



Prime Minister

MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS FOR WHITEHALL

Because of my interest in securing proper management in Whitehall departments, my Permanent Secretary, rightly, showed me an early draft of the Government observations on the recent report by the Select Committee. Because of my concern that the report was not sufficiently responsive or constructive, a view that she shared, Janet Young spent several hours with me discussing the issues. The document you have now approved is an improvement.

But I am still very unhappy with the version it is now proposed to publish. My views are set out in the attached minute. I am still deeply concerned that after 3 years we are still, in far too many departments, only scratching at the surface. My greatest worry is that unless there is a clear central line, which would need to be strongly backed by you, Whitehall will do just enough to make it look as if real changes are happening, but in practice will do little. I believe that you ought to ask to see the responses from Permanent Secretaries to the draft first circulated by MPO. These letters will give you a flavour of the underlying attitudes which exist. That need not be the case. I believe that the Permanent Secretary and officials in my own Department, perhaps because they have been so deeply involved in working up and developing the MINIS system, are totally behind the systems now operating here. But unless we provide a different sort of impetus for the Permanent Secretaries in other departments, I fear that only a fraction of the results which might be achieved will be achieved.

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I am not, for obvious reasons, copying this note to any of our colleagues, though Janet Young, of course, is fully aware of the points I have made.

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19 July 1982