

PRIME MINISTER

We have another awkward dispersal problem - remember Boothle!

Cabinet agreed in July that 650 ODA posts were to go to East Kilbride. This was confirmation of Hardman proposals.

Lord Carrington (A) says that he always maintained that staff cuts would make this difficult to achieve. The departments to be dispersed under Hardman have now shed staff, and now consist of only 436 posts. The recent aid programme cuts may reduce this further. He finds no scope for making up the numbers from other ODA functions or from the FCO. He points out that it would in any case be illogical to try to send more functions to Scotland just when ODA is being much more closely merged with FCO.

Mr. Channon (B) supported by Mr. Younger (C) say that the Government cannot now go back on its Glasgow/East Kilbride commitment without considerable political difficulty. Mr. Channon accepts that there has been a reduction in staff fulfilling the functions previously identified for dispersal, but argues that the full total of 650 should still be found from somewhere within the overall FCO.

Cabinet Office paper (D) adds the alternative of seeking more Defence dispersal to Scotland, even though this would probably have to be to Glasgow and not to the office space now being prepared in East Kilbride. Paragraph 4 of the Cabinet Office note offers the best approximation to the judgement of Solomon that they can devise. I doubt whether Defence will be all that keen to offer special favours in the dispersal field just now, but it might be worth a try.

There is a real political problem here. Figures for dispersal to Scotland have been announced. But most FCO political wing functions need to be based in London, and those ODA functions not already ear-marked for dispersal do belong in London, near the FCO, Embassies, etc., if they are to continue to be performed.

/The possible

Frank Why can't the Quintessential of Overseas
Survey, go? I understand why
Laboratories can't be moved but surely
that doesn't apply to mapping? Overseas - long
handshake in 07?

The possible exception is the scientific units, in which you have taken some interest. But as Lord Carrington points out, moving them would involve a much higher capital cost for building specialist facilities, and would not necessarily work: existing staff would disappear, and specialist replacement staff might not be available.

I do not think there is much chance of finding the missing 200 posts from a shrinking Department which is in the process of being more effectively merged with the FCO. But do you regard paragraph 4 of the Cabinet Office note as an acceptable compromise? Given the Bootle experience there is nobody other than Defence who could be persuaded to fill the gap.

MAP

27 February 1980