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Switchboard 01-213 3000

Rt Hon Norman Fowler MP
 Secretary of State for Social Services
 Alexander Fleming House
 Elephant and Castle
 LONDON SE1 6BY

D Norman,

SOCIAL SECURITY OPERATIONAL STRATEGY

In replying to your further letter of 20 July I do not propose to rehearse again all the reservations I have previously expressed about the approach you have adopted to the operational strategy. I am bound to say, however, that your letter has done little to allay my fears.

I understand, of course, that at this stage you are asking for agreement to publish the proposals for consultation rather than for substantive decisions. Almost all the work done so far has been aimed at developing an extremely ambitious programme, which I believe carries equally high risks, while very little consideration has been given to a more modest alternative approach. This is strongly reflected in the consultative document which gives the clear impression that the Government favours the main proposals and intends to pursue them. I am concerned, therefore, that this favoured course is in danger of developing too great a momentum and that we shall find ourselves carried along by it without having given proper consideration to other, and possibly better, alternatives.

It was mainly for this reason that I suggested we should consider the issues collectively at this stage. I certainly am not proposing calling a halt to the work that has been done so far; rather that we should consider extending it to embrace an alternative approach more fully before we get too far down the road towards a commitment which we may later have reason to regret. Nor do I regard the issues as essentially technological: surely discussion should not be ruled out on this ground.

g/c sv 2
Soc Sec

Prime Minister:

You will recall that Mr Tebbit had major reservations about the DSS plan for a computerisation strategy.

5 August 1982
He continues to press his reservations. As you will see, he wants a collective discussion, presumably in H.

will require if required



However, having made my own position clear, if no other colleagues share my concerns and wish to press for a meeting, I shall not myself stand in the way of publication any longer.

Turning to the question of control of NUBS, as I said in my letter of 5 July, I do not believe that your suggestion of joint management goes to the heart of the issue. What I am concerned to bring about is coherent and efficient management structure for the benefit service operation as soon as possible rather than waiting for the time, probably in the 1990s when the operational strategy, as presently conceived, starts to have an impact on it. You will have seen a copy of Barney Hayhoe's letter to me of 27 July in which he suggests that if we cannot reach agreement between us when actual decisions of the strategy are taken, the matter might be handled as a 'machinery of government' question. As you know, this has now been outstanding since the Rayner report was published in March last year. I do not believe that there is any prospect of our being able to agree on this bilaterally either now or later and I think it would be right to acknowledge this and put the matter into the hands of the MPO now so that independent assessment can be made and a decision taken. I hope you will be able to agree that we should proceed on this basis.

I am sending copies of this letter to the recipients of the previous correspondence.

J. Norman



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & SOCIAL SECURITY

Alexander Fleming House, Elephant & Castle, London SE1 6BY

Telephone 01-407 5522

From the Secretary of State for Social Services

The Rt Hon Norman Tebbit MP
Secretary of State
Department of Employment
Caxton House
Tothill Street
London S W 1

17 August 1982

SOCIAL SECURITY OPERATIONAL STRATEGY

Thank you for your letter of 5 August explaining your continued reservations about the line which has been adopted in the draft Operational Strategy Working Paper.

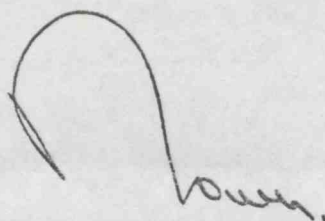
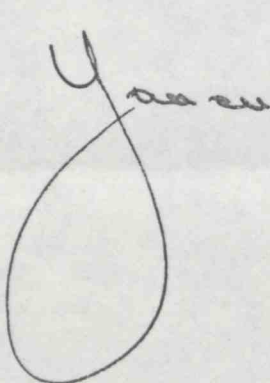
I am grateful to you for withdrawing your objection to early publication of this paper. I do take full note of your reservations, but feel the right course is to get the document out now so that we can test opinion on these difficult matters. The consultation period will of course allow for further discussion between our two Departments on the possibilities of alternative approaches. Since none of our other colleagues on H Committee has expressed any reservation about publication of the Working Paper, I propose - subject to Willie Whitelaw's agreement - to go ahead with publication on 8 September. My intention is to have a press briefing on that day, with Tony Newton. If you or one of your Ministerial colleagues would like to join us, I should be very pleased.

On the question of control of NUBS, Barney Hayhoe has pointed out that any proposal to change responsibilities for these installations must raise machinery of Government issues, which are the concern of Janet Young and the MPO. He evidently shares my view that it will not be easy to sort this out sensibly until we know where we are going on the strategy itself. The main thrust of our present proposals is towards greater integration of the services run by our two Departments, rather than more division of responsibility between them; and it was in that spirit that I suggested that we should emphasise the linkages by moving to a more formalised joint management of these computer installations. (In working practice, I understand, there is already a much closer degree of collaboration between our officials on this front than we have had before. Your people have been involved at every stage in recent discussions on the replacement of the computers over the next few years, while a joint working group has been set up on the new terminals for your offices, with the aim of giving them a worthwhile interrogation and enquiry service.)

I wonder, therefore, how far MPO will be able to take this in the interim, before we have a clearer idea what the future shape of our joint operational arrangements under the strategy is likely to be. Having said this, however, I have no objection to letting MPO look at the question now, if that is what you wish, and leaving it to them to judge how far it is possible to carry this matter forward at the present stage. I will ask my officials to open this up with MPO.

In conclusion, I feel I ought to say that though, as you point out, we have been in correspondence about the NUBS issue for a long time, it is not the case that there is any firm Rayner recommendation outstanding for a change of management. The Scrutiny Report was not conclusive on this issue, and recommended only that it should be studied further. Nor is there any immediate operational need for a change. The present system is undoubtedly operating very well so far as the present task is concerned, and we have just introduced taxation of unemployment benefit successfully and on time.

