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PREM 19/3013

SECRET

CONFIDENTIAL FILING

POSSIBLE TRANSFERENCE OF RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE PASSPORT OFFICE FROM THE FOREIGN SECRETARY TO THE HOME SECRETARY.

GOVERNMENT

POSSIBLE PRIVATE SECTOR INVOLVEMENT

MACHINERY

JUNE 1983

Referred to	Date	Referred to	Date	Referred to	Date	Referred to	Date
<del>27.6.83</del>							
<del>1.7.83</del>							
<del>11.7.83</del>							
<del>27.7.83</del>							
<del>6.8.83</del>							
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PREM 19/3013

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SECRET AND PERSONAL



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Treasury Chambers, Parliament Street SW1P 3AG

Colin Walters Esq  
 Private Secretary  
 to the Home Secretary  
 Home Office  
 Queen Anne's Gate  
 London  
 SW1H 9AT

2 March 1990

Dear Colin

## PASSPORT DEPARTMENT: FUTURE ORGANISATION

The Chief Secretary has seen your letter of 13 February to Andrew Turnbull. He agrees that the privatisation/contractorisation option should not be pursued further for the time being, and that the right approach is to press ahead with the introduction of agency status. He would not like the contractorisation option to be forgotten, however, and suggests that it should be looked at again in the period leading up to the first review of the new agency's framework document. He hopes that, in the meantime, any opportunity for market testing will be exploited.

2. The Chief Secretary remains very concerned about the inefficiency of the Passport Department, and notes in particular the significant differences in performance between different offices. He therefore very much hopes that senior management in the Home Office will continue to attach the highest importance to improving the Passport Department's service delivery and value for money. He believes this is largely a question of implementing better management techniques, based on sound information systems and transferring the lessons of best practice. He welcomes the expansion of the relatively efficient Belfast office, and hopes that a further redistribution of work from the less to the more efficient offices can be implemented.

3 I am copying this letter to Andrew Turnbull (No.10), Tim Sutton (Lord President's Office), Stephen Wall (FCO), Clive Norris (Employment), Stuart Lord (SS), Martin Le Jeune (Office of the Minister for the Civil Service), and to Sir Angus Fraser and Sonia Phippard (Cabinet Office).

Yours  
 Miss C Evans

MISS C EVANS  
 Private Secretary



10 DOWNING STREET

From the Principal Private Secretary

15 February 1990

Dear Colin,

PASSPORT DEPARTMENT: FUTURE ORGANISATION

The Prime Minister has seen your letter to me of 13 February. She welcomes the improvements that are in train and hopes that the better level of service to the public will be sustained throughout the Summer. She agrees that the priority for the future should be for the Passport Office to move towards agency status, rather than pursuing the route of privatisation/contractorisation. She has noted the state of play on contingency planning.

I am sending copies of this letter to Tim Sutton (Lord President's Office), Stephen Wall (Foreign and Commonwealth Office), John Gieve (HM Treasury), Clive Norris (Department of Employment), Stuart Lord (Department of Social Security), Martin Le Jeune (Office of the Minister for the Civil Service) and to Sir Angus Fraser and Sonia Phippard (Cabinet Office).

Yours sincerely  
Andrew Turnbull

ANDREW TURNBULL

Colin Walters, Esq.  
Home Office

SECRET AND PERSONAL

AT

Cc Ms. Sinclair

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*Prime Minister*  
The Home Secretary reports a number of improvements. For the future he is looking to Agency status rather than privatisation/contracting out for improvements.

HOME OFFICE  
QUEEN ANNE'S GATE  
LONDON SW1H 9AT

SECRET AND PERSONAL

*Content?*

13 February 1990

*AT 14/2*

*Dear Andrew*

*Yes*

PASSPORT DEPARTMENT: FUTURE ORGANISATION

Your letter of 2 August 1989 recorded the Prime Minister's agreement that there should be continued progress towards agency status for the Passport Department; that there should be an announced study of the scope for private sector involvement; and that work, on a restricted basis, should be undertaken to develop contingency plans against industrial disruption.

Current Operations

Since last summer the Home Office has taken a series of decisions that should enable the Passport Office to offer good service to the travelling public in 1990:

more computer terminals have been put into the Glasgow and Liverpool passport offices, as well as computer-based tracking systems in the as yet uncomputerised offices at Newport and Peterborough;

new telephone equipment has been installed to enable customers to be given prompt and comprehensive information about their applications;

we are implementing a Coopers and Lybrand recommendation that we should test out a system of group working (as opposed to the traditional assembly line system);

we have expanded the Belfast office, which has traditionally achieved high productivity and low unit costs;

production control has been reinforced and greater use is being made of arrangements to transfer work between offices, to balance workloads and to improve average processing times.

Demand was up in January broadly in line with our forecast that there will be a 9% increase in passport services over 1990 as a whole compared with 1989. Applications are at present being processed within a maximum of 14 working days, though some offices are taking considerably less time than this, and all urgent cases are being given priority to meet the applicants' travel plans.

b.

Contingency Planning

We have also made considerable progress with a covert contingency plan, to come into action in the event of a serious deterioration in service. Essentially, it will involve the Post Office taking in applications and processing them at regional centres (they already have, of course, longstanding experience in dealing with British Visitor Passports). The Post Office (and, we believe, its trade unions) are anxious to win new business wherever possible, and we think we should be able to rely on the co-operation of their staff provided that the breakdown in Passport Department service was not perceived as having been precipitated by management. We and the Post Office expect to complete work on the contingency plan next month.

The Private Sector

The Home Secretary has reflected further on the contribution that the private sector may have to offer, and informal discussions have been held on a confidential basis with a range of relevant undertakings. There clearly are some important lessons from private sector experience about how we manage the present service, and the Home Secretary intends to enlist representative managers for a continuing advisory role. On the other hand, it is equally clear that there are no obvious candidates capable of taking on the bulk of passport-issuing work without the need for a start-up period of some 6 - 12 months, during which we might well have to rely on the contingency planning arrangements to keep the existing service going. The Home Secretary does not think that we should be justified in present circumstances in risking disruption to the service on the scale that might well be involved.

Agency Status

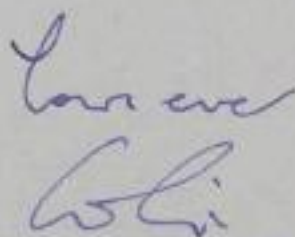
As the Home Secretary mentioned when he spoke to the Prime Minister about the Passport Department recently, he believes that the right approach is to look to agency status as the primary vehicle for achieving the improved service delivery and value for money which were at the heart of the concern last summer. We have drawn up and adopted an Action Plan to take us through to 1 April 1991, the planned launch date for the Passport Agency. This sets demanding targets to ensure that the objective of using the move to agency status as an opportunity for delivering substantial change in the short term is achieved. Our officials are in touch with Mr Luce's office and the Treasury about our plans for moving to agency status and they will continue to work closely together as the Action Plan is implemented. The inclusion of businessmen in the steering group which will oversee the introduction of agency status arrangements will ensure that full account is taken of best private sector practice.

C.

SECRET AND PERSONAL

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I am sending copies of this letter to the Private Secretaries to the  
Lod President of the Council, the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary, the  
Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Secretaries of State for Employment and  
Social Security, the Minister for the Civil Service, and to Sir Angus Fraser  
and Sonia Phippard.



C J WALTERS

Andrew Turnbull, Esq.  
No 10 Downing Street  
LONDON, S.W.1.

SECRET AND PERSONAL

pass for:  
GOVT MACH: in June '83







7 SW

10 DOWNING STREET  
LONDON SW1A 2AA

*From the Principal Private Secretary*

2 August 1989

*Dear Peter,*

**PASSPORT DEPARTMENT: FUTURE ORGANISATION**

The Prime Minister has seen your Secretary of State's minute of 1 August. She has agreed that there should be continued progress towards Agency status for the Passport Office; that there should be an announced study of the scope for private sector involvement; and that work, on a restricted basis, should be undertaken to develop contingency plans against industrial disruption.

I am copying this letter to Steven Catling (Lord President's Office), Alex Allan (HM Treasury), Stephen Wall (Foreign and Commonwealth Office), Clive Norris (Department of Employment), Helen Dudley (Department of Social Security), Martin Le Jeune (Ministry of State's Office), Trevor Woolley (Cabinet Office) and Don Brereton (Efficiency Unit).

*Yours sincerely  
Andrew Turnbull*

(ANDREW TURNBULL)

Peter Storr, Esq.,  
Home Office.

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PRIME MINISTER

1 August 1989

PASSPORT DEPARTMENT: FUTURE ORGANISATION

Douglas Hurd has minuted to you about the future organisation of the Passport Department.

He proposes an overt twin track approach:

- (i) continuing to turn the Passport Department into a Next Steps agency (this has already been announced);
- (ii) announcing that the Government will be exploring options for involving the private sector in the issuing of passports.

He also proposes covert contingency plans to deal with any breakdown in service in the early months of next year (when passport applications are expected to reach their peak).

Comment

Issuing passports involves

- an irreducible amount of manual checking (to confirm that all the relevant documents are attached, and to weed out tricky nationality cases - about 10 per cent of the total);
- a check against a central list of people who should not be given passports (this can be done by computer);
- a computerised operation to produce the document.

A number of private sector companies are likely to be interested in providing this service on contract to the Government

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if the price they are allowed to charge is right. The investment needed would be quite substantial, particularly the hiring and training of some hundreds of clerical staff (the Passport Department employ 1,000). A private sector contractor would be looking for volume business to repay his investment.

Travel agents like Thomas Cook seem the most obvious candidates. They could offer this service to their customers as a convenience much as they now offer to get foreign visas (a service for which they charge over and above the fees levied by the Embassies issuing the visas).

A number of issues would need to be sorted out:

- the Government would need to be satisfied that passports produced by private contractors could not easily be forged (private sector printing of banknotes could be worth examining);
- information about names on the "prohibited" list would need to be suitably protected. There could be no question of giving the list to anyone in the private sector;
- there would need to be arrangements for referring the 10 per cent or so of cases involving decisions on nationality to the Home Office.

None of this presents insuperable problems.

#### Attitude of some foreign governments

The main stumbling block to proceeding immediately to contracting out the provision of passports is the likely attitude of some Governments, including the USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. These Governments have consistently refused

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to accept British Visitors' passports (BVPs) issued by the Post Office because they regard them as a low security document. Appeals asking them to accept BVPs as a temporary measure this summer fell on deaf ears, though a number of other countries were prepared to do this.

The main fears about BVPs are that they can be easily forged (they are said to be linked to cheque fraud); and the fact that they do not indicate whether the holder has right of abode in the UK, as opposed to being a British subject. However irrational it may be, the initial reaction of foreign governments - including the USA - is likely to be that passports issued by the private sector would be akin to BVPs. This is because the idea of contracting out the making of passports is a novel one. No other country appears to do it.

We should be able to persuade foreign governments that a system involving contracting out of the mechanics of passport production is a perfectly valid way of operating. We should be able to reassure them that the contractors would be able to take the necessary steps to prevent forgery; and that cases of doubtful nationality would be handled by the Home Office. But this is likely to take some months. If the Government meanwhile took steps which precipitated a strike at the Passport Department - such as announcing the contracting out of the whole operation - there could be an uncomfortable interval during which some foreign countries outside the EC refused to recognise whatever temporary arrangements we made to provide passports.

### Conclusion

The Government cannot risk taking action which could lead to its citizens being "bottled up" in this country as regards travel to the USA and the old Commonwealth. This is the strongest argument for agreeing to Douglas Hurd's overt "twin track" approach. The covert contingency plans are clearly sensible.

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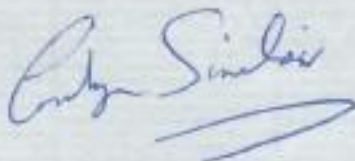
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The requirements of foreign governments should be identified at an early stage. It will be crucial to persuade them that fears that privately produced passports will be less secure are unfounded.

Recommendation

- Agree to the overt "twin track" approach, backed up by covert contingency plans.
- Early efforts should be made to secure the co-operation of other governments in accepting passports produced under contract. This should go hand in hand with discussions about the scope for private sector involvement in the issuing of passports.



CAROLYN SINCLAIR

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sa-d

cc PM

Prime Minister

- Agree
- (i) continued progress towards Agency status
  - (ii) an announced study of scope for private sector involvement
  - (iii) work, on a restricted basis, to develop contingency plans.

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es  
ms

AT 1/8

Prime Minister

PASSPORT DEPARTMENT : FUTURE ORGANISATION

Following the Passport Department's failure to deliver an adequate service to the travelling public again this year, there was a general view in Cabinet that the time had come to bring the private sector's expertise to bear on this area of work. I entirely share that view and we discussed it at our meeting on value for money on 19 July.

