

PRIME MINISTER

cc: Mr. Ingham

Lord Longford's Article for "The Universe"

I attach the text of Lord Longford's article about you for "The Universe". As you agreed, it draws on his interview with you unattributably.

The only paragraph which worries me is the third paragraph. There is nothing in Lord Longford's notes of his interview with you (Flag A) which justifies the second sentence; and it would be consistent with the notes to amend the fourth sentence in the way I have shown.

May I suggest these amendments to Lord Longford and say that otherwise you do not wish to object to this article?

*Yes please
me*

F.E.R.B.

24 February, 1983



10 DOWNING STREET

Mr. Ingham ^{Sl 26}
2

I agree with your
comment. The phrase
"extended it too far" is meant
to convey the sense that we
have tried to cover too many
people at the cost of discouraging
them from looking after themselves.

FERS

25.2.



10 DOWNING STREET

Note for the
file

Mr Butler

I have passed
these amendments
to Lord Longford's
Secretary.

OK.

FERS

I still think that para,
as amended, oversimplifies
his view, though one is no
point in trying to go far
further amendments.

I suspect that the PM would
not object to more and better
welfare for those in need if
we were creating the
whenever that. But that
complicates the agreement

Butler 25/2

No Prime Minister in this century has dominated the Cabinet in peace time to anything like the same extent as Mrs Thatcher. What is even more interesting is what she does with her domination. She is a true moralist politician - the first of that kind, on the highest level, since Gladstone. She is deliberately setting out to improve the moral standards of this country.

She has for some years, and long before the Falklands crisis, called for a return to the ancient virtues of self-help, self-discipline and self-sacrifice. No one questions her own powers of self-help and self-discipline. Anyone who renounces, as she has done, a quarter of her salary, must be listened to with respect on the subject of self-sacrifice. But when her moral convictions lead her into the field of social morality, they become extremely controversial. She leaves a clear impression that the principle of self-sacrifice has been distorted for many years, that our attempts to be our brother's keeper has^{VR} dragged down both our brother and ourselves into the pit; that the Welfare State in Britain has been carried forward too far and too fast.

Many of us consider that we in Britain in recent years have failed to develop our welfare provision, in which we were the pioneers, as fully as a number of European countries. Those who think like Mrs Thatcher probably think ^{that we} exactly ~~the opposite~~ ^{may have extended it to far.} Mrs Thatcher, on becoming Prime Minister, quoted from 10 Downing Street Saint Francis of Assisi's prayer for peace. Many of us cannot equate St Francis of Assisi's ideas of compassion with three million unemployed. But she herself utterly rejects the idea that anyone who ^{questions any aspect of} ~~interferes with~~ the Welfare State shows a lack of compassion towards the poor and disadvantaged. That issue will be fought out on a thousand platforms in the not distant future.

She is an exponent of a passionate patriotism. Patriotism has enjoyed a mixed up and down reputation over the centuries, since the Romans said Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori. We are all aware that Dr Johnson defined patriotism as 'the last refuge of a scoundrel'. Since the Falklands victory we are told that a 'new spirit of patriotism is abroad throughout the land'. Mr Peregrine Worsthorne, most eloquent of Sunday journalists, has referred to the 'almost tangible resurrection of Britain as a moral force, as a community with a proud idea of itself, for which many individuals were prepared to die'. That spirit whether or not widespread is incarnate in Margaret Thatcher.

We have heard at different times about various kinds of society -

the permissive society, the civilised society, the compassionate society, to name only three. My own label for her ideal society would be the deserving society. The England she would like to see is one where everyone is rewarded according to their merits, everyone that is, except those so afflicted that they need special assistance. She assumes that the vast majority of us will benefit by feeling 'it's up to me, not the State'. She believes that this will make us better people and will produce a better country. As someone who belongs to a different Party, I concede that she is a remarkable woman, not without greatness.

I told her on one occasion that I had been Personal Assistant to Sir William (later Lord) Beveridge, the 'father' of the Welfare State, though he didn't like that title. She insisted that she was a supporter of the original Beveridge ideas, but complained that the insurance principle by which benefits were paid for contributions had been submerged under the idea of free hand-outs for all. The idea of having to earn one's benefit had been largely superseded. Would Beveridge have agreed with her? Yes and no. He was never a socialist, but never a Conservative either.

She, a strong Conservative, has no desire to see the Social Services used as a re-distributive agency, except for those in real distress at the bottom.

She made appreciative reference to Churchill's phrase 'the safety net'. I, as a Labour person, am convinced on the other hand that income redistribution through the Social Services and other means is a Christian duty.

