

No
We can't have 7 priorities

PRIME MINISTER

However I think some of the proposals

are misconceived - especially for example

FAMILY POLICY GROUP

the first one we should not so

As you know, Ferdinand Mount and Gordon Wasserman of the CPRS have been thinking about the future of the Family Policy Group. Mr. Mount advises that from now on the Group should concern itself with major specific issues and with that in mind the CPRS have drafted the attached paper (Flag A) which sets out a programme of action which has been discussed at Official level in Departments. The paper assumes that the next meeting of the Group should consider a paper by the Chancellor of the Exchequer on the taxation of husband and wife. This was originally to have been ready by next week to enable it to be discussed at the meeting scheduled for next week. There was, however, a delay and on Mr. Mount's advice I have rescheduled that meeting for 30 November when the paper will be ready.

discuss the programme
write before it goes any further, not

Mr. Mount considers that the programme of work outlined in the CPRS paper is a sensible and realistic one. If you agree, therefore, I shall circulate it to the Group (with your endorsement) so as to encourage Departments to get on with the necessary work. The programme is of course neither exclusive nor absolute and if you agree my letter might therefore emphasise this.

Also attached is a note by Ferdinand Mount (Flag B) which is a note of guidance for officials on the purpose of the Group. I think this might help to set its work in context.

Do you agree that I should circulate both papers to members of the Group with your endorsement subject to the caveat that the Group remains open to new ideas or proposals, and that the next meeting of the Group should consider the Chancellor of the Exchequer's paper on taxation of husband and wife?

~~150~~

Circulate to the Group and arrange a meeting

5 November 1982

No further work unless we have

deducted not

Hy0957A

CONFIDENTIAL

To: MR FLESHER

5 November 1982

From: G J WASSERMAN

c Mr Mount

Family Policy Group

We spoke about the fact that the Chancellor of the Exchequer's paper on the Taxation of Husband and Wife, which we had been lead to believe would be ready for consideration by the Family Policy Group on 8 November, is now unlikely to be available until the end of the month and that the Secretary of State for Social Services' paper on The Elderly - also promised for 8 November - has apparently been delayed indefinitely. We agreed, with Mr Mount, that under these circumstances the best course was to postpone the next meeting of the Group until the Chancellor's paper (or that of the Secretary of State) was to hand. I understand that, on the advice of HM Treasury, you have fixed that meeting for 30 November at 5 p.m.

We agreed also that these delays raise more general questions about how to ensure that the initial momentum given to the Group by Mr Mount's paper on Renewing the Values of Society and the 10 September meeting is not lost. As you will see from the attached copy of the draft programme of action which we are proposing for the Group, there is no shortage of work for it to do. But the facts of Whitehall life are such that until our proposals have been approved by the Group, we are unable to put any effective pressure on Departments to devote scarce resources to preparing the papers which we propose the Group should consider. If, therefore, we were to wait until the next meeting of the Group for our programme of work to be approved, we should in effect be delaying the start of the substantive work of the Group for a further three weeks.

I therefore propose that the papers which we and No. 10 Policy Unit have prepared for the 8 November meeting should be circulated to the Group as soon as possible under cover of a letter from you indicating that the Prime Minister has approved them and that, subject to the views of colleagues, she would like the work on the 7 priority themes described in Appendices A-G to be put in hand straightaway.

A draft letter for your signature is attached.

GW

Draft letter from Mr Tim Flesher to Mr John Halliday (Home Office)

Copied to the Private Secretaries of the other members of the Family Policy Group.

As you know, the meeting of the Family Policy Group planned for the afternoon of Wednesday, 10 November has now been postponed until 30 November at 5 p.m. This will ensure that the Group has before it at that meeting the paper by the Chancellor of the Exchequer on the Taxation of Husband and Wife.

