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Manpower

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & SOCIAL SECURITY
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Telephone 01-407 5522
From the Secretary of State for Social Services

The Rt Hon James Prior MP
Secretary of State for Employment
Caxton House
Tothill Street
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SW1H 9NA

29 October 1980

Dear Jim,

DE/DHSS JOINT RAYNER SCRUTINY

Many thanks for your helpful letter of 20 October. I am sure that you are right that we should be prepared against the possibility of premature publicity, while doing the best we can to avoid it.

I would only suggest two minor modifications to the approach that you suggest. The first relates to simplification. There were rumours when this study was launched that the plot was to abolish unemployment benefit, and so simplify the system by having a means-tested provision only. Any reply which referred to the hope of simplifying the system might, despite the reference to the interests of claimants, be related back to these earlier rumours. I think we should say we hope the outcome will be to simplify administration in the interests of both claimants and staff. Second, I am not sure that the complexity of the scrutiny is in itself a very telling argument against publication of the report. I suggest that we say instead that the scrutiny involves looking in very considerable detail at the administrative arrangements for handling claims and paying benefits, and that it might not be appropriate to publish the report itself, but that we should certainly expect to publish a document based on the report.

If you are content with these slight changes of emphasis, our Officials can be instructed accordingly.

Copies of this letter go to the recipients of yours.

Yours
Patel

29 OCT 1980

