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1. Mr Cooper
2. Mr Gregson O/R
3. Mr Kemp
4. Mr Lovelock
5. Mr Bowman
6. Mr Ingram
7. Mr Hill
8. Mr Stow
9. Miss Cowton (F)

69/022

c. Sir P Wass
Mr Burns
Mr Ryrie
Mr Middleton
Mr Battishill
Mr Unwin

PS/IR
PS/CCE

CHANCELLOR

CC (without attachments)

Chief Secretary
Financial Secretary
Minister of State (C)
Minister of State (L)
Mr Ridley
Mr Cropper

BUDGET: LETTERS FROM PUBLIC

23/3

I have read the first 386 letters you have received from members of the public. This note gives a sketchy analysis.

2. 52% of the letters were critical or hostile. 24% were letters of congratulation and praise - sometimes really effusive. One cannot read too much into these figures: the remaining 24% could not be categorised (some for example just asked for clarification), and in any case the sample is of course unrepresentative of the general public.

3. The most common complaint was about petrol duty (mentioned 111 times). The second most common complaint was about increases in excise duties generally (43 times). And the third most frequent was the complaint that the dog license should have been increased: 29 times.

Incr. guess later after 6 April

4. Only 16 letters complained about no increase in personal allowances. A further 9 pointed out that the allowances would leave widows' pensions partly liable to tax.

Inc extra NICs would figure more prominently

5. 22 letters demanded immediate payment of the November increase for pensioners, and another 11 simply wanted a higher pension. 12 people thought child benefit should be reduced or abolished.

6. 17 people complained the Royal Family were being paid too much.

7. Only one letter brought up the Len Murray Question.

7/3

8/130 26/3

8. Only four people said they would switch their vote to the Social Democrats.

9. One person was convinced that your Budget Speech was a coded message you were reading out on behalf of the CIA.

10. I attach a small selection of letters for you to get the flavour of the response. The selection includes letters from people who seem to know you and from people who appear to be constituents.

GEORGE CARDONA
16 March 1981

69/015.

RESTRICTED

Mrs Bottomley

FMCS Note

Spoke to Talkies of Treasury [illegible] not to answer

Course fine, with Cttee. Provide some ammunition on the press. GB 20/3

CHANCELLOR

cc Chief Secretary
Financial Secretary
Minister of State (C)
Minister of State (L)
Mr Ridley
Mr Cropper
~~Mr~~ Battishill

BUDGET: LETTERS FROM THE PUBLIC

I have been keeping an eye on the letters arriving from the general public since my last note on this subject. There has not been any great difference in the proportions of letters complaining about petrol, etc., but there have been a few shifts of emphasis in this second week.

2. Rather more congratulatory letters are being received, and many of them praise your performance on "Question-Time". Also there is a growing minority of letters praising the petrol duty increase - usually on ecological grounds. There are a few letters from Labour and Liberal supporters who say they have never voted Conservative, and are unlikely ever to do so, but that they admire your courage in bringing in a harsh Budget. (I have of course excluded from this category the merely sarcastic!)

3. The proportion of letters calling for a higher dog license has gone up a little. Most of them want a £5 license; some want £50.

4. I have realised that I have not been counting a category that has turned out to be numerous: those who want sharply increased taxes on gambling. My impression is that there is absolutely no understanding (even among MPs) of the increases implemented last year. It would be useful if we could remind people of what we did in this area in the last Budget: Mr Battishill may be in a position to supply some telling figures.

GEORGE CARDONA
19 March 1981

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