

010

Spoke to the (min) Minister
about X/ when. The open
to make a report
17/11/80

1
PRIME MINISTER

This is one of the key tests
for the difference between cutting
out fat and cutting out functions
for good. Content to send a minute
on these lines? MJS

MANAGEMENT IN CONFIDENCE
✓ May I have a word
about X. out.

PRIME MINISTER

SENIOR POSTS IN THE CIVIL SERVICE

I believe it is very important that the reductions in Civil Service staffing should apply to the senior ranks as well as to the junior and, so far as possible, in equal proportions. Sir Derek Rayner made the same point in his note to you of 26 February. It will be extremely damaging if all the manpower cuts are in the junior grades, while senior ranks are left untouched.

So far, the necessary reduction is not happening. Under the last Government, I am told that the Open Structure (Under Secretary level and above) came down from 872 in April 1976 to 838 in April 1979 - a reduction of nearly 4%. So far, we are doing a good deal worse. The figure at 1 March 1980 was 834 - a further reduction of only 0.5%, whereas since April 1979, as you know, the Civil Service as a whole has come down by over 3%. Nor are the future prospects promising. The cuts announced on 6 December contained relatively very little (some 13 posts out of nearly 40,000) at these senior levels. The Select Committee on the Treasury and Civil Service has already started to ask questions about this. In my view, we cannot continue on present lines.

X

I believe therefore that we should adopt a very rigorous attitude to posts in the Open Structure. If you agree, I propose to instruct CSD officials to challenge existing posts on which we have doubts. Certainly no new ones should be authorised unless there is an urgent case proved up to the hilt.

This course will be very unpopular with some of our colleagues. It is fair to say that they have, quite rightly, put very heavy demands on their senior staff since last May, and that external events, not least the new Select Committees, have notably increased the pressure. There will be some sharp battles. It will be particularly helpful to know if we have your support on this point.

MANAGEMENT IN CONFIDENCE

... If you thought it right to send a note to Cabinet colleagues about this, it would of course be very helpful. I attach the draft of a possible minute.

Copies of this minute go to Sir Derek Rayner, Sir Ian Bancroft and Sir Robert Armstrong.

P.C.

PAUL CHANNON
14 March 1980

MANAGEMENT IN CONFIDENCE

G.R.
Re type from the
Min. Minis.
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DRAFT MINUTE TO THE HOME SECRETARY:

SENIOR POSTS IN THE CIVIL SERVICE

It is important that the reductions in Civil Service staffing should apply in equal proportions to the senior ranks in the Civil Service as well as to the junior. It would be wrong, and open us to public criticism, if senior ranks were to be left untouched while junior ranks are being substantially reduced.

So far, this necessary reduction has not happened. Staff at Under Secretary level and above have only been reduced by 4 (0.5%) since April 1979, while the Service as a whole has come down by 24,000 (around 3%). We must improve on this.

Ministers must of course be properly supported. We have had, and shall continue to have, a crowded programme of our own making. I realise that external forces, including the new Departmental Select Committees, are increasing the pressures on Ministers and their senior officials still further. Nevertheless, we must be as rigorous about staffing at senior levels as everywhere else. The Minister of State, Civil Service Department, has, with my support, instructed his officials from now on to adopt a very stringent line,

MANAGEMENT IN CONFIDENCE

MANAGEMENT IN CONFIDENCE

and to challenge any posts about which there are doubts. All proposals for new posts at this level will be turned down unless the case is both urgent and established up to the hilt.

I ask my colleagues to adopt the same attitude, to comb out all senior posts which are not essential and not to seek to create new ones unless they are both urgent and essential.

Copies of this minute go to all Cabinet colleagues, the Minister of Transport, the Minister of State, Civil Service Department, Sir Robert Armstrong and Sir Ian Bancroft.



14 MAR 1960