2. We must try to find a way of pressing on towards this goal, without causing the whole passport issuing system to seize up. This would probably be the result if we were baldly to announce a decision for an early change to large-scale contractorisation, or any other radical change that implied inevitable and widespread job losses. That would be likely to provoke severe disruption, and there would be a delay measured in weeks before we could put any alternative arrangements into place. The issuing of passports is basically a labour intensive, scrutinising operation requiring easy access by the public, and it is not a system that can easily be replicated. It is different in kind from the provision and management of an IT system, such as the Government Data Network or the DSS computers, though my officials will certainly continue to keep in touch with other Departments to see what they can learn from their experience.

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3. If the issuing of passports did indeed seize up, then large numbers of people would simply be unable to travel to the places they wished. I have naturally considered whether, in such a situation, we could persuade additional countries to accept the British Visitors' Passport (BVP) which is issued by the Post Office and would therefore be likely to remain available during any industrial action in the Passport Department. But during the disruption this Summer we asked a number of countries to accept BVPs and the USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand were amongst those who firmly refused to do this, even though we had undertaken to receive back any traveller to whom we had issued a BVP. I do not think that these countries would be likely to take any different view now.

4. After further thought I believe the right answer is to proceed energetically with our previously announced plan for putting the Passport Department on an Agency basis as soon as possible, but to find a way of combining this with the largest possible element of contractorisation or other private sector involvement. I canvassed this thinking in reply to a Parliamentary Question on 13 July. The staff in the Passport Department are already familiar with the idea of an Agency, and I believe that this will provide us with the framework for what we need to do. I envisage that progress towards Agency status should proceed alongside a study of the scope for private sector involvement, which should be put quite clearly on the public record so that the work can proceed on an overt basis, and include consulting companies who might take on some or most of the work. As you know from your VFM meeting on 19 July, there are a number of options for using the private sector. I want to go as far as we can, but I think it would

/be a mistake

be a mistake to tie ourselves down to any precise model at the outset. The essential thing is that we should move on to the twin track, pressing ahead with the change to Agency status while we simultaneously expose the range of choices for engaging the private sector. My officials will be in close touch with Richard Luce's office and with the Treasury as we take this forward.

5. A major innovation of the kind I have indicated cannot be in place in time to help us deal with the peak demand for passports in the first months of next year. For that purpose we must look to better planning and firmer management of the resources at present available to us. I am very well aware of the urgency and importance of this, and we are beginning to make our dispositions now. For example, I have already told my officials to plan an expansion of the Passport Office in Belfast, which has a very good productivity record, to give us a better margin against a sudden surge in demand.

6. I would hope that the very fact of the study of private sector involvement would itself exert a healthy discipline against yet another industrial dispute next year. However, I do not think that we should be prepared to enter the next season of demand without a contingency plan for responding to a breakdown in service resulting from industrial action, if it should occur. I have therefore decided that, under the aegis of the open study of private sector involvement, there should also be a covert exercise to work up contingency plans, about which my officials would consult other Departments on a strict need-to-know basis.

7. I am sending copies of this minute to the Lord President of the Council, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Foreign

/and Commonwealth



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and Commonwealth Secretary, the Secretary of State for Employment, the Secretary of State for Social Security, the Minister for the Civil Service, Sir Robin Butler and Sir Angus Fraser.

Douglas Hurd.

1 August 1989

SECRET



10 DOWNING STREET

LONDON SW1A 2AA

*From the Private Secretary*

11 July 1989

SECRET AND PERSONAL

*Dear Richard,*

**PASSPORT DEPARTMENT: POSSIBLE PRIVATE SECTOR INVOLVEMENT**

The Prime Minister has seen and noted the Foreign Secretary's minute of 10 July.

I am copying this to Peter Storr (Home Office), Carys Evans (Treasury), Stephen Catling (the Lord President's office) and Trevor Woolley (Cabinet Office).

*Yours sincerely,  
Caroline Slocock*

CAROLINE SLOCOCK

Richard Gozney Esq.  
The Foreign and Commonwealth Office

*File  
4*



Prime Minister (2) 3(A-B)

I assume by other models the Foreign Secretary means Trading Funds.

SECRET AND PERSONAL

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10/7

PM/89/036

PRIME MINISTER

Passport Department: Possible Private Sector Involvement

1. The Home Secretary sent me a copy of his minute to you of 28 June, explaining the work the Home Office had put in hand on the possible transfer of much of the work of the Passport Office to the private sector. **I agree that the present situation is intolerable and that contracting out to the private sector is a serious option. It may also be worth looking at other models eg the Royal Mint or HMSO.**
2. As you know, the Foreign Office is responsible for issuing UK passports overseas. Our posts currently issue about 250,000 passports - about 9% of the total. We shall look at this operation in parallel with the Home Office review. But we would expect that, in any event, the current arrangements under which the general passport fee covers the costs of the Passport Department in the UK, passport operations overseas, and non-fee bearing consular services (currently some £21m pa) would be maintained.
3. **A crucial question will of course be to ensure recognition by foreign governments of passports issued by a non-governmental agency. Home Office officials are already in touch with mine about this.**

SECRET AND PERSONAL



SECRET AND PERSONAL

4. I am copying this minute to the Home Secretary, the Chief Secretary, the Lord President of the Council and Sir Robin Butler.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to be 'G. Howe', written in a cursive style.

(GEOFFREY HOWE)

Foreign and Commonwealth Office  
10 July 1989

SECRET AND PERSONAL

ROY T MACH  
Passport June  
83



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10 DOWNING STREET

LONDON SW1A 2AA

*From the Private Secretary*

3 July 1989

SECRET AND PERSONAL

*Dear Peter,*

**PASSPORT DEPARTMENT: POSSIBLE PRIVATE SECTOR INVOLVEMENT**

The Prime Minister has seen the Home Secretary's minute of 28 June about possible private sector involvement in the Passport Department. She is content that he should put proposals to colleagues later this month covering the issues set out in his minute.

I would be grateful if you would ensure that this is seen only by those with a clear need to know.

I am copying this to Stephen Wall (Foreign and Commonwealth Office), Carys Evans (Treasury), Stephen Catling (Lord President's Office) and Trevor Woolley (Cabinet Office).

*Yours sincerely,*

*Caroline Slocock*

CAROLINE SLOCOCK

Peter Storr Esq  
Home Office



Prime Minister ①  
 The Home Secretary  
 wants you to see this  
 before Cabinet.

Content for him to work  
 up proposals in no way  
 he suggests and to put  
 a paper to colleagues  
 next month?

PRIME MINISTER

PASSPORT DEPARTMENT: POSSIBLE PRIVATE SECTOR  
 INVOLVEMENT

CAS  
 28/6  
 Yes Mr

In the light of the recent disruption in the Passport Department I undertook in Cabinet to consider the scope for moving passport issuing operations into the private sector. This minute is based on preliminary work by officials, and further work is needed before we can take decisions.

2. The preliminary conclusion is that though the move would carry a risk of serious industrial relations trouble and severe inconvenience to the travelling public, there is no fundamental reason in public policy why the bulk of straightforward passport issuing work should not be contracted out into the private sector. I have instructed my officials to put urgent work into the outstanding points, and I propose to put considered proposals to colleagues next month. It will be important that the handling arrangements preserve absolute confidentiality until we are ready to make an announcement.

Background

3. A passport is a document in which the Government vouches for the identity, including national status, of the bearer. At present passports are issued by the Secretary of State under the Royal Prerogative with the fee being set (under the Consular Fees Act) to do no more than cover UK issuing costs plus the FCO costs of both issuing passports

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abroad and of providing consular services to their holders. Once issued, a passport remains the property of the Government.

4. About 90% of the passport applications made in the UK are straightforward and are cleared at a low official level. The remaining 10% or so require attention at higher levels because of questions about the authenticity of the application or the nationality status of the applicant. In addition, there is a small number of highly sensitive cases involving the intelligence communities, and there are some special arrangements for official travellers. UK passports are also issued abroad by the FCO.

5. The integrity of the passport system is important for the control of immigration and international crime. But the simplified British Visitors Passport (BVP), which is accepted throughout Western Europe and a few other places, is already issued by the Post Office under contract to the Passport Department.

#### The basis on which the private sector could be involved

6. I agree with officials' preliminary conclusion that it would not be practicable for the Government to divest itself of all responsibility for control over passports and who should have them. The most promising model for private sector involvement would be a very substantial level of contracting out. Under this scheme the present Prerogative powers would remain untouched, but the Secretary of State would lay down fairly rigid rules under which private sector contractors could be expected to authorise and issue the 90% of straightforward applications. The remaining 10% of difficult cases would be referred to central Government, which would continue to deal with the special security and other cases mentioned in paragraph 4 above. There would, in effect, be a two-tier system, with the great majority of straightforward cases being dealt with in the private sector.



7. Officials still need to do more work on the details of such a scheme, including the size of the residual operation that would be left in the hands of central Government; the machinery for referring cases to central Government; and the arrangements for policing the whole operation to ensure its integrity. But, on the work done to date, officials do not believe that there is any fundamental difficulty about delegating the authorisation of passports on the basis I have described, and they do not believe that legislation would necessarily be needed.

#### Managing the transition

8. Although this work is being conducted in secrecy at present, we shall at some point, probably not later than the autumn, need to tell the unions what we are doing, and from that point there could be very considerable disruption.

9. A vital part of our planning must, therefore, be to work up a reliable contingency plan for guaranteeing the maintenance of a simplified passport issuing operation throughout the duration of the expected disruption. This could last for many months, since no possible outside contractors will have ready-made plans for setting up a passport operation, and they would need to think carefully about the organisation and costing of such an enterprise. Despite this basic problem, I believe that contracting out represents the best prospect for providing the public with a better service, and I hope that we could announce our intentions this autumn, during the slack period of the year for passport applications but while the present union disruption is still fresh in the memory of the public.

## CONCLUSIONS

10. I have asked my officials to work up two sets of proposals as a matter of urgency. First, we need a more detailed description of the eventual two-tier system that I have in mind and of the way in which we should invite proposals from the private sector. Second, and vitally, we need a trustworthy contingency plan for seeing us and the public through the transitional period. Subject to your views, I propose to put a paper on both aspects to colleagues next month, in time to enable a decision to be reached before the Recess. I have emphasised to my officials that, although they will need to consult a number of Departments (not least because any trouble could spread to those Departments), this matter must be handled on a strict need-to-know basis.

11. I am sending copies of this minute to the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary, the Chief Secretary, the Lord President of the Council and Sir Robin Butler.

*Douglas Hurd*

28 June 1989



*nbpm*

PRIME MINISTER

..... I enclose for your information an advance copy of the Government's reply to the Home Affairs Committee's Fifth Report "Previous Recommendations on the Passport Department and IND". This will be published on Thursday, 2 March at 3.30 p.m.

I am copying this minute and its enclosure to Geoffrey Howe and John Wakcham.

*Douglas Hurd*

1 March 1989

**CONFIDENTIAL — FINAL REVISE**

*[to be published as Command 635 by  
Her Majesty's Stationery Office  
Price £1.30 net]*



**THE GOVERNMENT REPLY TO THE FIFTH  
REPORT FROM THE HOME AFFAIRS COMMITTEE  
SESSION 1987-88 HC 621**

## **Previous Recommendations**

**Presented to Parliament by the Secretary of State for the  
Home Department, by Command of Her Majesty  
March 1989**

**Government Reply to the Fifth Report on Previous Recommendations on the Passport Office and IND from the Home Affairs Committee (Session 1987-88)**

**Recommendation**

"Until computerisation is fully established and the new system properly bedded down, we consider it essential that the Passport Department maintains the use of overtime working and the employment of casual labour to sustain the recent improvement in turn-round time in passport applications. It is also necessary to give the greatest publicity possible to the current waiting time for applications, and especially the improved service for postal applications to the London Office described to us in evidence, with a view to saving members of the public the time and expense of personal applications." (Paragraph 6).

**Response**

The Government welcomes the Committee's comments. Computerisation of passport-issuing started in Glasgow in August 1988 and in Liverpool in December of that year. The 4 remaining UK passport offices, at Belfast, Peterborough, Newport and London, should be computerised by the end of 1989. The Government will continue to employ such special measures as are necessary to maintain an adequate service to the public during this period. The employment of casual staff, together with overtime working, is likely to remain the most efficient way of dealing with the sharp seasonal peaks in demand for passport services, even with a fully computerised passport service.

The Government is aware of the importance of providing the public with up-to-date information on current processing times for postal applications, in order to reduce the need for personal applications and follow-up enquiries, both of which place heavy demands on the passport offices at peak times, as well as causing inconvenience to the applicant. The Passport Department is examining ways of stepping up its publicity efforts during the coming year to ensure that the public is kept fully informed on these matters.

