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Education

PRIME MINISTER

Education Supply Day: Thursday 5 March

The Opposition motion is as follows:-

This House, recognising the direct relationship between the maintenance and enhancement of educational standards and an appropriate investment of resources, and the fundamental importance of this investment in the struggle for national economic recovery, notes with grave concern the report by HM Inspectorate on "The Effects on the Education Service in England of Local Authority expenditure policies - Financial Year 1980-81" and calls upon Her Majesty's Government to undertake positive action to safeguard standards of provision, opportunity and performance in education.

Mr. Carlisle suggests the following Government amendment:

This House notes the report by the HM Inspectorate on the 'Effects on the education service in England of local education expenditure policies - financial year 1980/81'; and, whilst recognising the need to restrain public expenditure, expresses confidence in the ability of the education service in England, through the co-operation of all its partners, to secure maximum educational value from the extensive resources which continue to be available to it.

The DES have sharpened up an earlier draft, and I think that this one will now do. Content?

Yes
ms

told P Shawby phone

MS 4/3

MS

3 March 1981



DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION and SCIENCE

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PRESS NOTICE

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MS PRIME MINISTER*

*This HMI document on the effect of
education cuts 13 FEBRUARY 1981
will cause a fuss. The quotable part
is paras 35-56.
MS*

HMI DRAFT REPORT ON EDUCATION EXPENDITURE

A draft report* by Her Majesty's Inspectorate on the effects local authority expenditure policies in the 1980-81 financial year are having upon the education service in England was today made available to the members of the Expenditure Steering Group - Education (ESGE).

The draft report is mainly concerned with schools and maintained colleges of further and higher education, and the effects upon them of changes made in the level of provision of resources compared with 1979-80.

HMI have been reporting on the expenditure policies of LEAs since 1974 but this is the first time such a report is to be published and a final version is expected to be available from 23 February. The Rt Hon Mark Carlisle, Secretary of State for Education and Science, has agreed to publish the 1980-81 report following requests from the local authority associations for it to be made more widely available.

Copies of the final version of the report when published will be available free from the Publications Despatch Centre, Department of Education and Science, Honeypot Lane, Canons Park, Stanmore, Middlesex HA7 1AZ.

NOTE TO EDITORS

The Expenditure Steering Group - Education is a joint DES/local authority associations group at official level. It is chaired by a DES senior official and is a sub-group (as are equivalent groups for other local authority services) of the Consultative Council on Local Government Finance. Its prime task is to monitor trends in LEA expenditure as part of the process of consultations leading to the Government's decision on the annual Rate Support Grant settlement.

* Draft Report by HMI on the Effects on the Education Service in England on Local Authority Expenditure Policies - Financial Year 1980-81.

REPORT BY HMI ON THE EFFECTS ON THE EDUCATION SERVICE IN ENGLAND OF LOCAL
AUTHORITY EXPENDITURE POLICIES - FINANCIAL YEAR 1980-81

INTRODUCTION

1. This is the fourth in a series of short annual reports that HMI has presented to the Expenditure Steering Group (Education) recording the effects of LEA expenditure policies on the education service in England. The same methods have been used as in previous years, bringing together two main sources of information and assessment:

- i. returns based on HMI's observations made during the Autumn term 1980 in the course of routine and full inspection visits to some 660 primary and special schools, some 380 secondary schools and some 80 colleges of higher and further education;
- ii. returns on all LEAs in England made in November 1980 by district inspectors, based on information currently available to them and their teams. Some comparisons were made with the position in Autumn 1979.

2. The returns on the schools and colleges, though not statistically representative nationally, or of any one local authority, constitute a typical cross-section of HMI's inspections. An interim analysis of the first 370 returns was made last November; since the end of December all the returns have been analysed. This later analysis did not reveal any substantial changes from the interim findings. It therefore seems reasonable to conclude that the findings on which this report is based are not atypical and that further inspections would not produce dissimilar results.

3. The evidence from direct observation is the crucial element in HMI's argument. Together with the more generalised collective assessment on the LEAs it allows identification of the broad effects of the measures LEAs have felt obliged to take to reduce expenditure. It also highlights issues bearing on the performance of the schools and colleges, though these may not relate solely to financial constraint. The falling school roll is one of these and it should be noted that its major impact is still to come. Side-

by side with the need for overall reductions, it will involve diseconomies of scale, the impact of which is as yet imperfectly understood, and problems of honouring commitments to pupils in secondary schools who are already embarked on courses of anything from 2 to 7 years duration.

4. The effects of this year's reductions, even when these are broadly comparable in target and size, vary from LEA to LEA according to the inherited baseline* of provision which, in some cases, has already taken a series of \angle of reductions. The choices open to any LEA similarly vary. This year's picture is therefore as patchy as last year's; but the variations continue and the gaps seem to be widening. These are often obscured in aggregated financial statistics but become apparent in the course of inspection of individual institutions.

5. The current findings accord with the forecasts HMI made in Autumn 1979 and confirm that the LEAs did what they then believed could be done and would have to be done to achieve savings. Many of the reductions forecast for the schools' sector have been made. Again as forecast, non-advanced and advanced further education are now more visibly under financial pressure and are experiencing problems stemming from a combination of economies in provision and changing student demand. The recreational aspect of Adult education continues to be a major target of cuts and retrenchment as do youth and community work.

6. In respect of the schools, which give HMI most cause for concern, two things must be stressed. First, it is not possible to disentangle the results of financial policies and inflation from the effects of falling rolls. Secondly, whereas in the returns on LEAs district inspectors are making some comparison between 1980 and 1979, in the returns on individual schools, HMI are reacting to the 1980 situation as they saw it. Their comments are therefore not directed solely to answering questions about whether or not the standard of educational provision or the quality of education itself has declined since 1979 as a result of financial policies. In the light of the national primary and secondary surveys, they are concerned with whether or not the education now provided is good enough.

*The term "baseline" used throughout this report refers to assessments of each LEA made by HMI in September 1980 which took account of the effectiveness of the education currently provided and the availability of appropriate resources. The schools and FE sectors were assessed separately. The LEAs fell into three groups. For the schools sector some 65% fell within the middle (mid-baseline group), some 20% in the higher (higher-baseline) group and some 15% in the lower (lower-baseline) group. For the FE sector in the corresponding groups were 46%, 40% and 14% of LEAs. The higher groups were better provided than the middle groups but, in general, not markedly so. The third (lower) groups even in September gave cause for concern. The economies described in this report could lead to some LEAs in the mid-baseline groups moving into the lower group.

