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PREM 19/2712

CONFIDENTIAL FILING

The Central Office of Information (C O I) and the future of the Information Services Government Advertising Expenditure Repayment for Services provided by the C O I.

GOVERNMENT
MACHINERY

MAY 1979

Referred to	Date	Referred to	Date	Referred to	Date	Referred to	Date
NEW FILE COVER							
2.5.84							
14.5.84							
18.6.84							
21.6.84							
23.12.85							
4.11.86							
21.2.87							
26.7.88							
3.8.88							
16.9.88							
11.5.89							
27.7.89							

PREM 19/2712

cc PS
AT PA

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cc PS/Sir Robin Butler
Hayden Phillips
Mike Devereau

MR SPENCER

TCSC - MEMORANDUM ON THE GIS

Thank you for an opportunity to comment on your draft memorandum.

I think we should face the distinct possibility that this memorandum is only a prelude to oral examination, given the degree of interest, mostly ill-informed and often malevolent, in Government publicity and the GIS. In these circumstances I think there is a lot to be said - and, I must confess, also from my personal point of view - for setting out the facts of the review and its ramifications clearly.

I think we could reasonably say the Government rejected reinforcement by legislative means but recognised Parliamentary concern and embarked on a review. And the look at the COI led to supplementary guidance. It was clear that any review must also look at the means of securing compliance, especially in view of the changing relationship between the COI and Departments. This led in turn to a review of the management of the GIS. But we can reasonably state that the review was conducted in two parts - first the conventions; second their enforcement and any organisational consequences. There is much to be said for coming clean about something for which we can take credit if we are not defensive about it and explain it properly.

So far as Para 5 is concerned - and in view of Mr Cubie's request for a note setting out "in full" the new arrangements - I would prefer that my remit as Head of the GIS (and its limitations in relation to propriety and value for money) were fully explained.

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2.

I would prefer the material in square brackets in Para 6 were retained, but that the first sentence is amended to read "It is designed to ensure that all government publicity campaigns continue to meet the tests of being an effective response..." The consequential is that "of representing"; and "of avoiding" should read "represent" and "avoid". I believe that the GIS has a distinguished record for impartiality and we should emphasise this.

I agree with Hayden Phillips that "analagous" should be deleted from the last sentence Para 7.

I have raised with Andrew Turnbull the question of any inclusion of myself in any team to give evidence to the Select Committee. There is no doubt that some members of the Committee will want me there for the purposes of bloodsport and I would not rule out the possibility that some might try to go wider than the subject matter and try to needle me on Westland. The question is whether it would be more advantageous for me to appear as part of a team, or separately as Head of the GIS.

Meanwhile, I think we need to recognise that for the purposes of both the Select Committee and the Commons debate next week issues likely to be raised include:

- privatisation advertising and publicity (here we need to make the case for promoting a product from the sale of which the taxpayer benefits enormously)
- the level of Government promotional expenditure, leaving aside privatisation
- allegations by unnamed and unspecified GIS members that they are being asked to do party political publicity [NB - I have yet to find a Head of Information who has had such a complaint]
- the proposed IPCS Code of Practice for the GIS which I have refused to discuss
- possibly, the GIS weekend conference in York, April 28-30 which was disgracefully gatecrashed by the Mail on Sunday.

Could I ask you, in your absence, to depute someone to liaise with me on briefing for the Chief Secretary's debate next week. This briefing will no doubt provide a basis for material for any Select Committee team of officials.

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3.

I have just received Trevor Woolley's minute of May 10. I see no reason to submit any draft memorandum to the Prime Minister, provided it is approved by the Chief Secretary.



BERNARD INGHAM

May 11, 1989



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10 DOWNING STREET
LONDON SW1A 2AA

From the Press Secretary

16.9.88

The Wicks

I promised you a sight of
my paper for the second stage
EPS/COT review which
has entailed discussions
and turned parts of the Treasury
piece.

John 16/9



10 DOWNING STREET

LONDON SW1A 2AA

From the Press Secretary

9 September 1988

Mr Jonathan,

COI REVIEW: SECOND STAGE

I attach a paper, prepared on my own account, to contribute to next week's discussions on the second stage of our review covering the management of the Government Information Service.

I have not consulted anyone in preparing the paper but I believe it would command wide support in the GIS.

You may care to consider whether you should invite Anne Nash, Head of the Information Officer Management Unit, to our meeting next week. She would, I believe, have something important to contribute.

I am copying this and the attached paper to Hayden Phillips (Treasury), Mike Devereau (COI) and John Fuller (OMCS).

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Bernard Ingham'.

BERNARD INGHAM

Jonathan Spencer Esq

MANAGEMENT-IN-CONFIDENCECOI REVIEW: SECOND STAGE

1. This personal contribution from the Chief Press Secretary is intended to stimulate a more informed discussion of the issues confronting us as we tackle the second stage of the COI Review - ie the management of the Government Information Service (GIS). Some of these issues are outlined in Jonathan Spencer's minute to Hayden Phillips of July 21.

Background

2. Any future discussion of the management of the GIS has to relate back to our first report in which crucially we made clear that:
 - i) we had considered the implications of the conclusions in our first report for the second part of the review "to ensure [they] are compatible with the likely future role and structure of the GIS as a whole" - (Para 2);
 - ii) "the pivotal role of Departmental Heads of Information suggests that press and publicity work should continue to be managed together (so that the senior Departmental publicity official has sufficient clout with colleagues)" - Para 31.
 - iii) the COI has "a continuing role" and "that Departments will increasingly want a professional and competitive service in these areas" - (Para 27).
 - iv) "we do not see any need to disturb the present arrangements for the provision by COI of all the FCO's requirements for publicity services overseas" - (Para 29).
3. In short, our first report did not envisage major changes in the way in which the information and publicity function is discharged within Government. This is not surprising since the Government Information Service is probably the most effective, heavyweight professional publicity machine in the

MANAGEMENT-IN-CONFIDENCE

country. It is much better than Government deserves and its quality performance and integrity owe more to its own values and professionalism than they do to the benevolent interest and attention of successive Governments, Ministers and senior administrators.

The Current Situation

4. What is more, the present condition of the GIS is better than I have known it over the last 21 years. This stems from the following developments:
- i) the establishment of the Director General of the COI as Head of Profession in 1979;
 - ii) the shared objectives, and ability to work together, of successive Heads of Profession and the Chief Press Secretary; in other words there has been a unity of managerial purpose in the two most senior and influential posts in the GIS for virtually a decade;
 - iii) the performance of the Information Officer Management Unit in managing the careers of the members of the GIS;
 - iv) the establishment of No 10 Press Office as a finishing school - though not of course an exclusive or formally recognised one - for future Heads of Information Divisions and Chief Press Officers; four of the five former Deputy Press Secretaries still in the GIS are Heads of Divisions and all the large number of SIOs who have served, usually for 2 years, in No 10 Press Office have secured promotion, most of them initially as Chief Press Officers. Some former No 10 SIOs now head Information Divisions. [NB - Eleven Heads of Information Divisions listed in the COI White Book have had No 10 experience as have three of the COI's Regional Directors].
 - v) the operation of a secondment system for press officers to give them, usually for six weeks, experience of No 10 Press Office while the Commons is in Session; some 60 IOs, SIOs and, more rarely, PIOs have taken part, in this scheme.
5. The beneficial effect is to be found in:

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- better morale, subject to certain provisos (see below)
 - improved performance (as evidenced by the lack of complaints from Ministers and complimentary remarks about the higher quality of the GIS from serious consumers of its services - ie journalists.
6. This improvement has occurred, to some extent as we noted in our first report, against the background of rapid changes in publicity methods and techniques; a huge increase in Departmental publicity budgets; the proliferation of the media - press, radio and television (in company with a reduction in GIS complement); the greatly increased speed of communication; a marked deterioration in the media's professional standards; the greatly increased political scrutiny of the GIS and its output; and the increasing financial (as distinct from work satisfaction) attractions of non-Governmental information and publicity work.
7. This undoubted improvement in performance in difficult circumstances has occurred in spite of a familiar and continuing lack of understanding of and support for the GIS within Government. Among the symptoms, which are exhibited at the highest levels, are:
- i) at worst a contempt for and at best an intermittent interest in the information and publicity function of Government - eg when it fails to deliver the goods instead of a continuing effort to help it produce them.
 - ii) a lack of understanding about the real nature of information work - ie its strategic, intellectual and intensely political and sensitive nature as distinct from simply being a mechanical operation; and of the qualities required to fill such a post
 - iii) an undermining of the position of the GIS, often for very selfish Ministerial/Departmental reasons, by the appointment of Administrators at the highest levels of Information Divisions.
8. It follows from this that any change in the future role of the COI (which we are agreed will be evolutionary rather than revolutionary) and, more especially, in the management of the GIS will need to be carefully argued and justified to the 1,000 or so officers who have made the GIS their career.

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9. The most beneficial change which could occur now is a clear signal from Ministers and Permanent Secretaries that they recognise and accept their responsibilities to those 1,000 career information officers. They cannot, for example, expect to continue to have the kind of GIS the Government needs if, for whatever reason, a number of the top jobs are effectively closed to the GIS.
10. If the Government requires an information service (and our first report implied that it does) then the GIS needs to be given a better opportunity to do its job. Otherwise, organisational change will be at best inconsequential and at worst positively damaging.
11. We must have this firmly in mind in approaching the second phase of our task.

Issues to be addressed

12. It follows from this analysis that the main questions that we need to address are:
 - do we need an information specialism?
 - if so, do we need a Head of Specialism/Profession?
 - if we do, where should that Head sit, given the evolutionary process under way in the COI?
 - do we need an IOMU as a central institution and if so where should it be housed?
13. A number of other issues are raised in Jonathan Spencer's letter of July 21 which I also deal with -
 - handling of different levels of appointment within IOMU, if we need the unit; and
 - training

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14. Our first report shows that the Government requires specialist information and publicity services and advice and that there is likely to be a continuing role for the COI in providing them. Similarly, the continued requirement by Departments for a press and briefing operation has not been questioned.
15. Consequently there is no doubt about the future existence of a specialist information and publicity service within Government, though the likely size of the COI may be a matter for speculation given the tendency to contract out. Thus the question "Is there a genuine specialism in the Government service?" is imprecisely framed. What we need to ask ourselves is whether Press Officers - who represent roughly 20% of the total current GIS strength - are a genuine specialism. This links with the problem arising from the tendency, as distinct from a trend, to appoint Administrators as Heads of Information Divisions.
16. The truth is that, like many other occupations, including that of the administrator, the press officer has no unique talent which, given certain basic qualities, cannot be acquired by experience. As in other jobs, some will always be better at it than others and some, a minority, would be better doing something else. Nor is the invariable route to a press office these days through some aspect of journalism. The catchment area is much wider than that - and widening. And former journalists do not necessarily make the best press officers. What count today in a Government press officer are native wit, political feel, personality, flair and a positive approach to communication.
17. In these circumstances the Government needs to decide, in both its own operational interests and those of Government press officers, whether to maintain the status quo or, as in the Foreign & Commonwealth Office, to integrate Press Offices into Departmental structures.
18. The possible advantages of the latter route would be:
 - i) theoretically, at least, to open up wider career prospects for professional Information Officers whose current limit is Grade 3.

MANAGEMENT-IN-CONFIDENCE

ii) to provide greater managerial flexibility, and not least in absorbing those who are or become unsuited to information work; this would be particularly useful to Permanent Secretaries when a Chief Information Officer is found to be "incompatible" - the most familiar excuse - with his Secretary of State.

[NB - The advantages claimed under (i) and (ii) are already available, at least technically, under the open structure, but integration of Press Officers into the Departmental structure would be much more fundamental in its effects.]

iii) improve the quality of Administrators who would acquire a more acute awareness of the treacherous world we live in.

iv) improve the standing of the information and publicity function since it would become a training ground for the brighter sparks.

v) open up the possibility of a more fundamental reorganisation in which the COI acquired the staff and responsibility, as with the FCO, for all communications functions outside Press Office. This would have the added advantage of eliminating the duplication that inevitably exists with Departments running their own broadly based Information Divisions in tandem with COI. The COI would then be responsible for the flexible use of its pool of skills to discharge, or advise on the discharge, of various Departmental communication needs.

19. The likely disadvantages of such a course are:

i) a possibly dangerous period of disruption, with a haemorrhage of press officers who saw their Information careers blocked in Government at a time when lucrative posts are available outside

ii) a further narrowing of opportunities in other publicity specialisms and the likely closing off of top GIS Departmental posts to former publicity specialists; not all the best Heads of Information begin and end their careers as Press Officers; seven current Heads of Information Divisions have experience of both sides of the house

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- iii) a permanent weakening of the Government's professional communications and management capability
 - iv) the loss, for want of a better term, of a coherent Press Office ethic arising from its specialist group standing which is an invaluable stabiliser in communications exercises; not too put to fine a point on it, a price would have to be paid for transferring career management from the Director General, COI, to a Permanent Secretary.
 - v) elimination of the joint management of press and publicity work (see Para 31 of our first report) which is the only sensible way to manage Government communication. Controlling a publicity campaign is akin to conducting an orchestra.
 - vi) a more unstable presentational ship at a time when greater order and control - the objectives of our first report - are required.
20. For what it is worth, I believe the disadvantages outweigh the undoubted attractions of the fundamental change canvassed in Para 15 et seq. I do not believe that the peculiar circumstances of the FCO are necessarily a good guide to the Home Civil Service. But if this is accepted, Ministers and Permanent Secretaries also need to accept that they cannot retain a good and improving GIS if (i) they persist in introducing Administrators to Information work, and training them in it, at Head of Division level; and (ii) if they fail to recognise the significant role that senior Information Officers play in the formulation and presentation of policy and that the Press Office function is one of the most exposed in any Department.

Head of Profession

21. The issue of whether there should be a Head of Profession is largely irrelevant to the approach to Press Officers who, to repeat, account for only 20% of the total GIS. The fact is that the Government is going to require, and employ, a wide range of communications skills in the foreseeable future. They need managing. And the Government's interest in keeping abreast of techniques, having its own sources of advice on them and in being represented in the councils of the communications world at a high level require such a

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figurehead. On any projection of the likely future, to abolish the concept of Head of Profession would be damagingly impolitic; a denial of the very presentational skills Government is supposed to have at its disposal.

22. If we accept there should continue to be a Head of Profession I have no doubt that post should be combined with that of the Director General of the COI. No other proposition makes sense.
23. An executive Chief Press Secretary has enough to do on a continuing crisis basis without pretending he can manage the GIS. In any case he may not necessarily be an established Civil Servant. It would be wrong for a political appointee to become Head of Profession. Depending on circumstances, it may be sensible for the Chief Press Secretary to assist in the career management of press officers. This has been the practice over recent years and should continue in the foreseeable future.
24. Assuming a senior Departmental Head of Information had time, he would be unlikely to command respect as Head of Profession over and above the Director General of the COI and the Chief Press Secretary. His position could be particularly difficult if the Chief Press Secretary were a political appointee. This idea should not be pursued.
25. I must state my fundamental objection to a formal collegiate system of career management. We need effective management and not shabby committee compromises. There is no demand that I know of for a formal collegiate system, probably because Heads of Information are essentially practical people; they recognise that someone has to manage and that the method of making senior GIS appointments does not lend itself to brokerage by committee.

IOMU

26. To abandon an IOMU at this or any foreseeable future stage would be an act of management folly comparable with abolishing the position of Head of Profession. The IOMU is beginning to do a good job under its present leadership and should be encouraged and supported. The greater the changes or evolution in the GIS, the more the IOMU's services are likely to be required. And it should continue to work under the wing of, and to, the Head of Profession.

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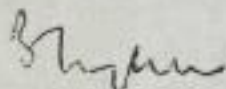
27. Now that it is beginning to get the measure of the GIS as a whole, the IOMU might usefully address itself to two other facets of management:
- training: I remain sceptical, without a report, of the ability of the GIS to take advantage of training courses, however desirable, given the tightness of manning. Training has been considered many times in the largely useless Information Officer Management Committee without much effect. The increasing tendency to recruit raw Assistant Information Officers as trainees requires an early report from the IOMU on their training.
 - an Information forum: it is said, sometimes with justice, that the GIS is much better at external than internal communications. In my view the GIS lacks such a forum going beyond the executive nature of MIO, and that more needs to be done to develop a group professional interest and contact with the wider communications world. The IOMU should be asked to come forward with ideas to close this gap.

Summary

28. This paper argues that the Government has to decide whether it wants to perpetuate the present GIS or whether to integrate the role of Press Officer into Departmental structures. If it decides against the latter - and in my view the disadvantages outweigh the attractions - then it should recognise its responsibilities to the 1,000 or so members of the GIS and act on them. Ministers and officials should in particular ensure the GIS is given the opportunity to do an effective job and is properly supported.
29. Whatever decision is taken, the GIS will still exist and need a Head of Profession and an IOMU. It would be folly to abandon either.
30. The Head of Profession should continue to be the Director General of the COI, assisted in the foreseeable future in the career management of press officers by the Chief Press Secretary; and the IOMU should continue to work to the Head of Profession. A formal collegiate system for considering appointments is unnecessary and impractical.

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31. The IOMU should be asked to report on the training needs and possibilities for members of the GIS and the desirability of a GIS forum to improve professional communication between members of the GIS and with the wider communications world outside.



BERNARD INGHAM

9 September 1988



KTC
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10 DOWNING STREET

LONDON SW1A 2AA

From the Principal Private Secretary

3 August 1988

Dear Alex

The Prime Minister has asked me to draw to Ministers' attention the outcome of a recent review of the conventions governing Government publicity and the role of the Central Office of Information. The attached letter sets out expanded guidance on this subject, as a supplement to that contained in C(P)(88) 1.

The Prime Minister regards it as important that Ministers should follow these guidelines scrupulously. This would be so at any time. It is particularly so at a time when Government expenditure on publicity has, for quite legitimate reasons, increased significantly over the last two years and when the Government is seeking to prevent the use by other public authorities of public money for party political purposes.

I am sending copies of this letter to Private Secretaries to Members of the Cabinet, Murdo Maclean (Chief Whip's Office) and Eleanor Goodison (Office of Arts and Libraries).


Z ~

Andy

(N. L. WICKS)

Alex Allan, Esq.,
HM Treasury.

hs



Ref. A088/2429

MR WICKS *ph by the*

Government Publicity

As requested in your minute of 26 July
--- to Sir Robin Butler, I attach a draft
letter for you to circulate to Ministers
to inform them of the new arrangements.
This is in the form of a short covering
letter, enclosing my letter of 26 July
(attached).

Trevor Woolley

T A WOOLLEY

3 August 1988

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DRAFT LETTER FROM MR WICKS TO PS/CHANCELLOR

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GOVERNMENT PUBLICITY

The Prime Minister has asked me to draw to Ministers' attention the outcome of a recent review of the conventions governing Government publicity and the role of the Central Office of Information. The attached letter sets out expanded guidance on this subject, as a supplement to that contained in C(P)(88) 1.

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I am sending copies of this letter to private secretaries to members of the Cabinet, Murdo Maclean (No. 12) and Eleanor Goodison (OAL).

N L W

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CABINET OFFICE

70 Whitehall London SW1A 2AS

01-270 0101

From the Secretary of the Cabinet and Head of the Home Civil Service

Sir Robin Butler KCB CVO

Ref. A088/2319

26 July 1988

Dear Sir,

Government Publicity

In the light of the growth in the volume of Government publicity, and of the change in the role of the COI, a review has been undertaken of the conventions governing it and the mechanisms for ensuring that propriety is observed and value for money (VFM) secured. The outcome of this review, which has been endorsed by the Prime Minister provides additional guidance on propriety and VFM to that contained in the Cabinet Office memorandum submitted to the Widdicombe Committee and attached to --- C(P)(88) 1 (copy of memorandum attached for ease of reference); restates how the main weight of responsibility of departmental Ministers, Permanent Secretaries and other Heads of Department should be discharged; and describes arrangements at the centre (Cabinet Office and Treasury) for advising on especially difficult cases. This letter sets out the expanded guidance and also outlines a revised structure of central responsibilities.

Propriety

The main conventions, as stated in C(P)(88) 1, require that Government publicity:

- a. should be relevant to Government responsibilities;
- b. should be objective and explanatory, not tendentious or polemical;
- c. should not be, or be liable to misrepresentation as being, party political;
- d. should be produced and distributed in an economic and relevant way, having regard to the need to be able to justify the costs as expenditure of public funds.

/These conventions

S D H Sargent Esq

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These conventions, as amplified in the attached memorandum, continue to serve the Government well. However, paragraphs 11 and 12 of the memorandum which deal with "Explanation and Discussion of Existing Policies" and by inference with new policy developments not needing primary legislation, do not address in any detail the particular problems posed by the availability and effectiveness of modern communications techniques on the one hand, and the risk they carry of party political impact on the other. The Government is now one of the largest purchasers of paid publicity, and as well as providing general information for the public, uses publicity to influence the social behaviour of individuals and the economic behaviour of individuals and businessmen.

Government publicity (and especially advertising) campaigns have to compete for attention with other publicity. To be effective they need to be professionally presented in such a way as to register a clear message with the public. They should also impress upon the public, whether listening, viewing, or participating in events such as conferences, that the Government is taking pains over the presentation of the facts and its message. Shabby and ill thought out presentation can be as much a waste of public funds as the extravagant use of resources.

It would however be counter productive if the level of spending on a public campaign impeded the communication of the message it is intended to convey by itself becoming a controversial issue. To pass the test of acceptability, Government publicity should always strike a balance in spending on often expensive modern communication techniques.

It is no less crucial, if Government publicity is to remain acceptable within the conventions, that it avoids any doubts about its purpose. Government publicity should always be directed at informing the public even where it also has the objective of influencing the behaviour of individuals or particular groups. It is possible that in serving the public in this way a well-founded publicity campaign can redound to the political credit of the party in Government. By definition this is a natural consequence of political office but must not be or be believed to be either the primary purpose or a principal incidental purpose of a campaign.

Ministers and Heads of Department need to be on their guard against these dangers. They can stem as much from context, treatment, style, tone and quality of presentation as from the actual text employed. Each of these will need to be examined. A publicity campaign, or individual components of it, needs to be closely scrutinised not only in detail but also for its overall effect. "Image building", whether explicit or implied and whether of Government or Minister, is not acceptable. The test is whether a campaign, taken both as a whole and in part, can be justified as an effective response to a requirement to communicate with the public, or a particular section of it on an issue of importance.

In addition, it has been the policy of successive Governments, maintained by the present, that Ministers and Departments should not make use of public relations consultants.

/Value for Money (VFM)

Value for Money (VFM)

As with any other kind of public expenditure the prime responsibility for ensuring the economy efficiency and effectiveness of a publicity proposal is for spending Departments. The Treasury is responsible for carrying out its normal role which will include questioning whether a particular proposal is a justified use of public funds or whether adequate evidence about the effects it achieves is or will be available.

The Accounting Officer's general VFM responsibility is if anything more acute in this area because of the high visibility of publicity expenditure and the potential intangibility of results. A rigorous examination of all proposals for publicity expenditure, starting from first principles, is therefore essential.

In each such case those responsible for the proposal need to be able to give a persuasive reply to the following questions:

- i. Is it necessary to have a publicity proposal which goes beyond what can be achieved in the normal way (eg Parliamentary announcement, Ministerial speech, regular publicisation)?
- ii. If so, what is the precise goal, and precise target audience?
- iii. What means of publicity is best suited to achieve this goal and target?
- iv. What is affordable?
- v. How are results to be measured, distinguishing between publicity effects (such as the level of awareness of information) and non-publicity effects (such as changes in behaviour)?
- vi. Where the final objective of publicity is to influence the behaviour of individuals or the performance of business, is there adequate evidence of the effects achieved or, failing that, have sufficient arrangements been made to get such evidence?
- vii. In the light of these considerations, is the publicity course chosen the most economical, efficient and effective in the circumstances?

In some of the newer economic areas there is often a close link between propriety and value for money. For example the argument that it is a legitimate use of public money to promote the importance of better business performance through paid advertising depends crucially on its effect on behaviour.

Procedures

The responsibility for ensuring that the conventions on propriety are observed and that value for money is being achieved rests with Departments and in particular with

/departmental Ministers

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departmental Ministers and Heads of Department. The principal source of advice to Ministers and Heads of Department in this field is the departmental Head of Information. Heads of Department should ensure that the Head of Information always has sufficient opportunity to advise on proposals for paid publicity, as well as the departmental Finance Division.

If the departmental arrangements work well, the need for reference to central Departments should be very limited. It is likely to arise in three distinct circumstances:

- i. if a publicity proposal falls in to a category where central reference is mandatory, as is at present the case for paid publicity in advance of legislative approval;
- ii. if a proposal is "novel or contentious" in expenditure terms, in which case reference to the Treasury would be expected under the rules in Government Accounting and the public expenditure conventions generally;
- iii. where a Minister, Head of Department or Head of Information wanted a second opinion on the compatibility of a proposal with the current central guidance.

Historically, COI (and in particular the Director-General) has provided central advice in difficult cases. Many potential problems will still in practice be avoided in dialogue between Departments and COI, since COI continues to provide Departments with advice on the most appropriate and effective ways of meeting their publicity objectives, drawing on wide experience. However, with relations between Departments and the COI moving progressively on to a contractual basis, and with Departments, as a result of untying, being free to take publicity business elsewhere, COI will not in future be able to discharge this regulatory function without conflicts of interest and gaps in its coverage.

In the future, responsibility for provision of central advice on the conventions will be provided through the Cabinet Secretary's office for propriety questions, and in the relevant Treasury Expenditure Division for value for money issues. The division of subjects, using the terms of C(P)(88) 1, will be as follows:

Cabinet Office:	relevance)	
	objectivity)	propriety
	non polemical)	
	non party-political)	
The Treasury:	production/distribution)	
	in an economic way and)	value for
	a justified use of)	money
	public funds)	

At Ministerial level, the Chief Secretary, Treasury acts as a point of reference on Government publicity matters, and has responsibility for the adjudication of conflicting departmental approaches to the presentation of Government publicity.

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C(P)(88) 1 requires all proposals for paid publicity about the contents of legislation in advance of Parliamentary approval to be referred to him, and this requirement remains in force.

I am copying this letter to the Private Secretaries to all Permanent Secretaries and to all other Heads of Department.

Yours ever,
T A Woolley

(T A Woolley)
Private Secretary

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THIS DOCUMENT IS THE PROPERTY OF HER BRITANNIC MAJESTY'S GOVERNMENT

Copy No. 313

C(P) (88) 1
February 1988

CABINET: PROCEDURE

CONVENTIONS ON GOVERNMENT PUBLICITY AND ADVERTISING

NOTE BY THE PRIME MINISTER

It is important that the conventions governing Government publicity developed over successive administrations are scrupulously observed. This would be so at any time: it is particularly so at a time when the Government is seeking to prevent the use by other public authorities of public money for party political purposes.

2. These conventions were set out in a memorandum submitted by the Cabinet Office to the Committee of Inquiry into Conduct of Local Authority Business (the Widdicombe Committee) in 1985, and in oral evidence given to the Committee by the Secretary of the Cabinet and the Director General of the Central Office of Information. A copy of the memorandum submitted to the Widdicombe Committee is attached herewith.

3. In summary these conventions require that Government publicity:
- (a) should be relevant to Government responsibilities;
 - (b) should be objective and explanatory, not tendentious or polemical;
 - (c) should not be, or be liable to misrepresentation as being, party political;
 - (d) should be produced and distributed in an economic and relevant way, having regard to the need to be able to justify the costs as expenditure of public funds.

4. Especial care is needed where it is envisaged that Government publicity should be given to proposals which are, or are to become, the subject of legislation in Parliament. Until such measures have become law, any Government publicity should neither assume nor anticipate Parliamentary approval. This is a particularly sensitive area, in respect of which the machinery for ensuring compliance with the conventions needs to be reinforced.

5. Ministers should therefore ensure that all proposals for paid publicity about the contents of legislation in advance of Parliamentary approval, together with the proposed distribution of the material, are referred to the Chief Secretary, Treasury for his consideration.

6. It is also clear that there is increasing pressure from the public relations industry for Ministers to employ their services in a consultancy capacity. Again it has been the stated policy of successive Administrations to rely upon the expertise and experience of the Government's own advisers and to decline offers from commercial public relations companies. I do not believe that Ministers could, as a general rule, justify to Parliament the use of public relations consultants, and I consider it important that the well established conventions in this area should also continue to be observed.

M. H. T.

10 Downing Street
February 1988

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CENTRAL GOVERNMENT CONVENTIONS ON PUBLICITY
AND ADVERTISING

NOTE BY THE CABINET OFFICE

This note sets out the conventions which successive governments have applied to their publicity and advertising. There have been changes over the years in the type and quantity of what may be broadly described as publicity. Methods of communication change or develop, and Governments have increasingly put out more information about their policies and activities. but the basic conventions have remained. They are in general terms, but have in practice provided a satisfactory basis for the exercise of judgment in individual cases.

The Main Conventions

2. It is right and proper for Governments to use public funds for publicity and advertising to explain their policies and to inform the public of the Government services available to them and of their rights and liabilities. Public funds may not, however, be used to finance publicity for party political purposes; this rule governs not only decisions about what is or is not to be published but also the content, style and distribution of what is published. This basic rule covering all Government publicity and advertising has been accepted under successive Administrations.

3. The conventions apply to both "paid" and "unpaid" publicity. "Paid" publicity includes paid advertising in the press, on radio and on television, leaflet campaigns, exhibitions etc. "Unpaid" publicity includes papers presented to Parliament as White and Green Papers and other consultation documents (which are sold to the public at prices intended to defray the costs of printing, publication and distribution), press notices and other official briefing material (all of which may never the less involve some cost to public funds in Civil Service costs).

4. The conventions are:

- (i) subject matter should be relevant to Government responsibilities. The specific matters dealt with should be ones in which Government has direct and substantial responsibilities;
- (ii) content, tone and presentation should not be "party political". The treatment should be as objective as possible, should not be personalised, should avoid political slogans and should not directly attack (though it may implicitly respond to) the policies and opinions of opposition parties or groups;
- (iii) distribution of unsolicited material should be carefully controlled. As a general rule, publicity touching on politically controversial issues should not reach members of the public unsolicited, except where the information clearly and directly affects their interests. The level of intrusion is highest for television, newspapers and poster advertising and material delivered to people's homes, and lowest for material available only on request. The general rule is that leaflets etc may be issued:
 - (a) in response to individual requests, or enclosed with replies to related correspondence;
 - (b) to organisations or those with a known interest or, with the organisation's agreement, in bulk for distribution at their own expense to their membership only.

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- (iv) costs should be justifiable. The Government are accountable to Parliament for the use they make of public funds for publicity, as for any other purpose. The Accounting Officer for the Vote concerned has a particular responsibility to the Public Accounts Committee.

Detailed Application

5. The following paragraphs set out how these conventions are applied to the main kinds of Government publicity. Some specific examples of publicity in potentially politically controversial areas are given at Annex.

New Policy Proposals

6. The main forum for the presentation and discussion of Government policies is Parliament. Major policy proposals are usually presented to Parliament as Command Papers which are sold to the public at a price designed to cover the costs of printing and distribution. Thus the cost to public funds usually consists only of the costs of preparing the text. Other proposals on which comments are invited may be set out in less formal documents in printed or typescript form. These are sometimes priced and sometimes provided free of charge. They are deposited in the Libraries of the House of Lords and the House of Commons at the time of publication and may be sent unsolicited to those with a known interest (not as a rule to the general public, although copies may be provided on request). The public will also get information free of charge through the official information machinery (Departmental Press Offices and the Central Office of Information) by means of press notices or other briefing.

7. Command Papers, consultative documents, official press notices and briefing material may well cover matters which are the subject of party political controversy. Such material will set out what the Government is doing and what they want to achieve. But content, tone and presentation follow the conventions set out in paragraph 4. The emphasis is on exposition and the arguments.

