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From the Secretary of State for Social Services

MAP(OK)

MAP MS

Manpower

The Rt Hon Michael Heseltine MP
Secretary of State for the Environment
Department of the Environment
2 Marsham Street
London SW1

22 April 1981

Dear Michael,

SCRUTINY OF THE PAYMENT OF BENEFITS TO UNEMPLOYED PEOPLE

Thank you for copying to me your letter to Derek Rayner of 30 March 1981 on certain aspects of the scrutiny of the payment of benefits to people who are unemployed. I have now seen the responses from Number 10 and from Sir Derek.

I agree entirely with the point you make about the need to reconcile the aims of minimal disturbance of existing offices, which have a very important job to do under difficult circumstances, and maximum staff saving from improved efficiency.

The purpose of the detailed analysis which officials from the various Departments involved are presently undertaking is, of course, to determine how best to make progress.

On the possibility of seeking expert outside help in identifying all possible staff savings, I share the doubts that others have expressed. We could look at this when the present analysis has been completed, and if serious doubts persisted about whether the potential savings from any particular course had been properly identified, perhaps there might be a case for a further scrutiny by outsiders. There might conceivably be a case for independent experts to be involved in any experiments which are mounted. I make no advance judgement on the need for experiments, but it is by no means impossible that the best way of moving ahead with reasonable confidence will be by way of thoroughly testing one or two alternatives. The identified advantages and disadvantages of the various options are likely to be finely balanced.

Copies as for your letter.

Your
Patel

23 APR 1981