In the meantime, members of the Group will wish to have copies of the enclosed papers by the No. 10 Policy Unit and the CPRS. The former, FPG(82) 1, describes the objectives and scope of the Group; the latter, FPG(82) 2, makes proposals for an initial programme of work. The Prime Minister has approved both of these and has asked that, subject to the views of colleagues, the work proposed in Appendices A-G to the CPRS paper be put in hand straightaway.

A

FPG(82) 2

5 November 1982

COPY NO

FAMILY POLICY GROUP

PROPOSALS FOR A PROGRAMME OF WORK

Note by the Central Policy Review Staff

1. The aims and objectives of the Family Policy Group are described in the paper circulated by the No 10 Policy Unit (FPG(82) 1). This note makes proposals for a programme of work in accordance with these objectives.
2. At the end of the meeting of the Group held on 10 September, the Prime Minister asked the CPRS to produce from the papers for the meeting a comprehensive list of proposals for action. This was circulated to members of the Group on 30 September under cover of a letter from the Private Secretary to the Head of the CPRS. The Prime Minister subsequently asked the CPRS to draw up a draft programme of work for the Group based on the list but focussing on a more limited number of issues.
3. After consulting the Departments concerned, the CPRS has consolidated the range of proposals in the summary list of 30 September into a number of themes (Annex 1). We suggest that seven of these merit priority treatment and recommend that they should be discussed at a series of meetings to be held as soon as practicable. We have identified also a "reserve" list of themes which we believe should be followed up separately by the Ministers concerned and perhaps discussed in a second series of meetings. Appendices A-G discuss the main issues raised by each priority theme; the other themes are described more briefly at Appendix H.
4. The appendices suggest, where appropriate, the particular aspects of each theme which might be the subject of papers for the Group, and which member of the Group might take the lead in preparing these papers. (Members are asked to consult Treasury colleagues about any papers which may have significant implications for public expenditure.)

5. The Group is invited:

(a) to endorse the list of priority themes at Annex 1, and

(b) to agree that these themes should be tackled as proposed in Appendices A-G.

Cabinet Office

5 November 1982

PROPOSED PROGRAMME OF WORK

A. Priority Themes

It is proposed that the Group should begin its work by considering papers on the following themes, each of which is described in an Appendix:

Personal Taxation and Benefits	(Appendix A)
The Elderly	(Appendix B)
Individualism in the Economic Sphere ?	(Appendix C)
Children and Schools	(Appendix D)
Meeting Social Needs through Voluntary Action	(Appendix E)
The Face of Government	(Appendix F)
Professionals and the Individual	(Appendix G)

B. "Reserve" themes

It is proposed that the following themes should be followed up by the Ministers directly concerned and perhaps discussed by the Group in a second series of meetings. Each is described briefly in Appendix H.

- Reducing Crime through a Strengthened Sense of Community Responsibility
- Housing
- Racial Equality of Opportunity

PERSONAL TAXATION AND BENEFITS

The aim of all the issues collected under this theme is to identify changes in the system of personal taxation and benefits which would (a) help families with children and (b) encourage individuals and families to be more self-reliant.

The Group may wish to begin its work on this theme by considering the Chancellor of the Exchequer's proposals for taxation of husband and wife. A separate discussion might cover family support for the elderly (see Appendix B). Other main issues which might be considered under this theme include the following:

(a) Supporting families with children

Is the tax/benefit system sufficiently orientated towards families? Areas to be considered include the tax treatment of working and non-working wives, and the account which the system takes of the cost of children, both in general and for working mothers and widows in particular. Possible options include improved child benefit or a new second tier means-tested benefit. Factors to be considered include the effect on work incentives (both the unemployment and poverty traps). (Papers from GH, NF, FM)

(b) Self-reliance

i. What more can be done to encourage families - in the widest sense - to reassume responsibilities taken on by the state eg responsibility for disabled (and elderly - see Appendix B) family members, unemployed 16 year olds. (Paper from NF with GH)

ii. Do present policies for supporting single parents strike the right balance between ensuring adequate child support to prevent poverty; and encouraging responsible and self-reliant behaviour by parents? (While not highlighted in previous correspondence, single parents are one of fastest growing groups of those dependent on the state.) (Paper from NF)

THE ELDERLY

This theme is concerned with finding ways in which the elderly can be helped, particularly by their families, to live full and happy lives in the community with minimum dependence upon the state. These issues must be considered against the background of the projected sharp increase during the rest of this century of the number of those who are over 75 years of age and of the likely demands which, under present policies, this shift in the age structure of the population is likely to make on state-provided institutional care.