**Recommendation**

"We recommend that the Home Office give urgent consideration to the withdrawal of the British Visitor's Passport as soon as the computerisation programme, which will allow for a 5-day service for issuing standard passports, is fully operational". (Paragraph 12).

**Response**

The Government has already undertaken to review the future of the British Visitor's Passport when the computerisation programme is complete, at the end of 1989. The practical and cost implications of withdrawal will be studied, but such is the importance of the BVP as an alternative travel document in the event of delays arising in the main passport issuing system, that no decision about its withdrawal or replacement can be made until the computerised system is fully bedded-in and has been tested under a full workload.

**Recommendation**

"We further recommend that consideration be given to the issue of the back page of the new United Kingdom passport as a voluntary identification document to facilitate travel within the European Community. Such a document might also serve to replace the growing number of cards now being issued by football clubs, public houses and other private establishments for the purposes of identification". (Paragraph 12).

### Response

The Government is still considering carefully the general question of the possible introduction of identity cards on a voluntary basis. The Government will consider the Committee's suggestion in this context.

### Diplomatic Passports

In responding to the Committee's questions concerning the case for distinctive passports for members of HM Diplomatic Service working overseas, officials explained that the matter was under consideration, and undertook to keep the Committee informed of progress.

The Committee will wish to be aware that Ministers have decided that the time is not right for the introduction of diplomatic passports. The standard passports issued to members of the UK Diplomatic Service and other staff at overseas posts, and to their spouses and dependents, will continue to bear on an inside page an official endorsement showing the holder's status.

### Recommendation

We consider that the Home Office should review its Post Room service at Lunar House to ensure that all mail received on a particular working day is opened and acknowledged on that day and any passport contained therein returned. (Paragraph 16).

### Response

All immigration mail received in the Post Room at Lunar House is now being opened and acknowledged within 24 hours. Because of late deliveries, it is not possible to open and acknowledge all mail on the day of receipt. Applications for citizenship go to Accounts for removal of fees before acknowledgement by staff in the Post Room. All citizenship applications are currently being acknowledged within 6 days of receipt.

The Committee's First Report and the Government's response indicated that any passports which had been sent in by applicants for British citizenship before 31 December 1987 were being returned with an acknowledgement. All such passports were returned by the end of April 1988. However, this was an exceptional measure to deal with the huge influx of applications received before 31 December 1987; the large number of applicants seeking the return of their passports which took time to find; and the length of time which the applications would take to process. The normal procedure for both immigration and citizenship applicants is that passports are retained for consideration with the application but are returned where applicants seek their return for travel or other purposes. This does not cause difficulty: passports are returned to applicants immediately they are requested, either by post or in person at the Public Enquiry Office.

### Recommendation

If the recruitment problems at Lunar House persist, and the volume of work continues to overwhelm the capacity of the staff there, we see no alternative but to relocate the whole or part of the office in order to achieve the kind of service required by the public. (Paragraph 20).

### Response

The Government has taken vigorous measures to recruit and retain staff at Lunar House. Wider advertising, improved procedures and the recruitment of part-timers have helped to improve the situation considerably in recent months. Since 19th May 1988 a net additional total of 136 staff have been recruited. Nevertheless there are still staff shortages and it is not going to be easy to recruit and retain staff in the South East.

The Committee's report acknowledges that the Government is considering the possibility of the relocation of IND. This follows the announcement by the Pay Master General that Departments would be reviewing their location of work with a view in suitable cases to finding locations offering advantages in terms of recruitment and retention of staff, value for money and other considerations relevant to service delivery and management. (Official Report, cols 610-611, 31 March 1988).

Consultants have been appointed to conduct a feasibility study and detailed examination of the implications of the possible relocation of IND. They are due to report in the Spring. The Government will then be in a position to consider the feasibility and desirability of the relocation of IND.

### Recommendation

We consider that, while lengthy delays regrettably continue, the Home Office should establish a clear order of priority so that no individual will suffer unduly from the protracted wait for his application to be dealt with. (Paragraph 20a).

### Response

The Nationality Department has reviewed its criteria for giving priority to citizenship applications. Registration cases rarely require protracted enquiries, and consequently it is usually not difficult to give priority to genuinely urgent cases. Naturalisation cases are more difficult because enquiries are necessary in all cases to establish that the applicant meets the statutory requirements. These enquiries may take time and are not always within our control. Where possible, however, we will give priority to applicants who cannot travel on their existing documentation or where the difficulty of obtaining visas makes necessary travel impossible. We hope that this will be of particular help to businessmen.

The Immigration (as opposed to Nationality) Department handles applications for variation of leave in their turn, although applications which are particularly urgent are afforded special priority. Applicants who are able to attend the Public Enquiry Office (PEO) in Croydon or one of the regional Public Enquiry Offices are usually able to have their application resolved the same day and over 50 per cent of all variation of leave decisions are taken by the PEOs. The time taken to resolve an application has however to be distinguished from any preliminary delay before first consideration; many cases require further enquiries to be made or the applicant to be interviewed and this can take time, particularly in complex or sensitive cases, for example a refugee application. Ministers are however committed to reducing the time taken to decide applications wherever possible. It was with this in mind that Immigration Rules changes were introduced in February 1988 (HC 208) to remove the need for certain routine extensions of stay, thus reducing the number of applications received annually. Improved working procedures are also being introduced wherever possible to ensure that applications are processed as promptly as possible.

### Citizenship Applications

The Committee expressed disappointment that their target, recommended in their First Report, would not be met of completing by the end of 1988 the processing of all applications for British citizenship received by the end of 1987. The Committee urged the Government to take whatever steps are necessary to end the backlog of applications by the end of April 1989.

The Government are anxious that applications received by the end of the 1987 deadline set out in the British Nationality Act 1981 should be determined as quickly as possible and it is for this reason that the Liverpool Nationality Office was set up in August 1988 to process applications for registration received before that date. The aim of that office is to complete all applications for registration made before December 1987 by 31 March 1990, although very many applications

will have been granted well before then. The Home Office will do all in its power, with current resources, to ensure that cases are completed as soon as practicable but can give no undertaking that all applications received by the end of 1987 will have been processed by April 1989.



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*Dms*  
*2/2*

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR THE HOME DEPARTMENT

Transfer of the Passport Office: Examiners' Allowance

1. When we met the other day we discussed the timing of the phasing-out of the Passport Examiners' Allowance. As you recall, I was reluctant to implement this decision in the immediate future, because of the likelihood, in the light of events at GCHQ, that the union reaction would be much sharper than it might otherwise have been. I have since been reflecting on your suggestion that the FCO should make clear to the Trade Union side before the agreed transfer date of 1 April that the allowance would be phased out, while leaving the date of implementation until the autumn.

2. I feel, on reflection, that this idea would not get us out of the immediate difficulties. The Unions will react to an announcement of our decision at the time it is made, and the fact that implementation is to be delayed is unlikely to temper that reaction. In the present general climate of industrial relations in the aftermath of Cheltenham, there may well be industrial protest action. It is difficult to assess accurately what the effect of this would be, but the seasonal increase in passport applications has now begun and a strike or go-slow would very quickly lead to a backlog in passport issues and deterioration in the service we could provide to the public. It could also very well have repercussions outside the Passport Office. I therefore think that my original suggestion that any further action should be deferred until the autumn remains best from both our points of view. As you and I

/noted



noted, although it is important as a matter of principle to phase the allowances out, the cost-saving involved is relatively small (only about £10,000 for a full financial year) and the savings would not begin until the decision is implemented. There is therefore nothing to be gained (in financial terms) by making the announcement now. Nor do I think that this issue should call into question the agreed transfer date of 1 April.

3. I therefore very much hope that you will agree to leave this decision until the autumn. From the point of view of staff relations, it would be highly desirable for the Passport Office to be under the same management from the moment at which the announcement is made to the point at which the decision is implemented. And it would be in neither of our interests for the decision to be taken in circumstances which would maximise the difficulties.

4. I am copying this to the Prime Minister.



(GEOFFREY HOWE)

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

2 March 1984

Gov Mach Passport  
Office 6183



RECEIVED



Prime Minister

FCS/83/161

*[Handwritten signature]*

*[Handwritten initials]*

8/8

HOME SECRETARY

Increases in Passport and Consular Fees

1. In view of the recent decision that responsibility for the Passport Office should be transferred to the Home Office, you should be aware of our plan to increase passport and consular fees this autumn.
2. Increases are necessary in order to achieve full recovery through fee receipts of the costs of the passport and consular services at home and overseas. The new fees also take into account certain recommendations arising out of last year's Rayner Scrutiny of the Passport Office. The increases will be the first since March 1978; they are calculated to make it possible to hold fees at the new levels for some time to come.
3. The fee for a standard ten-year passport will rise from the present £11 to £15 and that for a British Visitors Passport from ~~£5.50~~ to £7.50. The fee for a "family" passport (ie including particulars of a spouse) will be 1½ times the standard fee. There will be commensurate increases in fees for other passport services, an average 50% increase in consular fees, and increases at the same time in United Kingdom visa fees.
4. Present plans are that the increases will come into effect on Monday 14 November with an announcement to

/Parliament



Parliament by a written answer on 11 November (ie three days before they take effect), with a press release to issue immediately after. That date has been chosen in order to leave sufficient time, after the necessary Consular Fees Order is made at the Privy Council meeting on 19 October, for the Order to be considered by the Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments. An Order made at the previous Privy Council meeting on 27 July could not have been considered by the Joint Committee because of the Recess. Fee increases are, as explained in paragraph 2 above, needed in this financial year: postponing them until this winter or next spring would mean foregoing the extra receipts, and the consequent effect on the costing could be such that steeper increases were needed to compensate. Earlier consideration of fee increases was interrupted by the general election; and it is our practice to avoid increases during the Passport Offices' busy spring and summer periods. I have considered whether it would be right to give a longer notice period to the public, but have concluded that this is not necessary or in accordance with normal practice in other similar fields (eg TV licences). It would of course result in a forestalling rush causing increased workload (which could cost money) and consequent loss of revenue.

5. The Foreign Affairs Committee have shown an interest in passport matters, and I propose therefore to ensure that they are informed of the fee increases once the Order has been made.

/6. I am



6. I am copying this minute to the Prime Minister, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and the Secretary of State for Industry and Trade.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to be 'G. Howe', is written above the typed name.

(GEOFFREY HOWE)

Foreign and Commonwealth Office  
8 August 1983



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

27 July 1983

Note: Tim  
has spoken to  
FCO to confirm  
receipt. RB  
mentioned this  
as being no. 10  
being kept  
informed. No  
action reg'd

PE  
5/8

*Dear Sir,*

Future of the Passport Office

We have discussed with the Home Office how best to put into effect the Prime Minister's wishes, set out in your letter of 11 July, that the announcement of the transfer of the Passport Office to the Home Office should be made in Parliament at an early date; and that this should include details about the modalities of the transfer, so that answers to questions from those affected can be provided at the same time.

It will inevitably take some time to work out the more important modalities for the transfer. We and the Home Office have made a start, but we shall not be able to settle everything before Parliament goes into recess this week. In particular, the redeployment of financial and manpower resources, including the funds for the major passport issuing computerisation project, needs to be resolved in the context of the PES Review. We shall have to involve an increasing number of staff in our discussions, and interest in the decision is bound to grow. Although we do not envisage a public statement before Parliament reassembles in the autumn, Sir Geoffrey Howe thinks we ought to tell the staff principally affected - both in the Home Office and in the FCO - of the Government's intentions fairly soon. If they hear about it on the grape-vine, suspicions might be aroused, and staff relations over the period of the transfer might become more difficult.

Sir Geoffrey Howe therefore proposes that the staff of the Passport Office should be told that it is the Government's intention to transfer the Passport Office from the FCO to the Home Office, as suggested by the Foreign Affairs Committee and the Rayner Review; that a statement will be made about this in Parliament in the autumn; and that the timing and modalities of the transfer are under discussion between the Departments concerned. We understand that the Home Office will take parallel action with their staff.

/The press



The press (or at least a Trade Union journal) may get wind of our plans, and there might be criticism that an announcement has not been made first in Parliament; but we believe that this is a risk we should take in order to make progress in settling the modalities of the transfer.

I am copying this letter to Tony Rawsthorne (Home Office) and Richard Hatfield (Cabinet Office).

*Answer.  
J.P.*

(B J P Fall)  
Private Secretary

F E R Butler Esq  
10 Downing Street



Ref. A083/2037

PRIME MINISTER

---

*altered.*  
You have had minutes from the Home Secretary and the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary about the timing of the transfer of the Passport Office to the Home Office.

