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DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

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FROM THE SECRETARY OF STATE

F E R Butler Esq
Principal Private Secretary
10 Downing Street
London SW1

17 March 1983

Dear Robin,

FAMILY POLICY GROUP: MEETING ON 9 MARCH

I am writing at my Secretary of State's request about the record of the meeting of the Family Policy Group held on 9 March (your letter to Tony Rawsthorne of 10 March).

Sir Keith has asked me to say that sub-paragraph (g) on page 2 is a misrepresentation of perhaps what he said but certainly of reality. Mr Antony Jay has simply indicated that his film - which he would still like to make - would not reach the people who most need to understand.

I am copying this letter to the recipients of yours.

Yours sincerely,

Inogen Wilde

MRS I WILDE
Private Secretary

~~SUBJECT~~ CONFIDENTIAL

cc. Marks



Home Affairs Sub

be. Mount

Wasserman
(CPRS)

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Principal Private Secretary

10 March 1983

FAMILY POLICY GROUP

There was a meeting of the Family Policy Group on Wednesday, 9 March 1983 at 0900 hours. The Prime Minister was in the chair; the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Secretaries of State for the Home Department, Education and Science, Transport, Social Services, Industry, Employment and the Environment, the Lord Privy Seal, the Minister for Overseas Development, Sir Robert Armstrong, Mr. Sparrow, Mr. Mount and Mr. Wasserman were present.

The meeting considered memoranda by the Secretaries of State for Education and Science and for the Social Services and by the Central Policy Review Staff on preparations for parenthood. In discussion the following points were made:-

(a) This was an area in which it would be desirable to work through, and build on work already done by, voluntary organisations.

(b) Help was needed not just with preparation for parenthood but also with support in parenthood. The late Dr. Mia Pringle's proposal for self-help family centres might be worth further consideration. The National Children's Centre had been running a phone-in scheme on local radio where parents could ring in if they felt desperate: this facility might very well help parents who would be reassured by the protection of anonymity.

(c) The Home Secretary had been working on arrangements for bringing the probation service, the police, the social services and voluntary organisations into closer co-operation in dealing with the problems of unruly children and thus seeking to prevent crime. These arrangements would need to be tied in with anything which emerged from the present meeting.

(d) One of the difficulties was that children did not now perceive parents and teachers as standing together. It would be desirable to develop greater coherence of approach between parents, teachers and the social services in their attitude to the children in their charge. The Home Secretary's initiative would contribute to this.

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(e) Getting more owner-occupiers back into inner cities - as in the docklands area of London and as in Toxteth - would make a contribution to this problem.

(f) It was for examination whether school curricula could provide more opportunities for educating and influencing children in this area, not so much through specific courses as through general courses on health education and domestic science.

(g) Mr. Antony Jay was not now keen to embark on television films in this area, since he doubted whether they would reach the real problems.

The Prime Minister, summing up the discussion, said that there was general agreement that preparation for parenthood was not an appropriate subject for a major political and public campaign. The right course would be to work as much as possible through the voluntary organisations with specific schemes and proposals. The voluntary organisations would probably need some financial help in order to engage the necessary professional support. It was possible that funds already available through the Community Programme and other programmes could be used for these purposes. The proposals in the paper by the Secretary of State for Health and Social Services provided a useful starting point for further work.

① The meeting invited the Secretary of State for Social Services, in consultation with the Home Secretary and the Secretary of State for Education and Science, to bring forward an agreed plan of approach, concentrating on the voluntary organisations.

The meeting then turned to the paper by the Secretary of State for Education and Science on the use of school facilities outside school hours and the paper by the Secretary of State for the Environment on sport and recreation. In discussion there was general agreement upon the need for school premises to be more readily available outside school hours for evening activities of the kinds described in the papers. There were likely to be objections from head teachers and from school caretakers; it might be necessary to embark upon a public campaign to change attitudes on this matter. One way by which such a change might be brought about would be to create a right of access to publicly owned school premises out of school hours, subject to suitable conditions of use so as to protect the schools. It was not just a matter of premises: activities in schools outside school hours, particularly by children and young people, needed to be carried on under supervision, if they were to be beneficial and were to avoid the risk of damage to the schools. A public campaign might well bring forward volunteers who would be prepared to supervise such activities; one possible source of volunteers might be university students on vacation who found it difficult to get vacation jobs at present levels of unemployment.

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Nor was it only school facilities of which use might be made: industrial firms might be invited to make their sports grounds available, and Civil Service sports facilities might also be used.

The Prime Minister, summing up the discussion, said that there was general agreement upon the need to encourage and increase the use of school facilities, industrial and Civil Service sports grounds and other such facilities outside the hours when they would be used for their primary purposes, so as to provide centres for activities by children and young people. Such activities would need to be supervised; consideration would need to be given to how volunteers could be attracted to this kind of work. The discussion had identified various problems and blockages to developments of this kind. In further work attention should be concentrated on children and young people; the elderly had less priority for these purposes.

(2) The meeting invited the Secretaries of State for Education and Science and for the Environment to arrange for a working group to identify and analyse the problems and blockages that were inhibiting developments of the kind proposed and to make recommendations for how those problems and blockages might best be dealt with, and to report back to a further meeting of the Family Policy Group.

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), David Clark (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), Alex Galloway (Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster's Office), Pamela Hilton (Overseas Development Administration), Richard Hatfield (Cabinet Office), Gerry Spence (CPRS), and for information to Muir Russell (Scottish Office) and Adam Peat (Welsh Office).

R. B

A.R. Rawsthorne, Esq.,
Home Office.