The Group might examine the scope for helping the elderly and their families in each of the following 4 areas and then consider the balance between them:

i. Fiscal help

Should benefits or tax allowances be adjusted to reward families who look after elderly relatives? How many families not now looking after elderly relatives might do so by this means? (Paper from NF)

ii. Services

The elderly are supported in the community by a wide range of services, supplied by local authority social service departments, by voluntary organisations and by the private sector. Is the balance of services right? In particular, should more be done to assist families to care for elderly relatives (eg community nurses, home helps) and to give families a break from their caring responsibilities (eg day care, temporary accommodation for an elderly relative while the family takes a holiday)? (Paper from NF)

iii. Housing

The most desirable housing situation will vary depending on the circumstances and preferences of the elderly and their families (eg living in same home, 'granny flat' extension, living nearby). Can families be helped to achieve their desired situation (eg through home alteration grants, more flexible use of public housing stock)? Can the elderly without

families be supported in the community (eg by special forms of housing, including sheltered housing provided not only by the public sector and housing associations but also by private developers)? Despite progress in these areas, some obstacles may remain (eg private developers and housing authorities reluctant to provide special housing which could prove difficult to let or sell later; difficulties of private developers in gaining planning permission; elderly people anxious about leaving existing home and confused about the range of available options.) (Paper from NF)

iv. Community

How can the elderly be encouraged to play an active part in the life of the community to benefit of both (eg adopt-a-granny schemes)? How can individuals other than their family be encouraged to help elderly people (eg good neighbour campaigns)? (Papers from NF, KJ)

INDIVIDUALISM IN THE ECONOMIC SPHERE

This theme is concerned with a wide range of proposals designed to encourage individuals to take more responsibility for securing their own jobs and incomes.

Several of the issues have been frequently discussed in other contexts eg MISC 14. Among the issues which the Family Policy Group might consider under this theme are the following:

(a) Responsible behaviour among employees

Union matters are being dealt with outside the Group, while work incentives are included for discussion with tax and benefits issues (Appendix A). This leaves

- i. incentives for profit-sharing and other means of encouraging involvement of individual employees. (Papers from GH, NT)
- ii. ways of encouraging public sector organisations to create shorter and clearer lines of command for man management. (Paper from FM)

(b) Encouraging self employment and small business

Tax and other measures to help new, small and family businesses are kept under continuous review. The Group might wish to focus on:

- i. how to make it easier for the unemployed to start businesses and co-operatives. (Papers from NT, GH, PJ)
- ii. how to encourage a culture more conducive to business, risk taking and wealth creation. In relation to young people's education, this could include teaching business skills and providing work experience with small traders. (Papers from PJ, KJ)

(c) Savings and pensions

Banks are already doing much to encourage the "unbanked" to bank and to encourage young people to save. The Group might, however, examine:

- i. whether the treatment of capital for supplementary benefit purposes unduly discourages prudent financial behaviour. (Paper from NF)
- ii. whether better disclosure of their accounts by pension funds would encourage more active member involvement in the management of these funds. (Paper from CPRS)
- iii. how individuals can be encouraged to assume more responsibility for their own pension arrangements. (Paper from CPRS)

APPENDIX DCHILDREN AND SCHOOLS

This theme is concerned with examining ways of encouraging the development of children, the country's major resource of the future, into self-reliant, responsible, capable, enterprising and fulfilled adults. The main issues which the Group might consider are the following:

