

Jerry WIGGIN
MP



26/3

JH
Ack 12/3

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

12 March 1985

I attach a copy of a letter the Prime Minister has received from Mr Jerry Wiggin MP concerning his constituent Mr E Abram.

I should be grateful if you could provide a draft reply for the Prime Minister's signature, to reach me by 26 March.

David Woodhead Esq
Ministry of Defence

Tim Flesher

do

From: Jerry Wiggin, T.D., M.P.



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

8th March, 1985. R9 400

Dear Prime Minister,

You will have received from my constituent, Mr. E. Abram, a letter (copy enclosed) - written from the heart.

In normal circumstances, this would be sent to the Department for a Private Secretary reply in due course. It sums up in Mr. Abram's own words a very serious situation that has developed concerning my constituents Westland Helicopters Limited. They are by far the largest single employer of labour in my constituency and, if they were to close their factory, I believe it would be very difficult to hold the seat in the Conservative interest.

The issue here is primarily one of timing. Our existing Wessex and Puma Aircraft will be outdated before any European collaborative project could replace them. To fill the gap will be good business for Westlands but, more importantly, it will provide a vital piece of equipment for the Armed Services. The additional benefit of generating sales abroad for the Westland 30 should also be considered. After all, some £40m of D.T.I. money is already in the project.

There is a major hurdle within the Ministry of Defence in that the Royal Air Force fly and operate these larger helicopters but do so entirely in support of the Army or, very occasionally, the Royal Navy. Since they do not have direct control, the Army is distrustful of the RAF and because the RAF do not use them for their own purposes, they do not give helicopters the necessary priority within their own budgets. You may be interested to learn that we have 2.7 helicopters for every 1000 men in the British Army while the Americans have no less than 14. The United States have 800 helicopters for each of their corps in Germany while we have 180.

It would be most helpful if you were able to take an interest in this important matter and, in any event, I hope I may have a copy of your reply to Mr. Abram. I have been in touch, of course, with Adam Butler for some time on this subject.

Yours ever

The Right Hon. Margaret Thatcher, M.P.
The Prime Minister.

Mr. E. Abram
6 Colombo Crescent
Coronation Estate
Weston-super-Mare
Avon BS23-4QA

27.2.85

The Prime Minister
Houses of Parliament
London.

Dear Prime Minister,

I am one of the 11,000 people employed by Westland Helicopters P.L.C. At the moment we have a job of work to do, but unfortunately because of your lack of foresight and support, we could all be on the dole by the end of the year.

We need the contract for the AST 404 and for the life of me I cannot understand why you even consider giving it to foreigners. You have asked us yourself to "Buy British" to help the British Workers. You have also stated that we are the finest Engineer's in the World, and I know we are. Why dont you have faith in Us as the "Only British Helicopter Manufacturer" who served you well during the Faulklands War. Without us you would have probably lost it.

Among the alternatives to our Helicopters, are the French Aerospatiale . Remember ? they sold the "Exocet" and the "Super Etendard" Plane to our enemies which killed hundreds of our boy's. With respect, only a fool - or a traitor would give them an order for our glorious R.A.F. The other an American Design made in Northern Ireland. What are you trying to do ? . Push the £ down further against the dollar. It may give a few more jobs to the Irish, but it would put a greater strain on the British Economy by putting my estimate of approximately 20,000 people out of work, here in Somerset and Avon alone. A lot of other smaller companies depend on "Westlands" surviving. What you must think of is - if there is another War ? . The spares required to keep the aircraft flying is what counts. We in Britain can do this. We hold our destiny in our own hands. You could not depend on receiving any spares from any other country. Not even Ireland, if the Americans did not agree with us.

Think again Mrs Thatcher - We need that order. If the world sees that you have the confidence to buy Westland Helicopters for our Mighty Forces, they will think to themselves, it must be the best, and so other countries will want to buy from us as well. Therefore giving us greater Exports.

Confidence is the word MAGGIE, you have said it often enough.

NOW PROVE IT.

Yours respectfully



c.c. Mr. H. Hesseltine
Sir Basil Blackwell

E. ABRAM