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Rt Hon Margaret Thatcher MP
10 Downing Street
London SW1

25 September 1984

Prime Minister
lets hope this spirit
is matched in
other fields of
Community business -
like agriculture.

CD 25/9.

M. Thatcher

I have just returned from an Informal Council of Social Affairs Ministers in Dublin and I was so struck by the change of attitude round the table that I thought you might be interested in it. In my previous meetings I have been very much a lone voice warning of the cost of additional directives and of the need for our work to concentrate on practical ways in which we can help improve the employment position.

Up to now this has received little support from Ministers, who seemed happy enough to go along with Ivor Richards' as Commissioner with his concepts of yet more employment protection directives and similar measures. This time the atmosphere was quite different. The new French Minister - Madame Dubois - gave us a great lecture on the need in France to make substantial economies in their public health service, and the overall need to control public expenditure. The Irish Minister who is one of the Labour Party members of the coalition made it clear that social measures that added to employers costs were simply not acceptable at the present time, and the Italian Socialist Minister made a major plea on the importance of de-regulation and claimed that the black economy (which he estimated for Italy was now of the order of 30 per cent) was playing a valuable part in following through de-regulation and in this way bypassing the entrenched position of trade unions who were seeking to frustrate it.

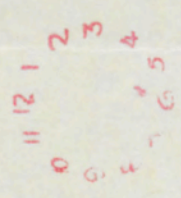
I thought you might be interested in these comments made in full session at our Council by three Socialist Ministers. Times have certainly changed!

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COORDINATOR