(a) Influences on children

Consideration of this theme might begin with a survey of the existing literature to serve as a backcloth to action-oriented work. Objectives of the study:

- Identify characteristics of behaviour and attitude which Government might legitimately hope to see adults possess or, conversely, avoid; eg ability to run one's own life, regard for property and people, tolerance of different social and racial groups, expectations of life, attitudes to work.
- Identify major influences on children; eg parents, schools and teachers, peers, the media.
- Assess correlation between influences in childhood and characteristics in later life. (Paper from CPRS with contributions from Departments concerned).

(b) Schools: preparation for the modern world

i. Increasing parental choice

- education voucher system to make parental choice of maintained schools more effective and facilitate the setting up of schools by parents. (Paper from KJ)
- more parental involvement in schools, eg parent governors. (Paper from KJ)

ii. Gearing curriculum to modern needs

- preparing for work by securing higher standards over a broad spectrum including literacy, numeracy, reasoning ability and understanding of basic values of society. (Paper from KJ)
- preparation at school (and elsewhere) for marriage and parenthood. (Papers from KJ (already circulated) and NF)

iii. Maintaining discipline and authority to secure (i) and (ii) above.

- classroom management, including staff college training of head teachers, education officers and others. (Paper from KJ)
- giving head teachers powers to enable them to strengthen their authority, eg power to dismiss teachers and to hire teachers only on short term contracts. This subject is linked to delegation of power in the work place (Appendix C). (Paper from KJ)
- truancy - examination of causes; possible correlation with delinquency and vandalism; cures. (Papers from KJ, WW)

In the light of the above studies, the Group might consider how the relationship between the school and the family can be adapted to foster the capacity to cope with the modern world at work and at home.

*This is much too broad a programme
 of work - it will
 get nowhere*

MEETING SOCIAL NEEDS THROUGH VOLUNTARY ACTION

One of the clearest signs of a society in which individuals are prepared and able to take care of themselves and their families is the existence of a vigorous voluntary sector. The Group might consider how best to encourage voluntary effort to meet social needs, either as a complement to state-provided services, or as an alternative to them. Among the issues for consideration are the following:

- (a) What is the scope for, and implications of, a major extension of voluntary sector activity aimed at meeting social needs? What parts of the voluntary sector (eg bodies relying mainly on paid staff, mainly on volunteers, or self-help/mutual-aid groups, etc) would be involved? How can an increase in voluntary sector activity and charitable giving best be stimulated? Should this increased activity be aimed primarily at supplementing "State-provided" services or at offering alternatives to them? Should the emphasis in future be more on bodies making substantial use of volunteers or on bodies relying mainly on paid workers? (Paper from WW)
- (b) Can voluntary financial contributions be significantly increased, eg by changes in the tax system (such as making charitable donations deductible for tax purposes, repealing provisions under which close company covenants are apportioned among participants) or by encouraging employers to deduct charitable contributions at source? Has experience in other countries anything to teach us? Does the existing legislation on charities constrain the growth of new forms of voluntary action, eg community enterprises? (Paper from WW)
- (c) How can the close involvement of the private business sector in the well-being of the local community be further encouraged? Is enough being done by shared cost schemes, local campaigns and initiatives to encourage enterprise, community service and environmental improvement? Who should take the lead?
- (d) Can schools and their recreation facilities be open outside school hours as a resource for sport, play etc? (Paper from KJ) Are there non educational public facilities which can be used in this way? (Paper from MH)
- (e) Can more use be made of surrogate families, eg "homeline", "homestart" and other voluntary schemes? (Paper from NF)

THE FACE OF GOVERNMENT

The aim of the study proposed under this theme is to ensure that when government come into direct contact with the citizen it does so in ways which encourage mutual respect and diminish people's sense of alienation.

