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1 October 1979

CABINETDISPERSAL OF CIVIL SERVICE POSTS:
THE REVISED PROGRAMME FOR MERSEYSIDE

Memorandum by the Lord President of the Council

INTRODUCTION

1. Under the revised dispersal programme agreed by Cabinet on 26 July 1979 (CC(79) 12th Conclusions, Minute 4) and announced in Parliament the same day, a substantial number of posts is due to be moved from London to Bootle. It has already been agreed that 150 of the posts are to be from the Home Office Computer Centre and 100 from the Property Services Agency (PSA). Cabinet asked me to report back with firm proposals on the rest of the package.

ACCOMMODATION

2. There is a large new open-plan building - St John's House - in Bootle. There are also other offices nearby at present occupied by Inland Revenue who would welcome bringing as many of their Merseyside staff as possible together under one roof in St John's House. We could then fulfil our commitment to Bootle by dispersing London staff into some of the smaller, conventional buildings vacated by Revenue. The leases of the rest would be given up. This would be the most efficient arrangement.

OPTIONS

3. There are, as I see it, only two choices in meeting our commitment to Bootle. Both of them confine the search to posts in the Departments destined for Merseyside in the previous programme.

4. Option 1 involves taking most of the posts from one Department, the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), who would move 1,200 posts to Bootle, leaving less than 300 of their headquarters staff in a small London office. To these 1,200 we can add 100 staff from PSA and 300 Home Office computer staff for whom the computer suite in St John's House is already being specially adapted. Only the Home Office staff would join the Inland Revenue in St John's House; the PSA and HSE staff who do not want open-plan accommodation would occupy other buildings. Altogether this amounts to 1,600 new posts to Bootle which I believe can be claimed as fulfilling our commitment. On the other hand the Secretary of State for Employment is sure that the move to Bootle would meet with strong objections from the HSE.

5. Option 2 draws on a larger number of Departments but with fewer posts from each, on the following lines:-

Health and Safety Executive	550
Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food	550
Home Office	300
Foreign and Commonwealth Office	250
Property Services Agency	100
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	1,750
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But the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, as a policy orientated Department needing close links with Whitehall and Brussels, would apparently find it difficult to be split in this way, and there are obvious drawbacks in sending Diplomatic Service staff to Bootle between overseas postings.

CONCLUSION

6. The best solution is to take most of the posts needed for Bootle from a single Department and I therefore recommend Option 1 as the least inconvenient for Government.

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Civil Service Department

1 October 1979