

2 December 1983
Policy Unit

PRIME MINISTER

JOHN VAIZEY

John Vaizey wants to carry out a "new Beveridge" with the backing of the CPS and the IEA.

He does not seek public funds. What he wants from us is access to official material and perhaps some assistance with checking calculations. I think it would be easy enough to give him this much help without seeming to endorse whatever conclusions he may come to.

His other point is that it might be counter-productive to carry out such an exercise within government or by means of a Royal Commission. This may well be true. However, Norman Fowler has at present no intention of carrying out a review of health and social security on anything like such an ambitious scale.

The principal features of Beveridge were:

- (a) the he was a one-man enquiry; and
- (b) that he was responding to a general consensus at the time that health and social security schemes should be brought together and rationalised in a national framework.

There is, I think, no such consensus operating today about how the present system should be reformed. So the best thing to create a climate is for independent investigators like John to go ahead and make their own reports. I suggest that you might like to reply to John welcoming his proposal to carry out an independent enquiry into health and social security, and saying that the relevant government departments would of course be glad to make available the necessary statistical material to a researcher of such distinction.

John also says that he would like to come and see you with Hugh Thomas and discuss the proposal, which you might find helpful.

FERDINAND MOUNT

fm