Many years ago Lord Lothian, later Ambassador to the United States, formulated the slogan 'patriotism is not enough' (Nurse Cavell), nor pacifism either'. There is no danger of Mrs Thatcher overdoing the pacifism. Patriotism must still be deemed a Christian virtue. I sat in Westminster Cathedral while the Pope pleaded for peace and the British forces were just beginning their main assault. But that does not provide an easy answer to the question whether the Falklands war was justified. We can be sure of this at least that whatever Mrs Thatcher does, she will do from moral conviction.

INTERVIEW WITH MRS THATCHER at NO.10 Downing Street October 15th 1982
3.15 - 5 p.m.

Mrs. Thatcher had read the draft extract from my book concerning her ^{and} ~~from~~ the fact that she had granted me an interview I had assumed that she did not think it too unfair. She did not comment on it except to say that I had made her out rather like a Methodist missionary. Having ~~been~~ brought up a Methodist she may not have minded this.

She tackled me quite severely about my suggestion, or implication, that anyone who interfered with the Welfare State showed a lack of compassion. In my draft, and in the House of Lords, I had spoken of her attachment to St. Francis. I sent her my book about him after she declaimed his prayer for peace on becoming Prime Minister. She ~~had written~~ ^{wrote} back to say that he had always been one of her favourite Saints. I was also aware, though I did not mention ^(it) that on one occasion last year she had said privately of compassion: 'It always seems to me so patronising a word'. A remark which could be understood to illustrate her sense of the dignity of fellow humans, her desire not to look down on them. One can't imagine that she would welcome pity directed towards herself. Now she 'ticked me off' in a friendly, intimate kind of way, in the manner of / ^{my} family governess, for suggesting that she herself was guilty of any lack of compassion towards the poor.

The argument ^{raged} vigorously. I said that I was there to listen rather than hold forth, but I obtained her permission to counter-attack on occasion which she seemed to enjoy (we are both fast talkers!). It happens that this morning (October 16th ¹⁹⁸²) Sir John Hoskins, her former Economic Advisor ², spells out at some length in The Times more than one of the main points she was making: 'As ever,

those who ^{question} question any aspect of the Welfare State are assumed to be less concerned about human suffering than those who defend it. No one is proposing that the state disowns responsibility for those who genuinely cannot help themselves. The question is whether the state should also provide large amounts of goods and services "free" for almost the entire ~~pop~~ population.

This is only partly a matter of economics. It is also, and perhaps more importantly, about the effect on attitudes and behaviour of transferring responsibilities to the state, from people who could perfectly well discharge those responsibilities for themselves. Has this transfer tended, at the margin, to prevent people from maturing into resourceful and independent individuals ?

When she argued on those lines yesterday I submitted that ~~those~~ ^{that} were ^{was} a middle ^{class,} / or upper class, point of view; that the great mass of the people could not help themselves to anything like the extent that the ^{welfare state} ~~working class~~ helped them. I did not add that when I was Chairman of the National Bank, with branches both in England and Ireland, the middle class officials of the Bank in Ireland suffered ^{markedly} ~~by~~ ^{pronouncedly} (at that time) as compared with their English counterparts because ~~the~~ ^a National Health Service was much more freely available to the latter.

But the points made by Sir John Hoskyns were not her only criticisms of the Welfare State. I told her that for three years I had been Personal Assistant to Sir William, later Lord, Beveridge when he produced a report that had much to do with the Welfare State's establishment. She insisted that she was a supporter of the original Beveridge ideas, but complained that the insurance principle, ~~under~~ ^{under} which benefits were paid in return for contributions, had been submerged under 'free handouts for all'. The idea of having to earn one's benefit had been largely superseded. I admitted that the

insurance principle had been fundamental to Beveridge's thinking, though he made large exceptions to it especially in regard to family allowances and, to a considerable extent, the proposed health service.

A deeper difference lurked behind our exchanges of which I think she was conscious. She, a strong Conservative, had no desire to see the Social Services used as a redistributive agency in favour of the poorer classes except for those in real distress at the bottom. She made appreciative reference to Churchill's phrase 'the safety net'. I, as a Labour person, am convinced on the other hand that income redistribution through the Social Services and otherwise is a Christian duty.

The talk with her cleared my mind here. When I demand compassion the words 'social justice' would somehow, though not always, be more appropriate. In regard to social justice Christians of different parties must necessarily differ.

She spoke about 'freedom' in more than one context. This Conservative Government, under her potent leadership, genuinely believes (but also considers it good political business) that the sphere of the State must be reduced to 'free' the individual, to give him or her a much wider range of choices.

