



10 DOWNING STREET

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From the Principal Private Secretary

29 May 1986

I understand that you would like some material on the matter of the Prime Minister's shareholdings for Mr. Stanley's speech on Mr. Dalyell's motion. I now attach the text of a statement issued from Downing Street on 24 March together with a Hansard extract the following day.

If there is any further help that you need, please let me know.

(N.L. WICKS)

John Tesh, Esq.,
Ministry of Defence.

This Government set up an independent review body for nurses which the nursing profession wanted for years. We provided that and we were right to do so.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. Mr. Terry Fields asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 25 March.

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in this House I shall be having further meetings later today. This evening I hope to have an audience of Her Majesty the Queen.

Mr. Fields: Does the Prime Minister recall her words in the Budget debate on 19 April 1961 and her outright condemnation of share speculation? Do not those words ring hollow today in view of the arrogant disregard—*[Interruption.]*—of the conventions of this House by a Prime Minister abusing that office in her dealings for five years in undisclosed shares? Can we have an assurance that when the district auditors have finished investigating honest politicians in Liverpool and Lambeth they will open up the books of the Prime Minister?

Mr. Speaker: Order. First, that is a very long question, and secondly, I cannot easily hear it.

The Prime Minister: In reply to the hon. Gentleman—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. The Prime Minister heard the question.

The Prime Minister: I have scrupulously observed the long-standing convention governing the holding of shares by Ministers. These conventions are set out in a memorandum by the former Secretary of the Cabinet and that has been in the Library of the House since 1975. Under those conventions there is nothing which requires me, on assuming office, to dispose of my shares nor to require me to transfer them into a trust or into the name of investment managers.

Sir Peter Tapsell: Is it not a concept worthy of George Orwell that the only new idea that the official Opposition had during Budget week was to promise us all free burglar alarms, —

Mr. Speaker: Order. Questions must relate to the Prime Minister.

Sir Peter Tapsell: —particularly bearing in mind that the tax policies of the Labour party are designed to turn burglary itself into a nationalised industry?

The Prime Minister: I am sure my hon. Friend's question was very pertinent. My only comment on the Budget is that the Opposition were not prepared to condemn the reduction in the standard rate of income tax by one penny and yet were not prepared to vote for it.

Mr. Kinnock: I understand that the Foreign Office will not make a statement in the House today about the incident yesterday in the Gulf of Sidra. May I therefore ask the Prime Minister whether she agrees that her Government's response to the atrocities, to the attacks on British citizens

and to the United States proposal in January for economic sanctions against Libya has been a great deal more rational and responsible than the dangerous and destabilising attacks on Libya yesterday by American forces.

Can she further tell me what view her Government expressed in the United States when they were informed of its intention to carry out naval exercises in the Gulf of Sidra some weeks ago? Finally, are United Kingdom citizens in Libya being advised to take any additional precautions in the wake of yesterday's incidents?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman is referring to the Gulf of Sirte. Let me make it clear that United States ships and aircraft were operating in international waters and airspace and they have every right so to do. It is important that international waters and airspace be kept open and we support the United States right so to operate.

Mr. Kinnock: The rights of the United States navy to be in international waters are not in question in the House and certainly nobody could or should accept Gaddafi's definition of what are international waters in the Gulf of Sidra, which is the same place as the right hon. Lady mentioned, as she should know. What is in question is the United States judgment in exercising those rights. Does not she think that in view of the destabilising effect of the exchange it is appropriate for the British Prime Minister to express an opinion that is slightly more assertive than that which she has expressed so far?

The Prime Minister: I have expressed a clear opinion and shall express it again. It is important that international waters and airspace be kept open. The United States was operating in international waters and airspace and we support its right to operate that way. Its planes were attacked by missiles. The missiles did not hit. In pursuance of article 51 of the United Nations charter, the United States is entitled to act in self-defence against such attacks.

Mr. Fletcher: Will my right hon. Friend accept that only the Opposition Benches would suggest that her personal conduct requires any investigation? Will she also accept that the Conservative Benches and the country have every confidence in her personal integrity?

The Prime Minister: The rules can be read in the Library of the House. I made my position clear. When specific scandalous, scurrilous and totally false allegations were made outside the House I answered outside the House in meticulous detail to show that the allegations were completely unfounded and outrageous.

Q2. Mr. Wallace asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 25 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Wallace: Is the Prime Minister aware that I have received many representations from parents of children from two schools in my constituency—Symbister junior high in Shetland and St. Margaret's Hope in Orkney—regarding the state of those schools? One was described as dangerous and unsanitary and another as being a fire risk? Does she accept that for pupils to study day in and day out in such schools is as adverse to their education as any number of industrial disputes? How can she justify policies which allow our children to be educated in schools of such damaged fabric when so many people are unemployed, particularly in the construction industry?

The following statement was issued from No 10 Downing Street tonight on behalf of Mrs Thatcher:

"In 1971 Mrs Thatcher bought a small shareholding in BHP (Broken Hill Proprietary) which was registered in her own name. Between 1971 and 1986, through a series of rights issues, scrip issues, dividend issues and share splits, the holding was increased to its current level. Last year Mrs Thatcher made arrangements for her holdings of shares, including her holdings in BHP, to be transferred to a firm of investment managers with full powers to buy and sell shares without reference to her. From then onwards 1303 BHP shares were transferred to the nominees of the investment managers and the remaining 24 shares are in course of transfer to them. All the shares are still held on her behalf; none has been sold. "

24 March 1986