

CONFIDENTIAL

For information
w/ Humberg
c- ps 15.22
ps 1.21
ps 1.53H



FROM: CHIEF SECRETARY
DATE: 1 February 1989

PRIME MINISTER

w/ Lister
w/ Hilton

Mr Nicholson
A palpatable hit! And a
government of course. Did
K.C. check the
try maintain...

ENQUIRY INTO THE MICRO-BIOLOGICAL SAFETY OF FOOD

I have seen Kenneth Clarke's minute to you of 30 January about this subject. I agree with him that the Government needs to draw on outside knowledge about the reasons for the increasing incidence of reported cases of micro-biological illness originating from food. But I do not think that setting up a joint Committee of Inquiry headed by an eminent outside scientist is the best way of going about this.

2. My preference would be to ask the Government's own chief professional advisers to arrange to draw on the knowledge of the best outside experts on the very wide range of relevant subjects. I see a number of advantages with this approach. The first is that our own advisers could make use of outside advice and up-to-date knowledge, as it becomes available, in advising Ministers on the current decisions which have to be taken. Recent experience suggests that there may well be a series of these in coming months, and that we cannot foresee at all clearly what they will be. A further advantage is that our advisers will be able to respond to the current issues in deciding on relative priorities within the wide subject matter set out in the proposed terms of reference. Moreover, they could also draw up a comprehensive internal report in a timescale which would not need to be made to fit artificial deadlines linked to events or to the Parliamentary year.

3. These practical advantages seem to me to outweigh any temporary benefit that the announcement of a Committee of Inquiry might bring us. I therefore suggest that we should seek to achieve Kenneth's substantive aim in the alternative way I have described.

4. I am sending copies of this minute to members of H Committee, John MacGregor, Richard Luce and Sir Robin Butler.

P. Wales

PPJOHN MAJOR
(Approved by the Chief Secretary
and signed in his absence)

ps/FM
w/ Hope (com)
w/ Humberg (LGC)
w/ Massing (Curb)
w/ Shaw (Edu)
w/ Stewart (Edu) ✓
w/ Davies (C.M. 44)
w/ ...

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