2. I can understand the Home Secretary's reluctance to take the work on until the key questions of resourcing and management have been settled. On the other hand, I am sure the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary is right in saying that there are advantages in setting an early target date for the actual transfer. Too long a gap between announcement of the decision in principle and its implementation would almost certainly attract further criticism from the Select Committee, and would cause further problems with the staff concerned and their union representatives. Their co-operation is essential if some of the recommendations of the Rayner scrutiny are to be implemented successfully.

3. I would therefore support the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary's proposal that we should aim for a transfer next spring and meanwhile carry out a quick study of all the modalities of the transfer, building on the work already carried out under Lord Rayner's direction. I think we can do without outside consultants in this study, although the Home Secretary may want to consider using them at a later stage.

I am copying this minute to the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary and the Home Secretary.

RA

ROBERT ARMSTRONG

11 July 1983

Get Mach  
June 83  
Passport Office



TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE

1983

1983



10 DOWNING STREET

*J*

From the Principal Private Secretary

11 July 1983

MANAGEMENT IN CONFIDENCE

Dear Brian,

FUTURE OF THE PASSPORT OFFICE

The Prime Minister has seen the Home Secretary's minute of 1 July on this subject, together with the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary's minute of 7 July.

The Prime Minister agrees with the Home Secretary and the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary that the question of resources for funding and modernising the Passport Office should be resolved before the transfer takes place, and she shares the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary's view that it should be possible to do this speedily. She therefore agrees that a target date of 1 April 1984 should be set for the transfer and that a Working Group should be set up as soon as possible to consider the modalities.

The Prime Minister agrees that an early statement should be made in Parliament announcing the decision in principle on a transfer of responsibility. But she would not wish the announcement to say that an urgent study is being made of the modalities: she hopes that the Working Group can make sufficient progress in settling the details before the announcement is made, so that answers can be provided to the questions likely to be raised by those affected.

I am copying this letter to Tony Rawsthorne (Home Office) and Richard Hatfield (Cabinet Office).

Yours etc,

Robin Butler

Brian Fall, Esq.,  
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

*J*



PM/83/47

PRIME MINISTER

You said (flag A) that you would prefer the Passport Office to be transferred to the Home Office.

The Home Office think that the Home Secretary will agree to proceed as proposed by the Foreign Secretary, and there is no need for you to take a meeting

Agree to proceed as proposed by the Foreign Secretary, the details to be worked out between him and the Home Secretary?

Future of the Passport Office

— immediately below

FE RS

8.7.

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ought to have  
before
- Yes - but do. Not  
Phonix. We  
some idea  
error with  
me
1. The Home Secretary minuted to you on 1 July about the transfer of the Passport Office to the Home Office.
  2. I agree with the Home Secretary that the question of resources for funding and modernising the Passport Office should be resolved before the transfer actually takes place. But I think this can be done quite speedily, and I would see every advantage in setting a target date for the transfer now, perhaps 1 April 1984. I would propose that a Working Group be set up as soon as possible, consisting of officials of the Treasury, the Home Office, the FCO and perhaps the MPO, to start work on all the modalities of the transfer. In view of the comprehensive Review of the Passport Office already undertaken by Lord Rayner, I would see no need to go over the same ground again or to bring in outside consultants.
  3. As to the efficiency problems which the Home Secretary mentions, many of Lord Rayner's recommendations have already been, or are being, put into effect. The improvements he sought in staff management and career prospects are dependent upon the transfer. The main improvement in service to the public will of course result from computerisation.
  4. Meanwhile, there is some urgency in making an announcement, to avoid further uncertainty which could affect morale. I would be in favour of an early statement in Parliament announcing the decision taken in principle to transfer and adding that an urgent study is being made of the modalities. It is perhaps not necessary to announce a precise date for the transfer at this stage, but I am sure we should agree on an early target date for our own purposes.
  5. I should be happy to discuss this with you and the Home Secretary if you so wish.



6. I am copying this minute to the Home Secretary and Sir Robert Armstrong.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to be 'G. Howe', written in a cursive style.

(GEOFFREY HOWE)

Foreign and Commonwealth Office  
7 July, 1983



Prime Minister

FUTURE OF THE PASSPORT OFFICE

I have seen your Private Secretary's minute of 27 June following Sir Robert Armstrong's minute to you of 23 June.

I understand your preference for transferring the Passport Office to the Home Office, but before responsibility is actually transferred, I would like to see agreement reached on how to remedy the evident deficiencies in the organisation for which I should be accepting Ministerial responsibility. It is agreed that there is an urgent need to improve the efficiency of the Passport Office and to provide resources for it in a way which enhances its effectiveness and produces the manpower savings that seem to be possible. But an immediate move to the Home Office would itself be a major upheaval and would raise expectations about immediate improvements in efficiency and better promotion prospects for the staff. I think it is preferable the efficiency problems which have been identified should be tackled first.

I suggest that the next step is for a strategy to be drawn up, with the help of outside consultants, for the resourcing, computerisation and internal management of the Passport Office, in agreement with the Treasury and the MPO, and building on Lord Rayner's own review.

On this basis, the reply to the Select Committee, would accept in principle the transfer of the Passport Office to the Home Office, but would make it clear that the timing of the transfer was dependent on a solution of the major questions of resources and effectiveness which the Select Committee's own report had exposed.

If you are not content with this way of proceeding, perhaps you would like to have a discussion with the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary and me.

I am sending a copy of this minute to the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary and to Sir Robert Armstrong.

L.B.

1 July 1983

Govt Mach  
June 83, Passport  
Office - Respons. body.



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10 DOWNING STREET

*From the Principal Private Secretary*

SIR ROBERT ARMSTRONG

The Prime Minister has seen your minute of 23 June (AO83/1792) about the suggestion from the Foreign Affairs Select Committee, which also recurred in a recent Rayner Scrutiny, that responsibility for the Passport Office should be transferred from the Foreign Secretary to the Home Secretary. The Prime Minister has considered the arguments on each side, set out in your minute, and has concluded that she would prefer to transfer responsibility for the Passport Office to the Home Secretary.

I am copying this minute to Mr. Fall (Foreign and Commonwealth Office) and Mr. Rawsthorne (Home Office).

J. E. R. BUTLER

27 June, 1983

MANAGEMENT IN CONFIDENCE

6



Ref. A033/1792

PRIME MINISTER

010  
I should prefer to transfer it to the Home Office.  
ms

Summary of the Officials' report at Flag A.  
Agree to Transfer of the Passport Office from FCo to Home Office, as recommended by the Select Committee and the Rayner Unit? or preserve status quo, as recommended by Sir Robert?

Now that Parliament is back we need to decide how to reply to a suggestion from the Foreign Affairs Select Committee that there would be advantage in transferring responsibility for the Passport Office from the Foreign Secretary to the Home Secretary. A similar suggestion was made in a recent Rayner scrutiny of Passport Office work. You will be getting a report from the Rayner Unit on the outcome of that scrutiny in the usual way towards the end of next month. But I thought you would want to deal separately with the machinery of government question in consultation with the responsible Ministers.

FRRB  
24-6

2. The Passport Office is badly in need of modernisation, not simply to cope more efficiently with its current workload but also to improve its output as its volume of work increases. The Rayner scrutiny thought that significant manpower savings were possible with changes to procedures and with progressive computerisation of the work. But the Rayner team were doubtful whether the necessary improvements in management skills would be achieved as long as the staff remained an isolated group of Home civil servants outside the mainstream of Foreign Office interests and unable to widen their experience by interchange with their parent Department. The Select Committee took a similar view. They thought the Passport Office too inbred and thought a transfer to the Home Office would give the office access to better management and computer expertise. They also pointed out that such a move would be logical given the close relations between passport entitlement and nationality.

3. Officials from the interested Departments have carried out a review of the arguments for such a transfer. Their report (copy attached with summary), confirms that the Home Office would be a logical location for the Passport Office. Passports are increasingly important for immigration purposes, and many other countries use their Home Office equivalent to issue passports. There is also something in the staffing arguments, in the sense that the Home Office has a range of administrative posts with

FLAG A

which there could be some interchange. But the report concludes that the practical advantages of a transfer have been overstated. The amount of staff interchange would be limited by the scattered location of Passport Office staff - interchange would in practice involve moves to London which most staff would be unwilling to undertake. More significantly, the report points out that the Home Office is equally short of the necessary management and computer resources the office needs.

4. Foreign Office officials are marginally in favour of a transfer because of the limited benefits to staff. Home Office officials are more than marginally opposed. They believe it would be no more than a presentational gesture which could backfire because it would raise expectations - both in Parliament and amongst the staff - which they would not be able to meet.

5. The easy option in the short term, and perhaps the course safest against criticism, would undoubtedly be to transfer responsibility to the Home Office. That is the solution the staff themselves support and it is one both the Select Committee and Rayner scrutiny thought would solve the problem. If you decide on that course we may also over time achieve some marginal improvement in Passport Office efficiency.

6. On the other hand, the report by officials - which you would probably want to give to the Select Committee and thus to publish - concludes that a transfer will have no significant effect on the real problem of an undermanaged, underresourced and undermotivated Passport Office. Improvements in this area can be undertaken just as well by the Foreign Office as by the Home Office, and a transfer could arguably divert effort from that. My own inclination therefore would be to recommend that we should leave responsibility where it is, but that in replying to the Select Committee the Government should emphasise its plans for a determined effort to improve the Office's management and efficiency, using the Rayner scrutiny as a basis for action.

7. If you decide on that course, however, you should be aware that the decision is likely to be criticised and that the Select Committee could return to the charge if there is no significant improvement on the ground within the next year or so.

8. I am sending copies of this minute and of the officials' report to the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary and the Home Secretary.

REA

ROBERT ARMSTRONG

23 June 1983

REPORT OF FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE/HOME OFFICE  
JOINT COMMITTEE ON FUTURE OF THE PASSPORT OFFICE

SUMMARY

BACKGROUND AND TERMS OF REFERENCE

1. The Foreign Affairs Committee (Third Report, Session 1981-82) recommended "an examination of the advantages and disadvantages of putting the Passport Office under the control of the Home Office". The Rayner scrutiny of the Passport Office (September 1982) made a similar recommendation.
2. The Permanent Secretaries of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and Home Office set up a Joint Committee, chaired by the Management and Personnel Office, to study the question. Its terms of reference are in paragraph 2 of the Joint Committee's report.

ARGUMENTS PERCEIVED FOR A TRANSFER

The Foreign Affairs Committee

3. The Committee felt that, as nationality was a Home Office matter, it would not be illogical to make the Passport Office part of that Department and that Passport Office employees would benefit from the possibilities of interchange with other sections of the Home Office.

The Rayner Scrutiny

4. This Report argued that to improve the efficiency of the passport operation it would be necessary to provide variety of work experience for some staff. This could be achieved by a transfer of responsibility.

Views of Passport Office staff

5. The Passport Office Trade Union Side supported the transfer recommendation. They saw a move to the Home Office as a distinct advantage offering a greater variety of work, an opportunity to gain wider experience and enhanced promotion prospects.

Views of Home Office staff

6. The Home Office Trade Union Side broadly agrees with the views of the Passport Office staff providing the Home Office has the necessary resources.

Legal Status of Passports

7. A passport is an internationally recognised document which satisfactorily establishes the identity and nationality of the holder. Passports are issued by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs exercising the Royal Prerogative. No law in the UK requires a British citizen to possess a passport in order to travel. Passport facilities are refused to a limited number of people only (eg certain categories of minors).

Immigration and Nationality Legislation

8. The British Nationality Act 1981 replaced citizenship of the UK and Colonies with British citizenship, British Dependent Territories citizenship and British Overseas citizenship. From 1 January 1983 new passports have described the holder's status in these terms.

Essential Functions of a Passport

9. For British citizens, the passport's major value lies in facilitating their travel abroad. Foreign officials regard our passport as a guarantee of the holder's identity. For UK immigration control, a valid British passport is the most satisfactory and quick way of enabling immigration officers to determine exemption or otherwise from Immigration Act controls. For consular officials, it provides satisfactory assurance of identity and national status and thus of the consul's right to represent the holder's interests.

Passport Format

10. The proposed machine readable passport will be smaller than the present passport, will incorporate a machine readable card, will be maroon and will bear the words "European Community" in addition to the familiar coat of arms and the words "British Passport". The Home Office would like it to have a flexible cover, to facilitate reading.

British Visitors' Passports

11. These are simplified documents valid for 12 months. The Home Office regard them as lack of positive identification of the holder and welcome the Rayner recommendation that they should be phased out.

## Passport Issues

1. Standard passports can be obtained from the Passport Office (which issues some 2 million a year) or about 200 consulates overseas (which issue a further 200,000 a year). A million British visitors' passports are issued annually by the Post Office.