8. Public funds have been used in recent years to supplement this kind of "unpaid" publicity in two ways:

- (i) popular versions of Command Papers. These are simplified versions of White Papers etc which are supplied free of charge and intended to reach and answer the questions of those who are unlikely to buy or read the on-sale document. Examples are Britain's application to join the EC (1971), devolution (1976), counter-inflation (1975), buses (1984).
- (ii) leaflets dealing with typical questions. These are handed out in place of, or enclosed with, replies to letters from MPs or the public and may be given wider distribution if appropriate and cover the main questions which may be raised about a particular policy proposal. Examples are leaflets explaining and answering points on the Government's proposals on live animal experiments (1983-84), the privatisation of British Telecom (1983) and the abolition of the GLC and the Metropolitan County Councils (1985).

9. Both kinds of publicity may be criticised, and presentation and handling are therefore looked at particularly carefully. They are usually written in a more popular style than the traditional Government papers which they supplement. But, like them, they follow the conventions on content and presentation. The emphasis is on facts and

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explanation rather than on the political merits of the proposals. And titles are carefully chosen to be as neutral as possible. For example the recent leaflets on abolition of certain local authorities are simply headed 'After the GLC' and 'After the Metropolitan County Councils'.

10. The justification for such publicity is that it enables the Government to explain its policies and the reasons for them to the general public in a cost-effective way, in circumstances where the traditional means of exposition—statements in Parliament and press notices—may not be sufficient for the purpose. There should be a reasonable relation between the cost of the publication and the likely cost of public funds in terms of enquiries from the public etc if it were not produced. The extra cost of printing the material (as distinct from simply photocopying it) must also be justifiable.

Explanation and Discussion of Existing Policies

11. The same general conventions apply to publicity for existing policies. Paid publicity may be used where the Government believes that a direct approach to the public is needed to give more information about particular issues and policies or to clear up misconceptions. Examples include advertising campaigns on counter-inflation policies (1975), and leaflets and films on defence and disarmament issues (since 1979) and a variety of departmental reports.

12. In such cases subject matter, presentation and handling are again critical, particularly when publicity deals with issues on which there is no consensus. The presentation of arguments and counter-arguments takes account of the need to avoid criticism that public funds are being used to disseminate party political propaganda. The emphasis is on the factual basis and exposition of Government policies rather than on partisan argument.

Information about Rights, Obligations, Liabilities and Government Services

13. This kind of publicity covers a wide range. It may follow legislation which has given the public new entitlements or obligations. It may remind the public of entitlements which the Government would like to see taken up more widely. Or it may be used to encourage the public to adopt certain kinds of social behaviour. It has been accepted under successive administrations that the Government has a clear duty to inform the public in this way. There is no question about the public's need to be informed of their legal entitlements and obligations, and the services available to them. The Government also has a clear right to use publicity to encourage behaviour which is generally regarded as being in the public interest (eg road safety advertising). Most publicity of this kind consists of leaflets, posters and newspaper advertisements. Some of these simply provide factual information and practical advice but others need to be more persuasive in content and presentation. Similar publicity is used to explain changes in the law which affect individuals or businesses, or the work of their professional advisers, Citizens' Advice Bureaux etc.

14. There may be some sensitivity where the matters publicised are the product of controversial legislation or potentially controversial policies. Examples include "Fair Rents" (1972-73), "Right to Buy" council houses (1980-82), "Right to Buy" (1984), "Right to Buy" in Scotland (1984), and the "Switch Off Something" campaign in 1974. Care has been taken in the "Fair Rents" and "Right to Buy" cases to present the information in a way that concentrates on informing the public about the content of legislation and how it affects them. Material of this kind is justified in

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principle by the need of members of the public to be informed of what entitlements are available to them under legislation. In the second case, the "Switch Off Something" campaign was generally accepted as necessary because it bore directly on maintaining the life of the community in a national emergency. Its continuation during the February 1974 Election campaign was specifically agreed with the Opposition Chief Whip.

Recruitment

15. Paid publicity is used extensively by the Government to recruit people in various public services. This is generally non-controversial, but the cost must still be justified.

Legal Position

16. Departments of central Government, unlike local authorities, do not rely on any specific statutory authority to spend money on advertising and publicity. Their use of publicity is covered by the principle that the Crown—and Ministers of the Crown as its agents—can do anything an ordinary person can do provided that there is no statute to the contrary and Parliament has voted the money. The safeguard is of course the Government's accountability to Parliament for all that they do and spend.

Criticism of Government Publicity

17. Government practice on the basis of the convention has occasionally been criticised in Parliament and in the press, but seems to have been subject to only rare formal challenge in recent years. Three instances are:

- (a) In August 1971 an injunction was sought in the High Court against the distribution of a shortened White Paper on Britain's application to join the EC. The injunction was not granted, and Mr Justice Griffiths (*Jenkins v Attorney General and another*, 1971; 115 *Solicitors Journal*, Part II p 674) "could not accept the submission that the prerogative power of the Crown to issue free information was limited . . . to information about Government executive action pursuant to law and excluded the power to inform the public of Government proposals . . .".
- (b) In 1973 the IBA objected to the term "fair rents" in the Government's advertising following the Housing Finance Act 1972 (even though it had been used in the legislation), and the wording had to be changed.
- (c) In 1982 advertisements in the press of current pay offers to the NHS, though entirely factual, were ruled by the Advertising Standards Authority to be political and therefore outside the scope of its code.

CENTRAL GOVERNMENT CONVENTIONS ON PUBLICITY AND ADVERTISING

(Evidence given to the Widdicombe Inquiry)

This note reproduces the Appendix to Annex A to the Note by the Cabinet Office dated 25 April 1985, with the addition of such information about costs as could be obtained without disproportionate expense.

I. POLICY PROPOSALS

1. Britain's application to join the European Community (1971)

Leaflets, posters, shortened version of White Paper: 5½ million copies of shortened White Paper, cost £191,000; leaflets £255,850; advertising the leaflets £86,150 (all figures to July 1971).

2. Devolution (1976)

Popular version of 1975 White Paper published as booklet. Available free at Post Offices in Scotland and Wales. 1,360,000 copies printed, cost £43,000; press advertising of its availability cost £31,300.

3. Police and Criminal Evidence Bill (1983-84)

Booklet on Government proposals, giving replies to main criticisms. Supplied free of charge on request and distributed to various interested groups. Copies enclosed with replies to letters from MPs and public about the Bill. 2,000 copies printed, cost £1,200.

4. Bus Policy (1984)

Leaflet summarising White Paper and answering main questions about the policy. Supplied free of charge on request and sent to various interested groups. Copies enclosed with replies to letters from MPs and public about the Bill. No bulk distribution, but extra copies available to MPs. 20,000 copies printed, cost £1,564.

5. Privatisation of British Telecom (1983)

Pamphlet explaining Government's aims and proposals in recently introduced Bill. Produced to deal with questions most commonly raised. Issued to organisations which had expressed interest in the Bill and in reply to MPs and public correspondence. 18,000 copies printed, cost £7,935.

6. Abolition of Greater London Council and Metropolitan County Councils (1985)

Two pamphlets explaining Government's proposals in Local Government Bill produced after Second Reading in response to requests for information about the proposed arrangements. Sent to all MPs, the press, and the relevant local authority associations. Enclosed with replies to letters about the Bill, and supplied free of charge on request. Initial print 5,000 of each pamphlet, total cost £9,600; further prints 25,000 (GLC) and 40,000 (MCCs), total cost £3,400.

II. EXPLANATION AND DISCUSSION OF EXISTING POLICIES

7. Counter-inflation campaign (1975)

Pamphlet (based on earlier White Paper) distributed to all households. Other briefing material supplied on request. Newspaper advertising beforehand. Cost of pamphlet £850,000, advertising £94,000.

8. Environmental protection (1984)

Booklet for London Economic Summit on achievements in environmental fields. 25,000 copies printed, cost £29,000.

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9. Defence Policy Generally, Nuclear Defence, Arms Control and Disarmament (Continuing)

Several information booklets, pamphlets and films. Available free of charge on request. Some distribution by non-government agencies on basis that there should be no unsolicited distribution. About £20,000 was spent for the Ministry of Defence in 1984-85 on material explaining nuclear and disarmament policies.

10. NHS Pay offers (1982)

Advertising in nursing journals (offer to nurses) and national press (offers to all NHS groups). Total cost £83,000.

(NB. Advertising Standards Authority ruled that the advertisements were political and therefore not within the scope of its Code.)

11. Control of Experiments on Living Animals (1983-84)

Leaflets distributed on request and in reply to correspondence. Set out policies developed by successive Governments and answered points about the 1984 White Paper proposals. Costs £1,952 (1983), £60 (1984).

12. Civil Defence (1974, 1980-83)

Priced and free publications. Free publications distributed on request and also to local authorities for issue by them on same basis. For the two recent unpriced publications, costs were £29,068 (1981) and £600 (1983).

III. INFORMATION ABOUT RIGHTS, LIABILITIES, GOVERNMENT SERVICES ETC.

13. Switch Off Something campaign (1974)

Advertising on TV, press and radio to persuade domestic users to save electricity during the miners' dispute.

14. Fair Rents campaign (1972-73)

Leaflets and booklets for private sector tenants explaining Housing Finance Act 1972. TV and press publicity for both private and public sector tenants. Cost of leaflets and booklets £4,000, advertising £683,000 (1972-73).

15. Right to Buy (1980-82)

Booklet explaining council tenants' new rights under the Housing Act 1980. Supplied free of charge on request. Some ordered by Conservative Central Office for distribution door to door.

16. Right to Buy (1984)

Explaining extension of rights under the Housing and Building Control Act 1984. Booklet and letter from the Minister distributed to most council tenants by a commercial organisation. TV and newspaper advertisements. Total publicity for Right to Buy was as follows:

1980-81	£655,000
1981-82	£239,000
1982-83	£76,000
1983-84	£1,340,000

17. Rates Act (1984)

Explanatory leaflet about the purpose of rate limitation and how it would work, in question and answer format, delivered to 5 million households in the areas subject to rate limitation in 1985-86 under the Rates Act. Advertisements placed in national and local newspapers. Estimated total cost approximately £420,000.

(Revised 23 May 1985.)

GOV MACH COI May 79





10 DOWNING STREET

LONDON SW1A 2AA

From the Principal Private Secretary

SIR ROBIN BUTLER

GOVERNMENT PUBLICITY: CENTRAL OFFICE OF INFORMATION REVIEW

The Prime Minister discussed with you this morning your minute of 19 July about the outcome of the Review of certain aspects of the Central Office of Information's role, including the arrangements for ensuring propriety and value for money in Government publicity.

The Prime Minister believes that the costs quoted in paragraph 9 of the Review, and set out in the chart attached to it, overstate the growth in the "real" volume of advertising expenditure. This is because costs of advertising have increased faster than the increase in the RPI/GDP deflator. She believes that the growth pattern would look somewhat different if the figures quoted had been deflated by a factor relating to the growth in advertising costs. But subject to this particular point, the Prime Minister agrees with the conclusions of the Review set out in paragraph 32.

She agrees, too, that your office should now send the draft letter at Annex B of your submission to the offices of Heads of Departments, so that they disseminate within departments the extended guidance of propriety and value for money, together with the new procedural arrangements. She would also like me to inform Ministers of the new arrangements and I should be grateful if you could provide me with a draft letter for that purpose.

I am sending copies of this minute to the Private Secretaries to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Chief Secretary and Sir Peter Middleton.

N. L. W.

N. L. WICKS
26 July 1988

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MR WICKS

As one who helped produce the report I am of course in agreement with it.

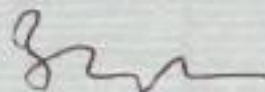
The growth in Government publicity spending, especially on advertising, the development of publicity techniques and the political interest in Government publicity are not the only reasons for the review. The COI has been put in a very difficult position by the process of "untying" when called upon to advise on the propriety of Government publicity; it could mean that it is inhibited from giving advice which might lose it Government contracts.

The report proposes a satisfactory way of removing this unhappy conflict of interest which leaves me free to advise the Prime Minister if she were ever called upon to adjudicate. I hope the Prime Minister will accept the report's recommendations.

I think you should inform Ministers of the new arrangements. I have undertaken at the appropriate time to lead Heads of Information through the report and the proposed new system as accepted by the Prime Minister.

There is some urgency about getting the new system in operation since there is some evidence that further problems will arise if firm guidance is not given.

As you will see from Sir Robin's minute, the report team are going on to examine the future arrangements for the overall organisation and career management of the Government Information Service. This raises some difficult issues which may touch the post of Chief Press Secretary. I will keep you posted.



BERNARD INGHAM

21 July 1988

Prime Minister

*Do you agree the conclusions
in § 32 of the Report and that*

*FERB should write as at Annex B?
(Bernard's comments are at Flag)
N.L.W.
22-7.*

Ref. A088/2204

PRIME MINISTER

Government Publicity: Central Office of Information Review

Mr Wicks' minute of 31 March approved the proposal in my minute of 29 March for a review of certain aspects of the Central Office of Information's role, including the arrangements for ensuring propriety and value for money in Government publicity.

2. I attach the report of the group, comprising Mr Ingham, Mr Devereau (the acting Head of the COI), and representatives of the Treasury and Machinery of Government Division here, which I set up to look into these matters. You will want to consider in particular the conclusions at paragraph 32, and the draft letter at Annex B which it is proposed my office should circulate to Heads of Department.

3. The main conclusions are:

i. the existing guidance on propriety and value for money in Government publicity, as stated in the Government's evidence to the Widdicombe Committee, needs to be supplemented in the light of the approximate doubling of Government publicity expenditure in the last two years, and the increased use of television advertising;

ii. the primary responsibility for the maintenance of the conventions should rest with individual Ministers and their Departments;

iii. where central guidance on the application of the conventions is required, the COI will continue to advise on

a day to day basis, but difficult cases should be referred to me where propriety is concerned, and to the Treasury where value for money considerations arise - at Ministerial level, the Chief Secretary adjudicates, though Ministers do of course have the ultimate right of recourse to you;

iv. the COI should continue to develop as a specialist agency providing consultancy, procurement and project management services in publicity to Departments, on a repayment and untied basis (advertising expenditure remains tied at present, but is under separate review by the Treasury).

4. I endorse these conclusions, as does Sir Peter Middleton. Government publicity is always delicate ground, and the recent and visible increase in expenditure has not surprisingly raised the level of political scrutiny. The publication last month of the Code of Practice on Local Authority publicity, to which local authorities are statutorily required to have regard, will also stimulate scrutiny of any central Government publicity which appears to breach the rules now laid down for local government.

5. I propose that my office should circulate the draft letter at Annex B to the offices of Heads of Department, which would disseminate the extended guidance on propriety and value for money to Departments, together with the new procedural arrangements. You may subsequently wish Mr Wicks to inform Ministers of the new arrangements, in which case I will supply a draft.

I think I should. Agree? N.C.W. 22-7 Y con

6. Separately, I have now asked the review group to produce a further report for me on the future arrangements for the overall organisation and career management of the Government Information Service.

7. I should be glad to know whether you are content that we should proceed in this way.

8. I am sending copies of this minute to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Chief Secretary, Treasury and to Sir Peter Middleton.

R.B.S.

ROBIN BUTLER

19 July 1988

COI REVIEW

Introduction

In the light of recent developments, including the untying of Departments from the COI for Government publicity, and critical Parliamentary scrutiny of some recent Government publicity campaigns, we were asked to consider:

- (i) the future arrangements for ensuring that Government publicity campaigns lie within accepted requirements for both propriety and value for money;
- (ii) the future role of the COI and the organisation and management of the Government Information Service (GIS).

2. Our initial work has focussed on the first of these tasks, though we have considered the second to the extent necessary to ensure that our conclusions are compatible with the likely future role and structure of the GIS as a whole.

The problem

3. To be effective the methods and techniques used in Government publicity work need to keep abreast of those used in society at large. They are subject to rapid change, and to changing relative costs. At the same time, it is important that Government publicity campaigns should never be open to legitimate charges that taxpayers' money is being misused for party political purposes. It is also important that the overall approach and the methods used demonstrably achieve value for money (VFM).

4. There is a natural tension involved in the simultaneous achievement of these goals. For them to be achieved, there needs to be:

- clear, appropriate and accepted guidance on the requirements for propriety and VFM,
- clear allocation of responsibility for ensuring that these requirements, including the provision of authoritative advice in difficult cases, are met; and machinery for resolving disputes (though this should be very much in the last resort).

There is also uncertainty over the appropriate role now for the COI. Its central role as a provider of information and publicity services to Departments is being modified by untying and by the development of the FMI approach within departments; these developments, which put COI's relationship with departments on to a more contractual basis, also affect COI's ability to act as an authoritative guide on questions of propriety. A clear definition of COI's future role is needed.

Background

5. Current guidance on the conventions on Government publicity and advertising is at present contained in two separate documents:

- (i) C(P)(88) 1 of February 1988 covering a copy of the memorandum submitted by the Cabinet Office to the Widdicombe Committee in 1985; and
- (ii) a letter of 19 December 1985 from the Private Secretary to the Secretary of the Cabinet and Head of the Home Civil Service on the Presentation of Government Actions, which itself referred to the Widdicombe evidence.

6. The first of these gives guidance on both propriety and value for money (although it is principally concerned with the former). It is essentially concerned with restating accepted conventions of custom and practice, especially of avoiding the charge that taxpayers' money is being misused for party political purposes. The second is more concerned with effective presentation and mentions issues of propriety as a restraint, and referred Departments to COI as a source of advice on mechanics for publicity, propriety, and the conventions on the use of public funds. It predates the substantial and rapid growth of Government publicity in the last two years, and the untying of departments from the COI.

7. Value for money, as opposed to propriety in its use, has also to be seen in the light of guidance on the responsibilities of Accounting Officers, and the role and responsibilities of the Treasury for achieving value for money as a part of controlling public expenditure. Expenditure on publicity may or may not be a part of the delegated

financial responsibilities agreed for particular departments. Where it is not the Treasury is to be consulted on expenditure proposals. Where it is, the convention that novel or contentious expenditure should still be referred to the Treasury applies.

8. The COI's origins lie in the wartime Ministry of Information, which provided Government information and publicity services on a centralised allied service basis. The largest elements in its work are:

- the provision of advice to departments on how best to achieve their publicity objectives
- the procurement of publicity material for departments in all media
- the management for departments of publicity campaigns and projects.

It also undertakes overseas publicity for the FCO; operates a regional network to provide information and publicity services to Departments in the regions; and is a source of advice to departments on the interpretation of the conventions on Government publicity. See Annex A for further details. The Director General of the COI has career management responsibilities for members of the GIS as head of profession.

9. Expenditure by departments on publicity through COI has more than doubled over the past two years from £66 million in 1985/86 to £151 million in 1987/88. Even excluding expenditure on flotations, which accounted for £34 million in 1987/88 (nil in 1985/86), this still represents an increase over two years of some 75%. Since moving to repayment in 1984, COI has reduced its staffing from 988 (in 1983/4) to 849 in 1987/8. The COI now provides its specific services to departments on a repayment basis (all but £1 m of its budget in 1988/9). Since April 1987, Departments have been formally untied from the COI for all publicity services apart from the procurement of advertising, where it has hitherto been held that the volume discounts COI can achieve represent best overall VFM; and the regional service network.

10. The COI reports to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, who delegates day to day responsibility to another Treasury Minister (currently the Economic Secretary). In addition, the Chief Secretary, Treasury acts as a point of reference on Government publicity matters, and has responsibility for the adjudication of conflicting departmental approaches to the presentation of Government publicity. C(P)(88)1 requires all proposals for paid publicity about the contents of legislation in advance of Parliamentary approval to be referred to him.

Discussion

11. We are persuaded that the present pattern of guidance, and the machinery to support it, is too hit and miss to provide sufficient assurance that the conventions on propriety and value for money are reliably and fully observed. Given the pace of change, and Ministers' understandable concern that the Government's use of modern communication methods does not lag too far behind what is accepted by the public as contemporary and appropriate, the guidance available needs to be brought together and regularly examined to make sure it is up-to-date. At the same time the guidance itself, and the machinery to underpin it, needs to reflect rather than overturn the progress which has been made in:

- (a) the delegation of responsibilities to departments and
- (b) turning the COI into an agency providing departments with a professional resource on an untied basis.

If this basic stance is agreed, the guidance given and the machinery in support of it need to be filled out beyond what is now available (although we do not believe the very general terms of paragraph 3 of C(P)(88) 1 need radical change).

- (a) Guidance on propriety and VFM

12. The main gap in the guidance on propriety attached to C(P)(88) 1 lies in the section at paragraphs 11 and 12 on publicity to explain and discuss existing policies (or policy developments where no new legislation is needed). More emphasis

is needed on the point that the scale and cost of any campaign must be fully justifiable as being well-targetted and cost-effective in terms of final objectives such as informing the choice of individuals or influencing the performance of businesses. Evidence of these effects should be a key aspect of evaluations of publicity expenditure. This additional emphasis is necessary because it is at a minimum counter-productive if the level of spending on a campaign impedes the communication of the message it is intended to convey by itself becoming a controversial issue. In addition, a publicity campaign, or individual components of it, needs to be closely scrutinised not only in detail but also for its overall effect. "Image building", whether explicit or subliminal and whether of the Government or Minister, is not acceptable. The test to be applied is whether a campaign, taken both as a whole and in part, can be justified as an effective response to a requirement to communicate with the public, or a particular section of it. Is any party political advantage which may accrue to the Government incidental to the exercise or more a calculated and intended consequence? If, on any reasonable test, it may even appear to be engineering party political advantage, the publicity would be indefensible.

13. In addition, some explicit guidance on value for money needs to be provided (see Annex B, paragraph 9).

(b) Procedures and Machinery

14. The main responsibility for ensuring that the conventions on propriety are observed and that value for money is being achieved must rest with Departments, and in particular with Departmental Ministers, Permanent Secretaries, and other Heads of Department. Clearer guidance on the procedures and requirements for decision taking would be helpful even if the principles are well understood.

15. In departments, these procedures can be simply stated as a requirement for the Head of Department, under the responsible Minister, to be satisfied that all proposals for publicity comply with current policies and guidance on propriety and value for money. The main source of advice to Ministers and Heads of Department in this field is the Departmental Head of Information. The delegation of respon-

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sibilities generally to line managers, coupled with the natural tendency of senior information staff to focus on the more immediately demanding and politically sensitive press relations side of their work (where the most immediate pressures are usually felt), has tended to undermine the key role of heads of information on publicity matters. We therefore suggest that:

- Heads of Information should be given a mandatory role as adviser to their Minister and Head of Department on questions of propriety and VFM in relation to Government publicity
- no parts of a Department should be exempt from this rule
- those responsible for the management of major publicity projects (whether or not in information divisions) should be made fully aware of the groundrules and guidance available on propriety and VFM.

If this approach is to be effective, Heads of Information will need to have sufficient clout in a practical sense with senior line managers in policy divisions; and understand the importance attached to publicity work.

16. If the Departmental arrangements work well, the need for reference to the centre should be very limited. It is likely to arise in three distinct circumstances:

- (i) if a publicity proposal falls into a category where central reference is mandatory. This is at present the case for paid publicity in advance of legislative approval: we see no need to add further categories;
- (ii) if a proposal is "novel or contentious" in expenditure terms, in which case reference to the Treasury would be expected under the rules in Government Accounting and more generally under the normal conventions;

- (iii) where a Minister, Head of Department or Head of Information wanted a second opinion on the compatibility of a proposal with the current central guidance.

Cases arising under (i) would fall to be decided by the Minister for the time being nominated to carry out this function (at present the Chief Secretary). Those arising under (ii) would be a matter for the Treasury who might or might not need to refer the issue to their Ministers. In both cases those concerned could be expected to wish to seek professional GIS advice.

17. So far as (iii) is concerned, COI (and in particular the Director-General) have hitherto been able, through the advice they have given, to resolve most difficult cases. Only rarely have such cases needed to go to Ministers for adjudication. Now and in the future, most potential problems will in practice be resolved in dialogue between Departments and the COI, since COI continue to provide Departments with advice on the most appropriate and effective ways of meeting their publicity objectives, drawing on wide experience; and will aim to do so within the existing conventions. However, as relations between departments and the COI move progressively on to a client-contractor basis, it will become more difficult (if not impossible) for COI simultaneously to act as regulator/whistleblower: knowledge that COI had such a role could discourage departments from using COI's advice, and in any case they are now free to take business elsewhere.

18. Under these circumstances, three other central points of reference merit consideration: the No. 10 Press Office; Treasury; and Cabinet Office.

19. We do not believe it would be sensible or practical to give the responsibility to the Prime Minister's Chief Press Secretary. Such responsibilities would not routinely fit well with the main work he is charged to carry out; and in the event of a conflict of advice (his own and a department's), in the last resort he would be advising the Prime Minister on how it should be resolved. We do not believe this would be acceptable to Ministers.

20. The Treasury has to examine value for money as part of its routine responsibilities in this and in other areas. Expenditure

CONFIDENTIAL

divisions are used to probing to see whether expenditure in an area should be incurred at all, and if so whether it is likely to meet its objective efficiently, effectively and economically. The Treasury is not particularly well placed however to offer 'second-guess' judgements on the tone or acceptability of publicity (although its Information Division could be strengthened to do this and provide other professional advice as could the Cabinet Office). Propriety and value for money would more readily be confused rather than clarified. And departments might resent the Treasury having this particular role more than they would the Cabinet Office.

21. The Cabinet Office, and in particular the Cabinet Secretary, would be the natural place for departments to look for advice on propriety and precedent in this as in other areas. The number of cases reaching him could be expected to be small; and he would be able to look to MG Division and the relevant Secretariat for advice as appropriate (they in turn might wish to take informal soundings with members of the GIS).

22. On balance we conclude that the least disruptive change to existing responsibilities would be to involve both the Cabinet Office and the Treasury by dividing between them the task of advising on the conventions and to do so broadly as follows:

Cabinet Office:	relevance)	
	objectivity)	
	non polemical)	propriety
	non party-political)	
The Treasury:	production/distribution)	value
	in an economic way and a)	for
	justified use of public funds)	money

This formulation uses the terms of C(P)(88)1.

23. Under the present allocation of responsibilities, any adjudication at Ministerial level would fall to the Chief Secretary, with ultimate recourse to the Prime Minister in the usual way.

Dissemination and monitoring

24. If these conclusions on propriety, VFM and procedure are accepted, it will be necessary to issue the amplified guidance on propriety and VFM, the reiteration of departmental responsibilities, and the changes in the central co-ordinating arrangements, to departments.

C(P)(88) 1 was issued so recently that it may not be desirable to offer a revised version as the first result of this review. The best means of giving updated and strengthened guidance initially might therefore be via a letter from the Private Secretary to the Secretary of the Cabinet to Permanent Secretaries' offices. A draft is attached at Annex B. The Prime Minister might then be asked to authorise a letter from No. 10 to Ministers' offices saying that she has asked the Cabinet Secretary to circulate revised guidance to Heads of Department, with a summary of its contents.

25. The pace of change and fashion in this field is sufficiently rapid that it would be sensible to keep the central guidance under regular review, and also to obtain regular feedback from Departments about developments and problems. This might be achieved via an annual meeting (under joint Cabinet Office/Treasury auspices) to review trends and report developments, in the light of which the guidance could be amplified or modified where necessary. A report of this annual review should be submitted to the Cabinet Secretary and the Permanent Secretary to the Treasury who would decide on any necessary consultation with Permanent Secretary colleagues or others. The results of the review should be reported to the responsible Minister (at present the Chief Secretary) and from him to the Prime Minister if appropriate.

Future role of the COI

26. Paragraph 8 summarised the current role of the COI. Over the next few years, it is likely to evolve further in the direction described there. Government Departments do not have the commercial equivalent of marketing departments which, in addition to their strategic functions, provide firms with in-house expertise on publicity techniques and contractors. Departmental Information Divisions provide the nearest equivalent in Government terms, but at times need to supplement their expertise with specialist knowledge and

skills. COI therefore has a natural role as consultant to departments on ways of achieving their publicity objectives, and (if Departments so choose) as a project manager for the larger and more complex publicity campaigns (e.g. 1992). Commercial publicity, advertising etc. agencies could not so readily perform these particular tasks, since their other clients also tend to provide these functions in-house; there is also a natural conflict of interest.

27. This analysis suggests that there is a continuing role for COI in the three areas highlighted in paragraph 8, and indeed that departments will increasingly want a professional and competitive service in these areas. But there is no need to turn back the clock from the present repayment/untied basis of provision. Furthermore, COI's continuing role as a consultant, procurer and project manager is likely to be accompanied by a continued (though not total) move towards contracting out of its internal functions (e.g. COI continues to provide a photography service for departments, but no longer employs photographers or has its own darkroom or library facilities). In an era of larger and more visible publicity campaigns, COI's research capability (for checking the need for, and effectiveness of, campaigns in achieving their stated objectives) is also likely to be of continuing value to client departments.

28. COI's regional service network operates essentially on a tied basis. Centralised management of information staff in the regions permits a more flexible and economical response to short term peaks and troughs; the management of lone specialists in departmental regional offices is never an easy task; and the present arrangements already give individual Departments in the regions some say over the choice of particular GIS staff in the COI office to serve their particular interests. Centralised provision also facilitates provision of an information service for members of the Royal Family when they undertake regional visits, and provision of an emergency planning service for Departments. The Treasury may in due course wish to examine the scope for untying Departments from this central provision, but such an exercise would not detract from the general conclusions of this report.

29. Nor do we see any need to disturb the present arrangements for the provision by COI of all the FCO's requirements for publicity services overseas in the absence of any known pressure for changes from the FCO.

30. ~~Within the COI's mainstream activities, one area remains tied: advertising.~~ Quite apart from any considerations of propriety, this has been justified hitherto on the grounds that the volume of business COI has to place enables it to achieve discounts with the media which departments individually would not be able to match, and hence an overall value for money gain. ~~This position is currently being reviewed separately by the Treasury in consultation with COI.~~

Organisation and management of the Government Information Service (GIS)

31. In the first stage of this review ~~we have not sought to investigate in detail the organisation and management of the GIS as an entity; we propose to do so as a second stage.~~ But our analysis and conclusions on the means for enforcing the conventions on propriety and VFM, and in particular the pivotal role of Departmental Heads of Information, suggests that press and publicity work should continue to be managed together (so that the senior Departmental publicity official has sufficient clout with colleagues).

Conclusions

32. (i) ~~The guidance to departments on propriety in C(P)(88)1 should be reinforced~~ along the lines discussed in paragraphs 12 and 13 above;
- (ii) there is ~~scope for more explicit guidance on Value for Money,~~ which might be incorporated with (i) above;
- (iii) ~~the main responsibility~~ for ensuring compliance with the conventions/guidance on propriety and VFM must rest primarily with Departments, and in particular with Ministers, Heads of Department and Heads of Information;
- (iv) while COI will continue to provide advice on propriety and VFM as an integral part of their work for client Departments, the new relationship with Departments resulting from the advent of repayment and (explicit) untying means that ~~COI can no longer act as central arbiter when serious disputes arise.~~ This function should henceforth be carried out by Cabinet Office

(propriety) and Treasury (VFM), though with close co-ordination between the two; reporting (under present arrangements) to the Chief Secretary at Ministerial level;

- (v) for the time being, mandatory reference to the centre does not need to go beyond existing expenditure control requirements and the specific responsibilities given to the Chief Secretary in C(P)(88)1;
- (vi) COI's future role should focus on the provision of consultancy, procurement and project management services in publicity to departments, on a repayment and untied basis (advertising expenditure remains tied at present, but under separate review by the Treasury). Its regional and overseas services can continue on the present basis, though the Treasury may wish to review the scope for untying Departments from the COI in relation to the former;
- (vii) the revised and expanded guidance on propriety, VFM, and procedures should be disseminated to Departments via a letter from the Cabinet Secretary's office, matched by a short letter from No. 10 drawing the attention of Ministers to the revised guidance;
- (viii) arrangements should be made to keep developments on government publicity and the central guidance under regular review along the lines indicated in paragraph 25 above.

