

CONFIDENTIAL

1. J.F.  
2 NDPM 05 31/7

~~CONF.~~



PRIVY COUNCIL OFFICE  
WHITEHALL, LONDON SW1A 2AT

30 July 1985

*Dear Tony,*

**SOCIAL SECURITY REVIEW**

The Secretary of State for Social Services came yesterday to discuss with the Lord President the arrangements for consulting on the social security review. Also present were the Secretary of State for the Environment, the Lord Privy Seal, the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, the Minister of State for Social Security, and Bernard Ingham.

The discussion followed an earlier approach to the Lord President by Mr Fowler about whether it would be possible to take paid advertising in the press; the advertisements would, in a manifestly factual way, explain the nature of the proposals and invite comment on them. The conventions governing the use of paid publicity were set out in Sir Robert Armstrong's minute of 18 July (A085/1941) which had earlier been circulated under cover of Mr Fowler's note expanding on the scheme.

In discussion, Mr Fowler emphasised that the sole purpose of the scheme was to widen the coverage of the consultations. The evidence submitted by the Management and Personnel Office to the Widdicombe inquiry into local authorities' use of rate revenue for political advertising had not expressly covered the use of paid advertising for this purpose; and common sense suggested there could be no objection to it in principle. As against this, however, the scheme was thought to be unprecedented. Conventionally, a distinction had been drawn between unsolicited and solicited material. It would be highly undesirable even to appear to be stretching the conventions just at present, when the report of the Widdicombe inquiry was imminent. This might add to the undoubted difficulties of any legislation to implement recommendations from Widdicombe.

Tony Laurance Esq

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

It was suggested that one way of achieving the Social Services Secretary's objective while avoiding such difficulties would be to advertise the availability of the leaflet in such a way as to give more people the opportunity to comment, but without publicising the proposals themselves. After discussion it was agreed that Mr Fowler should, with advice from Mr Ingham, prepare a draft advertisement for which the Prime Minister's approval would be sought.

I am sending copies of this letter to the Private Secretaries of the Ministers present at the meeting, to Tim Flesher, Bernard Ingham and Richard Hatfield.

*Yours sincerely*  
*Joan.*

JOAN MACNAUGHTON  
Private Secretary

CONFIDENTIAL