7. This year's returns make it plain that, particularly in the schools sector, LEAs and individual institutions have increasingly attempted to plan ahead in such a way as to minimise the effects of the economic situation and of demography. The returns, however, largely antedate the announcement of the later cut of about 1% in expenditure for the financial year 1981/82, and the details of the Rate Support Grant settlement announced on the 16th December. Recent evidence suggests that while some authorities are now taking a more optimistic view of what is possible for them, others are considering giving up some previous plans.

SUMMARY ANALYSIS OF THE CURRENT RETURNS: SCHOOLS

Teaching staff

8. In nine-tenths of the LEAs there was an overall reduction in teacher numbers in November 1980 as compared with November 1979 that in total amounted nationally to just over 10,000 full-time equivalent posts after allowing for those LEAs where there were small increases in numbers. This reduction coincided with a widespread fall in the school population, largely in primary schools. The picture was more variable in secondary schools. In most LEAs, pupil:teacher ratios remained little altered. In nearly one-sixth of all types of LEAs, primary or secondary ratios, and in three cases both, worsened within the range 0.5 to 0.9. About half these LEAs started with pupil:teacher ratios near the national average. The remaining LEAs were equally divided between those which started with more favourable and those which started with less favourable than average ratios. Somewhat under one-fifth of LEAs improved ratios within the range 0.5 to 1.0, but in either primary only or secondary only; these also included all types of authority. Rather more than half were from LEAs with near average pupil:teacher ratios in 1979 and most of the rest were those with more favourable than average ratios in 1979. The overall picture is of a stricter application of teacher staffing formulae than in 1979, with, on balance, a marginal bettering of ratios in primary schools and a marginal worsening in secondary schools. There continue to be considerable variations in ratio from school to school in individual LEAs, and from one LEA to another, with many Shire counties being among those with less favourable ratios.

9. Reductions in teaching staff were achieved in a number of ways, some of which have adversely affected the nature of the staffing establishments of individual schools. Natural wastage - where those resigning or retiring are not replaced - was still the most common means of reducing the number of full-time teachers. No enforced redundancies have been reported. The second most common way of reducing the number of teachers in a school was to arrange for one or more to be redeployed; this was usually arranged on a voluntary basis although several returns referred to "power to direct" as a last resort. The large majority of cases of redeployment were within phases, ie primary to primary, secondary to secondary and there was little reference to special re-training schemes. Reductions in the number of part-time and supply teachers continue but at a lower rate than in previous years when this had already been a major area of saving. There are indications that many LEAs have reached the position where they cannot reduce the level of supply cover further without causing a breakdown in schools' programmes when staff are absent owing to illness or released for in-service training.

10. Reduction through early retirement was considerably more prevalent than in previous years. The numbers accepting early retirement are quite large in some authorities, eg 280, 210, 113, 95 and 90 during the year. There is more evidence this year of the practice of making temporary appointments, with the consequent difficulty this creates for long-term curricular planning by the schools and the professional disadvantage this involves when the arrangement is applied to probationers.

11. LEAs have taken much trouble to avoid enforced redundancy, but the alternatives - natural wastage, voluntary redeployment and leaving vacancies unfilled - do not make it easy for schools to maintain appropriate cover of the curriculum, to cater for the special needs of pupils, or to plan ahead.

12. Observations on the provision of teaching staff were sent in on some 600 primary, 360 secondary and 40 special schools. In just over 500 of the primary schools and 290 of the secondary schools the staffing was assessed as satisfactory. Among these primary schools were 6 cases where staffing levels of } 14.

13. In the remainder there was evidence of teachers teaching subjects (not only those in which there are national shortages) for which they were inadequately qualified or not qualified at all; of large teaching groups; and of classes of children widely mixed in ability or age or both. In

both primary and secondary schools there were cases where the teachers' collective range of expertise did not match the needs of particular age groups.

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14. In ^{the} primary schools there was evidence of increasing pressure on heads to undertake heavy teaching responsibilities. [About half a dozen returns indicated that staffing levels were being maintained specifically to preserve curricular cover.] Some returns highlighted the dilemma in which schools increasingly find themselves in having to choose between arranging that all classes are of moderate size or accepting larger classes for the most part in order to provide a small remedial class. Adverse effects on the curriculum were noted where the range of specialist knowledge and skills had been reduced as teachers left or were redeployed. Science, mathematics, remedial work, craft, PE and music were specifically mentioned in several returns. There was a considerable increase in mixed-age classes, of which teachers had little experience.

15. There was evidence of difficulties in providing specialist cover in middle schools for subjects in addition to those in which there are national shortages of specialists.

16. In secondary schools the problems referred to included: reduced expertise or lack of expertise in some areas of the curriculum; the existence of a disproportionate number of temporary staff in some departments, including major ones like English; probationers under pressure; staff teaching 35 to 40 (sic) periods in a 40-period week; and teaching groups combining pupils of much wider abilities including mixed target groups in major subjects for public examinations. Many returns indicated a reduced or non-existent specialist cover for minority subjects such as classics, Russian, Italian or geology and reductions in remedial work or courses for older less academic pupils.

17. The stricter application of staffing formulae based on numbers is undoubtedly one cause of the difficulties mentioned. A few authorities have tackled the problem of maintaining specialist cover of the curriculum by introducing a staffing policy based on curricular needs rather than on an overall formula based on pupil:teacher ratios. One or two have maintained a reserve of teachers to fill curricular gaps. Others discriminate positively in favour of small secondary schools or of schools with small sixth forms. In one LEA, special dispensation is given to minority subjects where small teaching groups are recognised as unavoidable. However such action is

exceptional and the analysis suggests that even in these authorities further cuts will frustrate these policies.

18. A continued reduction in the employment of part-time teachers and the non-replacement of full-time remedial teachers have made it especially difficult in primary schools, but also in secondary schools, to provide special help (for example, by the withdrawal of slow learning pupils and those with learning difficulties). Additional stimulus on an individual basis for exceptionally able pupils is also more difficult to provide.

Some authorities have continued a measure of enhanced staffing for schools serving areas with a concentration of social problems, but others have not been able to maintain existing policies of this kind.

