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17 AUG 1982

*Dear Tim,*

FAMILY POLICY GROUP

Thank you for your letter of 20th July addressed to John Halliday.

... I attach a copy of a paper our Minister has prepared for the next meeting of the Group.

I am copying this letter to the recipients of yours.

*Yours,*

*Michael*

M. GALLAGHER  
Assistant Private Secretary

Tim Flesher Esq.

Renewing the Values of Society

No department is more heavily involved in, and directly concerned about, the values of society than the Home Office, or more aware of the diversity of attitudes that may exist. A high proportion of private members' Bills in this field (though not Abortion!) end up in our court, and we are only too well aware that on many of them there is simply not sufficient consensus to permit new legislation. Liquor licensing, Sunday trading, gambling are examples of areas where the laws are unsatisfactory but agreement on what should replace them are hard to come by.

And, of course, the whole area of 'law and order' not only imposes heavy responsibilities but also raises vast questions.

Yet that certainly does not mean that inertia is the answer: nor has it been. And interestingly enough it is very clear that in Parliament - and I believe in the country - the permissive climate of a decade or two ago is in certain respects in retreat. Our experience in the recent Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill was instructive. What started life as a virtually technical non-controversial measure designed to tidy up existing legislation ended with brand new provisions for controlling sex shops and pop festivals. These clearly reflected Parliament's desires and met with virtually no opposition: indeed the pressure was for tougher ingredients all the time.

This says something about society's values, and I believe that we have in fact been able to do a certain amount to reinforce them. Our pioneering in community service; the thrust of the Criminal Justice Bill; the creation of the Alcohol Research and Education Council out of the old Licensing Compensation Funds; and other pieces of Home Office

backed private Members' legislation in the fields of licensing laws and cinematograph licensing - all show that something is happening. And we can claim to have played a leading part (though very much with colleagues) in the good record of this Government in supporting the voluntary sector (described in detail in the paper recently circulated by the Lord President). Above all, of course, there is the major revitalisation now taking place of our traditional concept of policing by consent.

However, the group's concern is not about what has been done but about what should be done.

I am sure we are right to feel that we are working with the grain of society in emphasising family and personal responsibility, coupled with clear cut authority among those entitled to it. We know now from research that the family that lays down values and lives up to them is the family whose children are less likely to run into trouble. We know the difficulties that face one-parent families. We also know - from the Falklands but in many other ways - just how much latent guts and ability lie in our people, given a chance to express them. Anything that gives scope and opportunity for doing worthwhile things must be welcome - and the scope for doing worthwhile work must be shared by all. (It is wrong, for example, that some of the most famous hospitals in the country should apparently have the most bloody-minded unskilled staff).

Let me pick out one or two areas for development:

(1) Policing today - already referred to. A mass of work is going on in this field, often against odds. What has to be remembered is that the objective of effective consultation, collaboration with schools, beat policing, training, finding the right complaints system and so on is to tackle crime effectively

on the base of a solid partnership between police and community. What I think we sometimes overlook is the extent to which a lot of crime is, in its own terms, quite rational. It is still too rewarding and some of our social service arrangements make it too probable, (e.g. fortnightly Supplementary Benefit payments or the loss of flexibility in discretionary Supplementary Benefit grants).

(2) Race relations. What the great bulk of our minorities really want are good schools, law and order, good jobs - the things that all of us want. They do not expect preferential treatment, but they are entitled to fair treatment. Government should aim actively to bring this about. Of course, the Minorities want to preserve their cultural and religious freedoms - and we believe in freedom. But there is no need for us to accept that a society embodying different cultures has to become more and more fragmented in essentials, such as its common law, common language, common services, common loyalty (expressed among other things through the new British citizenship).

(3) The voluntary sector. I have referred to our achievements; but if the Chancellor can give still further tax assistance, payroll schemes can be developed and new classes of donors brought in that would be all to the good. And it is important in developing new programmes for the unemployed etc. to take the voluntary organisations along with us where we can.

(4) Education. I think this is crucial. As I argued at our last meeting, I believe that restoring the authority and confidence of teachers, especially heads, is vital - more so even than greater parental involvement, important though that is. (They need not conflict.) The indiscipline which plagues our schools owes a good deal to the lack of self-confidence among teachers. We should remember that though some teachers are

left-wing loonies, and that others are worn-out (and - for heads at least - in need of a scheme for graceful replacement where necessary), most are perfectly sensible and responsible and simply want a good lead. They want clear standards and not too much innovation. The job is an on-the-ground one but the lead - under the 1944 Act - comes from the centre. Above all again, schools must give every child the experience of doing something well.

School sport is an example. I never cease to be amazed at how inept this can be. For many London secondary school boys, sports periods consist of travelling for two periods to admittedly excellent playing fields, to have less than one period of sport, possibly supervised by an inexperienced teacher ("qualification" rates above skill in these matters).

We have already discussed the importance of dual use of facilities, but we really must make sure that our teenagers unleash their physical energies through games rather than bricks and petrol bombs.

But sport is only one thing. The great need in education is to give it a sense of hope and purpose, rather than a feeling of decline.

(5) Employment. The same applies here. Frankly in some areas (Merseyside, for example) I would spend the available money on private or public works (such as housing improvement) which quickly provide jobs (some skilled, some unskilled), even at the expense of MSC schemes. And we should not forget the plight of the long-term unemployed head of household in our concern to help the young.

The job-sharing scheme is right; but I believe there is a real case for setting up or backing some long-term studies and analysis of the future of employment - perhaps even an Institute of Employment Studies. The nature and ethic of work has a crucial bearing on the values of society - as of course our whole economic strategy since 1979 has sought to make clear.