CLARK

(I am sending this letter to all Lords members – hence your inclusion!)

14 - 18s: KEY POINTS FOR STATEMENT

1. Government wishes to see establishment of two-year training scheme and is prepared to fund up to £150 million in 1986/87 and £310 million in 1987/88 - provided satisfactory scheme can be worked out.

2. Government has decided that SB entitlement for 16 and 17 year olds will be withdrawn. This reflects scheme's ability to provide training places for all unemployed who wish. Young people not in education, employment or training will be eligible for waiting allowance of half the training allowance, say, £13 per week.

3. Timing of withdrawal must be dependent on MSC's ability to deliver a 'guarantee' of a place on the scheme to all unemployed. MSC to consult CBI on timing.

4. Scheme must be cost effective. Therefore:

(a) employers should bear major part of extra costs. Indicate publicly Government's belief that employers should fund 60% of both first and second year allowance costs (perhaps £1,700);

(b) Mode B places should be limited to one year and Government announce public target of reducing ratio from 22% to, say, 15% of total places;

(c) no public commitment on level of allowance: matter for consultations. But emphasise relationship between scale of allowance and number of places that can be funded within resources (i.e. lower allowance, more places).