19. The stricter application of staffing formulae, combined with cuts in expenditure on books and materials, has reduced the ability of some secondary schools to provide alternative or specially designed courses for less able pupils. Charging for instrumental music tuition or for swimming has taken these activities also out of the reach of some children.

The growing dependence of some primary schools on parental contributions, when added to the constraints on the numbers of teaching and non-teaching staff, also seems likely to work to the disadvantage of the less successful pupils and those from families with low incomes and other problems.

20. There are no cuts reported in teaching staffs in special schools, though there have been one or two delays in filling vacancies.

In-service training

21. Reductions in in-service training have occurred in three ways: the number of secondments to one-year or one-term courses has been reduced in somewhat over a third of LEAs, and cut out altogether in a few; financial assistance ^{with the expenses involved} for teachers attending in-service courses of any kind has been reduced in nearly two-fifths of LEAs; and LEAs' own in-service programmes have been reduced in nearly one-fifth. The overall picture is of a substantial swing from courses involving the release of teachers in school time to part-time courses attended in the teachers' own time. The amount and range of provision were judged satisfactory in about half of the LEAs. Some 540 returns on visits to individual primary schools showed that the arrangements for in-service training were satisfactory in about 400. But the position was less favourable in secondary schools where arrangements were judged satisfactory in about 180

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of the 300 schools for which there were returns. As in 1979 there was evidence of reduced take-up of all kinds of in-service training as a result of the problems of reduced supply cover and because of the greater difficulty teachers had in obtaining financial assistance when attending courses. There was evidence of teachers withdrawing applications for courses after early acceptance because their LEA had been unable to afford them financial assistance. The reduction in the advisory services leading to the loss of a subject or phase adviser also led to gaps in LEA programmes.

The induction of probationers

22. Provision for induction remains at the low level of previous years. Some formerly good schemes have run down. There are one or two exceptions: one Metropolitan district authority has maintained part-time day release for probationers throughout the year, another has appointed an adviser and made some supply cover available. A Shire county authority has restored some of last year's cuts. All these authorities had mid-level to higher baselines of provision. Induction has been affected by the same constraints as in-service training, eg the difficulty of obtaining contributions towards travel costs, reduced numbers of advisory staff and lack of cover for release. An emphasis on school-based induction was often a necessity if the probationer was to receive any support at all. In the 380 returns which referred to induction the provision was regarded as satisfactory in about 150.

Advisory services

23. There were reductions in the level of the advisory service in just over a third of the LEAs, but just under one-eighth made slight increases. The improvements in most cases were of one additional appointment in an acknowledged area of need, eg special education, computing. The reductions were largely achieved by freezing posts made vacant, by retirement or resignation. In some cases this involved two or three posts in an authority and resulted in teams becoming unbalanced and in gaps in phase or subject coverage. The reductions affected mainly Shire counties and Metropolitan district authorities and occurred mostly in LEAs where the advisory service was at an acceptable*

*For the purposes of this paper HMI are using
 the National Association of Inspectors and Educational Advisers' recommendation of one adviser to 20,000 of the total population of an LEA, with a minimum of 15 advisers to cover the range of subjects, aspects and phases.

level but also in a few where it was not. On the other hand 8 of the authorities with less than the accepted level made slight increases. Few LEAs were judged to provide satisfactory coverage of subjects, but several achieved nominal coverage by making individual advisers carry several responsibilities. Poor coverage was frequently mentioned for mathematics, English, science, modern languages and for phase responsibilities, both primary and secondary.

Non-teaching staff

24. Reduction in the provision of non-teaching staff, though difficult to quantify, appears to have occurred on a greater scale than in previous years. About two-thirds of authorities reduced provision in one or more of the five categories about which information was sought: classroom ancillaries, technicians, library assistants, clerical staff and foreign language assistants. There were fewer cases of reduction in the number of foreign language assistants than in the other four categories. About one-fifth of authorities made reductions in all categories. One or two made slight increases in some. Reductions in just over one-tenth of authorities were described as substantial. The level, distribution and range of non-teaching staff available to schools were described by district inspectors as tolerable or better in two-thirds of LEAs and unsatisfactory in one-third. As with pupil:teacher ratios, the support available to schools varied within a local authority, even where needs appeared to be similar.

25. Observations on the provision of non-teaching staff were returned on nearly 900 schools, primary, secondary and special. They confirm the general picture provided by district inspectors. Special schools were least affected by cuts and secondary schools the most. Methods used to achieve reduction included delays in filling vacancies, reductions in establishments and cuts in hours worked. Primary schools were particularly affected by reduced clerical help or loss of classroom ancillary support, effectively reducing teaching time. There was frequent mention of reduced technical assistance and library support in secondary schools with consequent reduction in servicing of laboratories, workshops and home economics rooms and reduced use of libraries and of reprographic facilities. The number of foreign language assistants has been reduced in just over one third of the authorities (to zero in a few). Among the remaining authorities who show no decline are necessarily included those half dozen who did not employ any foreign

language assistants in 1979. In total there has been a reduction of about 400 assistants compared with the number employed by LEAs in 1979.

Per-capita funding

26. In nearly four-fifths of the LEAs the purchasing power of per-capita funding for books, materials and equipment has been reduced compared with that of 1979/80. In a few cases the actual amounts were less than in 1979/80. Rather more than one-tenth of the LEAs made no allowance for inflation and many of the increases were markedly below the rise in prices due to inflation. Generally the supply of books, materials and equipment as observed in visits to schools is slightly less satisfactory in Shire counties than in Metropolitan districts and most favourable in the outer London boroughs and in ILEA.

Books

27. District inspectors reported satisfactory provision of books in just over half the LEAs. Of about 1000 returns on visits to individual schools, 700, of which 450 were primary schools, described the book supply as satisfactory. The position was more serious in secondary schools: nearly half the returns on over 350 secondary schools were unfavourable.

The 40 special schools were satisfactorily provided for. There was evidence of an increase in the extent to which parental funding was being used for the purchase of books. The decline in rolls has eased the position in some schools, especially primary schools. Even so, there was frequent reference to the use of outworn and out-dated books in primary and in secondary schools and to shortages in secondary schools which resulted in sharing text books in class and the curtailment of homework. Inadequate library book-stock was mentioned in many returns.

