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WHITE PAPER ON HOUSING POLICY

Memorandum by the Chancellor of the Exchequer

I have read with great interest the Lord Privy Seal's paper C. (53) 264 circulating amendments to the White Paper on Housing Policy, and the Minister of Housing's paper C. (53) 259 recommending that the maximum repairs increase should be twice instead of one and a half times the statutory deduction.

2. I have one or two comments on the White Paper which stem from its theme and title, with which I entirely agree - "Housing - A Comprehensive Policy". I hope the White Paper will be genuinely comprehensive and that we shall not find afterwards that we have left out of our statement things which the ordinary man would consider form part of a comprehensive policy, or that we have not gone far enough.

3. First, I agree with the Minister of Housing's conclusion on the maximum repairs increase.

4. Second, in spite of what the Minister says, I think we must make some reference to the housing subsidies. I do not want to go into detail, but to omit a reference entirely would be too glaring. We should probably be questioned about it, but if we were not, it would be assumed that we had no change in view. Therefore I suggest that we should say a little more than now appears in paragraph 91, perhaps as follows:-

"Any increase in private enterprise house building, whether for letting or for sale, would in some measure lighten the ever-growing burden of housing subsidies, which in the interest of the general body of taxpayers cannot continue indefinitely at the present rate. Her Majesty's Government consider that the proposals set out in this paper introduce new factors which will have to be taken into account in a future review.

5. Lastly, I think we ought to say something, however slight, about emergency housing. It is rather different from the theme of the rest of the paper, but anything which called itself a comprehensive housing policy would have to cover it. The Minister of Housing, I understand, has proposals ready. They would need legislation and would fit well into the Bill which he now contemplates. I hope they will be fitted in: if we leave it to a later Bill, obviously the chances of winding up an expensive service, which brings us under constant fire from the Public Accounts Committee, will be delayed. I do not want to anticipate the Minister's proposals to his colleagues, but I hope they may be brought forward early and that a brief reference may be made in the White Paper to the fact that he expects to wind up the system in the near future. If nothing is said in the White Paper about it, it might cause some surprise if we put it into the Bill.

R.A.B.

Treasury Chambers, S.W.1.  
30th September, 1953.