

15 May 1989

The Rt. Hon. Kenneth Clarke, QC, MP  
Secretary of State for Health  
Department of Health  
Richmond House  
79 Whitehall  
London SW1A 2NS

It is regrettable that yet again I have occasion to write to you on the matter of the membership of the NHS Policy Board as reported in an article by Nicholas Timmins in the Independent newspaper to-day. More specifically this time, on your reported exclusion of the Chief Nursing Officer from membership of the Board.

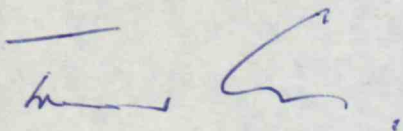
Whilst in your previous reply to me, you would not comment upon newspaper reports and speculation, I have it on good authority from a credible source that there is a degree of accuracy in the current reports. This is a matter which the RCN Council, the College Congress and the membership as a whole, view seriously not only from the position of professional nursing advice to the policy government board but also in relation to the position of British Nursing itself both nationally and internationally.

As Secretary of State for Health, you will be only too aware of the major health care issues facing the country in terms of the epidemiological and demographic needs of people together with the resource and manpower needs facing the service.

Having welcomed and indeed endorsed the Chief Nursing Officer's Strategy for Nursing yourself and recognising the central role of nursing to health care, it is inconsistent to exclude your Chief Nursing Officer from membership and thus the deliberations of your Policy Board which will itself consider amongst other issues, the strategy and objectives of the NHS.

In the midst of growing concern over the more business like structure being developed in the service, the exclusion of Chief Nurse from being part of policy decision can only be seen as a further widening of the chasm between commerce and caring within the NHS. It demonstrates a central lack of understanding on what the provision of the NHS in this country is all about.

Again, I would be glad if you would clarify the position and rationale for me in this matter.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Trevor Clay', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Trevor Clay  
General Secretary



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