Materials and Equipment

28. The provision of consumable materials appeared to have first claim on per-capita allowances and the position is generally described as satisfactory in nearly nine-tenths of LEAs and in about the same proportion of the 1,024 schools for which a return was made under this heading. There were, however, many references to the difficulties schools were having in obtaining an adequate range, quantity and quality of material for practical and experimental

work, especially at secondary level. It was unusual to find that current needs could be met by drawing on stock built up over the years. The shortages were leading to an increase in demonstration by teachers in science and other practical subjects, and to fewer opportunities for pupils to benefit from carrying out experiments. Equipment was judged satisfactory in schools in about two-thirds of the authorities. Funds raised by parents were often used for the purchase of larger items of equipment. Even so equipment was reported as unsatisfactory in one-fifth of the secondary school returns. The position in primary schools was slightly better. The costs of repairs to or replacements of expensive items could often not be met from available school funds. This becomes an increasing problem as old and worn equipment is not replaced; where it is not working there is a further curtailment of pupils' practical experience. Where there is a lack of technical assistants the problem is aggravated.

29. A noticeable feature in special schools is the large amount of money being raised in individual schools or donated by local charities - in one case amounting to four times the per-capita allowance and in another to £20,000 in ~~the~~^{FIVE} year^s. There was evidence that much of this money was used to purchase essential resources rather than to provide extras.

Premises

30. Somewhat over half the LEAs reduced their programme for maintenance of premises and sites and repair and redecoration of premises as compared with their 1979/80 levels. District inspectors described the reduction in three-quarters of these as slight to moderate and in most of the others as substantial. One authority increased its programme substantially in an attempt to reduce a backlog of repairs which has built up over the years. The evidence of the district inspectors' returns points to a continuing low level of maintenance of a considerable number of school premises, together with overdue repairs and a poor state of decoration, in nearly half of the LEAs, even to the extent, exceptionally, of maintenance being restricted to wind- and-weather-proofing only. This may be as much a matter of history as of present policy. For example in another Shire county the schools have had no interior decoration for 15 years and HMI has had to point to safety hazards arising from lack of adequate maintenance. In just under a third of LEAs the state of buildings was described as satisfactory in some aspects, unsatisfactory in others. In these there are numerous examples of exterior fabric reasonably maintained but interior minor repairs, heating systems and decoration long overdue for attention. In the remaining LEAs, somewhat over a quarter, the state of school buildings was considered generally

satisfactory. Over half of these LEAs had higher baselines of provision and just over a third mid-level baselines.

31. Observations on the state of premises were received on 980 schools. Of these, nearly 300 were described as poor. They included schools in both urban and rural areas, proportionately fewer in the London boroughs but about equally divided between Shire counties and Metropolitan districts. Older school buildings figured largely but, compared with previous years, newer post war buildings were increasingly mentioned as having untreated and rotting wood frames and leaking roofs. Of the 41 special schools on which observations were made the state of the premises was described as poor in 13.

32. The evidence suggests that, as in previous years, maintenance, repair and decoration remain popular targets for savings. Yet some LEAs have managed to retain a satisfactory programme. This again may be as much due to history as to present policy, reflecting past providence. In one Shire county, for example, no neglect was observed and adequate action was taken whenever there was need; and in a Metropolitan district the present general state of maintenance was recorded as good, but with heating systems a matter of concern as winter approached.

Surplus Accommodation

33. Information was sought on surplus accommodation noted during routine and formal inspection visits. Returns were received on over 620 primary schools and on 386 secondary schools. Just under a third of the primary schools had surplus accommodation ranging from 1 to 6 classrooms. In many cases limited spare space was being sensibly utilised for libraries and resource centres, for television lessons or for small-group teaching of pupils with special needs. However, there were cases where rooms were unused or used merely for the storage of surplus furniture. The surplus accommodation was fairly evenly divided between permanent and temporary (hatted) accommodation. There was proportionately less surplus accommodation in the secondary schools visited; indeed there were several cases of overcrowding. About one-tenth had some spare space, some of which had been converted for valuable uses such as drama or teaching English as a second

language, and for other groups of pupils with special need. In other secondary schools spare classrooms were used for storage. One classroom had been converted into a mini-bus garage, another to house the local Young Farmers' Club, one as a creche, and a few were kept available but not used at all. In some instances of unused temporary accommodation, its removal would have released space on cramped sites and provided additional outdoor areas for educational and recreational activities. In such circumstances the cost of removal has, of course, to be weighed against the continuing cost of retention.

34. Compared with last year there was much more vigorous action on the part of LEAs over closures and amalgamation of schools, and many more authorities have firm proposals for future action. Closures or amalgamations, mainly of primary (infant with junior) schools, were reported to have taken place in over a third of authorities. Almost one-seventh of LEAs have published notices which will result in closures or mergers later this year. Just under a third of LEAs have plans for closures and mergers likely to be implemented in 1981/82. Just over a third either have a policy of no closures, or are taking no action, in some cases because rolls have not fallen or are not expected to fall. In two cases, one a Shire county, the other a Metropolitan district, HMI report considerable scope for closure but local circumstances which inhibit action.

Parental contributions and other sources of funding

35. Although three authorities discouraged parental contributions, in almost all the schools visited and in almost all authorities there was evidence that contributions from parents in cash, kind or labour continue and that such support is increasingly important to schools. In a few cases Department of Industry funding was used to strengthen links between schools and industry. There were many references to generous help given by parents. Some large schools were seeking the services of special fund-raising agencies and some staff were devoting official time to organising fund-raising activities. The amount of additional income schools obtained varied widely, but in a number of schools it exceeded the annual per-capita allowance.

36. The purposes for which parental contributions were used vary. Four LEAs, though not discouraging parental contributions, sought to confine this extra help to the provision of facilities over and above essential curricular needs. But the general impression is that heads of both primary and secondary schools have a large degree of latitude and many rely on this additional finance for example

to provide new sets of readers or mathematics books, new library books and other teaching materials and equipment. A disturbing outcome of such practice is that it makes more pronounced the difference in levels of resources between schools; large schools become better resourced than small ones, and all types of schools in areas of socio-economic difficulty tend to remain at a disadvantage compared with schools in favoured areas.

Other changes in provision

37. Other changes took a variety of forms and were found in a number of LEAs, with only a few being widespread. Most of these changes were in the form of reductions compared with 1979 levels of provision and included cut-back or discontinuance of linked courses; the reduction or discontinuance of school library services; cuts in the careers services - by a third in one Shire county in the higher baseline group with a careers service that was considered to be at a barely satisfactory level before the reduction - and less drastically in several others; the withdrawal of subsidies for swimming lessons and instrumental music tuition; closure of residential centres; reduction in the number of education welfare officers; and cuts in special education out-county placements. There was a small number of increases in some of these categories of provision.