July 1988.

FUNCTIONS AND ORGANISATION OF COICOI's Present Role

Located within Government, COI works exclusively for other parts of Government, assisting them to achieve their publicity objectives with optimum value for money. Essentially, it operates as an agency to which departments may turn in order to tap its expertise in dealing with the market in publicity services. This expertise extends from advising on the development of solutions to publicity problems through to the procurement of best value for money in the implementation of these solutions. COI also provides some services direct to departments, but for most purposes this is secondary to its role as intermediary.

2. Departments are not obliged to use COI for most publicity, but may deal direct with private sector providers of services. In practice, most prefer to take advantage of COI's expertise. Advertising and the regional service which COI provides at present remain tied but the Treasury is reviewing the first and the second may also be the subject of a future review.

3. Aside from operational advice, COI's advisory role has also extended to advising on questions of propriety in Government publicity, although the principal responsibility for formulating publicity objectives and for ensuring that expenditure is justified has always rested with customer departments. The problems for the discharge of this role arising from the shift to untying in 1984 are discussed in the main text of the report.

Funding:

4. COI has operated since 1 April 1984 as a full repayment department with a target of breaking even year on year. This target has been achieved during each of the four ensuing years. As from 1 April 1988, COI will operate on a Net Vote basis, with receipts from repayment work being appropriated in aid. This arrangements replaces the previous Gross Vote system. Total expenditure through COI (excluding flotation campaigns) in recent years is shown in the attached table.

Structure and Staffing:

5. COI's structure reflects both its multi-media activities (including advertising, publications, photographs, exhibitions, conferences, visual media and radio) and its need to provide a co-ordinated package of services to its fifty or so clients. Its central divisions in London are organised broadly by function into 4 Groups: Overseas Publicity Group, Visual Media and Radio Group, Home Publicity Group and Central Services Group. These are supplemented and served by a network of regional offices. Other functions outside this working structure include the information element of national emergency planning.

6. Staffing is based on minimum anticipated levels of demand in each area, with peaks being met through buying in services as necessary. In 1987/8 total staffing levels were 849 (compared with over 1200 staff in 1980).

ACTIVITIES

Home Publicity Group:

7. This Group handled business of £117 million in 1987/88 in its three divisions:

Advertising Division manages the Government's advertising, running competitive pitches between advertising agencies when required, working closely with the Advisory Committee on advertising, negotiating contracts and ensuring that space is bought competitively.

Publications Division organises production of recruiting booklets and posters, information booklets detailing Government schemes and leaflets of all kinds.

Research Division monitors publicity campaigns and looks at the effectiveness of advertising.

Visual Media and Radio Group:

8. Turnover for this Group in 1987/88 totalled £21 million. The Group provides services to departments, both home and overseas, in the following media: Films and Television, Conferences, Exhibitions, Photographs and Radio.

Films and Television Division employs its own film producers who bring together from outside the creative and technical resources to meet each departmental brief. Productions include TV commercials, TV fillers, recruiting films and training videos. A budget unit negotiates fees with commercial production and facility houses and issues contracts. Marketing staff seek to obtain maximum exposure for each production. Sales are negotiated with overseas TV companies and a separate trading organisation, CFI-Vision, handles sales and loans in the UK. A small unit places public service TV fillers with BBC and commercial stations. A correspondents and facilities unit provides advice and assistance in the UK to foreign TV correspondents on behalf of FCO.

A small Conference Support Unit has been formed to handle administrative arrangements for two series of regional conferences which DTI is mounting with COI support (Single European Market and Customised Silicon)

CONFIDENTIAL

Exhibitions Division undertakes a wide range of projects from British pavilions at international exhibitions to window displays in recruiting offices. COI has a small team of in-house exhibition designers, exhibition management offices and exhibition contracts officers. Design work and a full range of photographic services are also contracted out to the private sector.

Radio Services Division has its own well-equipped studios and a small team of radio producers who originate material for overseas and domestic audiences (editorial items, fillers and commercials). Material is also commissioned from freelance contributors. A key service is provided by the radio technical unit in relaying and recording ministerial speeches and press conferences for transcription and wider dissemination. COI sound engineers invariably accompany the Foreign Secretary and Prime Minister overseas to set up the necessary links.

Overseas Publicity Services:

9. With a turnover of £13 million in 1987/8, this Group mainly provides information about Britain for use overseas. Customers include the FCO and BOTB.

The Overseas Visitors and Information Studies Division arranges for over 1,500 visitors to Britain annually, from over 100 countries. Programmes are also prepared for overseas media correspondents resident in Britain. Courses are organised for information officers of overseas governments, for British Diplomatic Service officers taking up information appointments overseas, and for the Information Officer Group of the Home Civil Service.

Overseas Press Services Division provides through the London Press Service, news stories, feature articles and other written material for reproduction in newspapers and periodicals abroad and for briefing purposes. Despatch to British Embassies or High Commissions is by telex or airmail. A specialised industrial service includes stories about new products and processes and gives publicity to trade fairs and trade missions. The London Pictures Service provides a parallel and complementary output of captioned photographs for press reproduction.

Other services include the provision of a range of reference publications, posters, and foreign language magazines covering British affairs, and a distribution and shipping function.

CONFIDENTIAL

Central Services Group:

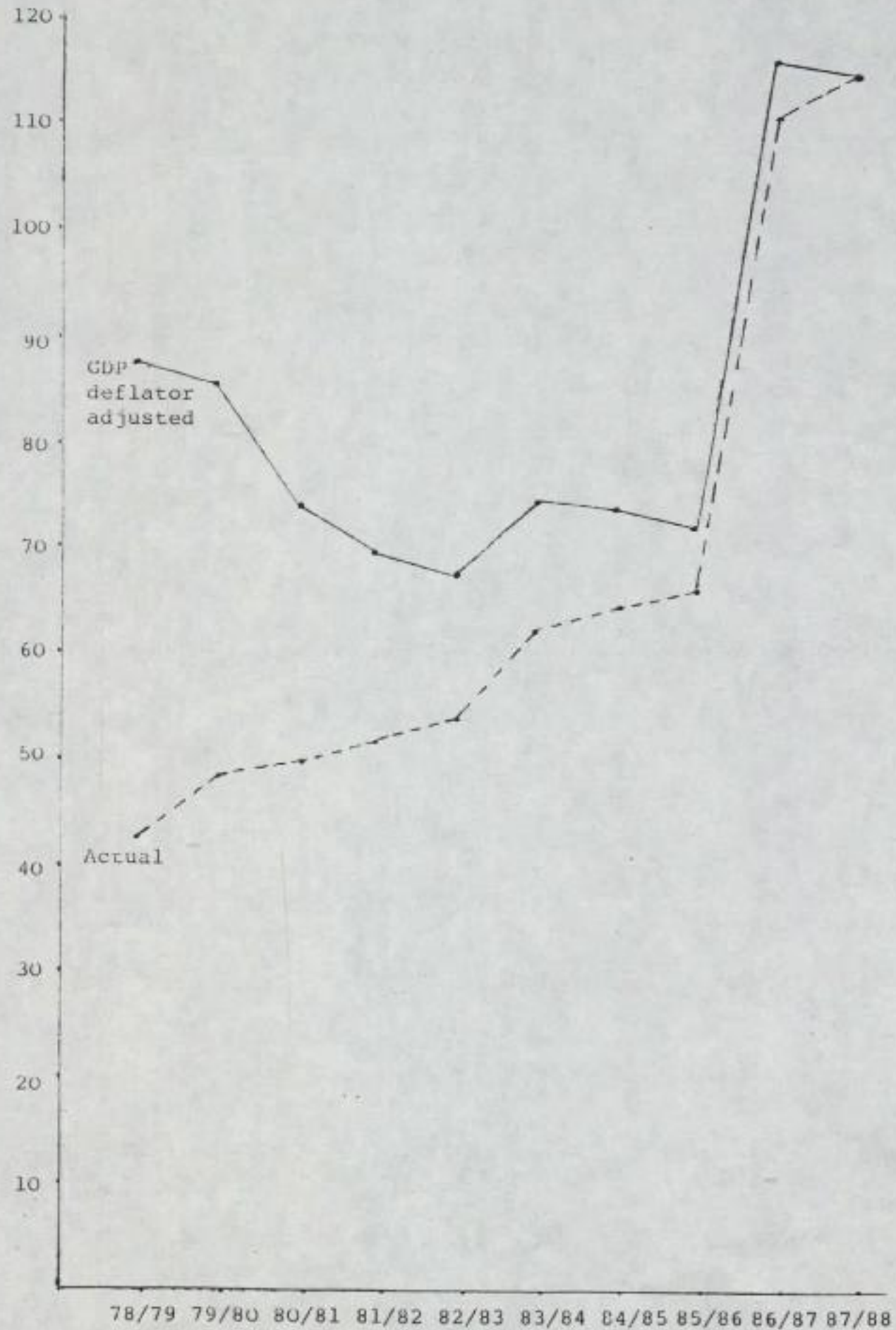
This Group has two main functions:

COI's seven regional offices in England are staffed by small teams of Information officers most of whom are dedicated to a particular client department. The staff maintain regular contact with regional press, TV and radio to obtain local publicity and feedback on behalf of home departments. They also make press arrangements for Royal and Ministerial visits and for overseas visitors. In addition, they produce press items, photographs and radio tapes for use overseas.

Communications Services Division distributes press releases on behalf of all government departments.

COI TOTAL EXPENDITURE (inc VAT)
(excluding Flotation Campaigns)

£m



(Estimated)

DRAFT LETTER FROM PS/SIR ROBIN BUTLER TO PS/HEADS OF DEPARTMENT
ON GOVERNMENT PUBLICITY

GOVERNMENT PUBLICITY

In the light of the growth in the volume of Government publicity, and of the change in the role of the COI, a review has been undertaken of the conventions governing it and the mechanisms for ensuring that propriety is observed and value for money (VFM) secured. The outcome of this review [which has been endorsed by the Prime Minister] provides additional guidance on propriety and VFM to that contained in the Cabinet Office memorandum submitted to the Widdicombe Committee and attached to C(P)(88) 1 (copy of memorandum attached for ease of reference); restates how the main weight of responsibility on Departmental Ministers, Permanent Secretaries and other Heads of Department should be discharged; and describes arrangements at the centre (Cabinet Office and Treasury) for advising on especially difficult cases. This letter sets out the expanded guidance and also outlines a revised structure of central responsibilities.

PROPRIETY

2. The main conventions, as stated in C(P)(88) 1, require that Government publicity:

- (a) should be relevant to Government responsibilities;
- (b) should be objective and explanatory, not tendentious or polemical;
- (c) should not be, or be liable to misrepresentation as being, party political;
- (d) should be produced and distributed in an economic and relevant way, having regard to the need to be able to justify the costs as expenditure of public funds.

These conventions, as amplified in the attached memorandum, continue to serve the Government well. However paragraphs 11 and 12 of the memorandum which deal with "Explanation and Discussion of Existing Policies" and by inference with new policy developments not needing primary legislation, do not address in any detail

the particular problems posed by the availability and effectiveness of modern communications techniques on the one hand, and the risk they carry of party political impact on the other. The Government is now one of the largest purchasers of paid publicity, and as well as providing general information for the public, uses publicity to influence the social behaviour of individuals and the economic behaviour of individuals and businessmen.

3. Government publicity (and especially advertising) campaigns have to compete for attention with other publicity. To be effective they need to be professionally presented in such a way as to register a clear message with the public. They should also impress upon the public, whether listening, viewing, or participating in events such as conferences, that the Government is taking pains over the presentation of the facts and its message. Shabby and ill thought out presentation can be as much a waste of public funds as the extravagant use of resources.

4. It would however be counter-productive if the level of spending on a public campaign impeded the communication of the message it is intended to convey by itself becoming a controversial issue. To pass the test of acceptability, Government publicity should always strike a balance in spending on often expensive modern communication techniques.

5. It is no less crucial, if Government publicity is to remain acceptable within the conventions, that it avoids any doubts about its purpose. Government publicity should always be directed at informing the public even where it also has the objective of influencing the behaviour of individuals or particular groups. It is possible that in serving the public in this way a well-founded publicity campaign can rebound to the political credit of the party in Government. By definition this is a natural consequence of political office but must not be or be believed to be either the primary purpose or a principal incidental purpose of a campaign.

6. Ministers and Heads of Department need to be on their guard against these dangers. They can stem as much from context, treatment, style, tone and quality of presentation as from the actual text

employed. Each of these will need to be examined. A publicity campaign, or individual components of it, needs to be closely scrutinised not only in detail but also for its overall effect. "Image building", whether explicit or implied and whether of Government or Minister, is not acceptable. The test is whether a campaign, taken both as a whole and in part, can be justified as an effective response to a requirement to communicate with the public, or a particular section of it on an issue of importance.

7. In addition, it has been the policy of successive Governments, maintained by the present, that Ministers and Departments should not make use of public relations consultants.

VALUE FOR MONEY (VFM)

8. As with any other kind of public expenditure the prime responsibility for ensuring the economy efficiency and effectiveness of a publicity proposal is for spending departments. The Treasury is responsible for carrying out its normal role which will include questioning whether a particular proposal is a justified use of public funds or whether adequate evidence about the effects it achieves is or will be available.

9. The Accounting Officer's general VFM responsibility is if anything more acute in this area because of the high visibility of publicity expenditure and the potential intangibility of results. A rigorous examination of all proposals for publicity expenditure, starting from first principles, is therefore essential.

10. In each such case those responsible for the proposal need to be able to give a persuasive reply to the following questions:

- (i) Is it necessary to have a publicity proposal which goes beyond what can be achieved in the normal way (e.g. Parliamentary announcement, Ministerial speech, regular publication)?
- (ii) If so, what is the precise goal, and precise target audience?

- (iii) What means of publicity is best suited to achieve this goal and target?
- (iv) What is affordable?
- (v) How are results to be measured, distinguishing between publicity effects (such as the level of awareness of information) and non-publicity effects (such as changes in behaviour)?
- (vi) Where the final objective of publicity is to influence the behaviour of individuals or the performance of business, is there adequate evidence of the effects achieved or, failing that, have sufficient arrangements been made to get such evidence?
- (vii) In the light of these considerations, is the publicity course chosen the most economical, efficient and effective in the circumstances?

In some of the newer economic areas there is often a close link between propriety and value for money. For example the argument that it is a legitimate use of public money to promote the importance of better business performance through paid advertising depends crucially on its effect on behaviour.

PROCEDURES

11. The responsibility for ensuring that the conventions on propriety are observed and that value for money is being achieved rests with Departments and in particular with Departmental Ministers and Heads of Department. The principal source of advice to Ministers and Heads of Department in this field is the Departmental Head of Information. Heads of Department should ensure that the Head of Information always has sufficient opportunity to advise on proposals for paid publicity, as well as the Departmental Finance Division.

12. If the Departmental arrangements work well, the need for reference to central Departments should be very limited. It is likely to arise in three distinct circumstances:

- (i) if a publicity proposal falls into a category where central reference is mandatory, as is at present the case for paid publicity in advance of legislative approval;
- (ii) if a proposal is "novel or contentious" in expenditure terms, in which case reference to the Treasury would be expected under the rules in Government Accounting and the public expenditure conventions generally;
- (iii) where a Minister, Head of Department or Head of Information wanted a second opinion on the compatibility of a proposal with the current central guidance.

13. Historically, COI (and in particular the Director-General) has provided central advice in difficult cases. Many potential problems will still in practice be avoided in dialogue between Departments and COI, since COI continues to provide Departments with advice on the most appropriate and effective ways of meeting their publicity objectives, drawing on wide experience. However, with relations between Departments and the COI moving progressively on to a contractual basis, and with Departments, as a result of untying, being free to take publicity business elsewhere, COI will not in future be able to discharge this regulatory function without conflicts of interest and gaps in its coverage.

14. In the future, responsibility for provision of central advice on the conventions will be provided through the Cabinet Secretary's office for propriety questions, and in the relevant Treasury Expenditure Division for value for money issues. The division of subjects, using the terms of C(P)(88)1, will be as follows:

Cabinet Office:	relevance)	
	objectivity)	
	non polemical)	propriety
	non party-political)		

The Treasury: production/distribution)
 in an economic way and) value for
 a justified use of) money
 public funds)

15. At Ministerial level, the Chief Secretary, Treasury acts as a point of reference on Government publicity matters, and has responsibility for the adjudication of conflicting departmental approaches to the presentation of Government publicity. C(P)(88)1 requires all proposals for paid publicity about the contents of legislation in advance of Parliamentary approval to be referred to him, and this requirement remains in force.

MANAGEMENT IN CONFIDENCE



10 DOWNING STREET

From the Principal Private Secretary

SIR ROBIN BUTLER

CENTRAL OFFICE OF INFORMATION

The Prime Minister has seen your minute of 29 March in which you proposed a review of certain aspects of the Central Office of Information's role.

The Prime Minister agrees that you should proceed with the review in the way that you suggest.

I am sending a copy of this minute to Alex Allan (H M Treasury).

N.L.W.

N. L. WICKS

31 March 1988

MANAGEMENT IN CONFIDENCE

file
SLH
BT

dg

MR. WICKS

This accurately sets out the problem which is a serious one in terms of:

- financial control
- ensuring value for money
- maintaining Government conventions governing publicity
- managing Information Staffs.

I am keen to participate in the review and hope I will be allowed to do so.

I am afraid I regard some of the issues raised by the current activities of DTI as potentially very difficult.

BERNARD INGHAM

29 March 1988

Prime Minister

*Contact with FERB's
signature below?*

Yes no

*(Please Bernard's comment at
Flag.)*

*N.C.U.
30.3.*

Ref. A088/1066

PRIME MINISTER

Central Office of Information

Recent developments, and in particular untying of Departments from use of the Central Office of Information (COI) for Government publicity, have highlighted a number of unsatisfactory aspects of the responsibilities of the COI and its Director General.

2. The first of these is the COI's role in advising Departments on the conventions governing Government publicity and achieving value for money, as well as actually running campaigns. Now that Departments are untied from COI, it is difficult for the COI to fulfil the first two of these roles since Departments are not obliged to come to them. Moreover, since COI is an agency competing with outside agencies for Departments' business, there is a potential conflict of interest for the COI in giving advice. This has been thrown into sharp focus by the rapid recent, and current, growth in Government publicity, particularly in the Department of Trade and Industry. The Treasury have been worried about the value for money of some of the Department of Trade and Industry's advertising and, whether or not there are grounds for concern about that, the prominence of their campaigns makes it likely that other Departments will want to follow them. We need to make sure that there are adequate mechanisms, in a world where Departments are untied from COI, to ensure they both observe propriety and achieve value for money.

3. The second problem is the management and organisation of the Information Service. Under present arrangements, the Director General of the COI (Mr Neville Taylor) is Head of

Profession for the Information Service. This has never been an easy role to perform because the information staff in departmental press offices have little contact with the COI, and the Director General has difficulties in keeping contact with them and assessing their performance. Although Mr Ingham keeps closely in touch with Mr Taylor on these matters, the untying of Departments from COI has made the links with departmental staff even more tenuous. There is also the question whether the present arrangements under which some information staff, eg those in departmental press offices, are employed by Departments and other information staff, particularly those in the regions, are employed by COI and assigned to departmental work is still a satisfactory way of organising the Information Service.

4. Another factor is that the Director General of the COI had a bout of poor health last year. While he has recovered from that and while he agrees that the role of COI needs to be reviewed - indeed he took the initiative in bringing these questions to attention - and is keen to help in reviewing them, he does not feel that he is the right person to carry through the changes to the COI's role which are likely to be necessary. He has indicated that he would like to take early retirement later this year.

5. All this provides an opportunity, as well as a need, to review the role of the COI and the organisation and management of the Information Service. Having consulted Sir Peter Middleton, Mr Taylor and Mr Ingham, I propose that a small group, consisting of Mr Taylor, Mr Ingham and one person each from Cabinet Office and Treasury, be asked to produce a report on these matters. They may need to deal more urgently with the organisation for ensuring propriety and value for money in Government publicity, since that shows signs of becoming an urgent issue. But I believe that they could produce proposals on all aspects of the matters set out above before the Summer

Recess. I envisage that the review should not be announced and that it should produce a report, or reports, which I would submit to you and Treasury Ministers only in the first instance. In the light of your reactions, it would then be necessary to clear proposals for the future with Departments more widely.

6. I should be glad to know whether you are content that we should proceed in this way.

7. I am copying this minute to the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

R.R.B.

ROBIN BUTLER

29 March 1988

Mr. WICKS



10 DOWNING STREET

From the Press Secretary

Richard Wilson Esq
Cabinet Office (MPO)
Government Offices
Great George Street
London SW1

4 November 1986

Dear Richard

GOVERNMENT INFORMATION SERVICE

Neville Taylor has already expressed himself in forceful terms about the Home Secretary's letter on the position facing the Home Office because four Information Officers are leaving simultaneously on promotion. This note seeks to supplement Neville's comments from my particular standpoint.

One of my jobs is to try to help Neville in the management of that part of the GIS which I know best - namely, the 220 or so Information Officers manning press offices. I do not know all these officers but over the last 7 years we have had about a quarter of the strength in No 10 on secondment.

It is interesting to note that, at a rough count, 17 Chief Press Officers or PIOs now serving in Departments or Agencies (or who have gone elsewhere to much more lucrative posts) were with us for a time as IOs or, more usually as SIOs, in No 10. In addition six are either Heads or Deputy Heads of Information in Departments. Others at SIO level are now prime candidates for early promotion.

Only two of the four leaving the Home Office on promotion have experience of No 10. However, I think I am entitled to regard this secondment scheme as my personal contribution to the improvement of the GIS by means of a. giving IOs and SIOs experience of working in No 10 and the Lobby environment; and b. identifying those who are likely to advance and whose careers need to be managed with that in view.

This would be my first response to the quite gratuitously insulting nonsense contained in Paragraphs 4 and 5 of the Home Secretary's letter. He has quite clearly been ill advised by his officials.

It follows from this - but not only from this - that we are providing machinery both for career development and effective presentation of Government policies. It also follows that we are bringing on people who stand up to the ultimate test: are they wanted by other Departments?

It is of course too silly for words for the Home Secretary's letter to suggest that there is no one to whom he can make representations. And it is by no means yet proven that the public service suffers as people move up on the different promotion ladders (or escalators as he calls them). After all, it is implicit in what I have said about our efforts to manage careers more effectively that there may well be replacements immediately to hand once his officials have rediscovered their way around Whitehall which they have unaccountably mislaid for the purposes of his letter. Am I to conclude that the Home Office does not have a professional Principal Establishment Officer?

Perhaps I am, because the cult of the amateur seems to be rife in Paragraph 5. Yet again we discover in a letter complaining about the disappearance of information expertise a preference for officers who are ignorant of the information game. Thus the cult of the amateur extends to the Home Office's logic.

I now propose to offer some constructive thoughts on the Home Office's destructive letter. And I hope we can engineer an opportunity for Permanent Secretaries to consider them along with Neville's letter. My points are:

1. Ministers and the Civil Service need to decide whether they want an expert career press officer class within the GIS or whether they want to "amateurise" it on the lines of the FCO. I am clear that they cannot for much longer have a substantially professional GIS led Departmentally by an amateur officer class of administrators. There is no attraction in that for the kind of brighter, politically aware personalities we want in the GIS, bearing in mind the temptations outside.
2. Before Ministers and the Civil Service reach conclusions on this they need to look at press officers as they now are, in their improved form, rather than as they were 5-10 years ago. They also need to ask themselves who was responsible in decades gone by for recruiting barriers to communication instead of bridge builders.
3. In considering their verdict, Ministers and the Civil Service need to be aware of the profound risks to credibility of short term elitist appointees who have no commitment to information as a career.
4. In the meantime, Ministers and Civil Servants should worry about their credibility with people like me when they talk about the "crucial" role of presentation (Para 2). The regard in which presentation is held seems to me all too often to occupy a somewhat less than crucial role in Government, otherwise I, for example, would find it altogether an easier matter to secure from secretive Civil

Servants the crucial facts on which to base these crucial presentational exercises. For my part, I have reached the conclusion that presentation becomes crucial when it touches the convenience of Departments, as is now the case with the Home Office. We shall not get a better and better GIS unless Ministers and Permanent Secretaries take a continuing interest in it and offer a modicum of support for it.

5. Finally, if Ministers and the Civil Service want an expert GIS to fulfil its crucial role, they should arm the Director General of the COI with the power and authority to manage it from top to bottom. They would then have no excuse for not knowing who to consult when their convenience is not served - or, more likely when their whims inconvenience their colleagues.

I am copying to Sir Robert Armstrong and Neville Taylor.

John G. ...
...

BERNARD INGHAM



Central Office of Information

Director General Hercules Road Telephone 01-928 2345 Telex 915444
Neville Taylor London SE1 7DU Direct line 01-261 8210

31st October 1986

Dear Richard,

GIS: HOME OFFICE AND ALLIED PROBLEMS

I am sure Bernard Ingham has already conveyed to you our feeling of utter resentment at the tone and content of the Home Secretary's letter to your Minister. Within the bounds of barely controlled rage I would like to put another side of the coin presented by the Home Secretary. Inevitably, I fear, this is going to require quite a lot of detailed exposition but I think it is very important that you and Sir Robert should be aware of the difficulties which face me as Head of Profession (very closely associated with Bernard Ingham) in trying to grapple with what is virtually an uncontrollable specialist service for Ministers. Neither of us can attempt to control the totally unpredictable whims of Ministers, but we try. Yet these are the pressures (which combine with natural wastage) to force us all the time to plug up holes and make the best of a bad job in what is often no more than a damage limitation exercise.

Improving the Calibre

Central management arrangements for the Information Officer Group have now got underway and we are proving the success of moving people from department to department. We have largely cleared out the dead-wood which littered departments a few years ago because, for whatever reason people had been recruited, they were no longer up to the demands of Ministers in the early 1980s.

There has been a deliberate and, up till this point, totally acceptable policy of moving the best people around departments to increase their breadth of experience and enhance their potential while providing improved expertise to Ministers and departments alike.

The Information Officer Group

As you know, there are approximately 1100 members of the Information Officer Group. They serve in all the mainstream departments (with the exception of the Foreign Office which has no member of the Information Officer Group employed in the department but relies on the backup of about 200 Information Officers in COI to support its activities). In addition to the mainstream departments, of course, the Government Information Service provides a common pool of expertise to all the agencies, to many of the museums and to an increasing extent the Metropolitan Police (which has this week selected a civilian information specialist to be its Director of Public Affairs).

STAFF IN CONFIDENCE

The vast majority of the Government Information Service comprises Information Officers engaged in specialist activities or generalist publicity work outside the Press Offices. However, Ministerial attention is almost always focused on the tip of the iceberg which serves Ministers directly in providing Press Officer skills, most of which are at Senior Information Officer level and above. While we do not have an accurate breakdown (since every time a Parliamentary Question is answered on the subject different figures emerge) IOMU estimate that of the total strength of 1100 Information Officers, approximately 220 are what might be loosely described as Press Officers or those spending the majority of their time on Press work as opposed to general public relations or paid publicity activities.

As you know, we have 3 Information Officers in Grade 4 posts. The other 3 Grade 4 Directors of Information are Administrators.

Below them there are 18 Grade 5 members of the GIS in information work of whom all but 7 are Heads of Information in departments or agencies. I mention these basic figures because these are the total resources of the Information Officer Group at the most senior levels. There are no "spare" members of the group in backroom jobs or lurking in corners to be suddenly plucked out of the woodwork to deal with unforeseen requirements of departments and/or Ministers.

By and large we have to keep moving the same people round in order to provide continuity of information experience, expertise and creativity.

The Unreasonable Demand

Every single member of the Information Officer Group at these senior levels is required to perform, day-in day-out, under a pressure which, for the most part, they will have to cope with for the whole of their Civil Service career. If I dare make a comparison, it is with a Private Office where a Private Secretary will be expected to perform long hours, at a pace and a level of excellence the department recognise can only be expected to last for a limited amount of time. Heads of Information (incidentally under-graded for the job they are expected to do) are expected to work seven days a week from the moment the Today programme comes on the air to the completion of their last 'phone call or programme at the end of the day, week-in, week-out and weekends included. I am not exaggerating when I look back at having been Head of Information in five departments, to say that I can think of no other official of comparable rank who is in the shop-window, on display for as long or as often as the Head of Information in a department or one who has such a wide remit across the whole range of subjects.

However, I also have to say that I have found very few signs that this special pressure and expectation of performance has been acknowledged by Ministers or Permanent Secretaries. The moment anything goes wrong, the Head of Information is regarded as an official who can be immediately cast aside irrespective of why he or she may have temporarily fallen from grace and irrespective of the damage which irrational dismissal of their services causes to morale of their colleagues who are still trying to climb up the ladder.

The Home Office Problem

The Home Office problem has arisen as a result of a series of Ministerial whims and the coincidental effect of a few people (who are very good) seeking and achieving the promotion they deserve.

As briefly as I can, the problem has developed along these lines:

Janet Hewlett-Davies (Grade 4) resigns as Director of Information DHSS to take up an offer from the Daily Mirror Group at a Deputy Secretary salary (plus extras).

Romola Christopherson moves on promotion from the Department of Energy into DHSS as the only candidate acceptable to the Secretary of State.

Mike Granatt is promoted within the Department of Energy from Grade 7 straight to Grade 5 after the Secretary of State for Energy refuses to consider other nominees proposed by me and Bernard. To all intents and purposes, the promotion was dictated by the wishes of the Secretary of State, to promote his own man.

Mike Granatt has to be replaced as Chief Press Officer in the Department of Energy and a Promotion Board selects Mary Palau as the clear candidate from the Home Office. She had already been turned down for promotion by the Home Office and can hardly be blamed for seeking promotion elsewhere. (She is, incidentally, very good at her job).

The Secretary of State for DHSS decides to reinstate a Head of Publicity post at Grade 6 and Mr Garfield Meredith is requested by the Department to move from Energy to the DHSS leaving a Grade 6 publicity vacancy at Energy. This post is filled by Ralph Windsor, also from the Home Office, who moves on promotion. There is no other opportunity for him within the Home Office. He is another excellent operator who deserves his promotion.

Secretary of State for Education insists on the removal of Mr Neville Gaffin as Head of Information to be replaced by a Grade 5 Administrator. After involvement of Robert Armstrong, Bernard and myself DES reluctantly accept that there is a need to have an Information specialist and Liz Drummond (Home Office) is the only candidate acceptable to the Secretary of State and the Permanent Secretary. So Home Office loses another of its key people on promotion.

Earlier this year John Robson, Chief Press Officer at the Department of Employment, resigned to join Lloyds Bank at very nearly double his Civil Service salary plus extras. We have to have a Board to fill this very important Press Office post. The successful candidate is Jonathan Haslam (Home Office). Again,

STAFF IN CONFIDENCE

the connection with all other moves is purely coincidental. None of this so far has been engineered by any one person and most has been uncontrollable.

Within the same timescale (over the last three months) Scottish Office have created a new post in London to serve the Secretary of State for Scotland. DHSS lose George Munro into that post, adding to their problems. They had already lost another Senior Information Officer (Sue Cunningham) to MAFF to replace Chief Press Officer Gordon Shepherd who had resigned to take a very lucrative job in Geneva. DHSS lost yet another Senior Information Officer on promotion to the Northern Ireland Office to succeed another man who had decided that he too wished to resign from the Civil Service.

Lorna Sinclair (SIO) moved from the Department of Education and Science to ODA on promotion. That vacancy was caused by the need to replace John Murphy who had had to be moved out of the Department - at the request of the Minister.

