



CONFIDENTIAL

HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

TO: The Rt. Hon. Margaret Thatcher MP.

A Minister's Workload

*As I have
said with
Geoffrey
on 28/3/80.*

1. I mentioned in Shadow Cabinet last week that Richard Luce (my former PPS) and I were working on the idea that we should establish a study group on Ministers' workload.

2. The problem is quite clear but the answer more difficult. We all know how Cabinet and other senior Ministers are overwhelmed by detailed paper work, how papers are thrust into red boxes for urgent decisions overnight or discussion the next morning in Cabinet and so on. Certainly Ministers, and very often a whole Government, can lose sight of their strategy and control over their Departments (or other peoples'!) when this kind of situation develops.

3. Year in and year out this difficulty is mentioned but no-one seems to know how to overcome it. Richard and I (and others) believe that whilst we are in Opposition we must study this matter objectively and plan to overcome it when we are returned to power.

4. Here are some of the questions which a Study Group on the subject might consider in course of seeking a solution:-

(a) How can a Departmental Minister display from the first day of office that he and not the civil servants are in command?

(b) How can a senior Minister adopt procedures which ensure that he is not burdened with unnecessary paper; has time to rest, pause and reflect; contribute to Cabinet thinkings and long-term strategy?

(c) How can an attitude of mind be imbued in Senior Ministers and elsewhere, and what procedures are needed, to ensure that middle-rank and junior Ministers are given a full range of responsibility? It is essential to do this in order to lighten the Departmental Minister's load and to give the junior Minister the chance to learn from a position of responsibility. Consideration may have to be given to the desirability of senior Ministers having a stronger say in those chosen to serve in his Ministry. There is also need to ensure that junior Ministers are not treated as dross by the Civil Service.

(d) How can some buttress be provided to ensure that Departmental Ministers continually think through the political implications of their decisions and continue to present in appealing political terms the tenor of their strategy? Shouldn't we accept the case for political PAs to be attached to each senior Minister?

5. If it is agreed that a working party be established, I suggest we need a small group with a cross-section of experience in politics and the Civil Service. The following names suggest themselves:

Tony Barber		Sir Max Brown
David Howell	} Ex CSD	Alex Jarrett
Ken Baker		
John Cope	} Ex PAS	Someone with
Robert Jackson		overseas experience
Brendan Sewill		

It has been suggested that Felicity de Jonghe - with a real insight into the problems because of her experience in the Lord President's Office - would be an ideal Secretary (or even member) of the group.

6. I hope you will agree that this idea is one that deserves to be taken further.



cc

The Rt. Hon. Sir Keith Joseph Bt. MP.
The Rt. Hon. Humphrey Atkins MP.