



National  
Health

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SCOTTISH OFFICE  
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Prime Minister

POSSIBLE ENQUIRY INTO MEDICAL ETHICS

I have seen Norman Fowler's minutes of 20 February and 4 March to you and also Quintin Hailsham's letter of 25 February and Janet Young's minute of 4 March about the desirability of establishing a committee to enquire into issues being raised about in vitro fertilisation.

There are clearly a number of important and far-reaching issues now arising as a result of modern techniques being used to deal with fertility problems; and I would certainly support an enquiry into the various issues which arise in this field. I think it would be much too wide however to have a general enquiry into medical ethics at large (as might be implied by the headings of the various minutes and letters in this series of exchanges). I would, like Janet Young, take the view that any committee should be asked to concentrate on fairly specific issues or a definite field, for example what I have referred to above as the implications of modern techniques to deal with fertility problems.

Although no problems have arisen in this area in Scotland so far, I certainly think it desirable that Scotland should be represented on such a committee. I would therefore wish my Department to be associated with Norman Fowler's in the detailed consideration of the exact scope of the enquiry.

I am sending a copy of this minute to Norman Fowler and those to whom he copied his minute of 20 February.

Cy.

30 March 1982

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