No matter how much it may be possible to reduce the role of the state in people's lives, there will always be some functions performed by government which involve direct contact with the citizen. This contact raises issues of concern at two levels. First, when developing and reviewing policies, governments should ensure that an individual's sense of personal responsibility is not stifled. This is the general theme of the Group's work. Secondly, when making arrangements for implementing these policies, the government should bear in mind the importance of ensuring that they operate simply but sensitively, avoiding overbearing or complex bureaucracies which destroy self-respect. We propose that the CPRS, in collaboration with the MPO and a number of Departments which serve the public directly, should undertake work in this second area.

The proposed study would have three objectives:

a. to identify general lessons from recent particular initiatives to improve the "face of government" (eg improved practices, such as giving reasons for decisions, development of decentralised management, analysis of complaints, staff training to improve standards of service). This would involve examining such initiatives with a view to identifying those which have been most successful in particular contexts, considering their wider application, and developing ways in which what has been learned can be disseminated to those most able to make use of it quickly and with maximum impact. (A particular aim would be to achieve a better appreciation of where administrative discretion is useful and where it should be replaced by rules.)

b. to examine areas where present information is deficient, such as the comparative efficiency and effectiveness of different ways of avoiding complaints and redressing grievances and the expectations which people have of the public services.

c. to propose methods of increasing the awareness of policy makers about the practical impact of different policies, separately and in combination, on individuals' lives, and to suggest factors which should be taken into account in making policy.

The work would concentrate on the services provided to the public by central government although it is likely that lessons of wider relevance could be drawn from it. The aim would be to draw upon and synthesize relevant experience from, in particular, social security, unemployment benefit and income tax systems as well as the employment and training and immigration services.

PROFESSIONALS AND THE INDIVIDUAL

This theme is concerned to identify ways of increasing individual responsibility and freedom of choice, by reducing to a necessary minimum the extent to which decisions are taken for individuals by professionals. This is a complex and far reaching topic. We propose a study by the CPRS which would aim to highlight the issues for Government and the options available. The general approach is outlined below.

Background

Most professions offer services direct to individuals. Often this involves judgements made by the professional on behalf of the individual who, it is thought, is unable to make the judgement himself. In some cases this will be true (eg some aspects of the medical services). There is a presumption that any judgements he makes on behalf of the individual will be made with integrity. Such a presumption rests on an operational concept of a professional standard (or ethic). Many professions are organized so that members exercise collective responsibility for the competence and the conduct of their practitioners - often through bodies which set their own standards and test for competence in them (eg the Law Society for solicitors). In return for this self-regulation, professionals frequently enjoy a substantial degree of monopoly power.

The relative success of these arrangements for some of the more traditional professions has encouraged others to adopt the same approach. The growth of the social and other public services has been accompanied by a proliferation of professions, or more accurately by an increasing 'professionalization' of occupations. These newer 'professions' (along with some older ones) are mostly embedded in state bureaucracies - sometimes with the statutory function of regulating people's behaviour (eg probation officers). This adds to the power they have over the individual. The concept of the professional, with his claim to unique understanding of his area of practice, when incorporated in a state bureaucracy, can also lead to service provision being driven by producers' (ie professionals') views of what ought to be provided, (eg in council housing) rather than consumers' views of what they want.

For many people a significant part of their lives is dominated by decisions taken by others on their behalf. In some cases the effect will be to undermine the individual's self-reliance and self respect. He (or she) may have no effective choice about which services he will receive, (even refusal may be difficult!) and even less about the form in which they will be delivered (eg institutional vs domiciliary services for the elderly); he may have little information about the value or the effect of the services (eg some aspects of medical services); and he may have little or no power to demand either information or choice. The result is that he makes little input to many decisions affecting him, and hence feels little responsibility for the outcome.

