

Top OF THE Box ^{Sir G. Howe MP}

7 March 1978

I am just writing to acknowledge your kind letter of March 6, enclosing a copy your trades union speech which I will of course make sure Mrs. Thatcher sees as soon as possible.

Richard Ryder
Private Office

The Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey Howe, GC MP

From: The Rt. Hon. Sir Geoffrey Howe, QC MP



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

6th March, 1978

Dear Margaret

I fancy I sent you some weeks ago a copy of the speech on trade unionism that I originally had it in mind to make by way of follow-up to my Swindon speech on that subject.

Since I know that you must by now be preparing your own speech for the Trade Union Conference next weekend, I am prompted to send you another copy in case you may wish to take any of the thoughts on board - not least in light of what is said in the page, of which I enclose a copy from the latest ORC Corporate Strategy Guide.

Obviously my own text was only a first draft and you will see some scribbled notes to suggest where I recognised the need for further changes. And equally obviously some of it is now slightly dated.

Even so the text might suggest a useful way of opening up discussion on this subject in a way that would enable us to capture the common ground indicated in the ORC Report.

Yours

The Rt. Hon. Margaret Thatcher MP

THE CLOSED SHOP

1. Attitudes to the closed shop can be summarised fairly easily. The vast majority of employees say they disapprove of the system, and relatively few see any benefits for people who are in a closed shop.
2. Despite this, the general consensus seems to be to accept closed or union shops - provided there are adequate safeguards and provided there is a genuine demand for them.
3. This mood of compromise is perhaps best exemplified in the 70% who agree that "there's nothing wrong with a closed shop if the vast majority of workers in a company or factory want to have one, and there are safeguards for those who do not".
4. An equally large majority believe there should be legislation to safeguard employees against either losing or not being able to get a job when a closed shop is set up.
5. If the worst comes to the worst, 72% also feel that employees "who lose their jobs or cannot get a job when a closed shop is set up" should be entitled to compensation payments.
6. Nearly 8 out of 10 think that the decision to have a closed shop should be based on a secret ballot of all workers - including non-union members.
7. Where a closed shop agreement has been made, most employees are in favour of exemptions for those with religious (77%) or political (69%) objections.
8. The "middle of the road" approach outlined above emerges clearly in the answers to another pair of questions. There is little support (30%) for making closed shops illegal "even if this causes strikes and disruption", and not much more (36%) for leaving things as they are "because changing them would cause strikes and disruption".