DHSS has lost another SIO (Ron Fosker) who went on promotion to MSC. The reason there was a vacancy there was that the Secretary of State for Employment specifically asked for John Robson to be moved to the Department of Employment (it was another "Ministerial appointment"). The DE vacancy had arisen because Mike Peters resigned from the Civil Service to go to Lucas on double his salary.

I have not painted the full canvas which has to be viewed to obtain the total picture of the problems we have to cope with in managing the GIS. I have merely sketched in some of the detail which has to be put alongside the Home Secretary's totally unfounded question which asked whether we are providing machinery for the development of the careers of individual Information Officers or machinery for the effective presentation of Government policies. We are actually trying to do both.

It is interesting when I look at the Information staff at the Home Office that the Director of Information has served in the Department of Employment, No 10, CSO and the Treasury. His Deputy has been in COI, DTI, No 10 and NIO. I can only identify 2 people in the whole of the Information Division at the Home Office who are "home grown" in the Department and I understand that the Department would be delighted to see them move if only this could be arranged!

The point I am making is that up until now I have not previously heard a Minister complain about the improved calibre of the staff he is getting from other departments. But we now have a senior Minister complaining that he finds it intolerable that his own staff are successful on promotion to other departments and immediately seizes the solution favoured by the Foreign Office - turn to those who know the policy rather than those who have a skill in presentation.

STAFF IN CONFIDENCE

Where we go from here?

Though I believe the Home Secretary has taken the lid off this can of worms for the wrong reason, I would be delighted to see the Permanent Secretaries engaged in a debate over this particular subject. I know of no other group in the Civil Service which is expected to perform at the grades that many of the Information Officers do, at the pace and speed that Information Officers have to, and I can think of no other group which receives less support for its efforts.

To be accused of mismanaging this resource because I am thought to be merely looking at the career development rather than the presentation of Government policy, I find quite personally insulting and totally illogical.

In passing may I end with the latest manifestation of the problems which I am expected to mastermind (with this lack of support and total inability to take executive action)?

I have just been called in by the Permanent Secretary at MAFF to find a replacement for the present Head of Information. Until now, the Head of Information at Agriculture has always been a more specialised post than most. The whole motivation of the Department has been to serve the farming interests rather than the consumer. The requirement has always been for someone who could get on with the Agricultural correspondents and specialists rather than political or general reporters. Suddenly the goal-posts have been changed. A Minister has decided that he does not want his present Information Head to continue. He will have to be retired prematurely and I am asked to field three or four names of people who can succeed. Good replacements to fill a Grade 5 job as Head of Information can only be found by bringing on people at the lower level. Inevitably this is going to mean another department has to accept that they are going to lose someone who is good.

Am I expected, in the light of the Home Secretary's letter, to say to good people that in order to serve the Government they must remain where they are? Am I expected to bolster their morale by telling them they will probably be succeeded by an Administrator, almost certainly against a background in which they cannot by any stretch of the imagination achieve a career within only one department and against a background in which the growing disillusionment and gaps in pay already mean that we have severe problems of recruitment (about which we spoke when you first came into your job)? Do we (ie the Government) want to lose an increasing number of our senior people? Is that in the interest of improving Government's presentation?

I apologise for the length of this letter and the strength of feeling it indicates.

These sentiments have not been discussed in detail with Bernard Ingham. I know, however, that he shares the general sense of frustration we have in attempting to perform an almost impossible task, like jugglers on a tightrope performing in total darkness knowing there is no safety-net below.

STAFF IN CONFIDENCE

I am copying to Sir Robert Armstrong and Bernard Ingham. Although I am on leave next week I would be quite happy to come in and discuss if this would be helpful.

Yours sincerely
Neill

Mr R T J Wilson
Personnel Management Group
Government Offices
Great George Street
LONDON SW1P 3AL

STAFF IN CONFIDENCE

cc Min Stewart 29 OCT 1986
M/ Monaghan
M/ Rawsthorne
M/ Mace



QUEEN ANNE'S GATE LONDON SW1H 9AT

29 October 1986

Dear Richard,

INFORMATION SERVICE

I am prompted to write to you because of a difficult situation which we are encountering in the staffing of the Home Office Public Relations Branch, which seems to me to raise some important general questions.

The Public Relations Branch is, of course, a vital part of the machinery of this Department. It works closely and successfully with Ministers and plays a crucial part in the presentation of the Government's position on law and order and other highly sensitive issues. It is responsible both for press relations and for a large and complex publicity programme.

It now seems likely that in the coming weeks we will lose four key senior staff, as well as a number of people from important junior posts. The Deputy Director of Information Services (at Grade 6) is to move on promotion to the DES; the Head of the publicity side (at Grade 7) is almost certain to be promoted to another Department; and two of the key Senior Information Officers have also been promoted to posts in other Departments. One of them heads up the criminal side (including drugs) and is David Mellor's main press adviser; the other heads up the police and broadcasting side and fulfils a similar role for Douglas Hogg. You will understand that this is bound to leave us with very severe difficulties at a time when the careful handling of law and order questions will become increasingly important. The Deputy Director takes charge of prison affairs, which may well give us a good deal of difficulty in the coming months, and the Head of the publicity section is closely involved in a major expanded exercise on crime prevention as well as another important campaign.

I quite understand that the individuals concerned should wish to advance their careers in the only way open to them, by applying for vacancies in higher grades wherever they may occur in the information service. Normally the situation is manageable through other transfers and promotions - though frequently with gaps when posts are unfilled, followed in some cases by a substantial learning curve. But we are faced with a quite exceptional coincidence of departures of key senior people. There seems to be nowhere and no-one to whom I can make the

/point that

STAFF IN CONFIDENCE

2.

point that as these different escalators move upwards the public service suffers. It seems to me that this system, though it may be of long-standing, does not adequately respond to the need for an effective overall presentation of Government policies or for the requirements of the Ministers most directly affected. Undirected competition for specialist resources between Departments clearly does not produce the best outcome for the Government as a whole. I find this an extraordinary situation and one which needs a fresh look. Are we providing machinery for the development of the careers of individual information officers, or machinery for the effective presentation of Government policies?

Faced with this situation I am tempted to ask whether, rather than tolerate vacancies, we should not post into information posts suitable staff from the administration group who, though they would initially lack information officer skills, would bring valuable knowledge of the subject matter - and, what is more, control of their exits and entrances would be much more within the Department. I am well aware of the arguments against adopting that approach (except, on a small scale, in the more junior posts, as we do here already): but if the arguments for the status quo are to prevail, it is necessary that the system should be such as to guarantee a continued service to Ministers, better than it presently does. For example, if I were faced with the choice between an officer who knew much about the press and nothing about prisons and an officer who knew much about the prisons but nothing about the press, I would choose the latter for the presentation of policy - but would actually (with luck, and after delay) get the former.

Officials in this Department are working hard with their colleagues in other Departments to secure the best possible outcome. But this state of affairs seems to me to indicate an unsatisfactory situation as regards the general management of the information service and the support which it is designed to offer Ministers.

I am not asking for your help in resolving our immediate problem, because this is in hand, but I believe it shows that the system is faulty, and that between us we should look at it again.

I am copying this letter to Sir Robert Armstrong.

(over),
Dwyer.



10 DOWNING STREET

From the Press Secretary

Alan Bevens Esq
Central Office of Information
Hercules Road
London SE1

23 December 1985

Dear Alan,

I refer to Michael Shea's letter of December 11 on the question of news on tour - the radio and television coverage of Royal tours.

I have the following points to make on behalf of the Prime Minister.

First, it would be helpful to know what the main UK radio and news bulletins are saying about a Prime Ministerial tour/summit while we are abroad, and in ideal circumstances these reports should be added to or precede the press digest. (In practice I try to get this information in the course of a working day abroad over the telephone via my own press office.)

COI reports are useful only to the extent that they are comprehensive. So often abroad we find that the prepared press summary has not had available the Mirror and the Guardian. This, I can assure you, makes for less confidence rather than more. However, the main point is that time has marched on and a press digest is inadequate without a summary of radio and television.

My concern is perhaps less with visual presentation of the Prime Minister (which is nonetheless important) and more with the policy content of her appearances.

I hope this is helpful to you.

I am copying to Michael Shea and Christopher Meyer.

James Stewart

Bernard Ingham

BERNARD INGHAM
23 December 1985



10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

21 June 1984

THE GOVERNMENT INFORMATION SERVICE

The Prime Minister was grateful for Lord Gowrie's further minute of 18 June about the Government Information Service, and has noted its contents.

David Barclay

Miss Sonia Phippard,
Office of Arts and Libraries.

MANAGEMENT IN CONFIDENCE



cc BT

Prime Minister

MINISTER OF STATE, PRIVY COUNCIL OFFICE

Not everyone in the Information Group will

share this optimism. But there is unlikely to be much mileage in pursuing the correspondence. Agree?

PRIME MINISTER

THE GOVERNMENT INFORMATION SERVICE

Following my report of 8 May 1984 on the Government Information Service, you sought my views on the apparent difficulty of filling some recent senior posts within this Service with members of the Information Officer Group.

DWB
25/6

By extending unified grading below the Senior Open Structure of the Service from January this year we have removed the old artificial barriers between various occupational groups when filling posts. We have to expect that from time to time some "outsiders" will move into posts in the information field. The important thing is that movement should not be all one way, and in fact two senior members of the Information Officer Group have recently moved into posts outside their specialism.

There are of course, special difficulties when filling senior posts in the information area. A senior press officer needs many attributes if he is to be successful. These include not only personal qualities but also expertise in the skills of communication both within government circles and the wider information field, and a sound knowledge of government and its policies. It is particularly important that a Director of Information is able to establish a good understanding with his Minister, if he is to succeed. In some cases in the past this has not always been achieved.

In my view we need to continue to develop the most promising members of the Group. The recent introduction of central management arrangements for the group will do much to groom candidates for senior posts in the longer term. In the meantime,

MANAGEMENT IN CONFIDENCE

central management is helping to sustain the supply of good information specialists by positive career development postings, to enable them to acquire the experience necessary to compete successfully with others.

My other principal comment is to acknowledge that the limited number of senior posts in the information field, and the limited opportunities that go with that, has had an effect on the attitudes of staff, particularly in the middle ranks of the Group. However, the broader prospects which unified grading offers ought to help attitudes among junior staff; certainly recruitment is now buoyant.

There have been considerable changes within the Government Information Service in recent years. This turbulence has had its effect on attitudes. But our recent personnel management initiatives have already gone some way to countering this, and I expect these efforts to show worthwhile results in the years ahead.

Gey
✓

LORD GOWRIE
18 June 1984

MANAGEMENT IN CONFIDENCE

Gov MACH: Gov Int Offices: May 7th

fo'v



c Bernard.

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

14 May 1984

The Prime Minister was grateful for and has noted Lord Gowrie's minute of 8 May about the Government Information Service.

The Prime Minister understands that it has not proved easy in some recent cases to find information specialists of sufficient quality to fill the highest posts in the Information Service. She would be grateful for Lord Gowrie's comments on this apparent problem, and on its implications for morale and staffing at more junior levels.

BT //

(David Barclay)

Paul Cann, Esq.,
Lord Gowrie's Office.

BT

Prime Minister (1)

Agree to ask for the report which Bernard suggests at X?

mb 11/5

MR BARCLAY

You sought my comments on the report on developments in the Government Information Service.

I do not share the optimism about the effect of central management on the Information Officer Group (IOG) if present trends continue.

We now have Administrators filling the top information posts in Environment and Treasury and I am reliably informed that a third is to be appointed in DTI. This will cause considerable damage to IOG morale even though, to be fair, the Government Information Service is thinly populated with talent at the top. The departure to private industry, or elsewhere, of promising talent lower down is a matter for comment and concern.

There is no way we can have an effective IOG if the top posts are increasingly closed to information specialists.

The report gives no hint of these concerns and I think it would be useful if the Prime Minister, or you on her behalf, could minute Lord Gowrie's office, by way of reply, seeking a report on the apparent problem of filling top posts and of wastage of promising talent in lower ranks.

X

[Handwritten signature]

Yes mb

BERNARD INGHAM
10 May 1984

Govt Nach: CAI 5179

MR INGHAM

I attach a copy of a minute the Prime Minister has received from Lord Gowrie giving a further report on developments in the Government Information Service.

I propose to put this in the Prime Minister's box next weekend, and would be grateful for any comments you may have before then.

8 May 1984



EDH

MINISTER OF STATE, PRIVY COUNCIL OFFICE

PRIME MINISTER

THE GOVERNMENT INFORMATION SERVICE

My first report to you in October 1983 emphasised two important themes: the improvements in staff management and the Central Office of Information (COI) move on to a trading basis in line with the aims of the Financial Management Initiative. This report updates these developments.

Staff Management

The career development reviews of the Principal Information Officers and the grades above, who were embraced by the first phase of the central management for the Information Officers Group (IOG), have got off to a good start. Favourable reaction from those participating has been encouraging. I firmly believe that the benefits accruing to both management and staff will be substantial once the scheme has become fully operational. These will be further enhanced by the opportunities available now that the artificial barriers between groups and classes at the senior levels have been removed through the extension of unified grading.

I am confident that the second phase of the central management scheme involving some 300 Senior Information Officers originally due for introduction in April 1985 can be brought forward to January 1985 thus bringing about 40% of the members into the scheme. The appointment of a career development officer to assist in this second phase is already under way. The final phase involving some 620 information officers will be brought in by April 1986 at the latest.

Staff Changes

There have been no senior staff changes since my last report though we shall need to appoint a new Director General of the COI and Head of Profession for the IOG before long; Mr Grant will be 60 in August. Staff reductions are continuing by moves to fill vacancies in other departments or by voluntary redundancy. A further 8 redundancies have been declared in the past 6 months.

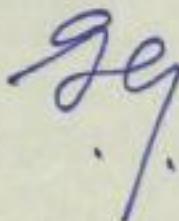
Overall, the size of the IOG has reduced from 1263 in January 1979 to 1061 in January 1984, a 16% reduction which is well within the 13.8% reduction in the Civil Service manpower for the same period. This has been achieved by improved efficiency in the quality of services provided as a result of the various measures introduced in the early 1980s to strengthen the Government Information Service.

Accountability

The move on to a trading basis of the services provided by the COI from 1 April 1984 has been successfully launched. Its success will be judged by its results. COI are very optimistic that the services which can be provided to client departments and the outside agencies will give value for money.

Conclusion

The new competitive financial regimes will do much to sharpen the motivation of individuals throughout the whole information area. This, together with the staff management arrangements, will provide the basis of a more effective Government Information Service in the years ahead.



LORD GOWRIE
8 May 1984

Grant Mack: COI May 79.

8 MAY 1979

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CONFIDENTIAL

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02

27 October 1983

GOVERNMENT INFORMATION SERVICE

The Prime Minister was grateful for Lord Gowrie's minute of 21 October about the Government Information Service which she has noted.

The Prime Minister attaches particular importance to the new central management arrangements, and she hopes that the April 1986 target for their full implementation will not only be met but if possible improved upon.

CONFIDENTIAL

Mrs. Mary Brown,
Office of the Minister of State,
Privy Council Office.

02

Prime Minister



Agree to
respond as
Bernard

10 DOWNING STREET suggests?

MR BARCLAY

[Handwritten signature]
DMS
26/10

I have no particular comment except that I regard the new central management arrangements, if prosecuted effectively, to be the most important point in this report. The Prime Minister might care to express her hope that the timetable for full implementation by April 1986 is not merely met but if possible improved upon.

[Handwritten signature]

B. INGHAM

26 October 1983

[Handwritten notes:]
And attach
...
to the ...
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MINISTER OF STATE, PRIVY COUNCIL OFFICE

PRIME MINISTER

THE GOVERNMENT INFORMATION SERVICE

Since Janet Young's last report to you in April/1983, press interest in the Government Information Service (GIS) has centred around speculation about how Government business would in the future be disseminated to the media. This report, however, is concerned with domestic issues.

The post-election changes in departmental responsibilities have had repercussions on the staffing in some departments' press offices but I am happy to report that the consequential staff changes are proceeding with the minimum of delay or fuss.

Important developments are under way promoting the drive to make the GIS more accountable and improve the management of its staff. These are the move of the Central Office of Information (COI) on to a trading basis and the introduction of central management arrangements.

Accountability

As part of the continued drive towards greater efficiency and accountability the COI will move onto a trading basis with effect from 1 April 1984. This move, in line with the aims of the Financial Management Initiative, has also led to a streamlining within COI in preparation for the changeover and has already resulted in a reduction of 2 senior posts.

Staff Management

The previous pattern of a fairly rapid turnover amongst senior information staff is no longer with us. This has led to a more cohesive identification amongst members of the GIS resulting in improvements in their professional capability and morale.

These improvements will be further enhanced now that the central management arrangements, which have been endorsed by both departments and the IPCS, have become a reality. The first phase of the new arrangements, which came into effect on 1 October 1983, will bring Principal Information Officers and grades above into a centralised system for career planning and progression. It will enable management to operate with more flexibility and to maximise benefits from limited professional resources. The scheme will gradually be extended to other grades becoming fully operational by April 1986.

The Information Officer Group (IOG) has also welcomed the moves towards the extension of unified grading.

Staff Changes

We are continuing to achieve staff reductions either by moves to fill vacancies in other departments or by voluntary redundancy. Since the last report a further four redundancies have been declared.

Seminars

This month saw the first of a series of 3-day seminars at the Civil Service College to be held for senior administrators and members of the IOG. Prominent representatives of the media took part and speakers included your own Press Secretary and the Director General of the COI. The seminar was voted a success and, with others to be held in the future, will contribute to a greater understanding of the GIS by administrators.

Gg

LORD GOWRIE

21 October 1983

Govt. MACH: Col + Future of Info Service

May '79

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MAY 1983

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CONFIDENTIAL

26 A14

MANAGEMENT IN CONFIDENCE

MR INGHAM

GOVERNMENT RESPONSIBILITY -
INFORMATION

I have shown the Prime Minister your very useful minute of 24 May, and she agrees that, now that it is established that Mr Biffen remains in his present post (albeit with a different title), we should proceed on the basis of option 4.

F.E.B.

14 June 1983

A14

MR BUTLER

~~Prime Minister~~
Agree that we now
follow option 4 on the
second page of Bernard's minutes?

GOVERNMENT RESPONSIBILITY - INFORMATION

FERB
24.5.83

I have been giving some thought to the issue of Ministerial responsibility for the co-ordination of information in the next Government, on the assumption that the Prime Minister is returned.

Over the past four years we have had valuable experience of a variety of styles:

- Angus Maude took a close interest in the work, organisation and morale of the Government Information Service (GIS); he provided valuable support, acting rather in the manner of the chairman of the board, and in the process made himself a focus for Opposition criticism and ridicule;
- Francis Pym took some, though reluctant, interest in the GIS but immediately ceased to chair meetings of MIO, as Angus Maude had done religiously; his distaste for the Government's economic policy made him adopt a very low profile, though he occasionally surfaced to make major speeches, some of which caused embarrassment;
- John Biffen has shown no interest in day to day, or even month to month, presentation and no inclination to develop links either with me or the GIS. He has told the Lobby that he regards presentation as being on automatic pilot.

The Liaison Committee has latterly elevated the level of presentational discussion, though the burden of the examination of the subject is piecemeal rather than overall; subjective rather than strategic.

With the departure of John Vereker I have so far lost some thinking time on longer term pay and economic presentation - the issue on which we have so far needed to concentrate.

The main responsibility for day to day and medium and long term thinking about presentation and its co-ordination rests in No 10 Press Office in consultation with Departments. This has the merit of putting the onus where it belongs - primarily on Departments for the presentation of individual policies and on No 10 for its co-ordination.

After the experience of the last four years (and before) I am convinced that effective co-ordination of presentation, especially with this Prime Minister, can only be done from and through No 10. If this is accepted there are a number of options for the Prime Minister for the future:

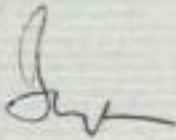
1. to delegate responsibility to a Minister working from No 10; experience shows that junior Ministers are not very effective in a co-ordination role and there is no reason to suppose they would be significantly more effective if operating from No 10;
2. to delegate responsibility to an interested and concerned Cabinet Minister operating outside No 10 but with a portfolio which allows him time for the task - eg. CDL/PMG, Lord Privy Seal, Minister without Portfolio;
3. to allow the responsibility to remain with the Lord President, regardless of whether it is actively taken up;
4. on the assumption that Mr Biffen remains Lord President, to leave things as they are in which case I take de facto responsibility;
5. alternatively, the Prime Minister could recognise that the job was not being done, end the pretence and herself take formal responsibility, devolving responsibility at official level to me.

My preferences are roughly in the reverse order in which they are set down above. 5 has the disadvantage that formal, as distinct from de facto, acceptance of responsibility could be the source of potential embarrassment for the Prime Minister - eg. at Question Time. Thus 4 *seems to offer the best course if things work out that way.*

There is something to be said for 3 - responsibility for co-ordination of information resting with the Lord President as Leader of the House. But 2 in certain circumstances could offer a more effective solution.

The fact remains that the present arrangements have worked reasonably well over the last 12 months, though I need to find more time for longer term thinking.

I hope this is helpful.



B. INGHAM
24 May 1983

Yes

ms



Sub
cc. B. Ingham

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

9 May 1983

BF//
The Prime Minister has now seen the Lord Privy Seal's minute of 28 April about the Information Officer Group. Mrs. Thatcher was pleased to hear of the progress which is being made and looks forward to the introduction of a central scheme on 1 October. In view of the imminence of that development, she would prefer to continue to receive six-monthly reports on progress for the time being.

TIMOTHY FLESHER

Mrs. Mary Brown,
Lord Privy Seal's Office.

K

MR BUTLER

THE INFORMATION OFFICER GROUP

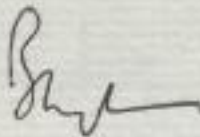
You asked for comments on the attached report.

This is a rather complacent and very thin report. I think it is reasonable to say that some (as distinct from considerable) progress has been made, but I am still not impressed with the dynamism at the higher levels.

Little has happened yet to justify ending six monthly reporting and to agree now would, in my view, send the wrong signal. We need to keep the pressure on - and not least to ensure that the new central management scheme is introduced on October 1.

Could I suggest the following reply:

"Thank you for your report on the Information Officer Group. The Prime Minister is pleased to hear that progress is being made and looks forward to the introduction of a central management system on October 1. She feels however it is too soon to revert to annual reports."



B. INGHAM

4 May 1983



1
Prime Minister:

Bernard Ingham's
comments are
attached. Agree
to respond as he
proposes?

IT 6/5

PRIME MINISTER

THE INFORMATION OFFICER GROUP

My last report to you on 24 September 1982 recorded our progress in improving both the calibre and career management of the Information Officer Group. I am pleased to say that, as a result of recent senior staff changes, there has been a considerable step forward in both the level of professional standards and morale within the Group.

Central Management

Officials have now completed plans to introduce a new central management scheme for the Group, starting with the senior grades and extending later, as resources allow, to all Information Officer staff. The new arrangements will enable more flexible postings between departments and better career planning.

The initial reaction of the Institution of Professional and Civil Servants has been favourable. Some further consultation is necessary, but I am confident that the remaining areas of disagreement between the two sides can be overcome. We are now working towards an implementation date of 1 October 1983.

Staff Changes

I referred in my last report to a number of cases where Information Officer staff needed to move because of reductions in posts or other considerations. There was a possibility of a small number of compulsory redundancies. In the event, through the efforts of officials and with flexibility and understanding shown by departments, only 5 redundancies have been necessary. So far all have been achieved voluntarily, although we may be reaching a stage where one or two compulsory redundancies could be necessary.

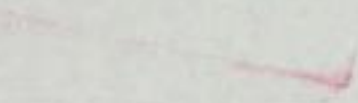
Further Reports

The results of this Government's initiative to improve the Information Service are now coming through. In view of this I would suggest that, if you agree,

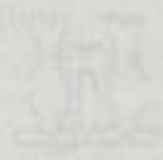
GOVT. MACHINERY: COI and future of the Information Services.

May 1979.

28 APR 1982



COMPTON



Govt Mails

10



10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

4 October 1982

This is to record that the Prime Minister has seen and noted the Lord Privy Seal's minute of 24 September about progress in the Government's efforts to improve the calibre and career management of the Information Officer Group.

TIM FLESHER

Jim Buckley Esq
Lord Privy Seal's Office

10

PRIME MINISTER

MS

Attached is a progress report from Lady Young on our efforts to improve the calibre and career management of the Information Officer Group. I have consulted Mr. Ingham who has commented:

- (i) we cannot usefully widen the appointment of administrators to information posts if we wish to retain the concept of a Government Information Service; the appointment of an administrator at the Department of the Environment is widely resented - the Treasury is thought to be a lost cause - and has been destructive of morale.

- (ii) you might like to know that some of the important posts mentioned in Lady Young's minute have been filled by former members of your staff; ^{Brian} Mower, Home Office, Liz Drummond, Northern Ireland Office and Hugh Colver, Department of Employment

- (iii) Donald Grant has made a surprisingly energetic and decisive start at COI by getting underway a phased introduction of central management; a number of hurdles remain but he deserves credit for galloping the horse towards them.

MS

I endorse Bernard's comments about Donald Grant whom I found most impressive during my Home Office days.

JH.

30 September 1982



PRIME MINISTER

file
per
R

THE INFORMATION OFFICER GROUP

Since my last report to you on 15 March 1982, the main issue that has arisen in regard to the Government's information services is the handling of information during the Falklands crisis. The present report, however, is concerned with progress in our efforts to improve both the calibre and career management of the Information Officer Group.

STAFF CHANGES

There have been some senior staff changes. Mr Donald Grant has succeeded Mr Groves as Director General of the Central Office of Information and Head of Profession for the Group. He takes up his new post shortly. We look to him to give a lead to the Group at a time when we are proposing some radical changes to its management.

We have strengthened the calibre of the Press Offices in several Whitehall departments. During the past six months new Directors of Information have been appointed at the Ministry of Defence and the Department of Health and Social Security. The Chief Information Officer posts at the Departments of Employment and Transport, at the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and here at the Management and Personnel Office have also been filled satisfactorily.

The top information posts at the Department of the Environment and at HM Treasury have been filled by administrators. The Ministers concerned were entirely content although the appointments did cause some unease amongst staff in the Information Officer Group.

At the Chief Press Officer level good candidates have been appointed to posts at MAFF, Northern Ireland Office and Employment.

Elsewhere there are a few cases of Information Officer staff needing to move because of reductions of posts or other considerations but who have had difficulty finding suitable placings. Officials are seeking to place the individuals concerned but in some cases suitable posts are not readily available and there may have to be a small number of compulsory redundancies.

CENTRAL MANAGEMENT

I referred in my last report to the lack of flexibility in the arrangements for level transfers following from the rigid agreement with the IPCS which we inherited. Efforts to persuade the IPCS to accept more flexibility have met with total resistance. The IPCS insist that they will not give up the agreement until the Group has full central management.

Central management for the Information Officer Group has been the long term objective of both MPO and successive professional heads; its advantages are well recognised but resources were a constraint in the past and prevented an earlier version coming to fruition. Since my last report, officials, after examining various options, have concluded that a phased introduction of a full central management scheme on traditional lines represents the best way forward. The additional resources at the outset will be minimal though savings elsewhere have yet to be identified. I have accepted their advice and we are seeking interdepartmental endorsement early next month. I am optimistic that the principles of central management will be agreed. Negotiations with the IPCS will then begin later in October. We shall want to begin the first phase of the scheme in early 1983.

Baroness Young

BARONESS YOUNG

24 September 1982



10 DOWNING STREET

Govt Mach RM.

cc: D. Wright
B. Ingham

From the Principal Private Secretary

16 April, 1982

The Prime Minister has seen the Minister of State's minute of 31 March about the grading of the post of Director General of Central Office of Information.

It remains the case that, if the post is downgraded to Under Secretary, the margin between that and the Controllers in the COI will be reduced from £1,940 or about 8½ per cent, to £343, or about 1½ per cent. The margin is unlikely to open out by very much even after the Government has implemented whatever decisions are finally arrived at, following the TSRB report, on salary rates at these levels. The Prime Minister remains of the view that the existing differential is quite narrow enough, and should not be reduced.

The Minister of State's minute makes no allowance for the fact that, as he is Head of Profession for the Information Officer Group, the Director General's grading has also to be seen in relation to the grading of senior Information posts in other Departments, including that of the Prime Minister's own Chief Press Secretary, who is of course an Under Secretary. The Prime Minister thinks that the Director General should retain some edge over these.

Finally, the Prime Minister is in no doubt that to reduce the grading as is proposed, just at the time when a new appointment has to be made, would run counter to the Government's objective of strengthening the standing and performance of the Information Officer Group, and would do nothing to improve their morale, which is clearly relevant to the effective presentation of Government policies.

The Prime Minister has, therefore, decided that the post of Director General of the Central Office of Information should not be regraded.

A Carter, Esq
HM Treasury



10 DOWNING STREET

c Mr. Ingham

From the Principal Private Secretary

SIR ROBERT ARMSTRONG
 CABINET OFFICE

Director General : COI

When I showed the Prime Minister your minute AO8002 of 2 April 1982 about the grading of the post of Director General of the COI, she commented that she had not fully appreciated before that there were no Under Secretary posts in the COI and went on to say that the whole argument against Mr. Hayhoe's proposal to regrade the Director General post hinged on the question of the differential. She thought that since this would probably change as a result of this year's Civil Service pay settlements, we should consider delaying a decision on the Director General's post until we were clear what the new rates of pay would be.

Basing myself on information which Mr. Wright kindly provided for me, I pointed out to the Prime Minister that it would not be easy to delay settling the question of grading. First, the present Director General was due to retire in June and we therefore needed to decide pretty soon who his successor was to be. But we plainly could not do that until we knew what the grading of the post was to be. Second, in reinforcement of the point made in the second paragraph of the draft letter attached to your minute of 2 April, I said that even if the TSRB recommendation for Under Secretaries was implemented in full, the differential between the Under Secretaries' rate of pay and that of the Middle Executive Directing Band was not likely to be all that big.

In the light of these considerations the Prime Minister has now reconfirmed her earlier decision that the grading of the post of Director General of the COI should remain as it is now. I have accordingly written to Mr. Hayhoe's Private Secretary on the lines of the draft attached to your minute and I attach a copy of my letter.

E A WHITMORE

16 April 1982SENIOR STAFF IN CONFIDENCE

DSS

Prime Minister -

You turned down the Hayhoe's earlier proposal to downgrade the post of Director General of the COI. He has returned to the charge of 'flag A'. Sir Robert Armstrong advised you to stand firm. So does the Ingham. Argue that I should write in terms of the attached draft? At the 2nd Pt.

Ref. A08002

MR WHITMORE

flag 'A' -

Thank you for letting me see a copy of the minute which the Minister of State, Treasury (C) sent to the Prime Minister on 31 March about the grading of the post of Director General, COI.

2. It remains the case that, if that post were reduced to Under Secretary, the margin between the Director General and his Controllers in the COI would be very small. The Under Secretary rate is £21,935; the Controllers are in the Middle Executive Directing Band, and the rate is £21,592. The rate for UIPP(L), at which the Director General is currently graded, is £23,532.

3. The Minister of State's minute takes no account of the fact that the Director General of the COI is also Head of Profession for the Information Officer Group. He should therefore have some edge, however small, on other senior members of that Group. At least two Information Officer class posts are at Under Secretary level; the Press Secretary, 10 Downing Street and the Chief Press Officer in the Treasury.

4. The minute fails to deal at all with the morale point. The downgrading of the post would be taken by the Group as a whole as a reflection of the Government's view of their standing and performance; and this would be particularly unfortunate at a time when we are about to have to choose a new Director General.