The problem is one of balance. The benefits of securing freedom for the individual to make decisions for himself have to be weighed against the possible risks to himself (eg to his health, safety, property or livelihood); or risk or offence to others. In its examination of restrictive practices in professions, the MMC identified three categories of risk: so serious that every possible safeguard should be provided; serious, but where the disadvantages of any safeguard outweighed the advantages of reducing the risk; not particularly serious and hence no special safeguard justified.

The Project

The study would be carried out internally using existing evidence to draw conclusions about the effect of professionals on the individual. It would not involve formal consultations with the professions (see para 9). Because of the breadth of the subject, it would concentrate on a few professions or occupations. The emphasis would be on those professions whose services impact fairly directly on individuals, either through direct contact (eg social workers), or at one step removed (eg local authority architects). For each profession it would examine the balance between the extent to which an individual was enabled to make his own decisions, and the need for some safeguards against risk. On this basis, we would hope to be able to draw some helpful conclusions of wider application.

3 In particular, the study would identify barriers to increasing the individual's control and examine the rationale for the barrier and its effectiveness as a safeguard against the sort of risks outlined in para 5 above. Such barriers might include restrictions imposed by the professions themselves (eg

controlled access to specialists) and certain powers exercised by the professions whether with statutory backing (eg regulations on public sector housing) or through custom (eg teachers' powers over what is taught in the classroom).

The study would aim to identify the advantages and disadvantages of the present arrangements; and to suggest ways of changing them if that seemed desirable. Examples of possible changes might be conferring rights to more information, the encouragement of competing services, the relaxing of government imposed restrictions, changes in professional training, the role of official and non-official consumer watchdogs, etc.

There would probably be no general all-embracing conclusions because of the heterogeneous nature of the subject. We would envisage two possible types of conclusion. The first would be recommendations on points which are directly amenable to Government action, such as the way in which some public services are organized and delivered; the second would be issues on which action would lie with the professions themselves. The outcome on both types of issue, especially the latter, would need sensitive handling by Departments with the professional bodies concerned.

I think this is much too vague

APPENDIX H"RESERVE" THEMES

The following themes are proposed as subjects which might be pursued initially by the Ministers directly concerned independently of the Family Policy Group but which the Group might consider at a later stage:

(A) REDUCING CRIME THROUGH A STRENGTHENED SENSE OF COMMUNITY RESPONSIBILITY

Insofar as strengthening self-respect and individual responsibility contributes towards a reduction in vandalism, juvenile delinquency and other forms of crime, the work of the Group described in the other Appendices is concerned also with law and order. If the Group wishes to take a more direct interest in this subject, however, it might most usefully do so by considering first the report due in the new year of the inter-departmental official group established by the Home Secretary to consider how Departments outside the criminal justice field could help to reduce crime. The Group might consider also the paper which this official group has commissioned on the relationships between crime and social factors including the evidence produced recently by Professor Michael Rutter.

The discussion on children and schools (Appendix D) will provide an opportunity to consider whether, notwithstanding the provisions of the Criminal Justice Bill, there is more scope for making parents responsible for some of the anti-social behaviour of their children and how to extend community work for certain offenders and how to expand intermediate treatment.

(B) HOUSING

Apart from its importance for the elderly (Appendix B(iii)) this could be tackled as a general issue. People's control over, and responsibility for their home and housing environment, plays a central part in their lives. By enacting the right to buy and the Tenants' Charter for public sector tenants, and by encouraging low cost home ownership, the Government have already made major advances in this area.

The Group might examine ways of increasing the proportion of council tenants who take up their right to buy. The No. 10 Policy Unit has put proposals about this to the Secretary of State for the Environment. The results of an examination of these could be reported to the Group

In addition, the Group could consider how to increase further the responsibility of the remaining council tenants for their homes and estates.