I agreed with her insofar as more freedom can be given, ^{for instance} ~~e.g.~~ in education, without disrupting the State system. Religious freedom of choice is an instance, but not by any means the only one. But no one could seriously suggest that, again taking education as an example (very much her subject as she was a former ^{Education} Minister), that the great mass of the population ever had freedom to choose in the middle class sense, or could attain it under any system in the

forseeable future. I mentioned, incidentally, that her new ^{Party} ~~Ferdie~~ Mount, Personal Advisor was my nephew and had been Captain of the School at Eton. She spoke about him with obvious warmth. In this whole connection I did not make the ^{obvious} ~~obvious~~ point that many social services can be supplied much more cheaply and efficiently on a 'mass' scale.

Under the head of 'freedom' I reminded her that Lloyd George's original health insurance scheme (1911) had been objected to on just that ground ~~i.e.~~ because it was compulsory and therefore an interference with freedom. The same argument could be raised against any scheme of compulsory insurance. I reminded her of Sir Winston Churchill's defence of such schemes and his reference to the 'magic of averages'. But she seems determined (and no doubt we shall hear a lot of this from her Party) to make the State and high taxation the scapegoats. I ventured to point out ^{that:} 'you can't reduce State expenditure without someone losing'. She retorted that a great deal of money was being wasted in the Social Services at present. I could not gainsay her there though the point has been made repeatedly in past years without much practical consequence.

She deplored the heavy figures of unemployment. She said that the Coalition White Paper at the end of the war in which a 'high and stable level of employment' was postulated was still her Bible. I did not venture to ask how far her government's policies were responsible for the present figures. She placed much of the responsibility, though not by any means all of it, on the Trades Unions' demands for 'more and more'. I submitted that collective greed was just as manifest among the higher professional people and businessmen. She did not dissent and picked out for criticism the demands of the Chairmen of nationalised industries. I did not press the question further. ^{Wentley} The Heads of private business were not just as grasping.

Our whole discussion, I should mention, was conducted against ^{the background of} my acceptance (in the ^{draft} paper she had seen) that she was the first moralist ^{Prime Minister} ~~politician~~ in this century, even though I did not agree with many of her policies. I had also mentioned in the Lords and in the ^{my} draft paper my recognition that she herself had shown self-sacrifice by giving up a quarter of her salary. I told her that if I had not resigned from the Labour Cabinet in 1968 my deciding vote would have been given in favour of a reduction in Cabinet salaries, which would then have taken place. Why could ~~it~~ she ^{not} promote a general spirit of self-sacrifice without appearing to confine herself to expecting sacrifices from the Trades Unions? She seemed to turn it over in her mind. There was not time for me to raise the question of the family, which she appears to be devoting much attention to, and on which ^{Ferdus} ~~Ferdus~~ has recently published a book. I told her that I applauded her powerful support for the Atlantic system of defence. I did not raise the question of the Falklands.

OF MONETARISM SHE SAID:
YOU MEAN HONEST MONEY

Have I anything to ^{add} in retrospect? Just this. We have heard at different moments about various kinds of society: 'the permissive society', 'the civilised society', 'the compassionate society', to name

only three. My own label (not hers) for her society would be 'a deserving society'. The England she would like to see is one where everyone is rewarded according to their merits. Everyone, that is, except those so afflicted, avoidably or unavoidably, that they need special assistance. She assumes that the vast majority of us will benefit by feeling that 'It's up to me, not the state'. She believes that this will make us better people and will produce a better country. John Nott recently said of himself that he was 'a nineteenth century Liberal', and added, 'So is Margaret Thatcher'.

After my talk yesterday I feel that what ^{Nott} ~~he~~ said was as good a ^{description} ~~category~~ as any now in use. But I prefer my own picture of her as the champion of a deserving society.

Frank Lloyd

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'SEMPER ALIQUID NOVI'

Founded 1908

SIDGWICK & JACKSON
Limited
PUBLISHERS

Telegrams : Watergate, London
Telephones : 01-242 6081/2/3
Telex : 8952953 SIDJAK G
Place of Registration : London, England
Registered Number of Company : 100126



Registered Office:

1 Tavistock Chambers
Bloomsbury Way, London WC1A 2SG

22nd February 1983

Dear Mr. Buckler

I enclose the draft of a short article I have written about the Prime Minister for The Universe. They are anxious that I should let them have a version to which no exception is taken by you, by next Monday morning, February 28th. That would enable them to publish the article in next week's issue.

If there was any difficulty about securing clearance, it could be held over in the last resort for another week.

I will give you a ring on Thursday afternoon, to see how things are going. Perhaps you would leave word with your secretary, if you are not available.

You will notice that I have indicated that I have at least talked to Mrs Thatcher, but there is no suggestion that I ever had an interview.

I hope therefore that you will be able to 'pass' the article without you or the Prime Minister being in any way committed to the views expressed.

For my own use
Rach
Earl of Longford, KG. PC

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the Prime Minister
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Loyd

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