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Prime Minister

CIRCULARS TO LOCAL AUTHORITIES

On 2 July last year, I reported to you on the 8th year of the exercise to reduce the number of circulars issued by Government Departments to local authorities. I now report similarly on the 9th year of the exercise which ended on 31 March 1988.

Annex A shows that in the year ended 31 March 1988, 366 circulars were issued by "Whitehall" Departments, an increase of 19% from 1986/87. When Scottish and Welsh Office figures are added, the result is a total of 538 issued in Great Britain, an increase of 12% since 1986/87. Although the latest annual figures are disappointing, the increase is perhaps not too surprising in view of the scope of the Government's legislative programme since the last election.

As you know, the very large reduction in the Government's first year in office has been followed, except in 1985/86 and the year just ended, by a steady reduction in subsequent years and the total has been well below the target of a reduction of two-thirds of the circulars issued in the last year of the Labour administration. This year's figure of 538 represents, in fact, a reduction of 71% from the 1979 figure of 1,873 (see Annex B).

I trust that Cabinet colleagues will continue to keep a close watch on the situation in their own Departments to ensure that the number of circulars issued is kept to the absolute minimum. As the figures in Annex B continue to show, some Departments have been far more successful than others in reducing the number of circulars they issue. I hope that those which have made least progress so far will make a special effort to achieve greater reductions in this and subsequent years.

I am copying this minute to other members of the Cabinet and to Sir Robin Butler.

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29 June 1988

NUMBER OF CIRCULARS ISSUED TO LOCAL AUTHORITIES

	(1) <u>1986/87</u> year ended <u>31/3/87</u>	(2) <u>1987/88</u> year ended <u>31/3/88</u>	Comparison <u>Column (2)</u> as % of <u>Column (1)</u>
<u>"WHITEHALL DEPARTMENTS"</u>			
<u>Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food:-</u>			
To Port Health Authorities etc (meat importation)		33	
Other circulars		<u>18</u>	
<u>MAFF TOTAL</u>	38	51	134%
<u>Department of Education and Science:-</u>			
Circulars		11	
Administrative memoranda		nil	
Circular letters		<u>56</u>	
<u>DES TOTAL</u>	50	67	134%
<u>Department of Employment:-</u>			
Careers Service circulars	nil	nil	-
<u>Department of the Environment:-</u>			
Published circulars		27	
Circular letters		<u>33</u>	
<u>DOE TOTAL</u>	53	60	113%

	<u>1986/87</u> (1) <u>year ended</u> <u>31/3/87</u>	<u>1987/88</u> (2) <u>year ended</u> <u>31/3/88</u>	<u>Comparison</u> <u>Column (2)</u> <u>as % of</u> <u>Column (1)</u>
<u>Department of Health and Social Security:-</u>			
Local Authority circulars		11	
Local Authority social services letters		7	
Housing benefit circulars		<u>16</u>	
<u>DHSS TOTAL</u>	38	34	89%
<u>Home Office:-</u>			
To Local Authorities		43	
To Police Authorities only		<u>24</u>	
<u>HOME OFFICE TOTAL</u>	60	67	117%
<u>Department of Trade and Industry:-</u>			
Weights and measures		12	
Technical guidance notes etc		35	
Other circulars		<u>26</u>	
<u>DTI TOTAL</u>	48	73	152%
<u>Department of Transport:-</u>			
Main circulars		3	
Circulars (roads)		6	
Security advice circulars		<u>5</u>	
<u>DTp TOTAL</u>	19	14	74%

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	<u>1986/87</u> <u>year ended</u> <u>31/3/87</u>	<u>1987/88</u> <u>year ended</u> <u>31/3/88</u>	<u>Comparison</u> <u>Column (2)</u> <u>as % of</u> <u>Column (1)</u>
<u>TOTAL FOR "WHITEHALL" DEPARTMENTS</u>	306	366	119%
Welsh Office	27	318	166%
Scottish Office	147	154	105%
TOTAL FOR GREAT BRITAIN	480	538	112%
<u>NUMBERS OF CIRCULARS ISSUED TO HEALTH AUTHORITIES</u>			
Department of Health and Social Security	490	463	94%
Welsh Office	87	103	118%
Scottish Office	156	155	99%

CIRCULARS ISSUED TO LOCAL AUTHORITIES

ANNEX B

<u>"Whitehall" Departments</u>	<u>year ended April 79</u>	<u>year ended April 80</u>	<u>year ended March 87</u>	<u>year ended March 88</u>	<u>% change since 1979</u>
Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food	102	75	38	51	-50%
Department of Education and Science	127	31	50	67	-47%
Department of Employment (Careers Service circulars)	51	28	nil	nil	-100%
Department of the Environment	222	70	53	60	-73%
Department of Health and Social Security	64	11	38	34	-47%
Home Office	151	76	60	67	-56%
Department of Trade and Industry	45	58	48	73	+62%
Department of Transport	41	6	19	14	-66%
<u>Total for "Whitehall" Depts</u>	<u>803</u>	<u>355</u>	<u>306</u>	<u>366</u>	<u>-54%</u>
Welsh Office	623	101	27	18	-97%
Scottish Office	447	215	147	154	-66%
<u>Total for Great Britain</u>	<u>1873</u>	<u>671</u>	<u>480</u>	<u>538</u>	<u>-71%</u>
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DHSS Circulars to Health Authorities	1235	866	490	463	-62%

NOTE: Totals for Great Britain in the years 1981 - 1985 were as follows:

1981	614	1983	562	1985	465
1982	592	1984	506	1986	500

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