

of Press Office  
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Prime Minister

A less encouraging set of  
figures on Civil Service  
numbers.

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PRIME MINISTER

CIVIL SERVICE NUMBERS

Departmental returns of staff in post at 1 October have just been received. The total of 697,100 is a reduction of 3,100 compared with July 1980. Since we took office, we have reduced by 35,200, or nearly 5 per cent.

Gross reductions are in Defence (1,350); the Employment Agencies - mainly MSC (750); Inland Revenue (500); National Savings (300); Environment Secretary's Departments (300) and Agriculture (250). These are offset by increases of 2,500: 1,700 of these to cope with the extra benefit work as unemployment has increased. There has also been some increase in prison staff and in some small Law and Order Departments.

But this looks better than it is, for 1500 of the reduction is only a bookkeeping transaction. So the real savings are only 1,600. This demonstrates how difficult it is to reduce numbers at a time when there are major demand-led increases. Indeed the best forecast we can make is that there will be precious little, if any, net reductions over the next year if our worst fears on unemployment levels are realised.

This underlines the need, as I explained in Cabinet, to make the maximum savings in all Departments next year if we are to keep on a downward course.

The Minister of State will announce the figures in a Parliamentary Written Answer.

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