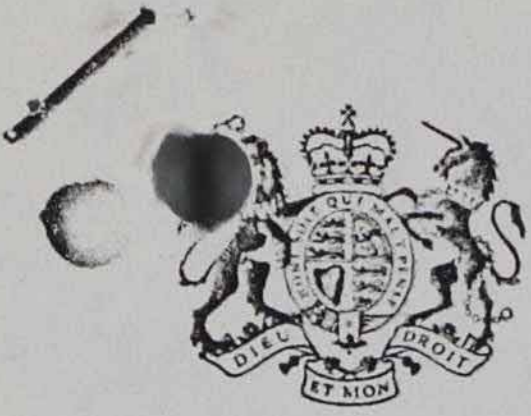


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PRIME MINISTER

SOCIAL SECURITY AND OTHER LEGISLATION

This minute is a sequel to my minute of 7 February and takes account of the decisions summarised in the Chancellor of the Exchequer's minute to you of 15 February.

We shall proceed as quickly as we can with the present Social Security Bill, which has to receive Royal Assent by 23 May.

Parliamentary Counsel has sounded out the House authorities about the possibility of including in the Finance Bill the additional Social Security provisions and the provisions about public sector pensions. The House authorities confirm Parliamentary Counsel's view that this cannot be done; the Speaker would not allow the Finance Bill to be extended for these purposes.

We therefore need a separate Bill to deal with the Social Security changes which Cabinet have agreed. Any provisions about public service pensions and those about supplementary benefits for strikers could go in the same Bill. To get the Bill through both Houses and obtain Royal Assent by mid-July we must aim to publish it before Easter.

I should draw your attention and that of colleagues to three implications for the Parliamentary timetable:

This is  
another argument  
for PEWP and  
Budget on the  
same day  
MS

- (a) the report and third reading of the present Social Security Bill will have to take place in the week beginning 17 March. The Public Expenditure White Paper which will announce the further Social Security measures is being published on 18 March. This is an awkward coincidence but if we are to obtain Royal Assent by 23 May it is unavoidable;
- (b) the Social Security (No 2) Bill will have to be published either in the same week or in the following week, which is the week of the Budget;
- (c) in the weeks immediately after Easter we have to find time on the floor of the House for the Finance Bill, the Social Security (No 2) Bill and the remaining stages of the Employment Bill. I think this can be done, especially if the Employment Bill can be handled in the way the Employment Secretary suggested at Cabinet last week, but other Bills may well be delayed.

The need to include a fresh Social Security Bill in our congested programme means that we must look even more critically at the



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prospects for those Bills that have not yet been introduced. The Chancellor of the Exchequer agreed at the meeting on 8 February to consider whether it was still necessary for the Secretary of State for Energy to introduce the Petroleum and Submarine Pipelines (Amendment) Bill this session. Perhaps the Energy Secretary can also look at the need to introduce the Energy Conservation, Etc. Bill. It would greatly help the management of the programme if both these were not now included for the present session.

I understand that the business managers in the Lords see difficulties about finding adequate time for the Contempt of Court Bill. Perhaps the Lord Chancellor would consider whether it would be a sufficient implementation of our Queen's Speech commitment if that Bill were given a second reading as a means of widening debate on its provisions but on the understanding that it might not be able to make further progress this session.

Finally, I should be grateful if the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary could consider deferring the International Organisations (Amendment) Bill.

If these Bills could be deferred we would still hope to be able to complete the rest of the programme by the end of October.

I am copying this minute to other members of the Cabinet, the Minister of Transport, the Chief Whips in both Houses, and the acting Leader of the House of Lords. I am also sending a copy to First Parliamentary Counsel and Sir Robert Armstrong.

N St J S

N St J S

19 February 1980