

Invitation that did not come

From Mr Edward Heath, MP for Bexley, Sidcup (Conservative)

Sir, In your leader today, October 7, you state: "Mr Heath has never been forgiven for refusing to join Mrs Thatcher's team". For six years I have remained silent about this and other accusations which have been sedulously fostered against me during this period. I propose to do so no longer.

Let me therefore state clearly for the record that at no time, either in opposition or in government, have I been invited to join Mrs Thatcher's "team".

At the meeting between Mrs Thatcher and myself at my home after the change of leadership I was offered no post in the shadow Cabinet. There is a witness to this conversation. I was asked to help in the referendum on British membership of the European Community. I did so by making more than 80 speeches up and down the country and a similar number of radio and television broadcasts.

After the General Election of 1979 it was clearly indicated to me that there was no question of my being offered a post in the Government. I later refused an invitation from the Prime Minister to become British Ambassador to Washington. It had already been reported in the press some days earlier that I had publicly told my constituents that, having been re-elected, I intended to remain in the House of Commons to represent them.

As your leader is based on the false statement I have quoted, it is important that the truth should be made known.

Yours sincerely,
EDWARD HEATH,
House of Commons.