Pre-school provision

38. In one or two authorities the number of nursery places was reduced; in half a dozen others there was a reduction in the level of admission of under-5's. There was a small number of increases in this area of provision where, for example, the entry of under-5's to primary schools had been increased to compensate for a cut-back of nursery places. Overall there was an increase in numbers in nursery classes (5,600 more between January 1979 and January 1980) and there were fewer under-5's in primary schools (nearly 5,000 fewer in the same period).

CONCLUSIONS

Primary Schools

39. The combination of economic constraint and falling rolls is affecting primary schools in a variety of ways. Overall, the number of teachers has fallen yet the pupil:teacher ratio has been slightly improved. Many schools have been able to draw upon stocks of books and the more durable apparatus and equipment built up in past years when the funding provided by per-capita allowances was, in real terms and even in absolute terms, larger, because it related to a larger number of pupils.

40. The overall picture, however, obscures difficulties that individual schools face. The reduction in the number of teachers has been achieved so far without compulsory redundancy, which, though helpful to teachers' morale, has not been without educational cost.

41. Some schools with falling rolls have retained staff who cannot readily be redeployed but others, whether their roll has fallen or not, have not had teachers who left replaced in sufficient numbers to maintain pupil:teacher ratios.

42. In LEAs where there are many small schools but some large ones, it has sometimes proved difficult or impossible to reduce the number of teachers in strict proportion to the fall in rolls across the range of schools and the smaller schools have gained at the expense of the larger.

43. Since the resignation and natural retirement of teachers is not within the control of the LEA, and redeployment depends on a multiplicity of factors, a school cannot easily be found a new teacher who precisely fits its needs either in terms of the ages of pupils to be taught or the curricular specialism required. This has an inevitable effect on such a school's ability to improve and even, in some cases, to maintain levels of quality.

44. As numbers of children in primary schools fall, more schools are losing part-time members of staff, many of whom concentrate on children who are finding it difficult to learn to read. This is a particular example of the way in which schools tend to fall back on making common provision for children as resources become tighter. The possibility of dealing with children with

any form of learning difficulty or of offering special work for the gifted is reduced. Secondary schools cannot easily make up for this at a later date.

45. The direct effects of economies are felt in some aspects of school work where costs have been directly met by the LEA, such as swimming, instrumental music, field studies; these aspects of the work also rely on the presence of specialists or enthusiasts who may leave and not be replaced.

46. A form of less obvious deterioration arises in the main stream of the schools' work, affecting English and mathematics at least as much as anything else, because of reduced ancillary support for teachers. The reduction of clerical assistance makes claims on heads' time. Moreover, more heads, as schools become smaller, have to take responsibility for a class and are less available to support teachers in the course of their work. In-service training outside the locality is harder to come by and the tendency is towards increasing local differences rather than spreading ideas across local boundaries.

47. The difficulty of maintaining quality is exacerbated by the increasing number of mixed-age classes that have to be formed as rolls fall. As the HMI survey of primary education showed, mixed-age classes of 25 or more children are likely to prove more difficult to teach well than single-age classes.

Secondary Schools

48. It has to be remembered that for the majority of schools and LEAs significant contraction in the secondary school population still lies ahead and management of institutional contraction within financial constraints has yet to be undertaken. The observed effects of constraints to date may therefore be more important as symptomatic of the future than the actual level and scale of effects may at first suggest. What now look like limited anxieties could become major problems, unless positive action to counter them can be built into policies.

49. Some problems, for example of staffing mismatch, are getting larger, losses of curricular provision have appeared, and the differences between schools and areas are getting more marked.

50. Visible effects on the curriculum, not in all schools but in enough to cause concern, include:

- (i) actual loss of some subjects and opportunities, including foreign languages, some of the humanities, music, CDT,* swimming. Often it is the opportunities of the younger pupils in the secondary school which are curtailed, in respect of subjects or areas of study which are normally introduced at the secondary stage. The curriculum of the less able throughout secondary schools is also frequently constrained. The timescale of courses in secondary schools and their organization in relation to public examinations at 16 also means that losses cannot quickly be restored for any given age-group of pupils even if the resources of schools subsequently improve;
- (ii) a narrowing of the range and content of work within given subjects, eg by reason of loss of individual practical work in science; limitations of materials in art, craft, needlework, CDT, home economics; lack of field-work in geography, and more generally limitations on homework and individual enquiry for want of sufficient and appropriate books and other source materials;
- (iii) the limitations on range and quality of work inherent in increasing demands on staff to cover subjects for which they lack qualifications or experience. There are indications that the known difficulties of staffing appropriately subjects such as mathematics and English, as well as minority subjects, are now found elsewhere in the curriculum.

51. Other observed factors which bear on the conditions of teaching and learning and ultimately on standards include:

- (i) reduction in the number of teaching groups within a school, leading both to increase in class sizes and to groups combining pupils of much wider abilities and needs, including mixed-target groups in major subjects for public examinations. There is at the same time less remedial teaching for pupils in need of special help;

* craft, design and technology.

- (ii) the generally increased demands on teachers' energies and resources, including heavier teaching timetables for some teachers, among them probationers, who are also losing other forms of induction support; requirements to teach subjects for which they are not equipped, without appropriate retraining or in-service training.

General

52. LEAs have chosen to let the redecoration of buildings and other non-teaching costs bear the main burden of cuts. This has helped to ensure that the number of schools in difficulty because of staffing has been kept to a minimum. But the deterioration of some buildings has gone as far as it can without leading to heavy repair bills; the supply of books and equipment - consumable materials are given priority by schools - is not such that many schools can go on indefinitely relying on previously built-up stock.

53. The need to keep a balance between savings in the various aspects of resource provision continues and the balance may have to be adjusted if teachers and pupils are to have tolerable conditions in which to work and a satisfactory range of books, materials and equipment to support their work. Teachers cannot be fully effective if the resources needed to support their teaching are absent or if their qualifications and experience are not matched to what they are asked to teach.

54. The LEA advisory service is not only, on the whole, being reduced but is also having to spend a considerable amount of time in some areas on redeploying teachers rather than on advising them in their professional work, either in their schools or by in-service training outside. This is a matter of concern at a time when the advisers' support and guidance to the schools and to individual teachers are and will be increasingly needed.