## Issuing Processes and Computerisation

13. Although a small part of the passport issuing process has just been computerised, there is a high proportion of clerical work, much of it inevitably of a repetitive nature.
14. Proposals for further computerisation are two-fold. The introduction of a machine readable passport, linked to the introduction of a common EC passport, will involve the insertion of a new stage in the passport production process. The Rayner report recommended, on general efficiency grounds, widespread computerisation beyond this. According to the scrutineers the Rayner proposals would cost about £3.5m at 1982 prices and take a minimum of 5-6 years. The system would handle 4 million passport applications per year with a daily peak output of 6,000 passports at each location and a maximum processing delay of 5 working days (compared with up to 33 working days at present). The PCO has made no financial provision for either purpose and no start on either scheme has been made pending a decision on the future of the Passport Office.

## Passport Office: Size, Location and Management

15. The Passport Office is largely self-administering and independent of the PCO. It has an establishment of 1,005 permanent staff (962 in post at January 1983) deployed in central London, Liverpool, Newport, Glasgow, Peterborough, Belfast and Hayes. The proportion of senior staff is small. A Rayner recommendation that the processing of postal applications in London should cease and be transferred to the regional office has been accepted. This would involve the dispersal of 146 jobs.

### Staff Turnover, Recruitment and Promotion

16. Staff turnover is currently low and there will be no retirement surge. Direct entrant EOs are recruited through the Civil Service Commission. Lower grade recruitment is undertaken locally. The Passport Office operates its own promotion procedures. Promotion prospects are probably about average.

### Effects of Rayner Recommendations on Staffing

17. The Rayner Report indentified quantifiable staff savings of 280 man-years but with the addition of 84 man-years to handle increased work resulting from the discontinuation of child additions and British Visitors' Passports. Net savings of 196 man-years are therefore envisaged. Discussions on implementing the report are at present (March) still continuing with the Trade Union Side.

### FCO RESOURCES OUTSIDE THE PASSPORT OFFICE DEVOTED TO PASSPORT WORK

18. The Passport Office at present operates as a semi-autonomous organisation. Nationality and immigration policy matters which affect passports are considered by the Home Office and FCO divisions concerned. Estimates of time spent by FCO officials not in the Passport Office appear as Annex B in the Joint Committee's Report. Little of this workload would be lost in the event of a transfer.

### HOME OFFICE INTERESTS IN PASSPORTS

19. The Home Office has no special interest in the British passport as a means of facilitating foreign travel but it does have an interest in the passport as demonstrating the holder's nationality and right of abode. This includes an interest that it should be proof against forgery or tampering and that it should be provided only to British nationals who are entitled to it. The Home Office considers that there is no close relationship between the issuing of passports and the present work of Immigration and Nationality Department.

## EFFECT OF A TRANSFER ON PASSPORT OFFICE STAFF

20. The standard of personnel management in the Passport Office, the difficulties perceived in motivating staff within a small and rather cut-off organisation and the views of the Trade Union Side have been borne very much in mind.
21. The effect of a transfer on staff interchange and promotion prospects can however be exaggerated. Many of the Home Office's 35,000 staff are operational grades in the Prison Service. Immigration Officers belong to a special departmental service. The Passport Office is organised on a regional basis and the majority of Home Office and Passport Office staff are non-mobile grades below Executive Officer level. To what extent interchange of staff between the Passport Office's London office and the Home Office might be possible would depend on the eventual location of the London office, which it might be convenient to move to Croydon.
22. Passport Office clerical staff prepared to move on promotion would have a wider field of opportunity as part of the Home Office, but experience suggests that relatively few would, probably, be prepared to move, even on promotion. At EO level and above, however, Passport Office staff would face strong promotion competition from Home Office staff with wider experience.
23. Home Office administration would not, therefore, per se improve the promotion prospects at EO level and above in the Passport Office but that in so far as this led to even modest interchange the quality of management within the Passport Office could improve in the long term.

## EFFECT OF A TRANSFER TO THE HOME OFFICE: LINK WITH IMMIGRATION AND NATIONALITY DEPARTMENT

24. If the Passport Office was transferred, the natural link operationally would be with Immigration and Nationality Department in Croydon. This Division (some 3,000 staff) is responsible for policy advice on immigration and nationality matters, immigration control, a large caseload and citizenship applications. If the hoped for benefits from a merger were to be obtained, the London based Passport Office staff would sooner or later have to move to Croydon.



MANAGEMENT OF GOVERNMENT

The Division's resources are already stretched to the limit. Management would be unable to accept responsibility for another 1,000 staff from the Passport Office. Even with extra resources the problem of integrating 1,000 staff, located in places which do not fit with the deployment of Immigration and Nationality Department staff would, in the Home Office's view, have a detrimental effect on the Division's work and development plans and would not improve the workings of the Passport Office.

#### Change of Approach over the Issuing of Passports

26. A change of style over the issuing of passports could result from a transfer to the Home Office. Greater weight could be attached to secure documentation and to ensuring that individuals do not get passports who are not entitled to them.
27. The addition of the Passport Office to the responsibilities of the department responsible for law and order could raise questions about the Home Office moving further towards an all-powerful Ministry of the Interior with "Big Brother" overtones. It was noted that this aspect was very much a matter for political judgement.

#### POLICY INTERESTS OF THE FCO AND HOME OFFICE

28. Both Departments will continue to have a policy interest in passports, whether or not a transfer takes place. If it does, the FCO would wish to continue issuing instructions to Consuls on passport matters, and be responsible for answering their queries and for their training. FCO would also be interested when passport practice assumed some international political significance. The Home Office would find these requirements broadly acceptable.

#### SERVICE TO THE PUBLIC

29. No reason was seen why a transfer should in itself have any significant effect on the service provided by the Passport Office to the public.

#### THE "MECHANICS" OF A TRANSFER OF RESPONSIBILITY

30. Passports are issued by the Secretary of State exercising the Royal Prerogative. This function could be transferred to the office of another Secretary of State by administrative action, subject to the Prime Minister's approval.

31. In the event of a transfer, the staff and cost savings in other FCO departments would be negligible.
32. The agreement with the Post Office concerning British Visitors' Passports would not be an obstacle.

#### Finance and other Resources

33. Financial provision for the Passport Office in 1983-84 amounts to about £19.4 million. There is no financial or manpower provision for the proposed computerisation project. Neither the FCO nor the Home Office could find any of the £3.5 million estimated cost from within existing PES provision. There are at present inadequate computer staff resources in either department to cope with the computer project. The Home Office considers also that a certain number of other additional staff would be required.
34. The FCO would transfer to the Home Office its allocation, amounting to some £2 million, under Property Repayment Services. Both departments agree that it will be necessary to consider with the Treasury whether additional resources will be required.
35. The Home Office would expect the costs of running the Passport Office to be a first charge upon the receipts from passport fees issued at home or abroad. It would be for consideration whether the FCO would act as an agent in issuing passports abroad.
36. In the Home Office's view, unless full financial and manpower provision for the Passport Office were made from resources other than present Home Office resources, the Home Office Accounting Officer would feel unable to advise the Home Secretary to accept responsibility for it.

#### ASSESSMENT

37. The Committee conceived its duty to report within its strictly defined terms of reference and did not examine alternative recommendations or proposals.

38. The Committee found no evidence which led them to suppose that a transfer would have an immediate effect on, or advantage for, the management of the Passport Office. In time, a transfer could be expected to have certain, although not major, implications for passport policy and for the personnel of the office.
39. The Committee has not been able to reach an agreed assessment on the particular course put to it in its terms of reference as the representatives of the two Departments take a different view.
40. The PCO consider that the Passport Office, which is staffed by Home Civil Servants, and whose work is based on nationality legislation requirements, would sit more logically with the Home Office than with any other department. They would see a break with the PCO as beneficial to the management of the Passport Office and to the prospects of its staff. The PCO are not persuaded that they would be handing on a large work load in terms of management responsibilities.
41. The Home Office representatives considered that a transfer would be unlikely to help the achievement of wider policy objectives, that it was doubtful whether a better service to the public would result or that the move would necessarily be beneficial to Passport Office staff, and that such a transfer would undoubtedly have significant detrimental effect on the work of Immigration and Nationality Department. They discerned no policy reasons for adding the Passport Office to the Home Secretary's responsibilities and are strongly of the view that Immigration and Nationality Department could not possibly take on another 1,000 staff. The Home Office could not make any contribution to the £3.5 million needed for Passport Office computerisation.

MANAGEMENT IN CONFIDENCE

REPORT OF FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE/HOME OFFICE  
JOINT COMMITTEE ON FUTURE OF THE PASSPORT OFFICE

BACKGROUND AND TERMS OF REFERENCE

1. In its Third Report, Session 1981-82, the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs made a number of recommendations about the Passport Office including (Rec. xxviii) 'An examination of the advantages and disadvantages of putting the Passport Office under the control of the Home Office'. The Rayner scrutiny of the Passport Office (September 1982) recommended (No 68) 'That serious consideration be given to the practicality of transferring the Passport Office to the Home Office!.
  
2. The Permanent Secretaries of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Home Office accordingly decided to set up a Joint Committee to study the question, with the following terms of reference:-  
  
'To examine the advantages and disadvantages of putting the Passport Office under the control of the Home Office, and to consider the practicality of transferring the Passport Office to the Home Office, as recommended in the Third Report from the Foreign Affairs Committee in 1981/82 and in the Rayner scrutiny of the Passport Office of September 1982'.

Because the questions to be examined related to the machinery of government, the Management and Personnel Office were invited to be represented on the Committee and to chair it.

The Committee's membership was:-

Mr C V Peterson	Management and Personnel Office (Chairman)
Mrs S Littler	Home Office
Mr C H Taylor	"
Lord N Gordon Lennox	Foreign and Commonwealth Office
Mr C J Howells	"
Mr F B Wheeler	"
Mr A C Thorpe	"
Mr A Grant	"
Mr A Holmes	" (Passport Office)
Mr R Tyer	Management and Personnel Office
Mr J Easton	Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Secretary)

The Committee, which was asked to report not later than Easter 1983, held 5 meetings, and commissioned papers, which have been drawn on in the body of this Report, from the two departments concerned.

#### ARGUMENTS PERCEIVED FOR A TRANSFER

##### The Select Committee on Foreign Affairs

3. The Select Committee on Foreign Affairs made the following statement in its Report (paragraph 65):-

'65. We have considered whether the Passport Office should form part of the Home Office administration. This would put the staff into a Civil Service environment, which would make it less in-bred than it now is, and the computer expertise and experience of the Home Office would, of course, be available. As passport entitlement is directly

related to a person's nationality, and nationality is a Home Office matter, it does not seem illogical to make the Passport Office part of the Home Office. These points were not effectively refuted by witnesses. The question was considered a few years ago; we were given evidence that indicated the reason for not proposing a change was that no particular benefit would come from it. However, we remain unconvinced that a change would not be in the public interest. We recommend that the FCO, in conjunction with the Home Office, should examine the advantages and disadvantages of putting the Passport Office under Home Office control, with emphasis on the need to ensure that staffing and management are adequate to meet the demands that computerisation will make. Also the FCO should consider if it would be beneficial to divest itself of a large group of employees who are completely out of the main stream of the Diplomatic Service and the work it does and who would benefit from the possibilities of interchange with the other sections of the Home Office and the other Home Departments'.

#### The Rayner Scrutiny

4. The Rayner scrutiny recommended that serious consideration be given to the practicality of transferring the Passport Office to the Home Office. The authors of that report argued that the improvement of management skills could not be easily achieved in an organisation as small as the Passport Office, with in practice no staff interchange with its parent department the FCO. To improve the general efficiency of the passport operation, as the volume of work increases and production becomes more technical, it would be necessary to provide some variety of work experience for staff at EO level and above. The full text of the relevant paragraphs in the Rayner scrutiny is attached at Annex A. The Rayner Scrutiny also recommended an alternative solution, the linking of the Passport Office to a large Civil Service department for the purposes of personnel management.

Views of Passport Office Staff

5. Three Civil Service unions are represented on the Passport Office Trade Union Side, the SCPS, the CPSA and the CSU.

In their written response to the Rayner scrutiny, the Passport Office TUS expressed full agreement with the recommendation that serious consideration be given to the practicability of transferring the Passport Office to the Home Office. Noting that at present there is no interchange of staff between the Passport Office and the FCO, and that a large percentage of FCO staff are overseas based diplomatic personnel with different conditions of service, the Passport Office TUS saw a move to the Home Office, where all staff are home civil servants, as a distinct advantage offering a greater variety of work and an opportunity to widen experience.

6. After setting out a number of specific arguments, the Passport Office TUS stated their belief that linkage with the Home Office would greatly improve the promotion prospects of Passport Office staff and at the same time offer opportunities for level transfer. These changes should result in improved staff morale and a reduction in staff turnover.

Views of Home Office Staff

7. The Home Office Trade Union Side has indicated broad agreement with these views, but has said that its support is contingent upon the Home Office having the necessary resources and capacity to solve the problems which prompted the proposal..