(C) RACIAL EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY

The group may wish to consider at some stage whether a special effort should be made to strengthen the sense of self-respect, confidence and hence individual responsibility of members of the ethnic minority communities, by, for example, making the communities aware of the possibilities open to them, and publicising the success of those who have made good. As background against which to consider the need for such an initiative, the Group may wish to commission reviews of such matters as:

- how the ethnic minorities have fared over the past decade in education, employment, housing, etc.
- the success of present legislation and institutional arrangements at tackling racial discrimination and at securing genuine equality of opportunity.
- how far present institutional arrangements in this field, most of which were introduced primarily to settle immigrants, are appropriate for dealing with problems faced by a largely British-born ethnic minority community

cc: David Clark
(BHS)
a o o A

FAMILY POLICY GROUP
A Guidance Note for Officials
by the No.10 Policy Unit

1. The purpose of the Group is to ensure that all the Government's domestic policies help to promote self-respect and a sense of individual responsibility. We are concerned with the overall well-being of the family, and not solely or specifically with the provision of welfare by the state and other public agencies (which is how "Family Policy" is sometimes interpreted). In the words of the 1979 Conservative Manifesto:

"Our country's relative decline is not inevitable. We in the Conservative Party think we can reverse it, not because we think we have all the answers but because we think we have the one answer that matters most. We want to work with the grain of human nature, helping people to help themselves - and others. This is the way to restore that self-reliance and self-confidence which are the basis of personal responsibility and national success."

This Government came to power asserting that it is the exercise of responsibility which teaches self-discipline. But in the early stages of life it is the experience of authority, when exerted fairly and consistently by adults, which teaches young people how to exercise responsibility themselves. This two-way relationship between obedience and responsibility is what makes a free, self-governing society.

2. The Group was set up in order to refocus Ministers' attention on these objectives and to enable them to stand back a little from their departmental duties and think about where their policies are leading and discuss fresh ideas across departmental boundaries.

3. The Group is a forum for discussion, and not a formal Cabinet Committee. Papers may be submitted as and when members feel it would be useful to air or revive particular ideas. Papers need not necessarily seek final decisions - which, in any case, would usually have to be taken in the appropriate Cabinet Committee or by individual Ministers.

4. Some discussions may lead to action in this Parliament; some may stimulate White or Green Papers; and some may suggest proposals or emphases to be borne in mind in the preparation of the Manifesto for the next Election.

1 November 1982

FERDINAND MOUNT

Hy0957

CONFIDENTIAL

5/11

To: MR FLESHER

5 November 1982

From: G J WASSERMAN

c Mr Mount

Family Policy Group

We spoke about the fact that the Chancellor of the Exchequer's paper on the Taxation of Husband and Wife, which we had been lead to believe would be ready for consideration by the Family Policy Group on 8 November, is now unlikely to be available until the end of the month and that the Secretary of State for Social Services' paper on The Elderly - also promised for 8 November - has apparently been delayed indefinitely. We agreed, with Mr Mount, that under these circumstances the best course was to postpone the next meeting of the Group until the Chancellor's paper (or that of the Secretary of State) was to hand. I understand that, on the advice of HM Treasury, you have fixed that meeting for 30 November at 5 p.m.

We agreed also that these delays raise more general questions about how to ensure that the initial momentum given to the Group by Mr Mount's paper on Renewing the Values of Society and the 10 September meeting is not lost. As you will see from the attached copy of the draft programme of action which we are proposing for the Group, there is no shortage of work for it to do. But the facts of Whitehall life are such that until our proposals have been approved by the Group, we are unable to put any effective pressure on Departments to devote scarce resources to preparing the papers which we propose the Group should consider. If, therefore, we were to wait until the 30 November for our programme of work to be approved, we should be delaying the start of the substantive work of the Group for a further three weeks.

Mr Sparrow therefore recommends that the Group be convened for a brief - say, 45 minute - meeting as soon as practicable to consider our proposed work programme, the paper by the No. 10 Policy Unit and the paper on "Preparation for Parenthood" already circulated by Sir Keith Joseph. This would enable us to make a start on an agreed programme of work two or so weeks earlier than would otherwise be the case.

GJW