I am sending copies of this letter to the other recipients of the previous correspondence.



NORMAN FOWLER

18 AUG 1982



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DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & SOCIAL SECURITY

Alexander Fleming House, Elephant & Castle, London SE1 6BY

Telephone 01-407 5522

From the Secretary of State for Social Services

The Rt Hon William Whitelaw CH MC MP
Secretary of State for the Home Department
Home Office
50 Queen Anne's Gate
LONDON
SW1

Prime Minister:

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18/4

17 August 1982

Dear Willie.

SOCIAL SECURITY OPERATIONAL STRATEGY

In my letter to you of 15 June I sought your agreement to the publication of our Second Working Paper on A Strategy for Social Security Operations. As I emphasised, it is a consultative document, the purpose of publication being to enable us to discuss our ideas with outside experts and with all those who have a real interest in this field, including our staff, and trade unions.

As you will know from subsequent correspondence, Norman Tebbit saw certain difficulties about going ahead in the way I proposed, but in his letter to me of 5 August has said that he does not wish to press for a meeting to discuss his reservations if other colleagues are content for the document to be published.

Apart from Norman, no-one has been in touch with me to suggest that we ought to discuss the document at a meeting before publication, and I therefore now seek your authority to go ahead. If you are agreeable, I propose to publish on 8 September and ask for any comments to be made by 1 February. We can then as I have indicated in my letter to Norman (a copy of which I attach) assess the results of our consultation and see what is indeed the best way forward.

I am copying this letter to the recipients of the previous correspondence.

Yours faithfully,
Norman Fowler

NORMAN FOWLER

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CC J.V.

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QUEEN ANNE'S GATE
LONDON SW1H 9AT

21. August 1982

Dear Norman

SOCIAL SECURITY OPERATIONAL STRATEGY

in box 20/2

Thank you for your letter of 17 August.

As Norman Tebbit has withdrawn his objection to publication and our other colleagues are content, I agree that you should publish the consultative document as you propose.

I am copying this letter to the recipients of the previous correspondence.

Norman Fowler

The Rt. Hon. Norman Fowler, M.P.



Caxton House Tothill Street London SW1H 9NAF

Telephone Direct Line 01-213..... 6400

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Rt Hon Norman Fowler MP
Secretary of State
Department of Health and
Social Security
Alexander Fleming House
Elephant and Castle
LONDON SE1 6PY

27 August 1982

Dear Secretary of State

SOCIAL SECURITY OPERATIONAL STRATEGY

Thank you for your letter of 17 August. I have noted your intention to go ahead with publication of the Working Paper on 8 September and we are making arrangements, in parallel with yours, for details of the proposals to be made available both to our trade union side and to staff generally in the UBO.

I am grateful for your invitation to attend the Press Conference but, bearing in mind that my strictly Departmental interest accounts for only a small part of the full range covered by the Strategy, I think my presence would tend to put the issue somewhat out of perspective. Unfortunately David Waddington will be out of London and unavailable on that day but I am asking my officials to ensure that the Department sends a representative as an observer and to answer any factual questions that may arise on our side.

Finally, I am glad that you have agreed to enlist MPO's help in trying to resolve the question of management of NUBS and I understand that contact has already been made with them at official level. Clearly we shall have to wait to see what judgment they come to both on the merits of the case and on the timing of any change. In answer to your



final paragraph I would only say that it is not now, nor has it ever been, part of our case that the existing arrangements have broken down. What we do maintain, however, is that there is plenty of scope for doing the job better and more efficiently especially over the next few years of potentially valuable development.

I am sending copies of this letter to the other recipients of the previous correspondence.

(Approved by the Secretary of State
and signed in his absence)

Social Services

NBPM

MUS 8/9

CC JV

SM



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & SOCIAL SECURITY
Alexander Fleming House, Elephant & Castle, London SE1 6BY
Telephone 01-407 5522

From the Secretary of State for Social Services

J F Halliday Esq
Private Secretary
Home Secretary's Office
Queen Anne's Gate
LONDON SW1H 9AT

7 September 1982

Dear John,

SOCIAL SECURITY OPERATIONAL STRATEGY

Mr Whitelaw wrote to Mr Fowler on 21 August confirming that he had no objection to the plans to publicise the strategy document. I am afraid we have had to defer the publication date for one week; it will now be 15 September.

Copies to recipients of previous correspondence.

Yours ever,

Colin Phillips

C A H PHILLIPS
Private Secretary

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DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & SOCIAL SECURITY
Alexander Fleming House, Bloomsbury, London WC1E 7BT
Telephone 01-255 4000
From the Secretary of State for Social Services

Mr. J. H. Williams, Esq.
The Secretary of State
The Home Office
1, Whitehall, London SW1A 2AA

7/25/77

Post John

THE SECRETARY OF STATE
IN RESPONSE TO A QUESTION
ASKEED BY MR. J. H. WILLIAMS
ON 17 JULY 1977
THE SECRETARY OF STATE
HAS BEEN ADVISED THAT
HE HAS NO INFORMATION
AS TO THE CURRENT
STATUS OF THE
APPLICATION FOR
A GRANT OF
A PATENT FOR
THE INVENTION
OF A METHOD
FOR THE
TREATMENT
OF
CANCER
BY THE
USE OF
RADIOACTIVE
SUBSTANCES
IN THE
FORM OF
A
SOLUTION
OF
A
SALT
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A
RADIOACTIVE
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OF
SODIUM
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IN
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IODIDE
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TREATMENT
OF
CANCER
BY
THE
USE
OF
RADIOACTIVE
SUBSTANCES

Yours faithfully
Robert Phillips
Secretary of State