

PRIME MINISTER

FOOD

The attached minutes from the Social Services Secretary and the Minister for Agriculture reports possibly the silliest disagreement I have seen reported to <sup>you</sup> me for resolution. The story is this:-

Last year the Government accepted and endorsed a report by the Committee on Medical Aspects of Food Policy (COMA) that recommended reducing the intake of saturated fat in order to reduce heart disease. Subsequently the Social Services Secretary commissioned the Joint Advisory Committee on Nutrition Education (JACNE) to convert this guidance into practical recommendations for the general public. This guidance is now with the Government.

The problem is that in two respects the JACNE booklet goes slightly further than the Government wants in recommending a reduction in the intake of butter and meat. The points in dispute are at Flag A.

The difference of view is that the Social Services Secretary believes that the problems with the booklet are not significant enough to stop publication; the Minister of Agriculture is more worried. He thinks that the document goes further than current Government policy on these two points.

The other crucial factor is that the Government are now being accused of suppressing the report and in any event the British Nutrition Federation (one of the components of JACNE) will publish the booklet on Friday, ~~This is~~ if the Government are prepared to do so.

Two points seem to me relevant to the decision:-

- i) We cannot stop the booklet being published anyway;  
and

- ii) The nuances of drafting between what the Government wants and what JACNE want will only become significant if the Government makes a fuss about it.

In these circumstances I recommend that we accept the Secretary of State for Social Services advice and let publication go ahead, with instructions to MAFF to say on the points at issue that the JACNE advice goes slightly further than they would wish. I also suggest that I convey a certain amount of displeasure at being called upon to resolve such a trivial issue.

*The less said about it, the better  
rob.*

*TJ*

Tim Flesher

7 August 1985