CRITERIA

8. In assessing the case for transferring the Passport Office to the Home Office against this background, the Committee looked to see in particular whether:-

- a) the provision of a better service to the public would result;
- b) any outcome would be beneficial to the management of the Passport Office and the opportunities of Passport Office staff;
- c) a computerisation programme would be launched and assisted;
- d) responsibility for the management of the issue of passports could help the FCO or Home Office to achieve wider policy objectives;
- e) the transfer of the Passport Office to the Home Office would have significant effects on the other work of the Home Office.

The Committee was also mindful of the need to minimise the degree of transitional administrative disruption and that no delay should be caused to work in progress elsewhere on the Machine Readable Passport and on the implementation of other Rayner recommendations.

PASSPORTS AND THE PASSPORT OFFICE: GENERAL DESCRIPTIONLegal Status of Passports

9. A passport is an internationally recognised document which satisfactorily establishes the identity and nationality of the holder.



10. In this country, passports have for many years been issued by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs exercising the Royal Prerogative. In other countries, information provided by a representative sample of 20 British Embassies shows the Ministry responsible for issue as, in 13 countries, the Ministry of the Interior or the Ministry of Justice, in 6 countries the Ministry of External Affairs and in 1 country (Italy) the Municipal authorities.

11. There is no common or statute law in the UK which requires a British Citizen (or indeed any person) to possess a passport in order to travel but the immigration officer may legally require any person on arrival in the UK to produce a valid national passport or other document satisfactorily establishing his identity and nationality. The passport is clearly the most satisfactory and convenient form of documentary evidence for this purpose.

12. In order to avoid unnecessary restriction on travel, refusal of passport facilities is confined to certain categories of minors, to persons for whose arrest a warrant has been issued in the UK or persons suspected of a serious crime, to UK nationals repatriated from abroad at public expense until they have repaid their debt and, rarely, to persons whose past or proposed activities are, in the opinion of the Secretary of State, demonstrably undesirable.

Immigration and Nationality Legislation

13. Before the British Nationality Act 1981 came into operation on 1 January 1983 a British passport could be issued to various classes of persons - eg citizens of the UK and Colonies, British protected persons and British subjects - some of whom did, and some of whom did not, have the right of abode in the UK. The 1981 Nationality Act superseded previous nationality legislation and from 1 January 1983 replaced citizenship of the UK and Colonies by 3 separate citizenships:-

1. British citizenship, for people closely connected with the United Kingdom, the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man;
2. British Dependent Territories citizenship, for people connected with the dependencies;
3. British Overseas citizenship, for those citizens of the United Kingdom and Colonies who did not have these connections with either the United Kingdom or the dependencies.

The 1981 Nationality Act also amended the Immigration Act 1971 so as to cast the right of abode in terms of the new British citizenship. Since 1 January 1983 new British passports have described the status of the holder in terms of these new citizenships.

14. British citizens have the right of abode. This means that they are not subject to immigration control. They have the right to live here permanently and are free to leave and re-enter the UK without restriction except that they may be required to establish to the immigration officer that they have the right of abode. The 1971 Immigration Act provides that other persons without the right of abode require leave to enter the United Kingdom.

#### Essential Functions of a Passport

15. A passport has a variety of functions, but as immigration controls have tightened throughout the world, the relative importance of its value for immigration purposes has increased. For British citizens, the passport's major value lies in facilitating their travel abroad. Foreign officials regard our passport as a guarantee of the holder's identity and, when held by a British citizen (who has the right of abode in the UK), as an indication that he can re-enter this country.

16. From the point of view of United Kingdom immigration control a valid British passport is the most satisfactory and quick way of enabling an immigration officer to determine whether or not the holder is exempt from controls under the Immigration Act. From the point of view of consular officials at our missions abroad a valid British passport provides satisfactory assurance of the holder's identity and national status and thus of the consul's right to represent the holder's interests and to

protect him, if need be, against the local authorities. The forgery, falsification and frauds associated with passports give both departments an interest in the security of the system of issue as well as the physical safeguards in the passport itself.

#### Passport Format

17. Ministers have agreed in principle that the new passport will follow the pattern laid down by the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) in 1980 and in EC proposals for a common format passport. The Prime Minister described the new passport to Parliament on 21 May 1981 (Hansard, column 416). The main changes compared with the present standard passport are that it will incorporate a machine readable card, that it will be an inch shorter and half an inch narrower than the present passport and that the cover will bear the words 'European Community' in addition to the familiar coat of arms and the words 'British Passport'. The cover will be in the same maroon colour as the passports of other Community countries; the Home Office would also like the passport to have a flexible cover incorporating the machine readable card, since this would facilitate machine reading and contribute to the development of a generally accepted standard international format. The machine readable passport (MRP) will incorporate additional safeguards against falsification, but its primary purpose as far as British citizens are concerned will be to ease their passage at controls abroad. It is hoped that development of the technology

for machine reading equipment at ports will give a boost to British industry since it is an area in which the United Kingdom is able to give a lead.

#### British Visitors Passports

18. British visitors' passports (BVPs) are simplified documents valid for 12 months and were introduced in 1961 in order to promote easier travel to countries which do not require visas. The Home Office regard the BVP as lack of positive identification of the holder, and the relative ease with which it can be forged or otherwise misused as detracting from the effectiveness of immigration control. The Home Office therefore welcome the recommendation in the Rayner scrutiny that the BVP should be phased out.

#### Passport Issues

19. Standard passports are obtainable from one of the six passport issuing offices in the United Kingdom (in person or by postal application) and from about 200 consulates overseas. British Visitors Passports are obtainable on personal application from main Post Offices in Great Britain. The Passport Office issues some 2 million standard passports a year, a figure which is forecast to increase to 3 million a year by the end of the century. FCO posts overseas issue a further 200,000 standard passports each year. A small proportion of the total (less than 1%) is issued to persons who do not have the right of abode in

the UK. By virtue of an agency agreement, the Post Office issues British Visitors Passports (paragraph 18 above). About a million BVPs are issued each year.

#### Issuing Processes and Computerisation

20. Apart from cash handling, passport laminating and the application of glue to photographs where there is a degree of mechanisation, all Passport Office operations are undertaken by hand. There is thus a high proportion of clerical work, much of which is inevitably of a repetitive nature and amounts to something not unlike a factory production line. Part of the passport issuing system (the Special Files Check, which ensures that passports are not issued to those persons listed in paragraph 12) has just been computerised and a start has been made on the microfilming of index cards.

21. Proposals for further computerisation are twofold:-

- (i) The programme for the introduction of a machine-readable passport to ICAO standards, itself linked by Ministerial decision to the introduction of a common EC passport, will involve the insertion of a new stage into the passport production process.
- (ii) The Rayner scrutineers recommended, on general efficiency grounds, widespread computerisation beyond the immediate needs of the MRP.

The FCO have accepted the Rayner recommendation as likely to be cost-effective in the long term. According to the Rayner Scrutineers these proposals would cost at 1982 prices about

£3.5 million (£3.75 million if proposals by the Northern Ireland Office to upgrade the Belfast Passport Agency are agreed) and take a minimum of 5-6 years. They would aim to provide a system capable of handling 4 million passport applications per year with a daily peak output of 6,000 passports in each location and a maximum delay in processing of five working days (as opposed to up to 33 working days at present). Soft covers and the abolition of the family passport are virtually prerequisites of such computerisation.

22. Pending a decision on the future of the Passport Office, no start on either scheme (limited to MRP requirements only, or the larger Rayner proposals) has been made. The FCO has no financial provision for either purpose. A major computerisation project of this kind cannot sensibly be launched while uncertainty continues about the future management of the Passport Office.

Passport Office: Size, Locations and Management

23. The Passport Office is largely self-administering and independent of FCO service departments. It has at present an establishment ceiling of 1,005 permanent staff (962 in post at January 1983), plus 70 man years in casuals and 50 man years in overtime. Existing arrangements provide for adjustment of the establishment ceiling to take account of the forecast of demand for passports. The staff are deployed in London (290 staff in post in January 1983) and in five regional offices: Liverpool (206), Newport (166), Glasgow (86), Peterborough (164)

and Belfast (7). There is also a central records section at Hayes (43). A Rayner recommendation that the processing of postal applications in London should cease and be transferred to the regional offices has been accepted. This proposal would involve the dispersal of 146 jobs and includes a commitment to disperse 50 posts to East Kilbride. The proportion of senior staff is small, with the Chief Passport Officer (Assistant Secretary level) supported by one Senior Principal and four Principals. The Assistant Secretary, Senior Principal and one of the Principals are based in London. The other three Principals are in Liverpool, Newport and Peterborough. Only 159 of the rest of the staff are in mobile grades of Executive Officer or above.

#### Staff Turnover, Recruitment and Promotion

24. Staff turnover is currently low. During 1982 only 1 EO (1% of complement), 11 CO/Examiners (6%), 32 COs (11%) and 30 CAs (13.7%) resigned or retired from the Passport Office. This pattern is likely to be maintained in the future and, unlike many other departments, the Passport Office will not suffer a surge of retirements in the next two years from staff recruited during post-war reconstruction of the Civil Service. The Passport Office recruits direct entrants at EO level and below. EOs are recruited through the Civil Service Commission but recruitment to the lower grades is done locally, sometimes in conjunction with



another department. It has been the aim to fill roughly half the vacancies in both the CO and EO grades by direct recruitment and half by promotion. The Passport Office has its own agreed promotion procedures and conducts its own promotion and appeal boards. It has participated in the Treasury promotion pooling scheme for many years. From 1973 until 1977 it was an exporting department for promotion to the EO, HEO, and SEO grades. Between 1977 and 1981 it was not involved in the pooling arrangements for promotion to the HEO and SEO grades but in the current promotion year it has an import quota of 1 SEO. Since 1980 it has had each year an export quota of 1 for promotion from CO and EO. These figures suggest that promotion prospects within the department are probably about average.

#### Effects of Rayner Recommendations on Staffing

25. The Rayner Report identified quantifiable staff savings amounting to 280 man-years of which 157 man-years are attributable to computerising the present volume of passport work and 123 man-years to improving the efficiency of other procedures. It also recommended the addition of 84 man-years to handle the increased volume of work which would result from the recommended discontinuation of child additions and BVPs. Net recommended savings are therefore 196 man-years. Implementation of the report was due to begin in January 1983 but discussions are at present (March) still continuing with the Trade Union Side. Nevertheless, changes in the present organisation and procedures should be largely completed by the end of 1983, with computerisation due to begin in early 1985. Posts will become vacant as recommendations are implemented, and will be lost, as

far as possible, by natural wastage. However, it will be necessary to retain some additional staff prior to and throughout computerisation to enable training to take place.

FCO RESOURCES OUTSIDE THE PASSPORT OFFICE DEVOTED TO PASSPORT WORK

26. As noted, the Passport Office at present operates as a semi-autonomous organisation, largely self-administering and independent of FCO service departments.

27. Matters of nationality and immigration policy which have a bearing on passports are considered by the Home Office Divisions and FCO Departments concerned, together with their legal advisers; the views of Passport Office management are also generally sought. When decisions are reached, the Passport Office management, in consultation with the Home Office and other FCO Departments, frame instructions for Passport Office staff and produce any necessary forms, leaflets or standard letters.

28. Other FCO Departments, outside the Passport Office, were asked to calculate the proportion of staff time spent on passport related work and an estimate of this is shown at Annex B.

29. In the event of a transfer of responsibility, little

of this work load would be transferred, since the FCO would retain responsibility for questions arising from the issue of passports at posts overseas and an interest in passport matters which could affect our relations with other countries.

30. The work load for senior officials and for Ministers fluctuates. It increased steeply in 1981 when staff in the Passport Office took industrial action during the Civil Service pay dispute. In that year there were 61 submissions to Ministers, 1090 replies to MP's letters and 55 replies to PQs. In 1982 this dropped to 56 submissions, 434 replies to MP's letters and 27 replies to PQs. Whenever passport fees are increased (there is currently a proposal for such an increase) additional work for Ministers and senior officials can be expected. Quite apart from the interest that might be generated if the Passport Office were transferred, it is expected that the work load will increase in the near future once the decision is taken about a date to move to the common format passport (which would undoubtedly attract public and Parliamentary interest), the need for an early fee increase and the additional work which would flow from implementation of the Rayner recommendations.