5. I hope that the Prime Minister will feel able to stand her ground on the basis of your letter of 26 March. I attach a draft of a further letter.

I had not fully appreciated that there are no Under-Sec's in the COI. The whole

REA

ROBERT ARMSTRONG

2 April 1982

argument above. It hinges on the differential which will probably change this year. Could be a delay a decision until we know more

DRAFT LETTER FROM THE PRIME MINISTER'S PRIVATE SECRETARY TO THE PRIVATE SECRETARY TO THE MINISTER OF STATE, TREASURY (C)

The Prime Minister has seen the Minister of State's minute of 31 March about the grading of the post of Director General ^{of the} COI.

It remains the case that, if the post is downgraded to Under Secretary, the margin between that and the Controllers in the COI will be reduced to £343, or about 1½ per cent. The margin is unlikely to open out by very much even after the Government has implemented whatever decisions are finally arrived at, following the TSRB report, on salary rates at these levels. The Prime Minister remains of the view that the existing differential is quite narrow enough, and should not be reduced.

from £1,940, or about 8¼ per cent,

The Minister of State's minute makes no allowance for the fact that, as he is Head of Profession for the Information Officer Group, the Director General's grading has to be seen in relation to the grading of senior Information posts in other Departments, ^{also} There are at least two ~~such~~ posts graded at Under Secretary. The Prime Minister thinks that the Director General should retain some edge, however slight, over these.

including that of the ~~former~~ ^{former} ~~Chief~~ ^{Chief} ~~of~~ ^{of} ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~Information~~ ^{Information ~~Officer~~ ^{Officer} ~~Group~~ ^{Group} ~~and~~ ^{and} ~~is~~ ^{is} ~~of~~ ^{of} ~~some~~ ^{some} ~~importance~~ ^{importance}.}

Finally, the Prime Minister is in no doubt that to reduce the grading as is proposed, just at the time when a new appointment has to be made, would run counter to the Government's objective of strengthening the standing and performance of the Information Officer Group, and would do nothing ~~whatever~~ to improve their morale, which is clearly relevant to the effective presentation of Government policies.

The Prime Minister has therefore decided that the post of Director General ^{of the} Central Office of Information, should not be regraded.

N.B. Heretical though it may be, I think the Press Sec is the most important part of all a Minister's most responsibility

Copy to Sir Peter Armstrong
N. Ingram.

SENIOR STAFF IN CONFIDENCE



FROM: Minister of State (C)

DATE: 31 March 1982

PRIME MINISTER

DIRECTOR GENERAL, COI

I have seen Mr Whitmore's reply of 26 March to my Private Secretary. I share your concern to strengthen the standing and performance of the Information Officer Group and to improve their morale. And I have sought to balance this against the precedent we would set for the post-Wardale review of the Open Structure if we left this post at UIPP(L).

In terms of the grading criteria which apply across the Civil Service the UIPP(L) level is intended to be used only where there are hierarchical reasons for giving a pay lead over other Under Secretaries in the same Department. But there is no other Under Secretary post in the COI. Keeping the Director General post at UIPP(L) would therefore, I believe, weaken the pressure required elsewhere to tighten up on grading standards and reverse grade drift.

The existing pay differential between Under Secretary and subordinate grades is narrow but this applies across the whole Civil Service. The pay of the grades in the Open Structure is still below the figures recommended by TSRB in 1980 and this must be considered in the context of this year's TSRB report. However our strategy on Wardale and on tackling grade drift would be harmed if over-grading is accepted as a remedy for compressed pay differentials.

As these wider considerations were not spelt out in the earlier letter to Mr Whitmore I would be grateful if you would reconsider my proposal to re-grade the post of Director General, COI at Under Secretary.

B.H.

BARNEY HAYHOE

SENIOR STAFF IN CONFIDENCE

MANAGEMENT IN CONFIDENCE

file ER

Govt Mndch

22 March 1982

The Prime Minister has seen Lady Young's minute of 15 March, in which she reports on work to improve career management in the Information Officer Group.

The Prime Minister has noted this without comment.

WFS RICKETT

Jim Buckley, Esq.,
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster's Office

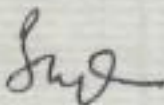
MANAGEMENT INCOONFIDENCE

MR RICKETT

This is a helpful covering note from Lady Young and reflects my understanding of the position we have reached. She should be encouraged to secure as soon as possible full central management arrangements similar to those for other specialist groups. I am not convinced that there will necessarily be a net increase in staff as a result of any introduction of a central management system. Such a system will reduce the Departmental manpower required to supervise the Information Officer Group, especially in the larger Departments, and it will probably achieve economies in time now spent on the discredited trawling system.

The report is now a little dated in that Treasury, much to my distress - and without even informing me in advance of any announcement - have appointed yet another Administrator as Head of Information. On past experience this will not help the Treasury and will do nothing for the morale of the Information Officer Group.

Altogether the report is the most encouraging we have received, but a number of very important decisions are pending on the filling of CIO posts. Given the lack of talent at the top, it is important that retirement at 60 is enforced.



B. INGHAM

17 March 1982

Prime Minister 2

Bernard Ingham's
Comments are at AWM
17/3

Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster

PRIME MINISTER

Since Barney Hayhoe submitted the last report to you on the Information Officer Group, the Head of Profession and the Career Development Adviser have continued their efforts to improve career management in the Group and in particular to ensure that the key posts are filled by the best available people. Their efforts have met with some success. The annex summarises the main features.

I think some real progress has been made in the last year and I am sure that the Head of Profession should be encouraged to pursue his present efforts. It is evident however that management will be frustrated in its efforts to achieve greater flexibility while the present trawling arrangements apply. Under these arrangements Information Group vacancies are advertised throughout the Service and are open to all members of the Group (at the appropriate levels) under a set of rules agreed with the IPCS. The IPCS oppose lateral transfers because of the alleged effects on the promotion prospects of junior staff in the Departments concerned. The Head of Profession has nonetheless insisted on lateral moves where such moves have clearly been in management's interest. There is some evidence that in spite of the union's attitude to this issue the majority of Information Group staff support our present efforts to improve the way in which the Group is managed.

As an interim measure MPO and the Head of Profession are exploring with the IPCS how far it might be possible to change the trawling agreement to facilitate lateral transfer. It may well be desirable to withdraw from the trawling agreement altogether. But first we ought to be sure that we have something enduring to put in its place; and it would be provocative not to give reasonable notice of withdrawal (having clearly tried to make the agreement work more satisfactorily). I propose to re-examine replacing the agreement with central management arrangements similar to those in other specialist groups (economists, statisticians etc). This would involve a small increase in staff but the price will be worth paying. I have asked officials to let me have recommendations in good time for my next progress report.

BARONESS YOUNG

15 March 1982

CAREER MANAGEMENT OF INFORMATION GROUP STAFF

Sideways moves and promotions

The sideways move of a PIO into the Chief Press Officer post at Northern Ireland Office has now resulted in the PIO concerned being promoted to the post of Chief Information Officer to the complete satisfaction of the Department and the Secretary of State. A similar sideways move has been effected of a PIO to the Chief Press Officer post at Transport and this seems to be working well. Exchanges or sideways moves of 3 SIOs and 8 IOs have now been negotiated and this method has been used to strengthen weak Press Offices as well as widen the experience of the brighter members of the Group.

2. Two other top posts became vacant during the period under review - Education and Defence. The Education post was trawled and the Head of Profession sat on the board. It was felt that none of the candidates was suitable and Mr Gaffin - an experienced Chief Information Officer - is moving into the post on a sideways move from No.10 Downing Street. At Defence the recommendation of the selection board - on which both the Head of Profession and your Press Secretary sat - was for a sideways move by a Director with extensive experience in MOD as well as in other Whitehall Departments. This is likely to be settled very soon.

3. The post of Chief Information Officer at the Treasury has become vacant and the Head of Profession is being consulted. The Chief Information Officer post at the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food is being trawled. The Chief Information Officer at the Department of Transport is moving to an Assistant Secretary post. His post will also be trawled. Mr Mower has moved to No.10 and the vacant CIO(A) post at Employment is being trawled.

Attachments

4. At a more junior level the CDA has had some success in widening experience of talented officers by short attachments of IOs from specialised posts to Departmental Press Offices. One IO from COI's Advertising Staff did so well during his attachment to the Department of Industry Press Office that he has been accepted as a Press Officer in the Department of Transport.

5. Short term attachments of SIOs and some PIOs to the No.10 Press Office have continued and Mr Ingham's reports on them, together with

• their own notes on the attachment, have proved valuable in assessing potential high flyers in the Group.

6. Four PIOs are currently holding or about to hold administrative posts under the Senior Professional Administration Training (SPAT) scheme. The move of Mr Goodfellow, CIO at Transport, to an Assistant Secretary post will give a successful young Chief Information Officer valuable administrative experience. Some administrators are working in press offices, and some press officers have been moved to administration posts.

Seminars

7. The Head of Profession and the CDA are continuing to run the successful seminars for CIO(B)s and PIOs - and have made a start on similar seminars for SIOs. Ministers and senior administrators have taken part.

Career Development Adviser

8. The CDA has continued to interview individual members of the Group and to visit Departments - particularly non-Ministerial Departments and those outside London where Information Officers tend to feel isolated and neglected. He has managed to find transfers for a number of Information staff whose posts were becoming redundant, and has encouraged action to get rid of inefficient staff in a number of cases.

Retirement

9. The question of retirement of Information Officers at 60 has been delayed by consideration of the whole question within the Civil Service. But Departments have in the meantime been advised to retire Information staff at 60 wherever possible. However, departmental agreements on retirement mean that this cannot be achieved quickly.

Extra payments

10. Press Officers draw quite considerable extra payment for being on duty at home at week-ends and overnight. This creates a barrier to movement. MPO have asked Departments to review out of hours work with a view to reducing such payments.



6016 rock.

Management and Personnel Office

Whitehall London SW1A 2AZ

Telephone 01-273 } 4400
GTN 273 }

Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster

From the Private Secretary

16 February 1982

Wille Rickett
10 Downing Street

Dear Wille, ^{WH 17/2}

GOVERNMENT INFORMATION SERVICE

Mr Hayhoe, as Minister of State in the Civil Service Department, submitted a 6 monthly progress report on proposals for improving the presentation of Government policies and the quality of the Information Group to the Prime Minister on 9 July last year. He promised a further report in 6 months' time.

I am sorry that you have not so far had that further report which would now come from the Management and Personnel Office. We are now putting the report together in conjunction with the Central Office of Information. I fear it may take a week or so before this comes to the Prime Minister but I hope that this is acceptable.

Yours sincerely,
Jim Buckley.

J BUCKLEY



20

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

27 July 1981

GOVERNMENT INFORMATION SERVICE

The Prime Minister has seen and noted Mr. Hayhoe's recent minute reporting on measures to improve the effectiveness of the Information Officer group.

I am sending a copy of this letter to David Heyhoe (Office of the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster).

W. F. S. RICKETT

A.A. Carter, Esq.,
Civil Service Department.

2

1. MR. WHITMORE ✓ *MM*
17/11

2. PRIME MINISTER

MS

Government Information Service

I asked Mr. Ingham for his comments on the attached minute from Barney Hayhoe, which reports on measures to improve the effectiveness of the Information Officer group.

Mr. Ingham feels that Mr. Hayhoe's report shows that a start has been made with career planning in the Information Service. However, he feels that in three respects the report has perhaps played down the problems facing career managers in the information group:

- (a) Trawling: some Departments are still reluctant to accept that their Information Officers should be moved sideways to other Departments for reasons of career development;
- (b) Retirement of the over 60s: some Press Officers have been retained beyond the age of 60, and the head of the profession is not entirely happy that everything is being done to retire them quickly. This receives only a brief mention in the report;
- (c) Allowances: the allowances which Press Officers below the rank of Principal earn from night and weekend duty can be very substantial. Mr. Ingham feels they are excessive, and that this is an obstacle to management since it makes some Press Officers reluctant to accept promotion.

Mr. Ingham does not suggest that you should intervene in the work being done by the CSD. Mr. Hayhoe will be reporting again in six months. Mr. Ingham suggests that it would be better to defer any decision on whether or not to intervene until then. By that time CSD will have had 12 months to get to grips with this problem.

Wagon

17 July, 1981.

MANAGEMENT IN CONFIDENCE

PRIME MINISTER

GOVERNMENT INFORMATION SERVICE

Following your letter of 12 November to Willie Whitelaw and other members of the Cabinet you asked for six monthly progress reports on Angus Maude's proposals of 6 November for improving the presentation of Government policies and measures and the quality and effectiveness of the Information Officer Group.

2. At your meeting with Francis Pym and myself on 16 February, Mr Groves, the Head of Profession for the Information Officer Group, reported the first steps that had been taken, after the recent appointment of the Career Development Adviser (CDA).
3. In March Sir Ian Bancroft invited Mr Groves to speak to a meeting of Permanent Secretaries about the plans for improving the contribution of the Government Information Service. Subsequently a meeting of Principal Establishment Officers endorsed the proposals and identified some points of difficulty which are now being tackled.
4. Meanwhile the CDA has been working closely with Chief Information Officers and PEOs to secure career moves, and to deal with the staff problems arising from the manpower cuts and the projected moves of the MSC and HSE out of London. Members of the Group are now regularly seeking his advice.
5. The CDA has prepared, in consultation with the Head of Profession and Mr Ingham, a list of "high flyers", which is kept under constant review. He has also been an observer on many selection boards to acquaint himself with the candidates being recommended and the standards being applied, and he has reported favourably on the calibre of SIOs and PIOs in particular.
6. Action to deal with the less efficient is being taken. A Chief Information Officer and a Principal Information Officer are to be prematurely retired. Career moves are being arranged; for example, an exchange has been agreed between the heads of information in the Central Statistical Office and the Health and Safety Executive, and the Northern Ireland Office has agreed to accept a "high flyer" from

MAFF as replacement for their Chief Press Officer, who is retiring. Internal applicants for the post of Chief Information Officer in the Scottish Office were below standard and applicants from outside the Service are being sought through Open Competition. The CSD is on the lookout for any instances of the Trawling Agreement restricting us unduly.

7. Other measures include the attachment of SIOs from departments and COI regions to the Press Office at No 10, which is proving very valuable, and short-term attachments to busy Whitehall Press offices for bright young information officers hitherto lacking in this experience.

8. On the training side the Head of Profession is running a series of 1½ day seminars for CIO(B)s and PIOs - from whom the next generation of CIOs will be selected. The subjects are the Information Group and the presentation of Government policy, and the seminars have proved very successful. So far each has been addressed by a Cabinet Minister, a Permanent Secretary, a journalist and your Press Secretary. The CDA is shortly to organise a series of similar, though less high-powered, seminars for SIOs. In this way Information Officers in Departments are obtaining a wider view of the problems and methods of presentation than is available in their own Departments.

9. You requested Cabinet colleagues to ensure that information is an integral part of policy making. This has been taken up with Permanent Secretaries and Establishment Officers and I propose to review progress in October.

10. Amongst the questions being followed up centrally by my officials are a more rigid application of the 'retirement at 60' rules and the tightening up of the annual confidential reporting standards.

11. The Head of Profession tells me of a noticeable, and welcome, lifting of morale in the Group, as a result of the evidence of

central activity to help and support its members.

12. I will be reporting again to you in six months' time. I
am sending a copy of this minute to Francis Pym.

BH .

BARNEY HAYHOE

July 1981



file RH

Gortnach

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

2 July 1981

Dear Terry

The Prime Minister was grateful for the Chief Secretary's minute of 30 June making proposals for the move to repayment for COI services from 1 April 1984.

The Prime Minister is content for officials from central departments to discuss with the COI and the departments concerned the detailed implementation of the change, as well as the issues of untying. She agrees that there is no need for an announcement separate from the publication of the White Paper on Efficiency.

I am sending copies of this letter to the Private Secretaries to other Ministers in charge of departments, the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, the Minister of State for the Civil Service Department, Sir Robert Armstrong and Sir Derek Rayner.

Terry Mathews, Esq.,
HM Treasury

Yours

Winnie Booklet

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HO
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MIN/STATE CSD
LAW OFFICERS
CHIEF WHIP
CO
SIR DEREK RAYNER



Prime Minister

Serek Rayner's office support
the Chief Secretary's proposals.
Agree?

WM 1/7

PRIME MINISTER

Yes
no

REPAYMENT FOR SERVICES PROVIDED BY THE CENTRAL
OFFICE OF INFORMATION

In your response to my minute to you of 14 April you approved the proposed move to repayment for COI services from 1 April 1984 (your private secretary's letter to mine of 28 April).

2. Comments from departmental colleagues have all supported the move. I therefore propose that we should move to the next stage in which officials from the central departments (Treasury and CSD) should discuss with the COI and the departments concerned the detailed implementation of the change.

3. Most of those colleagues who commented were also in favour of a move to untying, some thinking that the change should be made before the move to repayment rather than after.

4. I am still inclined to the view expressed in my minute of 14 April; that while the expenditure on paid publicity is centrally determined and borne on the COI Vote, without departments having to contribute, there is little sense in departments being allowed to make their own arrangements outside the system. But the question will only become a live one when the change to repayment has been completed. I therefore think officials in the central departments and those most concerned should now consider, in parallel with the discussion of arrangements to the move to repayment, the issues of untying, with a view to reporting back to Ministers at a point nearer the time of the move to repayment.

5. As to announcement of the change to repayment, this is already referred to in the draft of the White Paper on Efficiency. I see **no need** for any other announcement.

6. I am sending copies of this minute to other Ministers in charge of departments, the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, the Minister of State for the Civil Service Department, Sir Robert Armstrong and Sir Derek Rayner.

L.B.

LEON BRITTAN

30 June 1981

MR WHITMORE

Mr Ruskett

Goof Mach

Yes. A report before the recess will mean almost
nine months will have elapsed since the Prime
Minister wrote to colleagues, and that is long enough.

You will remember that back in November of last year ^{10/11} the Prime Minister wrote to Cabinet colleagues about the Government Information Service (Flag A). She made a number of proposals for improving the management and performance of the Service. You asked the Paymaster General's Office to give you six monthly progress reports on the follow-up to her proposals.

There was a certain amount of disagreement among Ministers about the Prime Minister's proposals but this was eventually settled in March 1981 (Flag B). At that time Barney Hayhoe was given charge of this particular subject. Because of this the CSD are arguing that your request for a six monthly report has been overtaken by events. They propose to report in September. I find this a little hard to understand. It is now seven months since the Prime Minister wrote to her Cabinet colleagues; there is no reason why progress should not have been made on her proposals despite the ministerial bickering that followed her letter; and I think that she ought to have a report before the summer recess. Do you agree that I should take this line with the CSD?

WJH

Note

I have spoken to Mr Hayhoe's office and asked them to produce a progress report in 'a month or so'. Please BF on 10/7.

10 June 1981

WJH
11/6



SCOTTISH OFFICE
WHITEHALL, LONDON SW1A 2AU

Wm
9/5

The Rt Hon Leon Brittan QC MP
Chief Secretary
HM Treasury
Treasury Chambers
Parliament Street
LONDON
SW1P 3AG

19 May 1981

REPAYMENT FOR COI SERVICES

I have seen a copy of your minute to the Prime Minister of 14 April. I would comment only that the Information Office of my Department undertakes a substantial amount of work on behalf of the COI as well as making use of COI services in the usual way. I assume that under your proposals both transactions would be undertaken on a repayment basis. If that is so, I am content with what you propose.

GEORGE YOUNGER



DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORT
2 MARSHAM STREET LONDON SW1P 3BB

The Rt Hon Leon Britten QC MP
Chief Secretary to the Treasury
HM Treasury
Parliament Street
LONDON
SW1

1301 14M 2
Grost
Mach
B May 1981

Wm
19/5

Dear Leon

REPAYMENT FOR SERVICES PROVIDED BY THE CENTRAL OFFICE
OF INFORMATION

Thank you for sending me a copy of your minute of
14 April to the Prime Minister.

I have long been in favour of a move to a repayment
system, to replace the present unsatisfactory arrangements.
My officials are ready to work with yours on the details of
the new system.

I agree with the proposal in John Nott's letter of 1 May
that "untying" should be considered from the outset. An
arrangement under which a client can neither question his
supplier's charges nor invite competition seems unlikely to
be the most efficient.

Copies of this letter go to those who received yours.

John

Norman Fowler

NORMAN FOWLER

WM 13/3
Pa
Kach

PERSONAL



CABINET OFFICE

70 Whitehall, London SW1A 2AS Telephone 01- 233 8224

8 May 1981

T Mathews Esq
Private Secretary to the
Chief Secretary to the Treasury

Jim Tany

REPAYMENT FOR COI SERVICES

Derek Rayner saw his copy of the letter to the Chief Secretary from the Defence Secretary before leaving for Canada yesterday and asked me to drop you a line for Mr Brittan in connection with it.

Given his earlier experience of MOD, he suspects that what they mean by "untying" in this context is doing much of the work themselves, rather than finding more effective or less expensive media outside government. In a recent discussion with Rayner, the Controller of HMSO described how he had had a recent tussle with MOD over their wish to do much more in-house printing as against using HMSO. The Controller said that he had been able to prove that the in-house cost was much greater than using HMSO.

Rayner favours untying, but at the right time
and provided it is properly disciplined.

I am copying this to William Rickett.

Yours sincerely,

Clive Priestley

C PRIESTLEY



From the Secretary of State

The Rt Hon Leon Brittan QC MP
Chief Secretary
HM Treasury
Treasury Chambers
Parliament Street
London, SW1P 3AG

S. May 1981

Dear Leon,

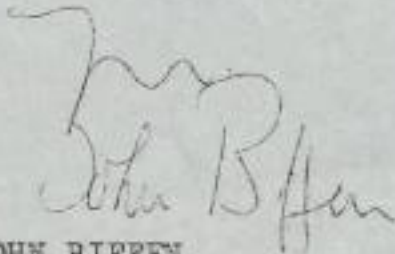
REPAYMENT FOR SERVICES PROVIDED BY THE CENTRAL OFFICE OF INFORMATION

Thank you for sending me a copy of your minute of 14 April to the Prime Minister.

I should like to associate myself generally with those of our colleagues who have welcomed the proposal that COI's services should be supplied to Departments on a repayment basis.

I am slightly disappointed however at the suggestion that a review of the question of untying should be left until the change to repayment has been completed. This is an important and difficult issue but if "repayment" is to act as a real discipline on both parties there must be a good case for allowing the customer to shop around. However if the general view is that this matter can be deferred for the time being I am content - provided that the advantages and disadvantages of untying are thoroughly reviewed when the time comes.

I am copying this letter to the recipients of your minute.


JOHN BIFFEN

WM 13/3
Sa
Hach

PERSONAL



CABINET OFFICE

70 Whitehall, London SW1A 2AS Telephone 01- 233 8224

8 May 1981

T Mathews Esq
Private Secretary to the
Chief Secretary to the Treasury

Dear Tony,

REPAYMENT FOR COI SERVICES

Derek Rayner saw his copy of the letter to the Chief Secretary from the Defence Secretary before leaving for Canada yesterday and asked me to drop you a line for Mr Brittan in connection with it.

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Rayner favours untying, but at the right time
and provided it is properly disciplined.

I am copying this to William Rickett.

Yours sincerely,

Cecil Priestley

C PRIESTLEY



See Mach
WR
11/5

From the Secretary of State

The Rt Hon Leon Brittan QC MP
Chief Secretary
HM Treasury
Treasury Chambers
Parliament Street
London, SW1P 3AG

S. May 1981

Dear Leon,

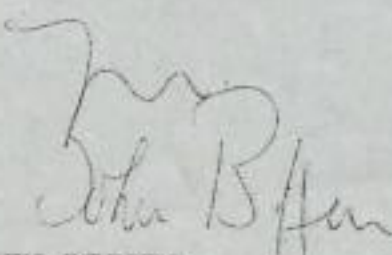
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I am slightly disappointed however at the suggestion that a review of the question of untying should be left until the change to repayment has been completed. This is an important and difficult issue but if "repayment" is to act as a real discipline on both parties there must be a good case for allowing the customer to shop around. However if the general view is that this matter can be deferred for the time being I am content - provided that the advantages and disadvantages of untying are thoroughly reviewed when the time comes.

I am copying this letter to the recipients of your minute.


JOHN BIFFEN



WA 6/5

MINISTRY OF DEFENCE WHITEHALL LONDON SW1A 2HB

TELEPHONE 01-218 8000
DIRECT DIALING 01-218 2111/3

MO 20/1 A

1st May 1981

Dear Sir,

REPAYMENT FOR SERVICES PROVIDED BY THE COI

I was grateful for the opportunity to comment on the proposals in your minute of 14th April to the Prime Minister.

I am of course quite content in principle with the main recommendation that COI services transfer to a repayment basis from 1st April 1984, but I have one reservation over the proposals for detailed implementation to be discussed between officials. It is not clear to me why the question of untying has to be shelved for over three years. I realise that the various implications of untying - some of which the Chief Secretary enumerates in his seventh paragraph - may need further consideration; but this should be done from the outset in the forthcoming discussions between the COI, central departments and customer departments. The logic that leads to repayment also points to relaxation of the COI monopoly; if customer departments are to remain tied, there will surely be less incentive for greater efficiency and cost-effectiveness.

I am copying this letter to the Prime Minister and to the other recipients of your minute.

John Nott

John Nott

The Rt Hon Leon Brittan MP



Secretary of State for Industry

DEPARTMENT OF INDUSTRY
ASHDOWN HOUSE
123 VICTORIA STREET
LONDON SW1E 6RB

TELEPHONE DIRECT LINE 01-212 3301
SWITCHBOARD 01-212 3674

30 April 1981

✓
MAJ
Rt Hon Leon Brittan MP
Chief Secretary of the Treasury
Treasury Chambers
Parliament Street
London SW1

Dear Leon.

REPAYMENT FOR SERVICES PROVIDED BY THE
CENTRAL OFFICE OF INFORMATION

Thank you for sending me a copy of your
minute of 14 April to the Prime Min
ister.

I am glad to endorse your proposals for
a move to repayment for COI services. I
agree that at a later stage, we will
have to look carefully at the whole
question of "untying".

I am copying this letter to the re-
cipients of your minute.

Eric Keir



10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

28 April 1981

Dear Terry

The Prime Minister has seen the Chief Secretary's minute of 14 April, about repayment for services provided by the Central Office of Information.

She has approved the proposed move to repayment of COI services, and she endorses the proposals outline by the Chief Secretary for the broad framework for the new arrangements.

I am sending copies of this letter to the Private Secretary to Ministers in charge of Departments, and to David Heyhoe (Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster's Office), Adrian Carter (Mr. Hayhoe's Office, CSD), David Wright (Cabinet Office) and David Allen (Sir Derek Rayner's Office).

Yours ever
Mike Patterson

T.F. Mathews, Esq.,
H.M. Treasury.

PRIME MINISTER

ms

REPAYMENT FOR COI SERVICES

Mr. Brittan seeks agreement in principle to the proposed move to repayment for COI services. The proposed arrangements have been agreed between Mr. Pym, Mr. Hayhoe and Mr. Brittan. There have been no comments from colleagues in the ten days since the proposals were circulated at Ministerial level.

The new system will not be operative until 1 April 1984, because there is much detailed preparation to be undertaken.

You should see in particular paragraphs 6 and 7 of Mr. Brittan's minute about central control of paid publicity and untying.

Content for Mr. Brittan to go ahead as proposed.

Yes ms

MS

27 April 1981



Gov Hasl

PRIME MINISTER

REPAYMENT FOR SERVICES PROVIDED BY THE CENTRAL OFFICE OF
INFORMATION

Officials in Treasury, CSD and COI have been considering proposals that the COI's services should be supplied to departments on a repayment basis. This work had arisen from a recommendation by the Expenditure Committee in the last Parliament, but clearly fits in with moves towards repayment in other areas of Government which have been initiated by this administration.

2. The Paymaster General, the Minister of State at the Civil Service Department and I are in agreement that COI should move to repayment. Despite the benefits of an allied service system of operation, we believe that repayment offers a better method of resource allocation in this sort of case. COI's expenditure is necessarily an adjunct to departmental policy programmes. It should therefore be for departments themselves to measure the benefits of a given level of publicity expenditure against the other calls on their expenditure allocations.

3. Such a move cannot, however, be made overnight. There must be a properly developed system of accounting and billing and one which requires the least additional manpower. COI therefore have to complete the computerisation of their accounting system, which has a target completion date of April 1983. Allowing time to eliminate teething troubles, the suggested target date for introduction of repayment is therefore 1 April 1984.

4. This is a long lead time, but it gives time to plan the move properly and avoid mistakes. The broad framework, agreed between the COI, Treasury and CSD, is that departments should make provision on their Estimates for publicity which they place through COI, using the Votes for the functional expenditure with which that publicity is associated, and making provision for the amounts which they will have agreed by prior discussion with COI and, as necessary, the Treasury. COI will then bill the departments for work done in the normal way.

5. Within that broad framework there will be a number of details to be settled by discussion between COI, the central departments, and the customer departments. A note on the main ones is given in the Annex. I propose that, following your agreement in principle, the COI and the central departments discuss the detailed implementation with customer departments.

6. A point which has exercised us particularly when discussing repayment for COI is the question of central control of paid publicity (i.e. publicity for which an outside agency is employed). This is an area where results are difficult to measure and there is a natural tendency for expenditure to increase. Successive Governments have sought to keep total expenditure within bounds and have found the central agency of COI an important instrument in this. With repayment central control and monitoring will be less easy. We can however use COI to monitor expenditure which passes through its hands - as the Annex indicates. At present we have no means of exercising central control over expenditure by departments on their own behalf (e.g. Press conferences etc.) though there is a system of recording estimated expenditure in my memorandum on the Supply Estimates. So long as departments are tied to COI for paid publicity however this is less important. My officials will explore ways of using this information as an aid to control of publicity expenditure overall.

7. This brings me to the question of untying. Francis Pym, Barney Hayhoe and I do not believe that the question of untying is one that needs to be tackled yet. The question will only become

live when the change to repayment has been completed. Once the system has been running for a little while it would be right to ask whether there is a case for untying. It will be a matter of judging between on the one hand the spur to efficiency and cost-consciousness that untying should bring and on the other the tangible benefits given by a central body of expertise and responsibility in terms of discounts etc and advice on cost-effectiveness. A further factor will be our view about the need for central oversight of expenditure.

8. Subject to there being no major reservations from colleagues I invite you to agree in principle to the proposed move to repayment for COI services and to endorse the proposals I have outlined for implementing the broad framework.

9. I am sending copies of this minute to other Ministers in charge of departments, the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, the Minister of State at the Civil Service Department, Sir Robert Armstrong and Sir Derek Rayner.

L.B

LEON BRITTAN
14 April 1981

REPAYMENT FOR SERVICES PROVIDED BY THE
CENTRAL OFFICE OF INFORMATION

Note by officials of Treasury, CSD and COI

This note covers some of the detailed points which will have to be settled before the introduction of repayment for COI services from 1 April 1984.

2 The broad framework is that departments should make provision on their Estimates for publicity which they place through COI, using the Votes for the functional expenditure with which that publicity is associated, and making provision for the amounts which they will have agreed by prior discussion with COI and, as necessary, the Treasury. COI will then bill the departments for work done in the normal way.

3 Over the months before implementation COI and the central departments will discuss the detailed implementation with customer departments.

Public expenditure implications

4 There will have to be a redistribution of the expenditure now on COI's public expenditure programme to the individual departments. At the appropriate time the Treasury will issue a proposed distribution which it will discuss with the departments affected.

