



# DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & SOCIAL SECURITY

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*From the Joint Parliamentary Under Secretary of State*

Michael Scholar Esq  
Private Secretary  
10 Downing Street

*12 October 1981*

*A type for mv.*  
*mv*  
*12/10*

*Dear Michael*

Tim Lankester wrote to Don Brereton on 25 September enclosing correspondence from the Secretary of the General Dental Practitioners Association. I now enclose a draft reply the Prime Minister may wish to use.

*Yours ever*  
*Mary McVerry*

MRS MARY McVERRY  
Private Secretary

Alan G. Oakes

## DRAFT REPLY TO THE GENERAL DENTAL PRACTITIONERS ASSOCIATION

Thank you for your letter of 21 September about the Doctors' and Dentists' Review Body and for the enclosed memorandum on the future of NHS General Dental Services.

I understand the disappointment of your Council at the Government's decision not to accept the Review Body's Report in full. I should like to reiterate the assurances given to you by Gerard Vaughan that we recognise the value of the Review Body system. The Government sees a fully independent Review Body as the best way to determine the pay of the professions. However, ever since the Review Body was set up some 20 years ago, it has been recognised that circumstances can arise in which the Government will be unable to accept its recommendations. This year the Review Body took national economic factors into account, but it still remains the case that <sup>the</sup> Government, and <sup>a government</sup> ~~they~~ alone, <sup>is</sup> ~~are~~ faced with the task of making the public expenditure sums add up. And we were convinced that there was no acceptable way of finding the money to implement the recommendations in full this year. I <sup>know</sup> ~~fully recognise~~ that reconciling the independence of the Review Body with strict cash limits has put the system under considerable strain this year. As Dr Vaughan mentioned, we are exploring ways of easing the problem for the future and this will require very careful consideration over the next few months.

I am sure you would not expect me to comment in detail on your note on the future of NHS General Dental Services but there are one or two issues I should like to touch on. First, you make the point that the formal channel between Government and the dental profession is through the British Dental Association and that your Council finds this unduly restrictive. I should like to stress that the arrangements for negotiation between the Health Departments and the dental profession are not set out in any agreed 'book of rules' but are largely based on convention and informal understandings. ~~In the Government's review,~~ <sup>in fact</sup> representation is <sup>a</sup> matter for the profession itself to decide. We would not <sup>touching that</sup> ~~consider it appropriate~~ <sup>what</sup> to intervene in ~~what~~ is an internal question for the different bodies representing dentists' interests.



Secondly, I do recognise the valuable contribution made by dentists to our health services. I should like to reassure you that this Government is committed to a mixed economy of NHS and private practice. The dentist's freedom to practise privately has been clearly recognised since the inception of the NHS and we would certainly not wish to see this changed.

Thirdly, in discussing the Eleventh Report of the Doctors and Dentists Review Body, you refer to the delayed implementation of the 1981/82 award. In fact a 6 per cent award on net pay has been made retrospectively to 1 April, although there has also been a deduction from dentists' expenses provision representing partial recovery of the payments above target average net income (TANI) in 1977/78 and 1978/79. In view of your concern about security for dentists, I should also say that from next year a new arrangement will apply whereby dentists' remuneration will be adjusted retrospectively to allow them to catch up for a year when they receive, on average, less than target income as well as allowing for recovery in other years of any payments above TANI.

Finally, I know that the Review Body welcomes comments from interested parties and I am sure they would be interested to receive a copy of your memorandum.

jfh

Nat Health

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25 September 1981

*JFH*  
I think the Prime Minister will need to  
reply herself to the enclosed letter from the  
Secretary of the General Dental Practitioners'  
Association. Could you please let us have a  
draft reply by Friday 9 October.

TPL

Don Brereton, Esq.,  
Department of Health and Social Security.



jfh

25 September 1981

In the Prime Minister's absence en route to the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting in Australia, I am writing to thank you for your letter of 21 September.

This is receiving attention and a reply will be sent to you as soon as possible.

TPL

A.G. Oakes, Esq.