55. In their visits to institutions HMI's strong impression is of professional commitment and resourcefulness. Nevertheless there is evidence that teachers' morale has been adversely affected in many schools. Its weakening, if it became widespread, would pose a major problem in the effort to maintain present standards, let alone improve them.

56. Most of the above comments relate to effects in terms of the maintenance of school provision as it now exists. They need to be considered also in relation to the likely capacity of teaching staff and advisers to engage in that reappraisal of the curriculum, development of an improved system of assessment and of appropriate public examinations, and response to changing educational needs which are widely recognised as desirable. The legislation following the Warnock Report and the Government's White Paper on "Special Needs in Education" is an immediate claimant. A few authorities are particularly well disposed to plan ahead to meet current difficulties and new needs and it is disturbing that recent adjustments of financial policy, by their timing and scale, risk undermining these intentions. It has also to be recognised that planning has implications for administrative costs and staffing in both authorities and their institutions.

SUMMARY ANALYSIS OF CURRENT RETURNS : HIGHER AND FURTHER EDUCATION

General

57. The information in this report is derived from returns made by district and specialist inspectors on all the local education authorities in England. It also includes information from 67 returns made in September 1980 on enrolments in non-advanced further education, from a detailed study of enrolment at 5 selected colleges carried out in 1979/80 and from 78 returns on the effects of expenditure observed in Autumn term 1980 in the course of routine inspection, both formal and informal, in HFE institutions. In addition, it draws on material assembled by inspectorate specialist committees.
58. The effect of LEA expenditure policies cannot be considered in isolation. Higher and further education are subject to other external pressures which currently influence demand. Among these, industrial recession and youth unemployment have had a marked influence on the range and type of demand by young people in different parts of the country and on their choice of course. The capping of the HE pool has further constrained the provision that might have been made in certain parts of the HFE system.
59. All the evidence available to HMI suggests that most branches of the HFE service have so far been able to accommodate the level of economies imposed upon them. Excepting adult education and certain branches of the youth services and despite what HMI identified last year as disturbing signs, which continue, there is no evidence of any general decline in range and performance. However, it is doubtful whether authorities and colleges are taking sufficient notice of the warning signals from the school sector which show that damage may occur unless the operation of making cuts can be conducted in a coherent and orderly manner.

Courses

60. Because of the failure of young people to secure employment, many more are now in the market for full-time courses. Recruitment to part-time courses, for students already in employment, has declined rapidly particularly in those areas traditionally associated with heavy industry, largely north of the Wash-Severn line. In national terms, the decrease in enrolment is of the order of 5% but local variations can be as high as 15%. This situation has brought about a marked decrease in demand for some of the courses associated with industrial training. These factors combine to present colleges with difficult problems in maintaining continuity of course provision.

61. Pre-vocational courses of a less specifically vocational but introductory nature are being given increased support by authorities. Sixty-two have retained the same level of funding, in real terms, and seventeen have increased their allocations compared with 1979/80. In some instances students who have followed such courses have experienced difficulties in finding employment locally and this is causing anxiety and discontent to them and their parents.
62. The demand for full-time general education is considerable. Fifty-nine authorities are maintaining the same level of funding as last year, twelve are showing decreased and twelve increased support. Of those authorities showing a decrease, only two did so from the lower base-line group. The increases were made mostly by those authorities in the mid-level base-line group and only one case was recorded of increase from the lower level base-line group.
63. Observations by HMI show that there has been a significant decrease in the volume and pattern of courses for the GCE at ordinary and advanced level. Authorities have operated either by refusing to allow classes to run if numbers were significantly below fifteen or, indirectly, through restricted out-county arrangements and discretionary grant awards.
64. Two authorities are directing prospective students back to school, a further ten are restricting the range of options on offer and three are attempting to rationalize the provision made by schools and FE colleges.
65. Twenty-three authorities, all but one of which fall within the mid or higher base-line group, show reduced expenditure for part-time vocational work. Fifty-eight have maintained an unchanged level of expenditure. The reductions result from a general decrease in demand and a more marked one in some regions. Throughout the north and the midlands the problem is more serious; courses in engineering and building are disappearing for lack of sufficient enrolment. On the other hand, for business studies, computing, micro-electronics, electrical engineering and a number of courses serving the more modern industries, demand remains high.
66. With the changing patterns of employment, considerable attention is being given by authorities to the development of Unified Vocational Preparation and Youth Opportunity courses. Through the Manpower Services Commission, forty authorities are increasing expenditure for this work; none has made reductions. The only

field in which a decrease has been observed is that of Training Opportunities provision where funds have been diverted, by the Commission, to other forms of training. In the view of HMI, the educational system is meeting the range and amount of these new demands satisfactorily.

67. Twenty-two authorities are providing additional resources to mount new courses for students whose employers agree to meet the full cost; no authority has curtailed this type of provision. Fifteen of these authorities have a deliberate policy of encouraging this work; some use the resources to subsidise other educational programmes. In only one college has HMI observed that so many full cost courses are being run that other courses are being adversely affected.
68. The demand for full-time vocational courses has increased substantially since last year and twenty-four authorities made an increased commitment to them. In only three authorities has funding been cut; none is in the lower level base-line group. The most popular areas of study are those where prospects for subsequent employment still exist, mainly in the service industries. Catering, hairdressing and beautician work are frequently reported as being increasingly popular compared with previous years. HMI report twenty-two colleges where demand for these courses has exceeded the places available.
69. In higher education there are at present no marked signs of reduction, with the exception of programmes for the B.Ed degree. The combination of higher entry requirements and more uncertain teacher employment prospects have caused a fall in recruitment and hence a fall in expenditure levels. Reduced expenditure is recorded in sixteen of the forty-two colleges on which returns were made. In work for other first degrees, both in polytechnics and other colleges, there has been an increase in expenditure in twenty-four authorities. There is no sign as yet of a general move to plan reductions. This information is derived from returns covering twenty-six polytechnics and a further thirty colleges within local authority control. The Advanced Further Education Pool for 1981/1982 will, in all probability, bring about many changes in this state of affairs.
70. Adult Education
- Adult education remains the area ^{of FE} most seriously affected by expenditure reductions. Forty-nine authorities have further reduced their allocations for general adult education. Of these authorities, nine are in the lower level baseline group. No examples of increase have been recorded. There continue to be overall reductions and concentrations of programmes throughout the country;

rigidly applied minimum recruitment criteria are enforced and many minority subject courses have been withdrawn.