#### HOME OFFICE INTERESTS IN PASSPORTS

31. The Home Office has no special interest in the British passport as a means for facilitating foreign travel, which is its principal purpose from the point of view of the FCO,

but it does have an interest in the passport as demonstrating the holder's nationality and right of abode. This includes an interest that it should be proof against forgery or tampering and that it should be provided only to British nationals who are entitled to it. It is therefore essentially an interest in passport policy, but not one which needs to involve the Home Office in the issuing process. The Home Office considers that there is no close relationship between the issuing of passports and the present work of the Immigration and Nationality Department (IND). The first is a largely routine process dealing with applicants whose entitlement to British citizenship is, for the most part, not in doubt, while the immigration divisions in the Home Office are concerned with persons subject to immigration control and the nationality division deals with a smaller number of often complex applications for British citizenship. There is very little in common between the two activities.

32. The Home Office (IND) receives a number of day to day enquiries from the Passport Office about the immigration or nationality status of particular individuals who apply for passports. The volume is minor, however, compared with the main volume of business either of IND or of the Passport Office and the enquiries can be satisfactorily resolved wherever the policy responsibility for passport rests.

33. The Home Office interest in the format of the passport

extends to an interest in the development of a machine readable passport in line with a recommendation by the International Civil Aviation Organisation. Although the introduction of a British machine readable passport will have some advantages to United Kingdom immigration control in facilitating forgery detection, the main Home Office interest is in encouraging the use of machine readable passports by other countries, since this is where the main advantage to the United Kingdom authorities will lie.

#### EFFECT OF A TRANSFER ON PASSPORT OFFICE STAFF

34. One of the central issues considered by the Select Committee and the Rayner scrutiny was the standard of personnel management in the Passport Office and the difficulties perceived in motivating staff within a rather cut-off organisation. The Committee have had this factor and the similar arguments advanced by the Passport Office Trade Union Side much in mind.

35. The Rayner report made several references to the small size of the Passport Office. The Committee noted that an establishment with some 1,000 staff could not of itself be described as 'small' and felt that the Passport Office's problems were attributable in the main not to its size but to the basic fact that staff, the majority of whom were in non-mobile grades, were scattered in seven different locations.

The Committee also noted that under present circumstances with the Passport Office as part of the FCO, there is no interchange of staff between the Passport Office and the FCO at any level.

36. The effect of a transfer, however, on both interchange of staff and promotion prospects in the Passport Office can be exaggerated. Many of the Home Office's 35,000 staff are operational grades in the Prison Service, and others are specialist grades. There are some 6,000 staff in Administration Group grades of whom 3,540 are engaged on general work, with the rest engaged on administrative work in the Prison Department in England and Wales. Immigration Officers, who are based at the ports, belong to a special departmental service. The Passport Office has regional offices at Liverpool, Newport, Peterborough, Glasgow and Belfast. The Home Office has small numbers of Immigration Officers at Liverpool (17), Glasgow (17), Belfast (5) and at Newport (1). There is a prison at Liverpool with about 400 prison officer grades and about 40 members of the Administration Group. There is also a group of about 15 clerical grades and paper-keepers at the Hayes repository. The majority of staff in both the Home Office and the Passport Office are non-mobile grades below Executive Officer level.

37. To what extent interchange of staff between the London office of the Passport Office and the Home Office might be possible would depend on the eventual location of the London office, which it might be convenient to move to Croydon (see paragraph 40 below). In any event, however, the London

office contains only a proportion of Passport Office staff (about 70 are of Executive Officer grade or above). IND's location at Croydon, where staff receive Outer London Weighting allowance, could inhibit staff willingness to interchange.

38. As to promotion prospects, clerical staff in the Passport Office who were prepared to move on promotion would have a much wider field of opportunity as part of the Home Office, but service-wide experience suggests that relatively few would, probably, be prepared to move, even on promotion. At EO level and above, Passport Office staff who were prepared to move would face strong competition from Home Office staff with wider experience, including experience of immigration work.

39. Home Office administration would not therefore, per se improve the promotion prospects at EO level and above in the Passport Office. In so far as Home Office administration led to interchange, even on a modest scale, of staff with wider experience of management, this could in the long term improve the quality of management within the Passport Office.

EFFECT OF A TRANSFER TO THE HOME OFFICE: LINK WITH  
IMMIGRATION AND NATIONALITY DEPARTMENT

40. If the Passport Office were to be transferred to the Home Office, the natural link operationally (although not geographically) would be with Immigration and Nationality

Division (IND) whose headquarters is located at Croydon. If the hoped for benefits from such a merger were to be obtained, the London based Passport Office staff would sooner or later have to move down to Croydon.

41. The management of IND operates as a collective effort by the Assistant Under Secretary of State and six senior officers in Croydon. This senior team is responsible to the Secretary of State for the Home Department for policy advice on immigration and nationality matters, the management and operation of a system of immigration control handling well over 30 million arrivals in the UK each year (roughly two thirds have the right of abode in the UK and one third are subject to control), a very large case load of correspondence, personal and telephone calls at Croydon, the presentation of the Home Office case in, and general responsibility for, the immigration appeals system, work on the enforcement of the immigration control, the handling of citizenship applications and the management of 3,000 staff. The work involves politically sensitive issues and difficult decisions about individual cases which give rise to considerable Parliamentary business and a large correspondence (nearly 10,000 letters a year) from MP's. The Department currently has extensive plans for changes in working procedures and organisation and is studying the possibility of further computerisation.

42. The location of IND's headquarters at Croydon creates



a number of difficulties of management and communication. On the one hand, IND is separated from Home Office Ministers, senior line management and Home Office legal advisers in Queen Anne's Gate and the main Home Office Personnel Department in Whittington House, London. On the other, about half of the Department's staff are located in 54 sea and airports around the UK, and the main Home Office ADP unit and IND computer is located at Bootle.

43. IND's resources are already stretched to the limit and the Committee were advised that the present management of IND would be unable to accept management responsibility for another 1,000 staff. Nor could the Home Office Establishment Department find the additional staff necessary to deal with a new set of provincial offices which could not be associated with existing ones. There is no spare management capacity in the Home Office to enable senior officers in Croydon to be reinforced by manpower from elsewhere in the Office and the problem of integrating another 1,000 staff, located in places which do not fit with the deployment of IND staff, would have a detrimental effect on the work and development plans of IND and would not improve the workings of the Passport Office, which is the stated aim of the present exercise. Indeed if IND were required to absorb the Passport Office this would entail a structural reorganisation. Nor could other Home Office interests likely to be affected - Ministers, senior management, legal advisers and Finance Department - readily accept the

additional work which would fall on them, particularly in the first years following a transfer.

Change of Approach over the Issuing of Passports

44. If the Home Office assumed responsibility for the Passport Office there might, over time, be some change of style to the issuing of passports. The Home Office's main responsibilities are concerned with law enforcement and order, and the Home Office is clearly perceived by the public to have those concerns. If responsible for the Passport Office, the Home Office could be expected to attach great weight to the need for secure documentation and to ensuring that individuals do not get passports who are not entitled to them. These considerations would loom alongside the need for speed and ease of issue to the bona fide applicant. There could possibly over time be a gradual change in relation to the question of refusing or tightening up access to passports by people involved in criminal offences.

45. A further consideration, difficult to quantify, is perceived by the Home Office. The addition of the Passport Office to the responsibilities of the department responsible for law and order could raise questions in some people's minds about the Home Office moving further towards becoming an all-powerful Ministry of the Interior with 'Big Brother' overtones. Critics could argue that there would be dangers to civil liberties in introducing and managing within one department control of entry and exit to the UK, as well as computer developments for the police, immigration, nationality

and passport work, although it is probably true that the general public would continue to see the Passport Office as a separate entity. If the Passport Office were part of IND, it would be natural to plan the development of all IND computers together and perhaps to introduce links between warning lists. Any such plans would of course have to conform with data protection legislation. The Committee noted that this aspect was very much a matter for political judgement, and that Ministers should be asked to weigh the possibility of criticisms of this kind in the event of a transfer.

POLICY INTERESTS OF THE FCO AND THE HOME OFFICE

46. Both the FCO and the Home Office will continue to have a policy interest in passports, whether or not there is a transfer of responsibility for the Passport Office.

47. In the event of a transfer of responsibility the FCO would have certain minimum requirements. These would be that the FCO would continue to be responsible for issuing instructions to Consuls on passport matters, for answering their queries, and for their training in London. Account would also need to be taken of FCO interests when passport practice assumed some international political significance, such as recently in the description in passports of the nationality of British Dependent Territories citizens and in the introduction of the common format EC passport. The Home

Office would find these requirements, if responsibility was transferred, broadly acceptable.

#### SERVICE TO THE PUBLIC

48. The Committee could see no reason why a transfer of responsibility should in itself have any significant effect on the service provided by the Passport Office to the public. A transfer could be expected to cause some initial disturbance to the service, but this would be short-term; introducing (if resources permit) an effective computerisation scheme would be likely to have a greater impact.

#### THE 'MECHANICS' OF A TRANSFER OF RESPONSIBILITY

49. Passports are issued by the Secretary of State exercising the Royal Prerogative. There is no reason why another Secretary of State (other than the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs) should not issue passports. The functions could be transferred by administrative action from the office of one Secretary of State to that of another, subject to the Prime Minister's approval.

50. In the event of a transfer of the Passport Office to the Home Office, the staff and cost savings in other departments of the FCO would be negligible because of the self-supporting nature of the Passport Office and the spread of the work over a number of FCO departments. Any savings in man years would be insufficient to enable FCO staff

numbers to be cut and for the same reason no significant saving would be effected in costs for accommodation and common services.

51. The agreement with the Post Office covering the issue of BVPs would not constitute an obstacle to a transfer of responsibility, nor need it affect the timing of any transfer.

#### Finance and other resources

52. Financial provision for the Passport Office in Budget Estimates 1983-84 amounts to about £19.4 million the largest items within which are £11.4 million for payments to the Post Office for issue of BVPs and £5.7 million for the pay of UK based staff. The Home Office has been assured that the latter is sufficient to pay for the present full staff complement (1,005) of the Passport Office, assuming a central pay settlement within 3½%. It might be possible to accommodate a central pay settlement a little in excess of 3½% (because the staff in post figure is below complement at present) but additional provision from the Treasury would be needed in the case of a larger settlement.

53. There is no financial or manpower provision for the proposed Passport Office computerisation project which would be spread over six years from the date of start. Neither the FCO nor the Home Office could find any of the £3.5 to £3.75 million estimated

cost (1982-83 prices, based on discussions with ICL) from within existing PES provision. Moreover there are at present inadequate computer staff resources in either department to cope with the computer project. It is estimated that two full-time members of staff (SEO and HEO) would be needed for the computer project together with other supporting staff at various times. Additional staff resources for computerisation would be needed in the Passport Office itself. One of the objectives of the transfer would be to broaden the range of managerial expertise available to the Passport Office, within the context of the Home Civil Service. Under present arrangements the finance and establishments function of the Passport Office in London and in the regional offices is carried out by a total of 9 full-time staff on finance work and 8 on personnel work, and it requires only minimal additional support from the FCO. The Home Office establishments department has estimated that they would need 7-8 extra permanent posts and another 12 on a temporary basis (of varying duration) to deal with the documentation etc of the take-over and interviews of staff. Provision would also have to be made for additional travelling and subsistence expenses.

54. Annex B to this report shows the proportion of time spent in other parts of the FCO on Passport Office and related issues. The FCO have said that most of this work will remain with them; that the total staff involved in other parts of the FCO on work

which would be transferred amounts to about two man years; but that there will be no scope for transferring any posts to the Home Office to carry out these transferred duties.

55. The Home Office considers there would be a requirement for a certain number of additional staff, including senior management, partly because of the likelihood of structural change in IND, and partly to meet the expectations which a transfer would arouse. It is not possible to estimate this precisely. Moreover, there would also be some additional work for Ministers.

56. As regards accommodation, provision for repayment to the PSA for property services at present rests with the FCO. The FCO would transfer to the Home Office its allocation under PRS for the buildings which the Passport Office occupies. This amounts to some £2,000,000. The question of the adequacy of this provision will arise whichever department is responsible for the Passport Office, and both departments agree that it will be necessary to consider with the Treasury whether additional resources will be required.

57. In the event of a transfer of responsibility, the Home Office would expect the costs of running the Passport Office to be a first charge upon the receipts from fees for passports whether issued at home or abroad. It would be for consideration whether the FCO would act as an agent of the Home Office in

issuing passports abroad. The present arrangement by which Passport Office fees are set to cover not only the costs of the Passport Office but also the costs of the consular services provided by the FCO, would need to be examined carefully.

58. In the view of the Home Office, unless full financial and manpower provision for the Passport Office were made from resources other than present Home Office resources, the Home Office Accounting Officer would feel unable to advise the Home Secretary to accept responsibility for it. A transfer of responsibility would be bound to raise the expectations of some of the Passport Office staff and of those Members of Parliament who have taken an interest in the future of the Passport Office. These expectations will be doomed to disappointment unless there is proper resource provision.