Bill-paying arrangements

5 Departments will undoubtedly incur some small additional staff effort required for clearing bills and carrying out the necessary recording and accounting processes, but it will be necessary to absorb this within existing staff provisions. In order therefore to keep the work within bounds the bill-paying arrangements should minimise the need for querying invoices and validating payments. COI will continue to provide an estimate containing a breakdown of costs prior to requisition. Departments

must have sufficient information on invoices to enable them to identify and recognise their requisitions. The proposed COI computer system will be designed to make reasonable provision for this. Any further questioning of COI's costs by departmental clients should be constrained by an understanding of the respective responsibilities of the two sides. Departments are responsible for formulating the operational objectives of the publicity and agreeing the broad order of expenditure they are prepared to devote to it. COI are responsible for the economy and efficiency with which they meet these requirements. COI will discuss its arrangements with departments. Central departments will as necessary clarify the respective responsibilities of the COI and departments.

Central monitoring of paid publicity

6 With a switch to repayment it will be less easy to identify and control overall expenditure on publicity. In addition to the main publicity expenditure on COI Vote, departments themselves incur some publicity direct. This is brought together and published at the beginning of the year with the Supply estimates. COI can monitor and control its own expenditure during the year. But it is not possible to maintain a central control over expenditure by departments direct. This is unnecessary while departments are tied to COI for the main paid publicity expenditure.

The Vote arrangements for COI

7 Treasury will make arrangements at the appropriate time on the way COI's expenditure is shown to Parliament.

Notice to Parliament

8 The PAC, and possibly the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee, will be notified of the new arrangements.

Value Added Tax

9 VAT applies to all repayment services in Government departments, and some additional work would be created. The VAT charge will of course cause no net addition to the Public Sector Borrowing Requirement, or any real increase in public expenditure. On change-over, the additional cash cost will be taken into account in the PES revaluation factors.

subject

*cc Master
✓ ops*



cc CSD
CO
CWO
HMT
D/TRANS
DES

D/N D/IND
DOT CSO
DHSS FCO
NIO LCO
WO HO
SO Ingham
MAFF Director-General,
LPSO COI
MOD Barney Hayhoe, MOD
D/M
LPO
CDL

*Master } in M's message
Ops } boxes in Dupon*
THE PRIME MINISTER

10 DOWNING STREET

Personal Minute

No. *T 39/81*

M7/81

*Sent out
wraply as ↑*

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

GOVERNMENT INFORMATION SERVICE

Thank you for your minute of 31 December 1980.

I believe that we need the experience and the knowledge of the media offered by a professional Information Service and that we must be careful not to undercut the confidence of the service we are trying to improve.

The ideas you put forward in your minute had been considered by Paul Channon and Angus Maude who favoured instead a number of measures designed to improve the training and career management of the Group. These measures are now being implemented, and must be given a chance to work. However, it was also proposed that there should be more interchange between young administrators and information officers, and this proposal, which I welcome, is I think in line with your own views. Information officers should be given interesting and useful secondments. For instance, it might be very helpful to the presentation of Government policy to have a bright young information man attached to Ministers' Private Offices. And high-flying young administrators would gain from direct experience of Press Offices. It would be inadvisable however to make such exchanges at the top level, where professional knowledge and experience are essential.

/I recognise

ds

I recognise that it is not always easy in a relatively small group to cope with the problem of individuals who are clearly inefficient. This is a management problem and I have asked Barney Hayhoe to look into it.

None of the efforts to improve the Information Group will be effective unless Ministers ensure that information is an integral part of policy making rather than simply a means of announcing it. Ways must be found of ensuring that the Chief Information Officer - though junior in rank to many officials concerned - is fully in the picture at all times and is consulted when policy is being formulated. I am sure Ministers will agree with this principle, and that they will ensure that their wishes are understood and implemented by Permanent Secretaries and officials at all levels in their Departments.

I am copying this minute to other members of the Cabinet, Michael Jopling, Sir Robert Armstrong and Sir Ian Bancroft.

Margaret Thatcher

4 March 1981

MANAGEMENT IN CONFIDENCE

PRIME MINISTER

GOVERNMENT INFORMATION SERVICE

At the meeting on 16 February you asked me to provide a draft reply for you to send to the minutes from Michael Heseltine, Norman Fowler and Patrick Jenkin. A draft is attached.

As I said at our meeting, I am sure that efforts by colleagues to get better use made of their Information Officers will succeed only if they are well backed up by Permanent Secretaries and Principal Establishment Officers. The CSD will do all they can to ensure that this happens. Sir Ian Bancroft will invite Mr Groves to address the weekly meeting of Permanent Secretaries, and suitable guidance will go to Establishment Officers.

I will soon be talking with Mr Groves and my officials about the premature retirement of less efficient members of the Information Service and looking at career prospects in the Service.

I am copying this minute to Francis Pym and Mr Groves.

BH.

BARNEY HAYHOE
27 February 1981

Prime Minister.

Barney Hayhoe has no comments on the draft minute attached.
I have had it typed up so that you can sign it if you are content with it.

PHW
JLH

MANAGEMENT IN CONFIDENCE

MANAGEMENT IN CONFIDENCE

DRAFT MINUTE FROM THE PRIME MINISTER TO THE SECRETARY OF
STATE FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

Government Information Service

Thank you for your minute of 31 December *ka*.

I believe that we need the experience and the knowledge of the media offered by a professional Information Service and that we must be careful not to undercut the confidence of the service we are trying to improve.

The ideas you put forward in your minute had been considered by Paul Channon and Angus Maude who favoured instead a number of measures designed to improve the training and career management of the Group. These measures are now being implemented, and must be given a chance to work. However, it was also proposed that there should be more interchange between young administrators and information officers, and this proposal, which I welcome, is I think in line with your own views. Information officers should be given interesting and useful secondments. For instance, it might be very helpful to the presentation of Government policy to have a bright young information man attached to Ministers' Private Offices. And high-flying young administrators would gain from direct experience of Press Offices. It would be inadvisable however to make

MANAGEMENT IN CONFIDENCE

MANAGEMENT IN CONFIDENCE

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I am copying this minute to ~~Mr Fowler, Mr Jenkin~~ and other recipients of the earlier correspondence. *Other members of the Cabinet, Michael Jopling, Sir Robert Armstrong and Sir Ian Bennet.*



Note
I have ^{your} spoken
according to Mr. [unclear]
and told him out of
the [unclear] [unclear] to
send a [unclear]
copy to the [unclear]
in [unclear] [unclear] to see the

10 DOWNING STREET

GA.

Mr Whitmore

PA
24th

I think we must insist that
the letter, as drafted, should not go
out for the reasons you state.
Responsibility lies with Mr Hayhoe
and how Coomes and we can't
have individual Ministers inventing
policy for a Government-wide service.
In any case, the draft with me
doesn't match the letter we hope
the Prime Minister will eventually
send to Mr Herelton by way of reply.
That letter will almost certainly get
leaked and then Mr Herelton will
be seen to have a little egg on
his face. Why don't we suggest he
formally acknowledges the [unclear]
letter and comes back to us when
he has got the Prime Minister's
reaction?

B Shepherd 24 1/2



2 MARSHAM STREET
LONDON SW1P 3EB

My ref:

Your ref:
23 February 1981

Mr Tim

My Secretary of State wrote earlier this year to the Prime Minister about the Information Class. I enclose a copy of a letter which he has received from the NUJ. I also enclose a copy of the reply which the Secretary of State has authorised me to send. Would this meet with any objections from No 10 please?

D A EDMONDS
Private Secretary

Mr Lybman.

I don't believe Mr Harelik's can advocate
publishing "much your miscegeny" (my wording) of
the abolition of the Information Class. Neither even is
Government policy; and in any case it is not for the
Secretary of State for the Environment to encourage any
change of policy that my country to expect upon.

Tim Lankester Esq
No 10

What do you think?

ML
23



2 MARSHAM STREET
LONDON SW1P 3EB

My ref:

Your ref:

February 1981

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your letter to him of 5 February.

The Secretary of State believes the Information Service could be a good deal more effective than it is. Ministers hold similar views about other parts of the Government machine and have deliberately given the pursuit of greater efficiency a very high priority.

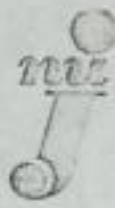
It would help to achieve this if there were much greater interchange between administrators and professionals generally, including Information Officers; this could be achieved either by more cross-postings, or in the case of the Information group, by ceasing to regard its members as belonging to a separate class. Either way, the objective would be a more effective mixture of departmental and professional experience. But the Secretary of State has no doubt that Government departments will also continue to require the services of some people with experience in journalism or public relations work.

So, the Secretary of State's purpose is an improvement in the Government's Information Service so that the public can be better informed of what Government departments are doing. And as to open Government, the publication of the DOE's comprehensive MINIS documents has meant that infinitely more information is now available about the activities of this Department than ever before.

D A EDMONDS
Private Secretary

Mr Francis Beckett

NATIONAL UNION OF JOURNALISTS



RECEIVED
- 6 FEB 1981
PRIVATE CODE

Acorn House, 314/320 Gray's Inn Road, London WC1X 8DP
Telephone: 01-278 7916

From the President: Francis Beckett

5th February, 1981.

The Rt. Hon. Michael Heseltine MP.,
Secretary of State for the Environment,
Department of the Environment,
2, Marsham Street,
London, SW1P 3EB.



IS/Si J. Gault
advise temp up (AS)
please

Dear Secretary of State,

I was unpleasantly surprised to read views on the Whitehall Information Service attributed to you by various newspapers last week-end.

You apparently believe that Information Officers are "a bunch of mediocre failed journalists". I would appreciate a sight of the evidence on which you base that charge, or an assurance that you do not subscribe to that view.

I wonder whether you would find acceptable a generalised charge that the Government of which you are a member consists of "a bunch of failed ministers." Given the choice, I think most people would regard that as a more acceptable statement than yours. And the responsibility for this state of affairs does not lie with my members.

Many Information Officers are not ex-journalists at all - failed or otherwise. They are Civil Servants who have transferred to the specialist class from clerical and administrative grades. Others have entered Whitehall from commercial PR, from the film industry and from other professions as well as journalism. Competition has been intense and "failed journalists" would be unlikely to have made the grade.

Where the Government Information Service has been less useful than I would like, it reflects:

- * A failure by senior Civil Servants and Ministers to appreciate the importance and value of information work;
- * a lack of sustained training for new non-journalists information staff;
- * constant reorganisation and staff reductions that lead to a skeletal and inconsistent service;
- * and lack of any real commitment to open Government, either in the Civil Service or in the Government itself.

The last point is important. You clearly see the Information Service as providing a "publicity" function for Ministers. This is not, and never has

150/2

Contd/...

NATIONAL UNION OF JOURNALISTS

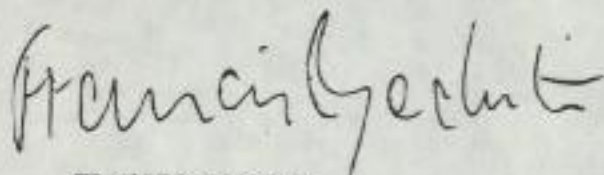
... /Contd.

been, the Information Service's prime objective. It exists to inform and explain to the public - usually through the Press - the activity of Government in Parliament and Whitehall. I can only suggest that your pre-occupation is not with a failure to communicate real information, but with your feeling that your policies have not been "sold" hard enough to the public. The NUJ's Whitehall Branch is actively backing both a radical extension of "open Government" and more specifically, a Freedom of Information Act. I do not know of a similar commitment to open Government from you.

If you genuinely want to improve the Information Service, then the NUJ will be with you. But you will not achieve that end by disbanding a professional specialist class and handing over information work to career administrators who have little interest in, and no commitment to, the real objectives of the Information Service.

With the Central Office of Information (COI) and many Whitehall information divisions already cutting back their services to the Press, industry and public, the NUJ is very seriously concerned with the direction in which you and your ministerial colleagues are going.

Yours sincerely,



FRANCIS BECKETT
President



10 DOWNING STREET

From the Principal Private Secretary

16 February, 1981.

Government Information Service

The Prime Minister met the Chancellor of the Duchy and the Minister of State, Civil Service Department, this afternoon to discuss Mr. Heseltine's minute of 31 December, 1980, Mr. Fowler's minute of 9 January, 1981, and Mr. Jenkin's minute of 22 January, 1981, about the Government Information Service. Mr. John Groves and Mr. Bernard Ingham were also present.

The Prime Minister said that she was worried about Mr. Heseltine's proposals. It seemed to her that they would demoralise the very service that Ministers were trying to improve and enhance. It was important to have a professional Government Information Service, though this did not mean that the Information Group had to be a totally exclusive class. There were advantages in a certain amount of interchange between the Group and the administrative side of Whitehall. The first and most helpful step in the process of raising the standing of the Information Group was for Ministers to take their Information Officers fully into their confidence.

The Chancellor of the Duchy agreed with the Prime Minister's approach to the matter. In the end, the presentation of policy was the responsibility of Ministers, and they would only get this right if they involved their Press Officers fully in the day-to-day thinking and life of their Departments, and in particular in the formulation of policy. Anything less would leave Press Officers at a disadvantage in carrying out their duties, and this helped nobody since Ministers, Senior Administrators, and Information Officers all shared the same interest in seeing the policies of their Departments properly presented.

Mr. Hayhoe said that he agreed that it was for Ministers to give a lead in drawing their Information Officers into the central activities of their Departments. But it was for Permanent Secretaries to give full effect on a day-to-day basis to such a lead from their Ministers. It was also important that Principal Establishment Officers should see that the careers of young Information Officers were properly planned: they should, for example, have a period in a Private Office. More needed to be done to groom the brighter younger members of the class for higher posts. If younger Information Officers were to be brought on in a timely way, it might be necessary to retire prematurely some older and inefficient members of the class.

/ Mr. Groves

Mr. Groves said that the implementation of the various proposals which the previous Paymaster General had put to the Prime Minister last year was just beginning. For example, the Information Group now had, for the first time, a Career Development Officer who had been appointed last October. The effect of adopting Mr. Heseltine's approach would be to abandon all these new developments before they had been given a chance to show their value. The response to the Prime Minister's letter of 12 November, 1980, had been patchy. Most Ministers were ready to involve their Information Officers in policy discussions, but to make this process really effective, the cooperation of Senior Administrators was essential, and that was not always forthcoming. The fact was that Senior Administrators did not, on the whole, care much for the Press, and many of them tended to identify Information Officers with the Press. But he did not want to overstate the problem: taking Whitehall as a whole, relations between Senior Administrators and Information Officers were normally in reasonably good shape.

Mr. Ingham said that there was a clear need for more interchange between the young Administrators and Information Officers. It would do HEO(A)s and ATs a lot of good to do a spell in a Press Office, but there was very little interchange at present. He would like to see Senior Administrators making greater demands on the Information Group. This would sort out the wheat from the chaff, and would gradually improve the quality of the Group. A necessary part of this process would be the greater involvement of members of the Information Group in the formulation of policy. All this would raise the Group's standing, and in turn make it a more attractive career to new entrants.

The Prime Minister, summing up the discussion, said that they were agreed on the need for Ministers to insist on their Information Officers playing a full part in the formulation of policy in their Departments. This meant that not only Ministers but also Senior Administrators should take their Information Officers fully into their confidence, and make the maximum use of their professional skills. If this were done, it could only improve the presentation of their Departments' policies. The Minister of State, Civil Service Department, should, in the light of the discussion, arrange for the preparation of a reply for her to send to the minutes she had received from Mr. Heseltine, Mr. Jenkin and Mr. Fowler.

I am sending copies of this letter to Geoffrey Green (Civil Service Department) and John Groves (Central Office of Information).

C. A. WHITMORE

David Heyhoe, Esq.,
Office of the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster.



SM

10 DOWNING STREET

Mr. Whitmore ^{Mr. Whitmore}

arranged for
Tuesday 3rd
February at
17.30. T. B. W.
E.

281.

Any further action
required. P - No.



10 DOWNING STREET

Cardinal

Can you get out of
a meeting with :-

✓ Mr Ryan

✓ Mr Hayhoe (CSO)

✓ N Groves (COI)

✓ Mr Dupont

re

to discuss the attached minutes
from Messrs Hurlbut, Fisher
& Jenkins about the Government
Department's plans.

We should do it fairly
soon. We must need 30-45
minutes.

MW

26.

Sar Keck

Prime Minister

GOVERNMENT INFORMATION SERVICE

In response to your letter of 12 November to Willie Whitelaw, I briefly minuted you on 24 November to add a word of welcome for the opportunities provided by the appointment of a Career Development Adviser for the Government Information Service.

I have now seen Michael Heseltine's minute of 31 December and would like to express my warm sympathy with much of what he says. I believe that we need an Information Class and must retain it. But I too consider that there is an urgent need to improve the quality of the Service which some Information Officers provide.

I recognise that we must seek to build up the morale of the Information Service and must, therefore, be particularly careful about the measures we take and how we handle them with the Trade Union Side; but I hope that we may find a way of exploring further the major features of Michael Heseltine's approach.

*PJ**22 January 1980*

PRIME MINISTER

1,
It seems to me that Mr. Heseltine's proposals would demoralise the very Service that we are trying to improve and enhance. I should like to discuss this matter with Mr. Byrnes - Mr. Hayhoe (and John Groves)

The attached letters from the Secretaries of State for Environment and Transport (Annexes I and II) propose more drastic action designed to improve the Government Information Service than your letter to Cabinet Ministers of 12 November, 1980.

Your letter was circulated after you had received advice from the then Paymaster General and the responsible CSD Minister. Mr. Channon, you will recall, told you that he had considered the alternative approach of merging the Information Group within the Administration Group and using Administrators to fill the top posts. He concluded, however, that the Service could not function without specialists whose quality would rapidly diminish if their career prospects were severely reduced in that way.

Moreover, Administrators would seldom have the knowledge of the media or the influence with the Press and broadcasting that a Minister expects from his senior information advisers. Mr. Channon advised - as did Mr. Maude - that the better course was to set about improving the Information Group rather than to weaken it by further diluting its professional experience or taking the top jobs away from it.

The measures proposed to improve the quality of the Information Group are now being implemented. I have discussed the proposals in Mr. Heseltine's and Mr. Fowler's letters with the Head of Profession, John Groves. We both firmly believe that to change course in this direction now would be very damaging for the Information Service and put seriously at risk the successful presentation of Government policy.

Furthermore, the problem will not be solved simply by putting people of different disciplines into the top posts. The idea of putting Administrators into these posts is not new. It has been tried and the results have been discouraging. To proceed in this way now would merely accelerate the existing drift out of the Service of promising information officers.

/The

* See
Para. 11
of
Annex III
attached

The Information Service will never function properly, regardless of who occupies the top posts, unless Departments take a more positive and creative view of information work instead of regarding Press Officers as a defensive and reactive mechanism.

Press Officers have to be given the opportunity to master their subject if they are to employ their communications skills effectively. That can only be done if the approach to information work in Departments is seen as a partnership between Ministers, administrators and information officers based on mutual trust.

X | It was, of course, a part of the proposals you accepted that exchange postings at the appropriate level between Administrators and Information Officers should be encouraged in order to widen experience and understanding in each direction. John Groves and I very much hope that this will happen, but we do not for the reasons given by Mr. Channon consider that Chief Information Officer is the appropriate level.

We have shown this correspondence to Mr. Pym.

I attach a draft reply to Mr. Heseltine (file A).

B. INGHAM

21 January, 1981

From: Minister.

Mr Jenkins has now joined in his correspondence, lending support, in a slightly qualified way, to Mr Heseltine's approach (file B).

Given the line you took in your letter of 12 November 1980, I do not think we can now change course and adopt Mr Heseltine's approach without further ado. In any case efforts are already being made to bring administrators and information officers closer together (see X/ above). But before you reply to Mr Heseltine (a copy is in file A) you may wish to consult with Mr Ingham and me.
A copy of your letter of 12 November is in file C. JAH
23/1/81



10 DOWNING STREET

THE PRIME MINISTER

January, 1981

Government Information Service

Thank you for your letter of 31 December about the Government Information Service. I am glad to hear that you are already implementing in your Department the measures outlined in my letter of 12 November requiring the early consultation and involvement in policy presentation of information officers.

Changes along the lines you suggest were among the alternatives which were carefully considered last autumn by the then Paymaster General and the responsible Civil Service Department Minister. Both recommended against them in favour of the improvements in training and career management which were outlined in my letter of 12 November. I accepted their advice and the measures are now being implemented.

At the same time it is most important that Departments should take a more positive and creative view of information work. No amount of new blood, whether from the administrative Civil Service or Fleet Street, will change things for the better if Departments regard Press Officers as a defensive mechanism rather than a positive well-informed instrument for explaining Government's policies and measures.

/Information

Information work can only be effective if it is based on a partnership between Ministers, administrators and press officers founded on mutual trust.

I have asked the Paymaster General to report to me every six months on the progress being made in the information service as a result of the new measures which have been introduced. These, you will be pleased to note, include proposals for an interchange of officers at an appropriate level between the administration and information grades in the interests of wider experience and understanding in each direction.

Time must be given for the measures to work and I should prefer, therefore, to allow them to go forward rather than to re-examine the alternatives at this stage.

I am sending copies to all other members of the Cabinet, Michael Jopling, Sir Robert Armstrong and Sir Ian Bancroft.

MANAGEMENT IN CONFIDENCE

PRIME MINISTER

GOVERNMENT INFORMATION SERVICES

1. Some time ago, you asked me to consider a number of points about the Information Group of the Civil Service.
2. My conclusions, which are explained in more detail in the Annex, are:
 - i. we do need an information service to deal with the media, advertising, etc;
 - ii. the Service itself is extremely patchy. There are some very good people in the Group, but also some fairly indifferent people as well;
 - iii. to cure this, we need to take steps to improve the career management of the Group and to promote more exchanges between administrators and Information Officers than occur at present. I emphasise that this must be a two-way traffic. Good Information Officers must, at a junior grade, have the chance to do an administration job as well as vice versa. We need higher standards for both recruitment and promotion. A Career Development Adviser can do a great deal to help with this;
 - iv. naturally, we must be economical in this field as well as others. Departments should review their complement of Information Officers as part of their look at staff cuts. The COI, like everyone else, is reviewing its staff at the present time.
3. Angus Maude agrees with all this. But he would like to see trawling replaced by central management as a matter of urgency. So would I. Unfortunately, though, such a change would be expensive and involve quite a lot of extra staff. So it is not on at the moment. In any case, it would take some time to become effective. Trawling would have to continue in the meantime.

MANAGEMENT IN CONFIDENCE

MANAGEMENT IN CONFIDENCE

4. I will talk to Angus Maude, whom I understand you are seeing next week, about all this.
5. I am copying this minute to him.

P.C.

PAUL CHANNON
22 August 1980

MANAGEMENT IN CONFIDENCE

ANNEX

STAFFING THE INFORMATION SERVICE

Is there a need for an Information Service?

1. I have come to the view that we do need an information service. We need to use the media, including the paid media, to inform the public and support Government services (recruiting for the Armed Services is an example). For this work we need people with the right knowledge and experience.

Nature of the Information Service, staffing and other problems

2. Do we have the right sort of Information Service? Information work is mainly carried out by the Information Group, which is about 1,200 strong. 500 are in the Central Office of Information and the rest distributed between Whitehall departments and certain non-Ministerial organisations (such as the Health and Safety Executive).

3. Members of the Information Officer Group are drawn from a wide variety of backgrounds. There are journalists, exhibition designers, film editors and producers, graphic designers, and of course Press Officers who act as spokesmen for departments. The Press Officers are often ex-journalists or public relations men, but some have moved from administration work.

4. There has been criticism of the quality of Information Group officials. I believe the specialist tasks are, in general, performed with considerable efficiency. For instance, the COI wins each year a number of communications industry awards for their work in all branches of the paid media.

5. But it is of course the Chief Information Officers (CIO) and Chief Press Officers whose work is crucial to Ministers. While some of these are good, others are weak. In that sense, however, the Information Group is not unlike the other groups in the Civil Service. Another problem in the Information Group is that good

people are not getting the right experience or the right opportunity to fit them for promotion to the top posts.

6. The CIO is in a key position because he has a special relationship with the Minister. Occasionally, however, a CIO may not be able to get on the same wavelength with a particular Minister. This is not a question of competence but of personal compatibility. He may well have proved entirely satisfactory to other Ministers. It is in any case difficult to move CIOs because there are so few posts at this level. Once it becomes known that a CIO has proved unsatisfactory to one Minister it becomes even more difficult to fit him in elsewhere.

7. Morale is low because information officers feel that they are poorly regarded. They think they are not always brought properly into the picture or allowed to make their full contribution. They resent the use of administrators in key information posts. They believe that the trawling system (see below) is not always operated strictly in accordance with agreed procedures.

Trawling

8. The system of trawling every Information Group vacancy throughout the Service is clearly the cause of many of the Group's problems. The system, which is the subject of an agreement with the Institution of Professional Civil Servants, is, however, the only means at present of providing departments with a field of selection for filling posts. But it does mean it is almost impossible to make the best use of available talent. Also, it is time-consuming. It tends to push departments into taking second-best rather than risk further delay by going on to use the Civil Service Commission system to bring in talent from outside. I believe the system can be replaced only by a comprehensive system of central management. At present, however, this would be too costly to run. But in the end we really must get rid of trawling.

Improvements

9. It must be possible to improve the position. This can be done by applying more rigorous standards for recruitment and promotion. We must also introduce some positive career management. Until now, there has not been any.

10. Crucial to these improvements will be the appointment (which has just been made) of a Career Development Adviser for the Information Group. The appointment will be for 2 years in the first instance, and the Adviser will assist the Head of Profession for the Group (the Director General of COI). His main tasks will be to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the Group, bring about moves of staff between departments for career development purposes (particularly in order to give appropriate experience to the more promising people at middle levels), and to consider how central management could be developed - within existing resources - so as to eliminate some of the worst features of trawling.

Absorption of the Information Group within the Administration Group

11. I have considered the alternative approach of merging the Information Group within the Administration Group and using administrators to fill the top posts. The Service could not, however, function without specialists, whose quality would rapidly diminish if their career prospects were severely reduced in that way. Also, administrators will not always have the knowledge of the media, or the influence with the press and broadcasting, that a Minister expects from his Chief Information Officer. I believe that the better course is to set about improving the Information Group rather than to weaken it further by diluting its professional experience or taking the top jobs away from it.

Recommendations

12. I recommend that:

- a. on appointment, the Career Development Adviser should immediately set in hand the work mentioned in paragraph 10;

MANAGEMENT IN CONFIDENCE

- b. departments and promotion Boards should in future apply stricter standards of reporting and assessment. They should not promote anyone whose capacity to perform at the higher level is in serious doubt;
- c. departments should retire or downgrade staff whose performance is clearly inadequate;
- d. if a post cannot be filled from inside the Service, it should be advertised outside. This is particularly important at middle and higher levels where better candidates can be expected to apply;
- e. the number of cross-postings between information staff and administrators should be increased. These are valuable for all concerned and should take place at middle levels where relevant experience can be most usefully gained. They should include cross-postings between Information Group staff in Whitehall and Diplomatic staff in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office who are expected to do information work in the FCO news department or abroad.

Stamp
Gormark
1/10

PRIME MINISTER

cc. Mr. Ingham

Messrs. Heseltine and Fowler have both responded to your minute to colleagues about the Government Information Service.

Bernard Ingham is not happy about the line they are taking. He will submit further advice in due course, but does not wish to trouble the new Paymaster General just yet.

MAD

ms

12 January 1981

MANAGEMENT IN CONFIDENCE

Prime Minister

GOVERNMENT INFORMATION SERVICE

I have seen Michael Heseltine's minute to you of 31 December and would like to support strongly the main points he makes.

Clearly the process of explaining what different Government Departments are doing is vital. I believe this needs a range of skills. Some of the present Information staff are good and have an experience which would be difficult to replace. On the other hand there are some mainstream civil servants who could greatly strengthen the effort by bringing their skills to bear - through an expertise in the subject matter of their Department.

*but not
Chief of
Office
level*

The solution must be - as Michael says - to reduce the present separation between the information class and the administrative grades. In other words mainstream civil servants would work on attachment in press offices and we should examine how existing information officers could broaden their experience in Departments. I believe that this is an important matter for this Government and wonder if the best way forward would be to set up a small Ministerial working party to study the possibilities and report to "H".

I am copying this to other Members of Cabinet, Michael Jopling, Sir Robert Armstrong and to Sir Ian Bancroft.



NORMAN FOWLER

9 January 1981

28

PM has seen copy of this
minute (attached to GI to
Par 21.8)

MANAGEMENT IN CONFIDENCE

Prime Minister

GOVERNMENT INFORMATION SERVICE

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NORMAN FOWLER

9 January 1981



Prime Minister

GOVERNMENT INFORMATION SERVICE

Thank you for sending me a copy of your minute of 12 November to Willie Whitelaw.

May I say at once that I fully share your concern about the quality of the Government Information Service and its ability to undertake the crucial role of putting over Government policies to the public. We had already largely adopted here the measures you suggest for improving the service; and I shall ensure that we do everything possible to maintain action on those lines.

But I can't help feeling that the problems are more deep-seated. Whatever measures we take, the service will only be as good as the people operating it. And I am not convinced that information officers as a class are the best people we have available in the service - although there are notable exceptions. This may in part be because, traditionally, journalists coming into the service may not have been the ablest from their profession. And yet information work requires a range of skills and a speed of reaction which puts it among the more demanding of civil service jobs.



I think the only long-term solution is to reduce the present separation between information officers and the ordinary civil service grades. At the extreme, this could mean the disbanding of the information officer class as a separate class and its complete integration with the administrative and executive grades. A less drastic solution would be to retain information officers as a specialist group within the general administrative and executive grades, with the expectation that they might serve for, say $\frac{1}{2}$ to $\frac{2}{3}$ of their time within Information Directorates, but also spend some time broadening their experience in ordinary divisions; at the same time, the balance of Information Division posts could be filled by normal 2-3 year postings of AEC grades. In addition, we might see if we could bring in some new blood to the Information Divisions by short-term secondments from Fleet Street.

Either reorganisation would enable us to put the best people available into the key posts, regardless of their specialist class.

Any development along these lines would, of course, have to be negotiated across the whole civil service. If you thought it worth pursuing, it would presumably be for CSD to take forward,



with the civil service unions involved. I realise the difficulties of this course, but, in my view, an approach along these lines will be the only way to ensure that our publicity needs are satisfactorily met in the long term.

I am sending copies to all other members of the Cabinet Norman Fowler, Michael Jopling, Sir Robert Armstrong and Sir Ian Bancroft.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "MH".

MH

31 December 1980



*PM has seen copy of this
minute attached to 81 to
PM 21.1.81*

Prime Minister

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A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be "MH".

MH

31 December 1980



NBPM
MA
Get much

PRIME MINISTER

GOVERNMENT INFORMATION SERVICE

I was pleased to see your letter of 12 November to the Home Secretary.

As you know, Paul Channon had a hand in the formulation of your proposals, which I fully endorse, for improving the Government Information Service. The appointment of a Career Development Adviser to help the Head of Profession should certainly help improve the calibre of Information Officers. Paul Channon will continue to take an interest in this, and will keep in close touch with the Paymaster General.

I am sending a copy of this minute to other members of Cabinet, Normal Fowler, Michael Jopling and Sir Robert Armstrong.

S.

SOAMES
28 November 1980

Gab March

NISC.M.

M.L.

24/11/80

Prime Minister

I very much value the services of my own Information Division and will be doing all I can to further its development. In this respect I welcome the opportunities provided by the appointment of a Career Development Adviser and know that my officials will be talking to him shortly about proposals for some career moves which we have had in mind for some time.

P.J.

24 November 1980

CONQUEROR

cc Mr Ingham.

NOPM.

Sav Head



QUEEN ANNE'S GATE
LONDON SW1H 9AT

15 March 1980
My dear Prime Minister

GOVERNMENT INFORMATION SERVICE

I am in full agreement with the objectives set out in your letter of 12th November and note the new initiatives in train. I share your view about the importance of making full and proper use of the Information Services so as to present Government policies and measures more effectively. I take this matter seriously myself and encourage my Ministers and officials to do the same.

