

Bennard puts up a powerful case. Shall

cc: Lord President
Chief Whip

1. MR WICKS
2. PRIME MINISTER

we have another

meeting to review the day's decisions?

N.L.W. 10.7

SINGLE PAYMENTS

I think I should record my concern about the proposal to make a statement about the curbing of the Single Payments abuse on Wednesday, July 16.

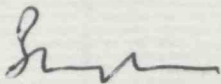
There is no doubt that an announcement that day - immediately before the by-election - could be presented as open and above board and honourable. There is equally no doubt that my clientele who believe it is the Government's job to win and not lose elections, would report that the Government is still politically incompetent.

There is still a chance they will say that if the announcement is made on Thursday, July 17 but the risk will have been reduced.

However, given the time factor, what I believe we need to do is:

1. decide to make the statement on Thursday;
2. arrange for the Sun, Express and Telegraph to carry a story that morning, in advance of the statement, saying the Government is to act swiftly to curb the growing abuse of taxpayers' money through the Supplementary Benefit single payments system; payments have nearly trebled since 1982 to £300m because of the way the welfare rights organisations are abusing the system, giving examples of what the money is being spent on - eg hot water bottle covers.

In short, I believe the right presentational course is to prepare the way with a positive story and then to make a statement at the most politically advantageous time, taking into account all the circumstances, on Thursday afternoon at circa 4pm.



BERNARD INGHAM

10 July 1986