



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & SOCIAL SECURITY
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From the Secretary of State for Social Services

The Rt Hon Norman St John-Stevas MP
 Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster
 Privy Council Office
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Social Services

~~PRIME MINISTER~~

To see. This might just
 be raised at Cabinet.
 Mr Jenkins is asking for
 a lot.

MS
 5/xii

5 December 1979

Dear Norman,

Now that the Social Security Bill has received its formal First Reading with the Health Service Bill to follow on Friday, I am writing to you about the timing of the Second Reading debates.

As you know, we wanted Second Reading of both Bills before Christmas, but I understand the pressures you face on the Parliamentary timetable. Perhaps I could just register the fact that I stand ready to occupy any vacant slot which may be produced by last-minute changes of plan and that my priority would be the Health Services Bill. However, it is vitally important that if this does not materialise both Bills get their Second Reading as soon as possible after Christmas Recess and go immediately into Committee.

So far as Social Security is concerned you know that most of the supplementary benefit changes will be introduced at the November 1980 uprating. The Bill needs Royal Assent before the end of May so that the changes for which the Bill provides can be incorporated in the normal uprating programme. This programme will be even more complex than usual next year, and an early start is essential. Even if it had been possible to have Commons Second Reading before Christmas our timetable would have left us little time for the Committee Stages of this Bill which we know will be received with some hostility. I hope you can now agree to Commons Second Reading, immediately after the Christmas Recess.

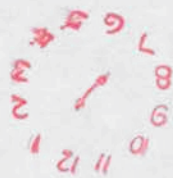
As to Health Services, the timetable is even tighter - the GPFC is against its borrowing limit, we want powers to enforce cash limits on health authorities and above all we want to stop the phasing out of NHS private practice facilities. I hope that Lord Wigoder, Chairman of the Health Services Board will not feel bound to recommend further revocations of pay beds (which I would be statutorily obliged to implement) and I await his news on this; if he does not, the result would be considerable embarrassment to us.

E.●.

If the Board do co-operate it would be sensible to give the House an opportunity to debate the Royal Commission Report on the National Health Service before Second Reading of the Bill. Could we aim for a debate on Merrison in the first week and Second Reading of the Bill a week later (assuming we cannot fit this in before Christmas)?

I am copying this letter to the Prime Minister, the Chief Whip and Sir Robert Armstrong.

Yours
Patel



F-5 DEC 1979

2.
Social Services



10 DOWNING STREET

PRIME MINISTER.

The cost figure - your query below - is £26 m, and was set out in the policy approval paper at Flag A. (#(79)33 of 12/7/79)

MP
26/xi.

mb.