I am sending copies of this letter to other members of Cabinet, Norman Fowler, Michael Jopling and to Sir Robert Armstrong.

Norman Fowler

The Rt. Hon. Margaret Thatcher, M.P.



Govt Mail.

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Principal Private Secretary

12 November 1980

BE 12.5.81

Dear Robert,

GOVERNMENT INFORMATION SERVICE

The Prime Minister has asked me to thank the Paymaster General for his minute of 6 November 1980 about the Government Information Service. She agrees that there would be advantage in her writing to her Cabinet colleagues on the lines suggested by Mr. Maude. She has, however, modified slightly the draft attached to his minute, and I enclose a copy of the letter which has now been sent to all members of the Cabinet.

The Prime Minister would be grateful if the Paymaster General would follow up the other recommendations in his note, and she has asked me to say that she would find it helpful if he could let her have six monthly reports on the progress that is being made.

I am sending a copy of this letter to Geoffrey Green (CSD).

Yours ever,

Sheila Whiston.

R.E.S. Prescott, Esq.,
Paymaster General's Office.

SE



10 DOWNING STREET

THE PRIME MINISTER

12 November 1980

M15/80

Dear Willie,

GOVERNMENT INFORMATION SERVICE

It is obvious that we need to make the fullest use of the Government Information Service and to ensure that we have the best people in it, in order to improve the presentation of Government policies and measures.

The Paymaster General, who is responsible for the co-ordination of the presentation of Government policy, has now put to me a number of proposals for improving our performance in this important aspect of the Government's work.

Over the longer term the calibre and training of information officers will be helped by the recent appointment of a Career Development Adviser for the Government Information Service to give support to the Head of Profession, the Director General of the Central Office of Information. I hope that Ministers and senior officials will be prepared to consult them and give favourable consideration to their recommendations.

In the meantime, all of us can help to strengthen the Government Information Service and the presentation of Government policy by:

/ - ensuring that

- ensuring that Departmental Heads of Information are adequately informed about the development of policy and are fully consulted in good time about the presentation of policy initiatives and the announcement of measures;
- including Information Officers in briefing and advisory meetings;
- seeing that Departments consult the Head of Profession about senior appointments. (Ministers can of course always consult the Paymaster General, who will do everything possible to advise and help them);
- facilitating exchanges of Information Officers between Departments when such moves are recommended by the Career Development Adviser to widen the experience of potential candidates for promotion, or in the interest of the individual.

In connection with the last point we have been giving Senior Information Officers the opportunity to broaden their experience through short training secondments in the No. 10 Press Office. These are proving popular and useful.


The effective presentation of Government policy, measures and achievements is an essential element in the Government's success, and

/I hope that

- 3 -

I hope that all Ministers will make the fullest use of all the resources of the Government Information Service and will assist in the measures now in hand to build up its morale, its quality, performance and breadth of experience.

I am sending copies of this letter to all other members of the Cabinet, Norman Fowler, Michael Jopling and to Sir Robert Armstrong.

Lansdown
Parsons


The Right Honourable .
William Whitelaw, CH MC DL MP.

MR. WHITMORE

I agree with your view of the paper for which I claim substantial authorship. It is, however, a little less urgent than I would have liked. The real problem is that John Groves is less seized of the need for urgency or of the need to demonstrate that the appointment of a career adviser really does mark a change in career management. He somewhat resents my attempts to hurry things along and keeps telling me that it is all going to take a long time. While the Paymaster General is genuinely anxious to improve matters, he does need pushing, as evidenced by the time it has taken to get this paper to the Prime Minister; I put it forward at the end of September.

Consequently, it would be most helpful to me if the Prime Minister calls for regular - e.g. six monthly - reports on progress from the Head of Profession through the Paymaster General.

I very much hope that the Prime Minister will send the draft letter to colleagues. Information Officer morale is very low and we need to raise it quickly. We shall not improve the Government Information Service simply by criticising it; we shall only achieve our objective if we place demands upon it, use it creatively and demand results.

Prime Minister:

[Handwritten signature]

B. INGHAM

7 November, 1980

Agree to write to colleagues on the (agreed) career process? Yes - as amended
Commit for him to follow up the other recommendations in his work, giving you a six-monthly progress report, as Mr Ingham proposes?

Yes out.

Yes
7ki



10 DOWNING STREET

M. Dwyer.

This will be sent
to me, if fairly urgent.

Do you want to offer
any comment before I put it
to the (Home) Ministers?

Yours

bxi.



PRIVY COUNCIL OFFICE
WHITEHALL, LONDON SW1A 2AT

PRIME MINISTER

GOVERNMENT INFORMATION SERVICE

1. This paper fulfils a remit from you following a discussion between us and your Press Secretary Bernard Ingham on August 27 on the Government Information Service. It has been prepared after consultation with John Groves, the Director General of the Central Office of Information, who has recently been appointed the first Head of Profession of the Information Group.

2. On August 27 we agreed that proposals should be made to improve the Government Information Service, including:
 - an improvement of the selection system in order to enable 'high flyers' to be identified;

 - more lateral movement to broaden the experience of promising information officers at an early stage; and

 - more emphasis on presentational skills.

3. In addition, you asked to be informed personally by the Minister in charge of those Departments where Chief Information Officer vacancies existed that he himself is satisfied with the choice of a successor.

4. All the three outstanding vacancies mentioned at the meeting have now been resolved: DHSS by the return, on recovery from illness, of the incumbent, who is entirely satisfactory to his Minister; the Treasury by the appointment of an Assistant Secretary as Head of Information; and Employment by appointing the No 2 at the Treasury, who is entirely satisfactory to Jim Prior.

5. The move of the Treasury No 2, following the appointment as Director of an administrator with no Press experience, does leave the Treasury very weak on the Press side. I have spoken to Geoffrey Howe, who agrees with me that we need to find both a good new Deputy and a first-class Press Officer. I hope we can do this soon.

Background

6. The essential background is contained in Appendices I (a note from me of August 8 on the future of the Government Information Service) and II (a note from Paul Channon of August 22 covering a more detailed report on the Information Service). In essence, there is no disagreement between Paul Channon and myself on the need to improve the Government Information Service; that need is wholeheartedly endorsed by John Groves and Bernard Ingham. Nor is there much argument over methods. The main question is the pace at which reform might be pushed through and the resources required to do it.

Present Position

7. The Government Information Service has had no central career management; information officers have in effect managed their own careers as best they could. The appointment of a Chief Information Officer as full-time Career Development Adviser for the Group was proposed some time ago by John Groves. An appointment has now been made and the Adviser has already taken up his duties under the Head of Profession. His resources will be extremely limited and it will inevitably take time to make a major impact on the problems of the Group. His success will depend much on the support given to the concept of career management by Ministers and their Departmental officials. We should, I think, identify certain clear priorities to help.

8. The Government Information Service is made up of about 1200 officers carrying out a wide range of tasks across the media -

radio, films, TV, publications, briefing, etc, as well as press offices. The main route to the top is through press offices, so that it is essential to encourage potential Chief Information Officers from the specialist jobs to gain press office/political experience at the right stage of their career so that their path to the top is not blocked.

9. Good Press Officers tend to stay too long in one Department, seeking moves only on promotion. A first essential is to ensure that the most likely candidates for senior posts have a sufficiently wide experience in Whitehall. It is therefore mainly in the press office area - representing only about one-sixth of the total service - that the Career Development Adviser will have his first task.

10. The next immediate generation of Chief Information Officers will come from the present Principal Information Officers, and the first priority should be to identify likely candidates and groom them for promotion. It is also of the greatest importance for the future of the Group to widen the experience of the main working grade, the Senior Information Officer. There is an urgent need for the Career Development Adviser, with the co-operation of Departments, to identify those who have been too long in one job, as well as likely candidates for promotion to Chief Press Officer, and to ensure that they are moved around as soon as possible.

11. No less important - but inevitably far more difficult - is to make room for promotions, and improve the average quality of the Group, by getting rid of the useless and incompetent, of whom there are too many. Unfortunately, not all of these are of an age when early retirement is an option.

Proposals

12. The first priority is to make it absolutely clear that the Government attach importance to the role of the Information Group;

that they wish to help it to improve; and to put some steam behind central career management.

13. It would, I think, be extremely helpful if you felt able to write to Cabinet colleagues emphasising the importance you attach to the service and to its proper use, the need to ensure it is given a real opportunity to perform its role, and calling for co-operation with the central career management system which is being set up. You can legitimately say you have already given a lead. Since the beginning of the year your press office in No 10 has been broadening the experience of the brighter Press Officers by offering short training secondments from Departments. These have proved useful and popular. I have ventured to submit a suggested draft at Appendix III.
14. The Head of Profession and the Career Development Adviser will identify immediately, through close contact with Establishment Officers, Heads of Information and the members of the Group themselves, those with promotion potential and those who would benefit from a move. Getting movement of this sort is fraught with difficulty - both from the inertia of individuals and from the reluctance of Departments to accept unknown quantities in exchange for known individuals who seem to them to be doing a good job. It is here that real help from Departments will be required; and much will depend on how soon senior officials can be brought to trust the judgement and accept the recommendations of the Head of Profession and the Career Development Adviser.
15. The Head of Profession, with the support of your Press Secretary, will of course seek the co-operation of Chief Information Officers, and I am sure they will have it.
16. These proposals should demonstrate the earnest of our career management intention and help the new Career Development Adviser to get off to a good start. In time it is to be hoped that resources will be available to run a full Career Management Scheme.

17. There would be no interference yet with the trawling system for promotion; all that is proposed at this stage is a series of sideways moves. But in the long run we must secure agreement to a simpler and speedier system of recruitment and promotion.

18. The proposals set out above will not, of course, improve the Information Service overnight. Your determination, however, to improve its quality and to ensure its proper use will be an important stimulant. I shall seek to maintain the momentum. However, one problem remains - the need for greater emphasis on presentation of information.

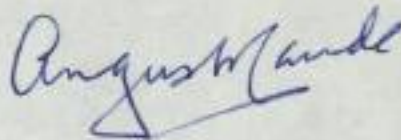
Presentation

19. It is idle to pretend that the present service can of itself improve the presentation of information. All too often the Information Officer's view is either not sought or is discarded by administrators. All too often Information Officers, discouraged by previous rebuffs, do not make a determined effort to press their point of view. We need to develop a professionally self-confident service which can hold its own in argument and ensure that the presentation of policy decisions is given serious consideration at the policy-making stage. That can be achieved, in the longer term, only if Ministers, as well as senior officials, are prepared to listen to professional advice on presentation in time, instead of complaining afterwards.

20. In the meantime, the Director General of the COI has issued a useful guide to Government Information practice, and the COI runs regular courses for Information Officers. I am asking him to ensure that the presentational aspects have a high priority in these courses. I also hope that the Civil Service College will consider giving much more attention to the information divisions' role in their courses for the administration group.

Exchanges

21. I strongly believe in the need for a two-way flow at the appropriate level between administrators and press officers to give them experience of each other's roles. In particular I believe that every large Private Office should contain one bright young Information Officer on secondment. That objective will no doubt be pursued by the Career Development Adviser in consultation with Departments; but it is not, of course, the most urgent priority.
22. I am copying this to Paul Channon in the Civil Service Department.



ANGUS MAUDE

6 November 1980

CONFIDENTIAL



PRIVY COUNCIL OFFICE
WHITEHALL, LONDON SW1A 2AT

8 August 1980

PRIME MINISTER

FUTURE OF INFORMATION SERVICES

On 2 April last, I sent you a memorandum on some of the reforms needed to improve the Government Information Services. This was not acknowledged, but I hope you saw it.

In the intervening four months the situation has gone from bad to worse. There has been virtually no movement within the Services. Information Officers (at all levels) who are regarded by everyone as incompetent or misplaced are still in the same posts. Others of merit and promise are stuck in a rut without apparent hope of promotion or any chance, under existing arrangements, of being moved to other Departments or posts in which they could broaden their experience or display their talents to advantage.

Ministers constantly complain to me; but while I know quite well what needs to be done, I have no authority to do it.

The arrangements for recruitment and promotion - which at the time I wrote to you in April the IPCS were quite willing to change if a satisfactory substitute could be found - are slow and cumbersome, make it virtually impossible to bring in bright outsiders except at the lowest level, and inhibit rapid promotion of the best within the Services.

At the present moment there are three major Departments faced with the need to appoint new Chief Information Officers. It seems likely that there may be a dearth of suitable candidates for two of them. This would be the strongest possible condemnation of the present system.

In the one case where there is an obviously suitable candidate, he is unlikely to be appointed. This is in the Treasury, where the former incumbent (an administrator) is being promoted to Under-Secretary. A Board was convened, chaired by a Treasury Deputy Secretary and including two other senior Treasury officials and the Director General of the COI (as Head of Profession). This Board made a unanimous and strongly-worded recommendation to appoint the present Deputy CIO, who is a career Information Officer. I understand this recommendation is likely to be over-ridden and an administrator appointed. Having seen the nominee's work over a longish period (in my view he is markedly better than the last incumbent), I wholly endorse the Board's view and believe that to ignore its recommendation would have a further disastrous effect on morale in the Information Services.

I have now visited and spent some time in the Information Section of every Department (except the Scottish Office) and several COI regional offices. I have met most members of the Service. I am heartened by the quality of many of them but depressed by the waste of talent and opportunity.

/Very little....

CONFIDENTIAL

PRIME MINISTER (contd.) 8.8.80

Very little is being done to improve a deplorable situation. John Groves (Director General of the COI) Bernard Ingham and I do what we can, but we do not have the authority to take any effective action to get to grips with the essential problems of what the departmental Information Services are being asked to do, which either should not be done at all or might be better done through the COI or other channels - let alone how they could do better the jobs they must do. We hope that the appointment of a Careers Development Officer will improve matters, but it is going to take time.

Meanwhile, Ministers complain, but either do not have time to get to grips with the problem or do not have the knowledge to solve it. Responsibility is so diffused that no one feels able or willing actually to do anything.

In my view this situation cannot be allowed to persist. We must get down to effective career management quickly. Unless we do, the Government's public relations will continue to deteriorate. We are already nearing the point where it is impossible to find a Chief Information Officer of any quality for a major Department.

At present we do our best with the material available to us, but I am sure Bernard Ingham will confirm my view that the material is poor and the outlook appalling unless there is a major change of attitude towards the Information Services before long.

May we discuss this soon, please?

ANGUS MAUDE

MANAGEMENT IN CONFIDENCE

PRIME MINISTER

GOVERNMENT INFORMATION SERVICES

1. Some time ago, you asked me to consider a number of points about the Information Group of the Civil Service.

2. My conclusions, which are explained in more detail in the Annex, are:

- i. we do need an information service to deal with the media, advertising, etc;
- ii. the Service itself is extremely patchy. There are some very good people in the Group, but also some fairly indifferent people as well;
- iii. to cure this, we need to take steps to improve the career management of the Group and to promote more exchanges between administrators and Information Officers than occur at present. I emphasise that this must be a two-way traffic. Good Information Officers must, at a junior grade, have the chance to do an administration job as well as vice versa. We need higher standards for both recruitment and promotion. A Career Development Adviser can do a great deal to help with this;
- iv. naturally, we must be economical in this field as well as others. Departments should review their complement of Information Officers as part of their look at staff cuts. The COI, like everyone else, is reviewing its staff at the present time.

3. Angus Maude agrees with all this. But he would like to see trawling replaced by central management as a matter of urgency. So would I. Unfortunately, though, such a change would be expensive and involve quite a lot of extra staff. So it is not on at the moment. In any case, it would take some time to become effective. Trawling would have to continue in the meantime.

4. I will talk to Angus Maude, whom i understand you are seeing next week, about all this.
5. I am copying this minute to him.

P.C.

PAUL CHANNON
22 August 1980

ANNEX TO APPENDIX II

STAFFING THE INFORMATION SERVICE

Is there a need for an Information Service?

1. I have come to the view that we do need an information service. We need to use the media, including the paid media, to inform the public and support Government services (recruiting for the Armed Services is an example). For this work we need people with the right knowledge and experience.

Nature of the Information Service, staffing and other problems

2. Do we have the right sort of Information Service? Information work is mainly carried out by the Information Group, which is about 1,200 strong. 500 are in the Central Office of Information and the rest distributed between Whitehall departments and certain non-Ministerial organisations (such as the Health and Safety Executive).

3. Members of the Information Officer Group are drawn from a wide variety of backgrounds. There are journalists, exhibition designers, film editors and producers, graphic designers, and of course Press Officers who act as spokesmen for departments. The Press Officers are often ex-journalists or public relations men, but some have moved from administration work.

4. There has been criticism of the quality of Information Group officials. I believe the specialist tasks are, in general, performed with considerable efficiency. For instance, the COI wins each year a number of communications industry awards for their work in all branches of the paid media.

5. But it is of course the Chief Information Officers (CIO) and Chief Press Officers whose work is crucial to Ministers. While some of these are good, others are weak. In that sense, however, the Information Group is not unlike the other groups in the Civil Service. Another problem in the Information Group is that good

people are not getting the right experience or the right opportunity to fit them for promotion to the top posts.

6. The CIO is in a key position because he has a special relationship with the Minister. Occasionally, however, a CIO may not be able to get on the same wavelength with a particular Minister. This is not a question of competence but of personal compatibility. He may well have proved entirely satisfactory to other Ministers. It is in any case difficult to move CIOs because there are so few posts at this level. Once it becomes known that a CIO has proved unsatisfactory to one Minister it becomes even more difficult to fit him in elsewhere.

7. Morale is low because information officers feel that they are poorly regarded. They think they are not always brought properly into the picture or allowed to make their full contribution. They resent the use of administrators in key information posts. They believe that the trawling system (see below) is not always operated strictly in accordance with agreed procedures.

Trawling

8. The system of trawling every Information Group vacancy throughout the Service is clearly the cause of many of the Group's problems. The system, which is the subject of an agreement with the Institution of Professional Civil Servants, is, however, the only means at present of providing departments with a field of selection for filling posts. But it does mean it is almost impossible to make the best use of available talent. Also, it is time-consuming. It tends to push departments into taking second-best rather than risk further delay by going on to use the Civil Service Commission system to bring in talent from outside. I believe the system can be replaced only by a comprehensive system of central management. At present, however, this would be too costly to run. But in the end we really must get rid of trawling.

Improvements

9. It must be possible to improve the position. This can be done by applying more rigorous standards for recruitment and promotion. We must also introduce some positive career management. Until now, there has not been any.

10. Crucial to these improvements will be the appointment (which has just been made) of a Career Development Adviser for the Information Group. The appointment will be for 2 years in the first instance, and the Adviser will assist the Head of Profession for the Group (the Director General of COI). His main tasks will be to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the Group, bring about moves of staff between departments for career development purposes (particularly in order to give appropriate experience to the more promising people at middle levels), and to consider how central management could be developed - within existing resources - so as to eliminate some of the worst features of trawling.

Absorption of the Information Group within the Administration Group

11. I have considered the alternative approach of merging the Information Group within the Administration Group and using administrators to fill the top posts. The Service could not, however, function without specialists, whose quality would rapidly diminish if their career prospects were severely reduced in that way. Also, administrators will not always have the knowledge of the media, or the influence with the press and broadcasting, that a Minister expects from his Chief Information Officer. I believe that the better course is to set about improving the Information Group rather than to weaken it further by diluting its professional experience or taking the top jobs away from it.

Recommendations

12. I recommend that:

- a. on appointment, the Career Development Adviser should immediately set in hand the work mentioned in paragraph 10;

MANAGEMENT IN CONFIDENCE

- b. departments and promotion Boards should in future apply stricter standards of reporting and assessment. They should not promote anyone whose capacity to perform at the higher level is in serious doubt;
- c. departments should retire or downgrade staff whose performance is clearly inadequate;
- d. if a post cannot be filled from inside the Service, it should be advertised outside. This is particularly important at middle and higher levels where better candidates can be expected to apply;
- e. the number of cross-postings between information staff and administrators should be increased. These are valuable for all concerned and should take place at middle levels where relevant experience can be most usefully gained. They should include cross-postings between Information Group staff in Whitehall and Diplomatic staff in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office who are expected to do information work in the FCO news department or abroad.

K. H. S. S. S.

DRAFT LETTER FOR PRIME MINISTER TO ~~GABINET MINISTERS~~

GOVERNMENT INFORMATION SERVICE

It is obvious that we need to make the fullest use of the Government Information Service and to ensure that we have the best people in it, in order to improve the presentation of Government policies and measures.

2. The Paymaster General, who is responsible for the co-ordination of the presentation of Government policy, has now put to me a number of proposals for improving our performance in this important aspect of the Government's work.
3. Over the longer term the calibre and training of information officers will be helped by the recent appointment of a Career Development Adviser for the Government Information Service to give support to the Head of Profession, the Director General of the Central Office of Information. I hope that Ministers and senior officials will be prepared to consult them and ~~will soon come to trust their judgment~~ and give favourable consideration to their recommendations.
4. In the meantime, all of us can help to strengthen the Government Information Service and the presentation of Government policy by:

- ensuring that Departmental Heads of Information are adequately informed about the development of policy and are fully consulted in good time about the presentation of policy initiatives and the announcement of measures.

- ~~not inhibiting the~~ ^{widening} Information ^{Officers} Group ~~by allowing~~ administrators ~~to denigrate their role, or by~~ ~~excluding them from~~ ⁱⁿ briefing and advisory functions. ^{meetings.}

- seeing that ~~Permanent Secretaries~~ ^{the Departments} ~~do~~ consult the Head of Profession about senior appointments. (Ministers can of course always consult the Paymaster General, who will do everything possible to advise and help them);

- facilitating exchanges of Information Officers between Departments when such moves are recommended by the Career Development Adviser to widen the experience of potential candidates for promotion, or in the interest of the individual.

5. ^{In connection with the last point we} ~~As an earnest of my intention,~~ I have been giving Senior Information Officers the opportunity to broaden their experience ^{through} ~~by offering~~ short training secondments in the No 10 Press Office. These are proving popular and useful.

6. ~~I consider~~^The effective presentation of Government policy, measures and achievements ^{is} an essential element in the Government's success, and I hope that all Ministers will make the fullest use of all the resources of the Government Information Service and will assist in the measures now in hand to build up its morale, its quality, performance and breadth of experience.

I am sending copies of this letter to all other members of the Cabinet, to Norman Fisher, to Michael Jopling and to Sir Robert Armstrong.

6 November 1980

MANAGEMENT IN CONFIDENCE



Caxton House Tothill Street London SW1H 9NA

Telephone Direct Line 01-213.....6400.....

Switchboard 01-213 3000

GTN Code 213

Tim Lankester Esq
Prime Minister's Office
10 Downing Street
LONDON SW1

Gut Machinery
I spoke to Mr Dykes
& confirmed that
we were content.

na.

MAF 25/ix

24 September 1980

Dear Tim,

As you may know, a selection board has recently been held to consider candidates for the post of Head of Information in this Department. The Board was chaired by Mr Derx of this Department, accompanied by the Director General of the CIO and by Mr Ingham. The board unanimously recommended Mr Brian Mower who is currently Deputy Head of Information at the Treasury.

The Paymaster General has been consulted and his office have confirmed that he would be happy to see Mr Mower appointed. Mr Mower has also today been seen by the Secretary of State who is satisfied that he is suitable for the post.

The PMG's office have also advised that, subject to this assurance to the Prime Minister that our Secretary of State is satisfied that Mr Mower is suitable, we may now go ahead and announce the appointment.

We are therefore proposing to issue an appropriate press notice tomorrow afternoon.

I am copying this letter to Richard Prescott in the Paymaster General's office.

Yours ever

Richard Dykes

R T B DYKES
Principal Private Secretary



10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

1 September 1980

Thank you for your letter of 27 August, about Government advertising expenditure.

The Prime Minister is content with Mr. Channon's proposal that the question of defence recruitment advertising should now be taken up in the context of the Estimates exercise.

I am sending a copy of this letter to Stephen Locke (Financial Secretary's Office).

M. A. PATTISON

G.D. Rogers, Esq.,
Civil Service Department.

5



10 DOWNING STREET

PRIME MINISTER

You asked Mr. Channon whether we could cut down on recruitment advertising. The attached reply points out that the bulk of this is armed service recruitment. Mr. Channon suggests that this should be taken up by the Treasury in the context of the 1981/82 estimates exercise. Are you content to handle it in this way?

Yes
MJP

28 August 1980

Gov. MA 41



File

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

28 August 1980

Dear Richard

The Paymaster General and Mr. Ingham yesterday had a discussion with the Prime Minister about Government Information Services. The Prime Minister had seen both the Paymaster's minutes of 2 April and 8 August, and Mr. Channon's minute of 22 August.

The Prime Minister expressed her concern that the present trawling system did not seem to be working satisfactorily, and that the present quality of Government information staff was somewhat variable. She was, however, concerned to note Mr. Channon's view of the staff resources which would be needed to change to a career development system for the information group.

After discussing the problems against this background, the Prime Minister asked the Paymaster and Mr. Ingham to put to her proposals for a simplified system which would enable Information Service high flyers to be identified, and which would allow much more lateral movement to broaden the experience of promising officers at an early stage. The Prime Minister will want to see these proposals before she takes any long term decisions about the Information Services. Her particular concern is that present efforts are too much focussed on information pure and simple, and that there is insufficient emphasis on the art of presentation.

In respect of senior appointments now pending (and any others that may arise before long term decisions are reached) the Prime Minister will wish in each case to be informed personally that the Minister in charge of the Department has had a chance to see candidates and is himself satisfied with the final choice for the post. Mr. Ingham is sitting on the Boards which are now considering the trawls in respect of vacancies at the Department of Employment and the DHSS, and the Prime Minister instructed him to press for the rejection of any candidates who are not clearly of top quality.

I am sending copies of this letter to Geoffrey Green (Civil Service Department), Martin Hall (HM Treasury) and Bernard Ingham.

Yours ever

Mike Pattison

Richard Prescott, Esq.,
Paymaster General's Office.

SP

Management in Confidence

MR. INGHAM

Following yesterday's disjointed discussion of Information Services, I need to send round some note covering the Prime Minister's instructions about the three outstanding vacancies. I think the note should also cover the further work commissioned yesterday.

Are you content that I should send out the attached letter, and that it should go to the Paymaster's office, Mr. Channon's office and the Treasury?

X
The Treasury spoke to me this morning about their vacancy. They are anxious to move fast next week. I told them that I thought it unlikely that the Prime Minister would press the Chancellor to accept the trawl candidate, since she was quite clear that Ministers should have the final say in selecting their Chief Information Officers. But I also said that you and the Paymaster had been instructed to ensure that square pegs were found for square holes in the information field, and I suggested that, if you or the Paymaster proposed an additional name for the Chancellor to see, I hoped that the Chancellor would find it possible to do this. I think Mr. Hall took the point.

27 August 1980

T. P. Pattison

na.

I have consulted the PMQ.
He seems disinclined to take any action on X, though I think since the Chancellor should at least have a look at T. Gaffin. However, I do not feel able to press this without PMQ support.

Therefore we are content for me attached below to issue

A 28/8.



Minister of State

Civil Service Department
Whitehall London SW1A 2AZ
Telephone 01-273 3000

M Pattison Esq
Private Secretary to the
Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
LONDON SW1

27 August 1980

Dear Mike,

GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING EXPENDITURE

Thank you for your letter of 24 July, following the note which the Minister of State sent to the Prime Minister about Government advertising expenditure.

Of the £11.6m provided for recruitment advertising in this year's Estimates, £8.7m was for Armed Services recruitment. You will probably agree, therefore, that it is in this area that we need to consider whether or not there is scope for cutting down.

As you will have seen from my letter of 31 July to Mr Pattie's Private Secretary, we took up this point with the Ministry of Defence. We understand from MOD that they have recently decided to save some £1.0m from the provision in this year's Estimates for recruitment advertising. Apparently a study of all aspects of Services recruiting has already been launched by Mr Pattie. The findings will of course be relevant to MOD's recruitment publicity effort. MOD therefore feel that it is too early at present to give an indication of the likely level of next year's publicity requirement. They will be better placed to do this when they have both a fuller picture about this year's recruitment position, and some findings from Mr Pattie's study. (We understand that, in connection with that study, an MOD team of service officers and officials will be visiting the COI very shortly. They will be meeting all the advertising agencies involved in Services recruiting work.)

As far as this year is concerned, it is of course possible that MOD may be able to make some further savings on the publicity budget. Again, however, they will need to see how recruiting goes in the first six months of this financial year before making any decision.

In the light of all this, Mr Channon suggests that, as the provision for MOD's advertising expenditure has to be agreed with the Treasury in the context of the annual Estimates exercise, the question of provision for 1981-82 should be pursued by the Financial Secretary at the appropriate time. This would seem to fit in with the timescale of Mr Pattie's review.

I am copying this to Stephen Locke in the Financial Secretary's Office.

Yours sincerely
Gary Rogers

G D ROGERS
Assistant Private Secretary

Gov. M. L.

PRIME MINISTER

The Paymaster General and Bernard Ingham are coming in to discuss the future of Information Services at 1630 on Tuesday. I attach:

- A - Paymaster's note of 8 August;
- B - The Paymaster's earlier note of 2 April;
- C - Bernard Ingham's comments on 'B'.

You will want to reach specific conclusions about the three senior information jobs which are at present vacant. On your instructions, new appointments are not to be made until after this discussion, but Departments will be expecting to be able to fill the vacancies very early next month. The Chancellor has interviews scheduled with several candidates, whilst the DHSS and Department of Employment jobs are being trawled in Whitehall. In the light of the discussion, you will want to decide whether to give any further instruction about the scope of the selection procedure for any or all of these posts.

M. L.

21 August 1980

CONFIDENTIAL

289

File



cc: Mr. Ingham

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

BF 22.8.80

11 August 1980

The Prime Minister has seen the Paymaster-General's minute of 8 August, about the future of Information Services. I confirm that she did also see his earlier paper of 2 April on this subject, and I am sorry that this was not formally acknowledged. I understood Mr. Ingham had discussed this with the Paymaster.

The Prime Minister would like to discuss the matters raised in these papers with the Paymaster-General and her Chief Press Secretary. I understand that Caroline Stephens is arranging for this discussion to take place on Tuesday 26 August. In the interim period, the Prime Minister has asked that no appointment should be made in the case of the three major Departments mentioned in the Paymaster-General's minute of 8 August. CSD will relay this instruction to DHSS and the Department of Employment. In the case of the Treasury, I understand that the Chancellor has turned down one candidate and proposes to interview several others in the first week of September.

M. A. PATTISON

Richard Prescott, Esq.,
Paymaster-General's Office.

CONFIDENTIAL

98



File

cc: HMT

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

MR. CHURCHILL

CIVIL SERVICE DEPARTMENT

We spoke this morning about pending appointments within the Government Information Services.

I told you that the Prime Minister has it in mind to discuss some general questions in this field with the Paymaster-General towards the end of this month. She understands that there are three major Departments in the process of seeking new Chief Information Officers and she has asked that these appointments should not be filled until she has had the discussion in question.

You told me that the Departments of Health and Social Security and Employment were at present trawling for their posts. I should be grateful if you could pass on the Prime Minister's instruction that the vacancies should not be filled before 1 September, to give her an opportunity to consider some issues about the career structure in the information field.

I understand that the Chancellor has decided to see further candidates personally for the Treasury vacancy and that he will not be doing so before 1 September. I have been in touch with Mr. Hall about this and I am sending him a copy of this minute.

MAD

11 August 1980

PRIME MINISTER

Bernard Ingham is now on holiday. We have therefore arranged for you to discuss the future of Information Services with Messrs. Maude and Ingham immediately after the Bank Holiday.