Youth and Community Service

71. Twenty-seven authorities have reduced their allocations to the Youth and Community Service. The voluntary section of the youth service faces greater difficulties. Many authorities are not increasing their grants towards the salaries of full-time employees to take account of inflation and salary increments. Several authorities have initiated charges or raised existing ones for the use of school premises, a burden which falls heavily on local voluntary units. Restrictions on the use of school premises for evening and week-end functions, the prime aim of which is to save heating and caretaking costs, are adversely affecting both statutory and voluntary provision.

Out-County Arrangements

72. Thirty-three authorities are now operating more severe controls on students, both in terms of direction of travel and choice of study. Authorities which gain from the system of "free trade" continue to allow many choices to their own prospective students. Other authorities are ending the free trade agreements with their neighbours. The effects of these policies on the use of existing FE capacity and on the choices available to students are not known quantitatively. It seems likely that they will create a state of considerable imbalance between available resources and student demand in some areas.

Teaching Staff

73. In previous years authorities have taken various measures to economise without reducing teaching staff. It is now clear that these cannot alone accommodate the expenditure reductions required. The measures affecting teaching staff are, as yet, based on voluntary redundancy and a deliberate policy of not replacing staff who secure alternative employment. No organised pattern is, therefore, emerging within a particular institution or within an authority. The reductions most easily made continue to be in the part-time staff complement; just under one half of the polytechnics and of other institutions providing higher education have recorded a decrease in expenditure on these staff. The employment of some part-time staff, however, is essential if colleges are to remain flexible in what they offer and able to keep their course-work relevant to the needs of industry. Sixteen polytechnics were recorded as having decreased their expenditure on full-time staff. The cumulative effects of

reductions in the AFE pool and in the expenditure determined by the authority have in one case reached the level of requiring upwards of sixty posts to be removed from a total staff complement of the order of seven hundred: the removal of whole sections of departments is being considered. Most polytechnics are now expected by their authorities to move towards less generous staff:student ratios. Two Shire counties specifically indicate that recent salary awards, including those for part-time teachers, must be reflected in reduced staffing levels.

74. In NAFE there is increased pressure to redeploy staff to meet the increased demand for courses for the less able and for the unemployed in a system which, in general terms, is not over-staffed. HMI has recorded seven cases of colleges where course provision has been restricted and limits have been set to the range of vocational and technical courses as a result of the unselective abolition of staffing posts. There is, at the moment, no particularly strong evidence to show that the performance of the service as a whole is being impaired by staff limitations.
75. In some colleges there are pockets of over-generous staffing, especially in higher education. One problem is that of matching existing staff expertise to current demands, a problem which will be intensified by changes in academic direction required of the service in the next few years.

Ancillary Staff

76. Observations on ancillary staff must be considered in the context of the varying range of provision made by authorities in their institutions. In consequence, there are differing degrees of resilience to further reductions.
77. Twenty-six authorities have reduced the numbers of administrative and clerical staff; fifty-four are maintaining last year's numbers. Twenty-one have reduced technical services whilst fifty-eight retain a constant level. Thirteen have reduced library staff. As a general practice, authorities allow vacancies to remain unfilled and, in one polytechnic, the number of unfilled vacancies for technicians is now forty.

Staff Development

78. Five authorities record an increase in expenditure on the seconding of staff for teacher training and two an increase for day release and short course activities. Twenty-three have reduced their allocations for secondment and twenty-five for day release and short courses. Only one authority is recorded as continuing its policy of allowing all newly appointed staff to begin initial teacher training within twelve months of appointment. The general impression is that this aspect of education, already modest in proportion, is being reduced and that it is becoming increasingly difficult to maintain and develop the training programme for FE teachers. HMI repeatedly comment on the need for more adequate training of the staff working on UVP/YOP courses.

Materials, Equipment and Related Provision

79. In previous years, reductions had already been made in expenditure on materials / and equipment. At present one half of authorities are making reductions in consumable materials and twenty-three in capital equipment for HFE courses. The only marked category of increase in capital expenditure is in HFE where seventeen authorities have increased their expenditure. In some colleges, the increases are made in order to restore a previously unsatisfactory situation. Comments bear out those made in previous years on the obsolescence and worn-out state of much equipment and upon the adverse effects of this both on the range of work available to students and on the degree of respect accorded by industry to the work done by colleges. Members of the HMI Engineering Committee have repeatedly advised authorities that a planned policy for the replacement of such items as machine tools and other major pieces of capital equipment is necessary if appropriate experience of safe and accurate working is to be made available to the students.
80. In the eleven teacher training institutions for which there were returns, the library services had been adversely affected by cuts in expenditure. Restrictions on transport and off-site activities were also producing difficulties. Whilst field work has been safeguarded, economies in arrangements for teaching practice have been made either by using schools near at hand or by rationing supervisory visits.

Premises

81. As in previous years, programmes of building maintenance continue to be a major target for economies. Just over one half of authorities have made decreased

allocations for maintenance. Viewed against the background of the varied stock of buildings in use for FE, maintenance and modification programmes are now inadequate even in a service where the tolerance of primitive surroundings is characteristically high.

82. Authorities vary in their capacity to match available premises to the range of courses to be provided. Fifteen authorities have allocated increased expenditure to make redundant schools serviceable for further education and a further seven are acquiring other types of building. Observations by HMI and the Architects and Building Branch of the Department have produced evidence of appreciable under-utilisation throughout the HFE system, particularly in areas designated for specialised use. In some older colleges, in annexes based in old buildings and in less well-maintained temporary accommodation, there are serious problems of suitability for educational use in terms both of the safety and the general well-being of students.