#### ASSESSMENT

59. The Committee was given strictly defined terms of reference and has conceived its duty to report within them. The Committee has not, therefore, examined the alternative recommendation of the Rayner scrutiny (No 69) to the effect that, if a move to the Home Office was adjudged impracticable, consideration should be given to linking the Passport Office to a large department for personnel management purposes. Nor has the Committee examined proposals which go beyond Rayner, such as the privatisation



of the production line element of the Passport Office's work.

60. The Committee found no evidence which led them to suppose that a transfer of responsibility would have an immediate effect on, or advantages for, the management of the Passport Office. The constraints are the nature of the work, the particular regional location of the Passport Office, the non-mobility of a large proportion of Passport Office staff, and the availability of financial and other resources. However, in time, a transfer could be expected to have certain implications for passport policy, given the slightly different perceptions of the passport by the two Departments, and for the personnel of the office. But the changes would be unlikely to be major and policy on passport matters would be determined, as now, by discussion between the two Departments (and any other Department concerned) in the normal way.

61. The Committee were of course much aware that the Select Committee felt that a transfer could have advantages, that the Rayner scrutiny had made a transfer one of its alternative recommendations for improving management in the Passport Office and that the Passport Office Trade Union Side favoured a transfer. They also noted (paragraph 10) that the majority of the sample of other countries placed their Passport Office under the responsibility of their Home Office or equivalent ministry.

62. The Committee were concerned that ways should be found

to tackle the Passport Office's resource problems (finance and staff) as perceived by the Select Committee (see paragraph 3 above), and to secure better access to management and computer expertise. But the Committee has not been able to reach an agreed assessment on the particular course put to it in its terms of reference as the representatives of the two Departments take a different view.

63. The FCO consider that the Passport Office, which is staffed by Home Civil Servants, and whose work is based on the requirements of nationality legislation, would sit more logically with the Home Office than with any other department. They would see a break with the FCO as beneficial to the management of the Passport Office and to the prospects of its staff, since the difference between the terms of service of members of the Passport Office and other members of the FCO rules out the possibility of staff interchange with the present parent department.

64. About 10% of all standard British passports are issued by consular officers. It does not follow from this service provided to British nationals abroad that the Passport Office need be controlled by the FCO. Consuls register births, marriages and deaths on behalf of the General Registry Office, they make payments on behalf of the DHSS, they handle pension payments for the Paymaster General's Office and they issue visas on behalf of the Home Office. They could issue passports

on a similar basis if the Passport Office were transferred from the FCO.

65. The FCO are not persuaded that in the event of a transfer they would be handing on a large work load to the new parent department in terms of management responsibilities. Under present arrangements the Passport Office is largely self-administering. A table of the time spent on passport work by members of the FCO outside the Passport Office is given at Annex B. In the view of the FCO this does not represent a significant commitment of their resources.

66. The Home Office takes the view that the amount of time and effort spent by the wider FCO hitherto would be likely to increase in the near future even if the Passport Office were to remain with the FCO. The workload would be heavier for the Home Office because it would also have to manage the transfer as well as having to cope with the consequential on the wider work of the Home Office and on IND. Without the necessary injection of money and manpower a mere change of control will not help, and to the extent that expectations may have been aroused only to be disappointed could be counter-productive.

67. In terms of the Committee's criteria (paragraph 8) the Home Office representatives considered that transferring the Passport Office to the Home Office would be unlikely to help

the achievement of wider policy objectives; that it was doubtful whether a better service to the public would result or that the move would necessarily be beneficial to Passport Office staff; and that such a transfer would undoubtedly have significant detrimental effect on the sensitive and important work of the Immigration and Nationality Department. They consider that this is a subject on which the Home Affairs Select Committee might be expected to have views. They discerned no policy reasons for adding the Passport Office to the Home Secretary's heavy responsibilities and some risk of creating a 'Big Brother' image. They are strongly of the view that the Immigration and Nationality Department, whose resources are already fully stretched, could not possibly take on another 1,000 staff and the Home Office could not provide the additional manpower resources (including skilled computer personnel) necessary to manage the Passport Office effectively. Nor could the Home Office make any contribution to the £3.5 million needed for Passport Office computerisation; it is already short of the necessary resources both of manpower and money for the IND computerisation project.

March 1983

## EXTRACT FROM RAYNER SCRUTINY REPORT

Improvement  
of  
Management  
Skills

11.6 The improvement of management skills cannot be easily achieved in an organisation as small as the Passport Office, with a permanent staff of 965 (as at 1 August 1982) of whom only 164 are of Executive Officer grade or above. There can in practice be no staff interchange with its parent department the FCO, manned largely by Diplomatic Service officers. Passport Office staff have no scope in the course of their careers for broadening experience and gaining new skills and wider insights. This acts as a brake on the development of future managerial staff, restricts the field of choice in filling particular positions and affects working efficiency.

11.7 A solution to these problems must be found if the general efficiency of the passport operation is to be improved in the future as the volume of work increases and production becomes more technical. The need, as we see it, is to provide some variety of work experience for staff at EO level and above without necessarily losing for good their expertise in passport work, and at the same time to introduce some executive grade staff into the Passport Office from outside. The normal system of

inter-department trawls provides no solution since staff who move in this way rarely return to their original department.

Transfer to  
the Home  
Office

11.8 Of the possibilities we have looked at, two deserve further consideration. Firstly, whatever the drawbacks, we see some prospect of fulfilling the need by transferring the Passport Office to the Home Office. Such a transfer has been considered on several occasions in the past. Most recently, in 1979, the FCO Inspectors concluded that, despite certain theoretical advantages of bringing the Passport Office under the Home Office, there was little practical scope for the interchange of staff between the two. We have not concerned ourselves over-much with the theoretical benefits since these seem fairly evenly balanced, although there is a logical case for bringing the issuing of passports, increasingly important as documents of national status, under the department responsible for nationality policy and immigration control. It is our understanding that there would be no constitutional obstacle to the transfer to the Home Secretary of the Royal Prerogative for the issue of passports, nor would we see any undue difficulty in the continued

exercise of that function overseas by diplomatic posts. The arrangement under which passport fees are calculated to cover the cost of consular services is essentially a paper transaction and we see no reason why it should not continue under Home Office management.

11.9 In principle there is considerable scope for staff interchange between the Passport Office and the Home Office. Of non-specialist staff, the Home Office have 256 officers of Assistant Secretary and Principal grade to the Passport Office's 6,752 SEOs and HEOs to 23 and 1,080 EOs to 125. All staff in these grades are in theory geographically mobile; in practice mobility is limited by various personal factors. The majority of Home Office staff work in the Greater London Area, while of those in the grades in question in the Passport Office only 69 are London based and this number could fall drastically under our recommendations for dispersal. We are nevertheless satisfied, from meeting a wide range of Passport Office staff, that officers with any ambition, particularly those in the regions, are prepared to move with promotion as the incentive. We were also told by the Passport Office Trade Union Side that a transfer to the Home Office would

have their strong support. Providing the principle of full interchangeability of Home Office and Passport Office staff were accepted, and our belief that Passport Office staff are willing to move to London is borne out in practice, we see a strong advantage in terms of efficient management in transferring the Passport Office to the Home Office. A further benefit of such a transfer is that the Chief Passport Officer could, when necessary, look for guidance in management matters to superiors well versed in the Civil Service Establishments Code. We therefore recommend that serious consideration be given to the practicality of transferring the Passport Office to the Home Office.

Linking the  
Passport Office  
to a Large  
Department

11.10 An alternative solution, which might also serve to improve managerial skills, would be to link the Passport Office to a large Civil Service Department for the purposes of personnel management. Under such a scheme the Passport Office would remain responsible to the FCO in respect of policy, organisation and procedures, but would rely on the linked Department to recruit staff, arrange and carry out promotion boards and develop a personnel management policy. Such a scheme would need to provide sufficient



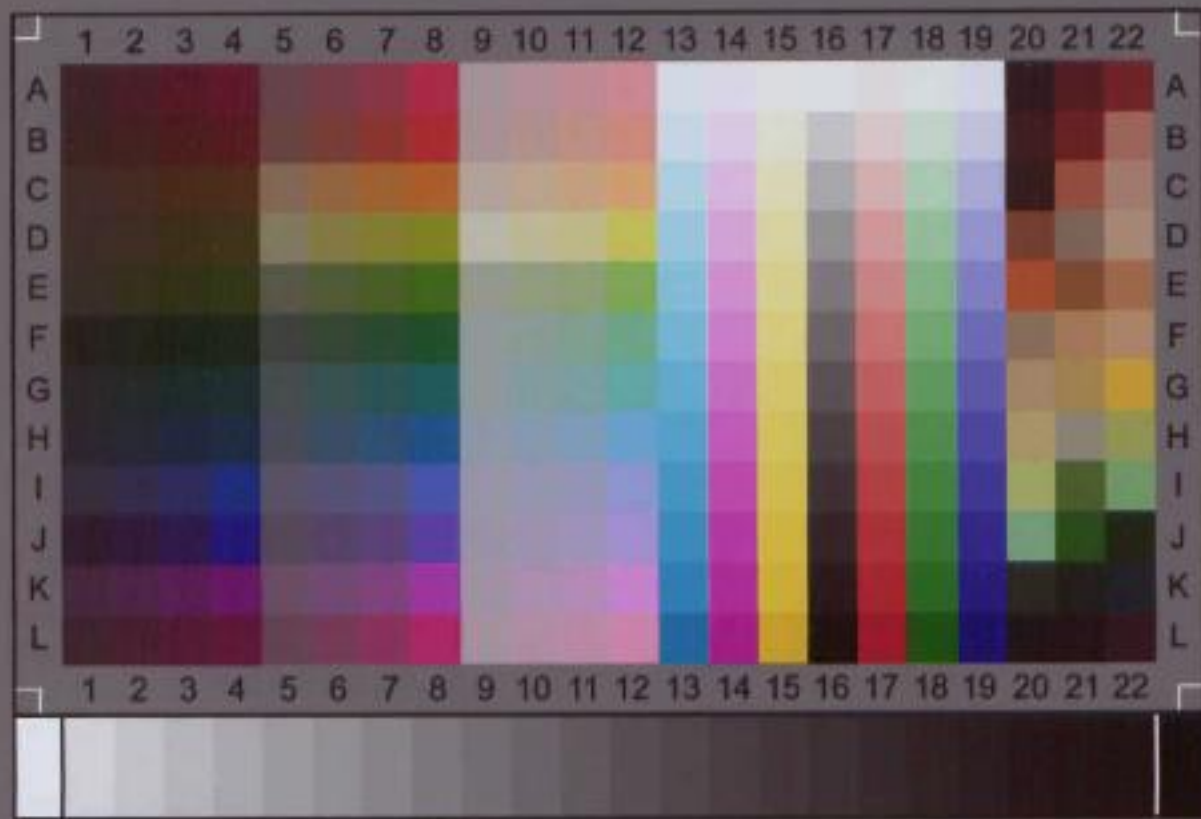
interchangeability of staff to enable those from the Passport Office to widen their experience. A link with a Department having a regional organisation would help to overcome problems of staff having to transfer to another location. We do not believe that differences in work expertise would invalidate the benefits of interchange, which lie more in operational than in policy areas.

11.11 Such a solution is not without precedent. We understand that a similar arrangement exists in Scotland where the Scottish Office have taken over responsibility for personnel management for the Registers of Scotland and the General Registries Office. We recommend that a similar link be given serious consideration if a merger of the Passport Office and Home Office proves impracticable.

## PROPORTION OF TIME SPENT WITHIN FCO ON PASSPORT OFFICE AND RELATED ISSUES

GRADE	PERCENTAGE OF TIME SPENT ON PASSPORT RELATED ISSUES	COST *
Parliamentary Under Secretary	12 1/2 - 15%	3888 - 4666
Private Secretary	12 1/2 - 15%	2692 - 3231
PA	12 1/2 - 15%	1445 - 1730
Under Secretary	5 - 10%	2359 - 4719
PA	5 - 10%	577 - 1154
DS4 Nationality & Treaty Dept	20 - 30%	8301 - 12453
DS5 Nationality & Treaty Dept	10%	3111
DS6 Nationality & Treaty Dept	20 - 30%	5080 - 7620
SEO Information Technology Dept	5%	1270
3 x DS7 Nationality & Treaty Dept	2 x 90% 1 x 50%	49539
DS7 Training Department	10%	2153
DS7 Finance Department	16%	3446
9 x DS9 Nationality & Treaty Dept	8 x 90% 1 x 30%	132944
DS9 Information Technology Dept	100%	17726
DS9 Consular Department	30%	5317
DS9 Finance Dept	56%	8927
DS10 Consular Department	30%	4055
DS10 Nationality & Treaty Dept	5%	676
Assistant Legal Adviser	8%	2684
TOTAL		257,189 - 268420

\* Ready reckoner figures



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