These appointments are for individual Departments to make. In fact, there is no difficulty about holding action on the three specific cases raised by Mr. Maude. The Chancellor has turned down the recommendation made to him, and proposes to see several candidates personally early in September. The other two jobs - at DHSS and the Department of Employment - are now the subject of trawls, but I have instructed that no further action should be taken until you have had your discussion with the Paymaster-General.

mb

MA

11 August 1980



PRIME MINISTER

FUTURE OF INFORMATION SERVICES

CONFIDENTIAL

PRIVY COUNCIL OFFICE

WHITEHALL, LONDON SW1A 2AT

8 August 1980

Prime Minister

Would you like a discussion when you and Mr Ingham are both back from holiday?

Yes - unless you're in on Monday in the meantime please make! no news - approved

[attached]

On 2 April last, I sent you a memorandum on some of the reforms needed to improve the Government Information Services. This was not acknowledged, but I hope you saw it.

In the intervening four months the situation has gone from bad to worse. There has been virtually no movement within the Services. Information Officers (at all levels) who are regarded by everyone as incompetent or misplaced are still in the same posts. Others of merit and promise are stuck in a rut without apparent hope of promotion or any chance, under existing arrangements, of being moved to other Departments or posts in which they could broaden their experience or display their talents to advantage.

Ministers constantly complain to me; but while I know quite well what needs to be done, I have no authority to do it.

The arrangements for recruitment and promotion - which at the time I wrote to you in April the IPCS were quite willing to change if a satisfactory substitute could be found - are slow and cumbersome, make it virtually impossible to bring in bright outsiders except at the lowest level, and inhibit rapid promotion of the best within the Services.

At the present moment there are three major Departments faced with the need to appoint new Chief Information Officers. It seems likely that there may be a dearth of suitable candidates for two of them. This would be the strongest possible condemnation of the present system.

In the one case where there is an obviously suitable candidate, he is unlikely to be appointed. This is in the Treasury, where the former incumbent (an administrator) is being promoted to Under-Secretary. A Board was convened, chaired by a Treasury Deputy Secretary and including two other senior Treasury officials and the Director General of the COI (as Head of Profession). This Board made a unanimous and strongly-worded recommendation to appoint the present Deputy CIO, who is a career Information Officer. I understand this recommendation is likely to be over-ridden and an administrator appointed. Having seen the nominee's work over a longish period (in my view he is markedly better than the last incumbent), I wholly endorse the Board's view and believe that to ignore its recommendation would have a further disastrous effect on morale in the Information Services.

I have now visited and spent some time in the Information Section of every Department (except the Scottish Office) and several COI regional offices. I have met most members of the Service. I am heartened by the quality of many of them but depressed by the waste of talent and opportunity.

/Very little....

Delay appointments until after discussion

Delay

Who makes these appointments?

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

- 2 -

PRIME MINISTER (contd.) 8.8.80

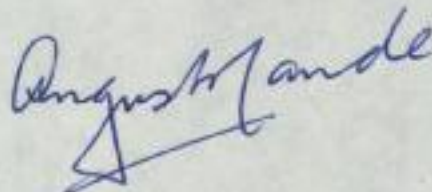
Very little is being done to improve a deplorable situation. John Groves (Director General of the COI), Bernard Ingham and I do what we can, but we do not have the authority to take any effective action to get to grips with the essential problems of what the departmental Information Services are being asked to do, which either should not be done at all or might be better done through the COI or other channels - let alone how they could do better the jobs they must do. We hope that the appointment of a Careers Development Officer will improve matters, but it is going to take time.

Meanwhile, Ministers complain, but either do not have time to get to grips with the problem or do not have the knowledge to solve it. Responsibility is so diffused that no one feels able or willing actually to do anything.

In my view this situation cannot be allowed to persist. We must get down to effective career management quickly. Unless we do, the Government's public relations will continue to deteriorate. We are already nearing the point where it is impossible to find a Chief Information Officer of any quality for a major Department.

At present we do our best with the material available to us, but I am sure Bernard Ingham will confirm my view that the material is poor and the outlook appalling unless there is a major change of attitude towards the Information Services before long.

May we discuss this soon, please?



ANGUS MAUDE

CONFIDENTIAL

MANAGEMENT IN CONFIDENCE

PRIME MINISTER

GOVERNMENT INFORMATION SERVICES

1. Some time ago, you asked me to consider a number of points about the Information Group of the Civil Service.
2. My conclusions, which are explained in more detail in the Annex, are:
 - i. we do need an information service to deal with the media, advertising, etc;
 - ii. the Service itself is extremely patchy. There are some very good people in the Group, but also some fairly indifferent people as well;
 - iii. to cure this, we need to take steps to improve the career management of the Group and to promote more exchanges between administrators and Information Officers than occur at present. I emphasise that this must be a two-way traffic. Good Information Officers must, at a junior grade, have the chance to do an administration job as well as vice versa. We need higher standards for both recruitment and promotion. A Career Development Adviser can do a great deal to help with this;
 - iv. naturally, we must be economical in this field as well as others. Departments should review their complement of Information Officers as part of their look at staff cuts. The COI, like everyone else, is reviewing its staff at the present time.
3. Angus Maude agrees with all this. But he would like to see trawling replaced by central management as a matter of urgency. So would I. Unfortunately, though, such a change would be expensive and involve quite a lot of extra staff. So it is not on at the moment. In any case, it would take some time to become effective. Trawling would have to continue in the meantime.

MANAGEMENT IN CONFIDENCE

MANAGEMENT IN CONFIDENCE

4. I will talk to Angus Maude, whom I understand you are seeing next week, about all this.
5. I am copying this minute to him.

P.C.

PAUL CHANNON
22 August 1980

ANNEX

STAFFING THE INFORMATION SERVICE

Is there a need for an Information Service?

1. I have come to the view that we do need an information service. We need to use the media, including the paid media, to inform the public and support Government services (recruiting for the Armed Services is an example). For this work we need people with the right knowledge and experience.

Nature of the Information Service, staffing and other problems

2. Do we have the right sort of Information Service? Information work is mainly carried out by the Information Group, which is about 1,200 strong. 500 are in the Central Office of Information and the rest distributed between Whitehall departments and certain non-Ministerial organisations (such as the Health and Safety Executive).

3. Members of the Information Officer Group are drawn from a wide variety of backgrounds. There are journalists, exhibition designers, film editors and producers, graphic designers, and of course Press Officers who act as spokesmen for departments. The Press Officers are often ex-journalists or public relations men, but some have moved from administration work.

4. There has been criticism of the quality of Information Group officials. I believe the specialist tasks are, in general, performed with considerable efficiency. For instance, the COI wins each year a number of communications industry awards for their work in all branches of the paid media.

5. But it is of course the Chief Information Officers (CIO) and Chief Press Officers whose work is crucial to Ministers. While some of these are good, others are weak. In that sense, however, the Information Group is not unlike the other groups in the Civil Service. Another problem in the Information Group is that good

people are not getting the right experience or the right opportunity to fit them for promotion to the top posts.

6. The CIO is in a key position because he has a special relationship with the Minister. Occasionally, however, a CIO may not be able to get on the same wavelength with a particular Minister. This is not a question of competence but of personal compatibility. He may well have proved entirely satisfactory to other Ministers. It is in any case difficult to move CIOs because there are so few posts at this level. Once it becomes known that a CIO has proved unsatisfactory to one Minister it becomes even more difficult to fit him in elsewhere.

7. Morale is low because information officers feel that they are poorly regarded. They think they are not always brought properly into the picture or allowed to make their full contribution. They resent the use of administrators in key information posts. They believe that the trawling system (see below) is not always operated strictly in accordance with agreed procedures.

Trawling

8. The system of trawling every Information Group vacancy throughout the Service is clearly the cause of many of the Group's problems. The system, which is the subject of an agreement with the Institution of Professional Civil Servants, is, however, the only means at present of providing departments with a field of selection for filling posts. But it does mean it is almost impossible to make the best use of available talent. Also, it is time-consuming. It tends to push departments into taking second-best rather than risk further delay by going on to use the Civil Service Commission system to bring in talent from outside. I believe the system can be replaced only by a comprehensive system of central management. At present, however, this would be too costly to run. But in the end we really must get rid of trawling.

Improvements

9. It must be possible to improve the position. This can be done by applying more rigorous standards for recruitment and promotion. We must also introduce some positive career management. Until now, there has not been any.

10. Crucial to these improvements will be the appointment (which has just been made) of a Career Development Adviser for the Information Group. The appointment will be for 2 years in the first instance, and the Adviser will assist the Head of Profession for the Group (the Director General of COI). His main tasks will be to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the Group, bring about moves of staff between departments for career development purposes (particularly in order to give appropriate experience to the more promising people at middle levels), and to consider how central management could be developed - within existing resources - so as to eliminate some of the worst features of trawling.

Absorption of the Information Group within the Administration Group

11. I have considered the alternative approach of merging the Information Group within the Administration Group and using administrators to fill the top posts. The Service could not, however, function without specialists, whose quality would rapidly diminish if their career prospects were severely reduced in that way. Also, administrators will not always have the knowledge of the media, or the influence with the press and broadcasting, that a Minister expects from his Chief Information Officer. I believe that the better course is to set about improving the Information Group rather than to weaken it further by diluting its professional experience or taking the top jobs away from it.

Recommendations

12. I recommend that:

- a. on appointment, the Career Development Adviser should immediately set in hand the work mentioned in paragraph 10;

MANAGEMENT IN CONFIDENCE

- b. departments and promotion Boards should in future apply stricter standards of reporting and assessment. They should not promote anyone whose capacity to perform at the higher level is in serious doubt;
- c. departments should retire or downgrade staff whose performance is clearly inadequate;
- d. if a post cannot be filled from inside the Service, it should be advertised outside. This is particularly important at middle and higher levels where better candidates can be expected to apply;
- e. the number of cross-postings between information staff and administrators should be increased. These are valuable for all concerned and should take place at middle levels where relevant experience can be most usefully gained. They should include cross-postings between Information Group staff in Whitehall and Diplomatic staff in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office who are expected to do information work in the FCO news department or abroad.



Minister of State

A S Kemp Esq
Private Secretary to the
Parliamentary Under Secretary
of State for Defence for the RAF
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SW1

Govt Machinery
MAP
Civil Service Department
Whitehall London SW1A 2AZ
Telephone 01-273 3000

31 July 1980

Dear Kemp,

The Prime Minister recently asked my Minister for a note about Government advertising expenditure. She noticed that recruitment advertising is the largest single block of work and has asked whether there is scope for cutting down in this field.

Most of the recruiting expenditure is of course on behalf of the Armed Services. I understand that Mr Pattie is reviewing the recruiting arrangements, including the advertising element, before next year's estimates. Also, I believe that, because of the improved recruiting position, there may well be some underspending in this financial year.

I would be grateful for your advice on how my Minister might respond to the Prime Minister's question as far as Armed Services recruitment advertising expenditure is concerned.

I am copying this letter to Mike Pattison (No 10) and Stephen Locke (Financial Secretary's Office).

Yours sincerely
Gary Rogers

G D ROGERS
Asst Private Secretary

file

ds

BF ¹¹ 10.8.80

24 July 1980

The Prime Minister was grateful to your Minister of State for his note about Government advertising expenditure.

She has noted that recruitment advertising is the largest single block of work, and has asked whether there is scope for cutting down in this field. I would be grateful for a note on this point.

I am sending a copy of this letter to Stephen Locke in the Financial Secretary's Office.

M A PATTISON

Geoffrey Green, Esq.,
Civil Service Department.

110

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PRIME MINISTER

*Probably we can
cut down on
Recruitment advertising?*

*Prime Minister 1.
The proposed switch to
payment may tighten control
on advertising.
If you want to press for reduction,
perhaps this is best done as
part of PES, through Chief Sec?*

1. You asked me some time ago to compile a report on Government advertising expenditure.

Expenditure

2. Expenditure on the COI's Allied Service Vote for advertising in 1980-81 is estimated at £27.7m, £8.8m of which has been transferred by Departments from their own Votes - see paragraph 4. Further details are in the Annex. The main expenditures in the present year are:

Ministry of Defence	£8.7m
Department of Transport	£4.8m
Manpower Services Commission	£3.7m
Department of Energy	£2.8m

These four amount to £20m out of the total of £27.7m.

3. The main items on which the money is spent are:

	£m	%
← Recruitment (eg Armed Services, police, nursing, prison service)	11.6	42
Social campaigns (eg Road Safety, Energy Conservation, crime and fire prevention)	8.5	30
Government Services and facilities (eg employment services, training services)	4.4	16
Others (including new legislation)	3.2	12

4. In 1980-81, three Departments thought it was essential to find more money for their advertising than was provided for them on the COI Vote. With Treasury permission, nearly £8.8m was transferred. The Departments are:

- Ministry of Defence, who transferred £3.9m for recruitment advertising.
- Department of Transport, who transferred £2.6m to maintain the level of expenditure on road safety publicity.
- Department of Energy, who transferred £2.3m to launch the new Energy Conservation Campaign which required extra funds.

5. The Annex sets out the expenditure, at constant prices, on COI advertising in each of the last 5 years, together with the provision for this year. I am told that the figure for 1975-76 was unusually high due to extra spending on the Energy "Save It" Campaign and on the Counter Inflation Campaign.

6. Reductions are made in Departments' plans for advertising expenditure when annual Estimates are discussed with the COI. In almost every case, I am told that the publicity projects which Departments request cost considerably more than the Departmental allocation agreed with the Treasury. The basic PES programme provision for home and publicity before transfers has been reduced by the Treasury by £4.5m

between 1980 and 1983 at constant prices.

COI's Role

7. The COI handles advertising on behalf of all Ministerial Departments and most Government Agencies. The two most significant exceptions are the Department for National Savings, which has an advertising budget of £3.9m in 1980-81, and the Civil Service Commission, with a budget of £1.0m.
8. Advertising Agencies are appointed by COI on the recommendation of the independent Advisory Committee on Advertising.
9. The COI manages the Government advertising business and has secured over recent years economies worth over £2m a year by setting up central buying systems for press space, television and radio air time, press production and poster sites. This represents about 10% in extra value for advertising budgets. A new cost-plus system of paying agencies has just been introduced by the COI (against opposition from the Agencies). This should yield more economies. Whatever the level of expenditure on advertising that is desirable, I believe the COI provides a cost-effective service. But of course I am looking for further economies in administration.

Conclusion

10. I know that you are concerned about the money spent on Government advertising. If you decided this should be reduced, the three Departments I have mentioned in paragraph 2, and the MSC, would need to make the biggest contribution.
11. Under the present Allied Service arrangements, a reduction in advertising expenditure can be brought about by imposing a tight limit to the COI PES programme and asking COI to review with Departments their advertising requirements with a view to making economies. It would then be for Treasury Ministers to control the level of transfers from Departmental PES programmes to COI.
12. As you know, however, I am at present considering with colleagues whether the COI should move from Allied Service to repayment arrangements. If that were to happen, we would have to consider different means of controlling (or, if you so decided, reducing) expenditure on advertising.
13. Do you think that the level of Government advertising is too high? If so, you could write to Cabinet colleagues saying so. Alternatively, Treasury Ministers could take this up with Departments in connection with the PES proposals for future years.
14. I am copying this minute to Nigel Lawson.

J.C.

COI EXPENDITURE ON ADVERTISING OVER LAST FIVE YEARS

ACTUAL SPENDING AT 1980-81 ESTIMATE PRICES

£000

BY DEPARTMENTS

	<u>1975-76</u>	<u>1976-77</u>	<u>1977-78</u>	<u>1978-79</u>	<u>1979-80</u>	<u>1980-81</u> (Provisional)
DEFENCE	7,635	5,875	5,545	6,955	9,368	8,705
TRANSPORT	3,498	3,588	3,154	5,842	6,216	4,784
ENERGY	6,865	1,331	2,408	2,878	1,680	2,824
MSC	1,684	2,227	2,838	4,462	2,332	3,656
OTHERS	11,637	8,237	12,575	10,057	7,513	7,744
TOTAL	31,319	21,258	26,520	30,194	27,109	27,713

BY MEDIA

PRESS	19,293	13,244	16,814	18,660	16,997	
TV & CINEMA	10,930	7,143	8,672	10,628	9,325	
POSTERS RADIO ETC	1,096	871	1,034	906	787	
TOTAL	31,319	21,258	26,520	30,194	27,109	27,713

PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL
COI EXPENDITURE

51%	46%	53%	57%	54%	50%
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TRANSFER FROM DEPARTMENTAL PESC PROGRAMMES

SINCE 1978-79 AT 1980-81 ESTIMATE PRICES

£000

	<u>1978-79</u>	<u>1979-80</u>	<u>1980-81</u>
DEFENCE	-	3,218	3,861
TRANSPORT	2,960	3,108	2,574
ENERGY	2,072	-	2,317
EMPLOYMENT	888	1,802	-
TOTAL	5,920	8,128	8,752



Minister of State

Tim Lankester Esq
Private Secretary to the
Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
LONDON SW1

✓ Mr. P. J. Green

Civil Service Department
Whitehall London SW1A 2AZ
Telephone 01-273 3000

8 April 1980

Dear Tim

When the Prime Minister met the Minister of State on Monday, 31 March, she asked him to send a report on COI advertising expenditure.

Mr Channon proposes to report fully very soon. He thought, however, that the Prime Minister might like to have a brief note before tomorrow's meeting at Chequers.

Total advertising by Home Departments and Government Agencies for 1980-81 is proposed to be £27.7m. The COI is at present on allied service, though Mr Channon is considering moving to repayment. £21.8m of this figure is from COI's own Vote, but some Departments have in addition transferred £5.9m from their own Votes, since they think the sums allotted are insufficient.

The biggest spenders are to be:

Ministry of Defence. They will spend £10.6m, of which recruitment advertising is £8.8m.

Ministry of Transport. They will spend £5.4m (of which £4.8m is for road safety).

Department of Energy. They will spend £3.4m (of which the 'Save It' campaign is £2.9m).

Departments are largely responsible for their own advertising priorities and expenditure. The Minister of State wonders whether the Prime Minister would like him to investigate this further with Departments and report to her again?

Yours sincerely

G E T Green

G E T GREEN
Private Secretary

PRIME MINISTER

INFORMATION OFFICERS

I have seen Angus Maude's report to you of 2 April on this topic which you briefly raised with me on Monday. I am examining the problems he raises, will discuss it with him, and report to you again.

I am copying this minute to Angus Maude.

P.C.

PAUL CHANNON

3 April 1980

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PRIME MINISTER

COI AND THE FUTURE OF THE INFORMATION SERVICES

Just a short note before you discuss this subject. After 13 years' experience I think the main questions remain:

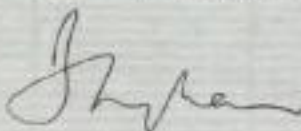
- do we need a Government Information Service?
- if we do, should it be professionally based or should it be regarded, as in the FCO, as a career posting for an administrator? Or should we cross-fertilise systematically?
- if there is to be a Government Information Service, which Department should be responsible for it?
- should there be a Ministry of Information responsible overall for informing the public, taking in the COI (and the FCO operation)?
- do we need a COI as a common service organisation?
- if we do, how do we ensure that the common services it provides are not duplicated in Departments?
- if we have a COI/Departmental structure (including the FCO) how do we manage it so that it really delivers the goods and provides a satisfactory career which attracts good people and imposes no ceiling on the best?

2. If I may say so, Prime Ministers have not been noted in my time for addressing themselves to these questions. They have tended to temporise by appointing this or that inquiry, with the result that the Government Information Service has been excessively raked over.

3. What is now needed is to decide what is required and go out and get it. We may not have a more helpful atmosphere since the Paymaster General has got the unions in the mood for reform, albeit on the basis of the existing structure.

4. My concern is that there is a lot of promising young material in the Government Information Service. If we are to have a Government Information Service we must prevent its waste by strengthening leadership, management and career planning.

5. You may wish to discuss.



B INGHAM

3 April 1980.



PRIVY COUNCIL OFFICE
WHITEHALL, LONDON SW1A 2AT

2 April 1980

PRIME MINISTER

FUTURE OF INFORMATION SERVICES

I had hoped to be able to defer sending you a full memorandum on this subject until current negotiations with the Staff Side on the future of the recruitment and 'trawling' systems were completed, since this is vital to any significant improvement in the Information Services. However, in view of your imminent discussions with the Minister of State, Civil Service Department, I felt I should send you an interim report.

2 The Government Information Services are not nearly as efficient or well-staffed as they ought to be; but much of the criticism aimed at them is ignorant and misplaced.

For example, we hear only too often references to '1,500 Press and Public Relations Officers' in Government Departments. The real figure is about 150. The Information Officer group contains a majority of officers who are engaged on a wide variety of functions, from Services recruitment to the preparation and publication of DHSS leaflets on pensions and Social Security benefits or statutory reports on many subjects. Some of these functions could - and perhaps should - be dropped, but these are decisions to be taken on policy grounds by Departmental Ministers, and have nothing to do with the Information Services as a whole.

3 As to the quality of the minority of officers who are actually engaged in the propagation of Government policies, it is patchy and uneven at all levels. But just setting out blindly to cut their numbers will not help unless a genuine effort is made to improve quality and secure an efficient system of recruitment and promotion. Indeed, the result might be simply to discourage and drive out the best.

Of course, one difficulty is diffused control. The Civil Service Department negotiates, Ministers complain, and I can only advise.

4 There is a vicious circle here. Because the system has led to a reduction in quality, administrators tend to treat Information Officers as an inferior class of being - which in itself leads to the discouragement and departure of the best. It is a firmly held belief at the top of the Civil Service that administrators are perfectly capable of doing information work, even at CIO level, without previous media experience. I am satisfied that this contention has not in general been borne out in practice - even in the FCO, where quality and effectiveness are falling.

/And ...

PRIME MINISTER (contd.)

2.4.80

And the morale of the Service will further deteriorate if top posts are not available to Information Officers. The best will leave.

5 This attitude on the part of administrators actually tends to reduce the effectiveness of even the best Information Officers, since they are not nearly as often consulted or informed of what is going on as they ought to be. Policy decisions are taken without adequate thought or advice on presentation, and Ministers' private offices tend to put up barriers between their Ministers and Information Officers.

6 The ideal answer is - having first raised the quality of Information Officers by more efficient recruitment and promotion methods - to introduce a flexible system of temporary transfers between Administrative and information class officials.

It would do nothing but good if a few bright young administrators were seconded for six months or a year to an Information Section, to learn something of presentation problems and gain direct media experience. Equally, I believe that every Minister's private office in large Departments - and private offices are often deplorably ignorant or even obstructive on presentation and media matters - should contain one bright young Information Officer on temporary secondment.

Such transfers would help not only to educate both sides but to improve understanding and mutual respect between them. There is also a case for the occasional temporary secondment of professional Information Officers to PCO posts abroad.

7 Meanwhile, it is taking a long time to get the main reforms through which are essential to major improvement. I was able to get the Director General of COI - a very wise and experienced Chief Information Officer - recognised as 'Head of Profession', which was a small start. But it has taken months to get approval for a Career Development Officer, who can now start to go through the Service and recommend those who should be weeded out, moved, or promoted. There has been - alone among professional Civil Service classes - no career management structure for the Information Services, which have suffered seriously as a result.

8 Under Union agreements, the 'trawling' system can result in it taking up to 10 months to recruit a useful candidate from outside - which means in practice it can almost never be done. Internal trawls are often farcical, or nominal, and only too often result in an inadequate candidate being appointed to higher Information Officer posts, which depresses the best IOs and further diminishes the status and respect of the Service in the eyes of Ministers, administrators and media.

/9. We ...

PRIME MINISTER (contd.) 2.4.80

9 We must get the recruitment and promotion machinery improved. I am satisfied, from my meeting with its representatives, that IPCS will go along with this - but negotiations with the Civil Service Department seem to be stagnant.

10 Given this, I believe we can start to rebuild an Information Service which would be more effective, with fewer and better staff.

I am copying this to the Minister of State, Civil Service Department.

ANGUS MAUDE



PRIVY COUNCIL OFFICE
WHITEHALL, LONDON SW1A 2AT

1 April 1980

PRIME MINISTER

CENTRAL OFFICE OF INFORMATION

I believe you are discussing with the Minister of State, Civil Service Department, the future of the Central Office of Information and the state of the Government Information Services in general.

I attach a separate memorandum on the latter, but there are one or two points to be made about the COI. The Director General has briefed the Minister of State in detail, but I should like to emphasise some essentials.

2 Neither the COI nor I question the need to reduce public expenditure, nor do we believe that the COI should be exempt from reductions. What we do question is the logic and effectiveness of the methods used and proposed to achieve them.

3 In the UK information field - and to a large extent in the overseas field - the COI neither initiates projects nor creates functions. Its work is demand-led, and it acts solely as an agent for Departments.

4 It is therefore pointless to attempt to attack the problem by making arbitrary cuts in the COI budget. Unless the client Departments are prepared to shed functions themselves, they react by either transferring funds to the COI to continue as before or by doing the work themselves less cost-effectively.

5 It follows that Ministers in charge of client Departments must be prepared completely to shed advertising or other publicity projects if a real saving is to be achieved. Changing to a repayment system is not the most efficient way of achieving this, if only because of the additional accounting costs.

6 So far from seeking work, the COI looks very carefully at all projects and often advises against them. Indeed, I understand the Director General is considering now recommending the abandonment of some Departments' projects.

7 The overseas work of COI is in a different category. Some 70% of it is devoted to export and other commercial promotion work on behalf of Trade Departments and British industry. To reduce this further would involve an important policy decision and produce many complaints from exporters.

/Moreover ...

PRIME MINISTER (contd.) 1.4.80

Moreover, the recent drastic cuts in FCO information staff overseas have left a gap which COI has been trying to fill. Even so, it is clear that our message on Britain's problems and our EC Budget case have not been getting across to media and public opinion in EC countries. The COI could do much to fill this gap without extra staff, but FCO has not been very co-operative in permitting COI direct access to foreign media.

I am copying this to the Minister of State, Civil Service Department.

ANGUS MAUDE

MR INGHAM

cc Mr. Whitmore

The Prime Minister said today that she would like to have Mr. Maude and Mr. Channon in to talk about the efficiency of the COI and the organisation of the information service more generally. I wonder whether the first move might not be for you to put a note into the Prime Minister giving your own views on the sort of things we might talk about, so that she can focus her mind before we set up a meeting. Would you like to have a word?

Ms

18 March 1980



~~Mr. James~~
You had seen?

with compliments

KHS.

23/4.

SIR IAN BANCROFT

CIVIL SERVICE DEPARTMENT

Whitehall, London, SW1A 2AZ

Tel. 01-839 7733 Ext.

Mr. Stoney
Mr. ... but I
have document
with P-9
with Andy in
9/2/65



Civil Service Department

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WHITEHALL, LONDON SW1A 2AT

18 May 1979

The Rt Hon Angus Maude TD MP ^{21/V}
 Paymaster General
 Privy Council Office
 Whitehall
 LONDON SW1

Dear Angus,

CENTRAL OFFICE OF INFORMATION

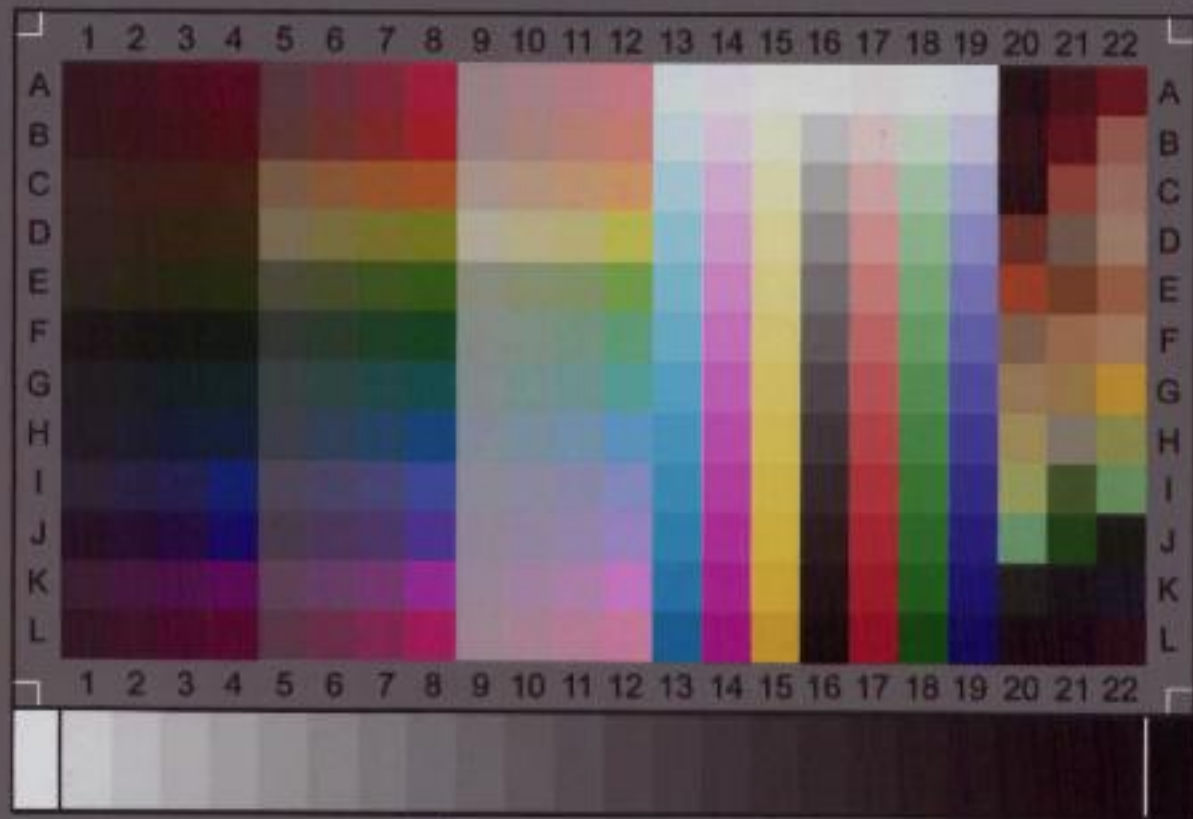
We had a word about the Central Office of Information (COI), and, as I agreed, I have now looked at your suggestion explained in your letter of 16 May that Ministerial responsibility should be transferred from CSD Ministers to your Office. I know that you raised the matter with Paul Channon also, who naturally discussed it with me. Having looked carefully into the point I feel it is not as simple a question as I think you felt.

2. As you will know, since its formation in 1946, the COI has been the responsibility of Treasury Ministers until 1972, and of CSD Ministers thereafter. This has not been affected by the arrangement where, from time to time, the responsibility for co-ordinating Government information has been given to a senior non-Departmental Minister. You will remember that in the 1950s and early 1960s Philip Swinton, Charles Hill and Bill Deedes were Cabinet Ministers with responsibilities for co-ordinating information, but COI continued to report to Treasury Ministers. I think that you had understood that Mr Foot had been in charge of the COI in the last Administration: in fact COI was the responsibility of CSD Ministers - the Minister of State discharged the responsibilities on behalf of the Lord Privy Seal in the same way as Paul Channon will on my behalf - but a junior Minister in the Privy Council Office under Mr Foot was responsible for the Government's information policy. Historically, this division of responsibility has been because no Government has wanted to have a Minister who might appear to be a "Minister for Information". I have a feeling that if we were to make this change, this would be an inevitable criticism.

3. The responsibility of CSD Ministers for COI, which is not concerned with information policy, but with providing a common service to Government Departments, can be clearly distinguished from your co-ordinating responsibilities for Government information. I see no reason why the separate responsibility for COI need in any way inhibit initiatives on your part to examine the effectiveness and efficiency of the Government's information services and I hope it will not. I have naturally discussed the matter with Paul Channon and Sir Ian Bancroft, the Head of the Home Civil Service. Given these reasons, I hope that you will accept that the present arrangements should stand.

Yours ever

Christopher



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