

await Cabinet
Office comment
MAA

(Blind copy: Mr Pattison) ^{Bl 8/1/79}

cc for information

Sir Derek Rayner
Mr Lane (CSO)
Mr Allen (CO)

Mr A W RUSSELL (CSD)

REVIEW OF STATISTICAL SERVICES

Thank you for copying to me your letter of 2 November to Mr Lane, together with its draft "outline note". My comments are as follows:

will request if required

General

2. I take it from your minute and from Mr Channon's letter of the same date to Lord Cockfield that the "outline note" is intended as the basis (a) for a request from the Prime Minister or the Lord President on her behalf to Ministers to nominate officials as if for the scrutiny programme but in addition to it and (b) for a decision by the Prime Minister herself also to establish the review in the CSO (which reports to her through the Secretary of the Cabinet who is its Accounting Officer) and to appoint the lead Department and the outsider.

3. If so, I think that the substantive document should be more exact than the "outline" in indicating who is to do what, and how, and the nature of the decisions sought from the Prime Minister and Ministers.

4. Tactically, however, I cannot help thinking that there is much to be said for not raising the issue with the Prime Minister until she gets reports on Ministers' proposals for the scrutiny programme. I see that Mr Channon's letter speaks of officials exploring "quickly" how best the review should be conducted, but it may well be that Ministers will propose statistics as a subject for study. If so, one could build on such suggestions. If not, the central departments could as readily propose that statistics should be included in the programme, but that because it is a big subject in its own right it deserves a review in its own right. What I do not think we want to suggest to the Prime Minister is that she should spring an extensive review on Ministers making new demands on their resources, either before the scrutiny programme is settled or as if it were something completely different. (I do not think it is, as in each case the Minister is asked, in effect, to look at his statistical policy and practice.)

Paragraph 2

5. What is meant by "each area of statistical work in Government"—"the statistical services available to each Minister and the use made of them"?

6. In 2a, does "each case" mean "each statistical service"? In the second line, should one say, "are justified" rather than "can be justified"?

Paragraph 3

7. In line 4, should one briefly define what the CSO manages?

Paragraph 4

8. In lines 2 and 3, I am not sure what is meant by "broadly adopt the methodology". (I have already commented on the separate-ness of the proposed review.) I wonder whether one needs to say more precisely:

"The examination would be conducted under the supervision of the Departmental Minister by one of his officials, on a footing very similar to that agreed by the Cabinet for the scrutiny programme. On the assumption that the statistical review is mounted in the near future, it would need to be accepted that it would be additional to the scrutiny programme."

Paragraph 5

9. I suggest deleting the words "it should be possible for" from lines 2 and 3 and substituting the word "should" for "to" in line 3.

Paragraph 6

10. I suggest deleting the word "reasonable" at the line of line 5.

Paragraph 7

11. Who would review the CSO's statistical services (para. 7a)?
12. Presumably the "bringing together" in line 1 of 7b means collation. As for departmental decisions (lines 2 and 3) how will one ensure that decisions are consistent?
13. In 7c, it will presumably be for the central agency to propose to Ministers - singly? collectively? - means for the assessment of departmental services?

Paragraph 8

14. I understand the reference to "organising" in line 2, but not "providing a common input" in line 1. Nor am I absolutely clear about "associate an appropriately qualified outsider", as to either the verb or the adjectival phrase: with whom exactly will the outsider be "associated", what sort of person would he/she be and what "services" would he/she provide?

Paragraph 9

15. I am not clear about the start date and phasing here.

- 6 NOV 1979

