

SUBJECT
CONFIDENTIAL

cc master RM

File



bc: Mr. Mount

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

19 April, 1983

Dear Tony,

The Prime Minister took a meeting of the Family Policy Group at 0930 hours today. The Home Secretary, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Secretaries of State for Education and Science, Transport, Social Services, Employment and the Environment, the Lord Privy Seal, the Minister for Overseas Development, Mr. Macfarlane, Sir Robert Armstrong, Mr. Sparrow, Mr. Mount and Mr. Wasserman were also present.

In discussion of the papers by the Secretary of State for the Environment (FPG (83) 17) and by the Secretary of State for Education and Science (FPG (83) 18), the Group noted that there was already considerable dual use of community and school facilities; for example many local education authorities had a very good record. At the last meeting of the Group the Department of the Environment and the Department of Education and Science had been asked to consider how this record might be extended to all LEAs. The Secretary of State for the Environment now considered that a joint circular to local authorities on a right of access to community facilities and best practice was the approach most likely to be productive. The Secretary of State for Education and Science, however, considered that given the complexity of the education system further work was needed to establish the likely cost of and demand for greater dual use before a circular could be made effective.

Following a brief discussion the Prime Minister said that most of the Group favoured the issue of a joint circular to local authorities along the lines proposed by the Secretary of State for the Environment as soon as possible; the question of whether legislation was needed on a right of access to community facilities was not so urgent. The Secretary of State for the Environment should therefore consult the Secretary of State for Education and Science (and as necessary the Secretary of State for Employment) with a view to the resolution of the difficulties remaining in the way of a joint circular. When their discussions were completed they should report back to her.

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On the question of the provision of resources for the extended use of community facilities the Group agreed that the maximum possible use should be made of existing resources; where additional resources were required they should, if possible, be provided through the private sector. In this context the Group noted that the Department of the Environment's pound for pound initiative was going well and seemed to indicate that an approach along these lines was likely to prove productive. There was also a possibility that community programme resources might be used to extend the local use of sports facilities although such schemes might not necessarily meet the criteria set out by the Secretary of State for Employment for the proper use of programme funds.

More generally, the Group noted the initiatives by the Sports Minister to persuade private and public sector industry to open their facilities to the public. He was also pursuing the possibility of opening up the considerable facilities of universities and polytechnics. The Lord Privy Seal also reported that the Civil Service sports clubs were anxious to ensure that their facilities were used to the maximum practical extent.

Summing up this part of the discussion the Prime Minister said that it was clear that much was already being done to extend public access to private sports facilities and to make sport and recreation facilities available to a wider public. The Secretary of State for the Environment should prepare a note setting out the progress which had been achieved for a wide circulation amongst Ministers and Government backbenchers.

In discussion of his paper (FPG(83)16) the Secretary of State for Social Services said that there was a small number of self-help family centres already of which one of the most successful was at Botcherby in Carlisle. The existing centres provided a wide range of services including crisis and support counselling, care for very young children and facilities for the elderly. These centres were based on the concept of mutual help; there was some evidence that their successful operation could considerably reduce the number of referrals to the Social Services Department. The proposals set out in his paper were a modest attempt to stimulate the establishment of further centres. In discussion there was general agreement that family centres were potentially a promising means of combining support for families in trouble with other facilities such as simply a place for young mothers who would otherwise be isolated to meet. While, however, there was also agreement that the proposals in the paper offered a reasonable way of stimulating the expansion of such centres it was stressed that the emphasis should be overwhelmingly on support for voluntary activities. There was also some doubt as to whether the National Council of Voluntary Organisations was the best vehicle through which the scheme for ten regional family centre workers should operate.

Summing up this part of the discussion the Prime Minister said that the Group agreed to the proposals set out in FPG(83)16 provided that the additional family centres which it was intended to stimulate were overwhelmingly voluntary. She invited the Secretary of State for Social Services to take the scheme forward in consultation with the Home Secretary on its organisational details.

/Opening

Opening a discussion on the voluntary sector and in particular of his papers(FPG(83)13 and 14)and that by the Secretary of State for Social Services(FPG(83)15) the Home Secretary said that the Government's broad strategy towards the voluntary sector was to regard it as a supplement - or a complement - to public provision. Experience had proved that voluntary bodies discharging statutory services tended to be no more cost-effective than the public sector. The Group agreed nevertheless that voluntary organisations played a vital complementary role to that of the state and in this context it was suggested that more use could be made of business organisations such as Rotary Clubs and Womens Institutes which had local regional and national structures.

Summing up a short discussion the Prime Minister said that the Group endorsed the general principles of the Government's approach to the voluntary sector set out in FPG(83)13 subject to the reservations that the grants to voluntary bodies should not be presented as perpetual commitments and that training in the voluntary sector should not be seen as a state responsibility.

In discussion of finance of voluntary bodies the Group noted there had been a disturbing decline in the amount of giving by companies in recent years despite considerable concessions made by the Chancellor of the Exchequer. The Home Secretary had made a number of proposals in this area and the Chancellor of the Exchequer was considering these together with a proposal that tax relief should extend to single donations. Another more extensive reform of charity finance would therefore have to await a reform of charity law. While such a reform was attractive, if only to reduce the amount of administrative effort in the Charity Commission and Inland Revenue which was required to police charity law, its complexity had defied previous efforts to produce a simple solution. In particular any extension of charitable status would bring with it the danger of encouraging extremist political activity carried on under the cloak of apparently laudable voluntary effort; moreover a reform of charity law might subsequently be misused to bring into question the charitable status of independent schools.

Summing up this part of the discussion the Prime Minister said that the Chancellor of the Exchequer should now proceed to examine the proposals made by the Home Secretary to encourage giving to charities. He would also consider what administrative savings might be made in the administration of the law on charity finances. For the moment, therefore, a more general review of charity law could not take a high priority.

I am sending a copy of this letter to John Kerr (HM Treasury), Imogen Wilde (Department of Education and Science), Richard Bird (Department of Transport), Steve Godber (Department of Health and Social Security), Jonathan Spencer (Department of Industry), Barnaby Shaw (Department of Employment), David Edmonds (Department of the Environment), Mary Brown (Lord Privy Seal's Office), Pamela Hilton (Department of Overseas Development), Richard Hatfield (Cabinet Office), Mr. Sparrow and Mr. Wasserman (CPRS), and for information to Muir Russell (Scottish Office) and Adam Peat (Welsh Office) and Derek Hill(Northern Ireland Office).

A.R. Rawsthorne, Esq.,
Home Office

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Yours ever

Tom Furb

Miss Durbt

CONFIDENTIAL - Adv pt: Dr Holigat 14/4



10 DOWNING STREET

covering letter missing -
SS det to RM 6/2

SJS to see
C. PS/Mr Madgwick
Mrs Madgwick

From the Private Secretary

19 April, 1983
→ Mr Teasdale
Mr Strong
PP/MNT

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