Discretionary Grants

83. Just under half of the authorities are showing a decrease in expenditure on discretionary grants. Six authorities have increased expenditure, three from the lower level baseline group. In the remainder, funding is unchanged. Economies are made in different ways. One Metropolitan district, whilst in theory allowing for inflation in calculating its grant, is unable to maintain the total number of grants since the actual increases in fees and travel costs exceed the percentage allowed. Another has been increasing the value of individual grants whilst decreasing the number awarded so that the total expenditure remains the same. One Shire county has cut both the number of grants awarded and their individual value; another has chosen not to attach any weight to requests from mature students. One Midland authority has placed restrictions on travelling allowances and on awards to overseas students. Twenty-two authorities are recorded as operating selection processes on the criterion that some disciplines are "acceptable" and some "unacceptable". Examples of courses which have not qualified for awards are fine art, music, drama, dance and beautician studies. One Metropolitan district has softened this type of decision by awarding a bursary for courses of this kind as distinct from a full major award. The consequences, in addition to the personal disappointment to students, are becoming evident in recruitment to certain colleges. One college of art has a markedly reduced enrolment to both its art and design course and to that in beauty therapy.

Research and Consultancy

84. Eight authorities have reduced support for research work, either in terms of remission of staff teaching duties or direct funding for equipment. No adverse effects on the quality of teaching have so far been observed. The disposition of consultancy fees remains as it was, varying between the retention of all or part of the fee by the authority for general or selective disbursement to the retention of it by the faculty or department for use by its members of staff.

Careers and Counselling Service

85. Thirteen authorities have spent more on their careers and counselling services. The careers services have been augmented to a marked extent by the addition of staff paid out of funds from the Department of Employment. Despite this funding, three authorities are recorded as falling short of what is considered to be an adequate staffing level, one seriously so.

Support for Voluntary Organisations

86. Twenty-eight authorities have decreased their support to voluntary organisations. Only four show an increase in such funding. At the extreme of the range, one Shire county has given no grant at all in the past year and another has made a reduction of one half in the support it gives. It is becoming increasingly common for authorities to charge voluntary organisations more to use premises for educational purposes.

Conclusions

87. There is evidence that cuts in expenditure^{on FHE} are beginning to bite. HMI believe that more coherent planning could produce a slimmer and more efficient system within five to ten years. The issues cross institutional and even individual authority boundaries. The non-advanced sector of FE has particular problems in that new demands, together with the cessation of old demands as a result of changes in industry and employment, are not easily interchangeable in resource terms. There are also tensions between the academic and vocational sections of college work as a result of which, unless care is taken, the more cheaply-met demands of full time academic work could well absorb a disproportionate amount of the total resources available.
88. Given the known duplication of effort between schools and NAFE and between

various divisions of advanced and higher education, there is scope for developing a coherent policy carried out at local, regional and national levels which would lead to more economical solutions.

89. Academic and support staff absorb about 70% of the total cost of the HFE system and it is essential that the best use is made of their abilities. The solutions which are available to authorities are limited but could include planned retraining of existing staff for the new range of student demand and better procedures for ensuring increased mobility of staff between institutions.
90. The limitation of expenditure on higher education is having some adverse effects upon teacher training where there is evidence, for example, that the range and scope of courses is being restricted in the important area of school experience. The combined effects of low recruitment and limitations of finance are also creating a threat to the maintenance of the essential subject basis for the training of teachers. This may lead to problems in the balance of intake into the ^{school} teaching force in years ahead and to a reduction in opportunities for in-service training.
91. In maintaining and developing their work institutions are having to take very much more account of the efficient disposition and inter-relationships of their various resources, eg. teaching and other staff; technical facilities. These are also matters of concern to the validating bodies who act independently and only in parts of the FHE service. They need to be alert to the economic situation as it affects the whole institution and to act with moderation towards the attempts being made to improve institutional efficiency.
92. The youth service is reducing provision because of the freezing of full-time posts, cuts in part-time leadership and restrictions on the use of school buildings. These follow cuts from the previous three years but authorities and voluntary bodies are still preserving the core of the service. Adult education has undoubtedly been subjected to severe cuts, particularly in those forms of education with a predominantly recreational or social purpose. There have been some compensatory developments in self-financing ventures.



FROM THE SECRETARY OF STATE

The Rt Hon Francis Pym MP
Paymaster General
Privy Council Office
68 Whitehall
London SW1A 2AT

11 February 1981

Prime Minister to see ²

N.P.G. Mitchell
Duty Clerk
ELIZABETH HOUSE, PIP N55
YORK ROAD, 11/2/81
LONDON SE1 7PH
01-928 9222

cc Mr Ingham

MAP to see
and PA
MS

Dear Paymaster General,

ms

HM INSPECTORATE REPORT ON THE EFFECTS OF EXPENDITURE POLICIES

You and colleagues may like to know in advance that a report by HM Inspectorate on the effects on the education service in England of local authority expenditure policies in 1980-81 is likely to receive some publicity on or soon after Friday afternoon.

Similar reports have been prepared in previous years without attracting any demands for publication. But for many weeks now (as you may have noticed from Parliamentary Questions) I have been pressed by Christopher Price's Select Committee and others to undertake to publish this year's report. Though I have given no undertaking, expectations of publication are high. Once I had received the report and assessed it, I had no doubt that publication was both right and (given that the Select Committee would keep up the pressure) tactically advantageous. Friday's timing is tied to a meeting with local authority representatives.

The report is addressed to observed educational effects and not policies. The situation it describes is a mixed one. In many respects it will provide reassurance against the voices crying that irreparable damage has already been done to the education service. But it also contains warnings that, in some areas already and to a wider extent before long, authorities are not finding it possible to maintain the standard of education service that we would have hoped for, even within our financial restraints. The widening disparities between different authorities are amongst the report's most worrying features. These passages are bound to attract public and Parliamentary attention.

My immediate reply to any Press questions will be that I had never concealed that education would have to take its share of the nation's expenditure reductions and that our latest cuts would inevitably have some impact on educational provision; that I recognised that HM Inspectorate's observations included some warnings which the Government and the local authorities would have to take seriously; that I was having it published at once for just that purpose; and that I would be talking to the local authority associations about it in the course of the discussions I was already having with them on education expenditure in the years ahead.

I propose to stress that the Report makes it clear that in many respects and places the quality of service observed continues to be satisfactory; (the Report records for example that the overall Pupil Teacher Ratio has altered little over the past year) and that in order to mitigate the impact of the present and planned further cuts all partners in the education service will need to work together to secure the best educational value from the resources available, taking account of the weaknesses revealed in the Report in assessing their expenditure priorities.

I am copying this to the Prime Minister and other members of the Cabinet, the Chief Whip and to Sir Robert Armstrong.

Yours sincerely

I A Shaw

for MARK CARLISLE

(As agreed by the Secretary of State and signed in his absence)