

Home Affairs

1. MR. WHITMORE
2. PRIME MINISTER

cc. Paymaster General

Mr Jackson

Open Government and Manpower Options

You should be aware of a difficult situation which has arisen as a result of unilateral action by the CSD over the Departmental manpower options exercise.

Peter Hennessy, of the Times, approached the CSD last week asking for background papers on the exercise. He quoted in support of his request the Parliamentary Answer by Mr. Channon of June 20 (Doc. 1) and Clive's letter to Private Secretaries of the same day, which I have refused to give to Mr. Hennessy (see article - Doc. 2).

CSD Ministers have agreed to make available to Mr. Hennessy the CSD's own list of 10, 15 and 20 per cent options as attached (Doc. 3). Mr. Hennessy then telephoned each Department and even organisations like the Forestry Commission, asking for similar information and quoting CSD's willingness to provide theirs as a reason for a general response.

So far as we know, all our Departments and bodies have declined, at least for the time being, to release the information. The Paymaster General raised the whole issue at his meeting of Chief Information Officers last evening. There is a general reluctance to release the information which is of varying sensitivity; and a serious concern that one Department, in acting unilaterally, has potentially embarrassed all others.

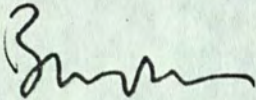
The Paymaster General is advising all Ministers, through Chief Information Officers, not to respond to Mr. Hennessy's request and, if they wish to do so, certainly not before others have discussed it with him and given me an opportunity to comment

/on

on your behalf.

The Paymaster General and I agree that there is no way in which the Government can win from a disclosure of the options - and most certainly not in the wholly raw and unexplained CSD format.

This, I fear, is a bad example of a breakdown in co-ordination. We have, however, kicked up such a fuss about it that I hope that such a lapse will not recur again for a long time.



B. INGHAM

12 December, 1979

~~X~~ Official Information ~~X~~

61. Mr. Christopher Price asked the Minister for the Civil Service what proposals he now intends to bring forward to give the public the right of access to official information.

62. Mr. Rooker asked the Minister for the Civil Service if he will make a statement on his policy for open government.

Mr. Channon: The Government are committed to legislation to reform section 2 of the Official Secrets Act 1911. In addition, it will be the practice of this Government to make as much information as possible available, including background papers and analytical studies, relevant to major policy decisions. Moreover, the House will shortly be debating the recommendations of the Procedure Committee, which will enable the House to maintain and improve the routine of the work of Government Departments. The Government share the view of their predecessors that legislation to provide a public right of access would not be appropriate. A code of practice would be open to many of the same objections.

Mr. Price: I thank the Minister for that comprehensive reply. Is he aware that an all-party consensus developed in the last Session about the Official Information Bill, which supported not only the reform of the Official Secrets Act but a statutory right of access for the public? Does the Minister accept that it does not make sense to reform the Act without providing a right for the public to be given non-sensitive information? Is the Minister at least monitoring the flow of information? What are the arrangements for monitoring which were begun by the last Government?

Mr. Channon: I understand the hon. Member's feelings. We are determined to make as much information as possible available. I am sure that the House will insist upon that. We are engaged in a number of major initiatives, such as the reform of the Official Secrets Act and consideration of the recommendations of the Procedure Committee, which I have already mentioned. It is meaningless to publish lists of information when it is no longer possible to tell whether they would be published in the normal course of events or are published because of previous initiatives.

Mr. Rooker: Is the Minister's philosophy on this subject such that he believes that more than three people in each constituency are genuinely interested in open

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Oral Answers

20 JUN

government? Will he institute a review of the 110 subjects on which hon. Members are not allowed to table questions?

Mr. Channon: I should be surprised if that were a matter for me. If it is, I shall examine it. There is considerable interest in the question of open government. I hope that what I have said today will show that we are doing more in this sphere than has been done before.

Mr. Forman: When taking the desirable preliminary steps towards more open Government, will my hon. Friend consider issuing guidelines to Whitehall Departments for the purpose of declassifying documents, as classifying them is one of the greatest barriers to full information being made available to Parliament and people elsewhere?

Mr. Channon: That is an important matter. I shall consider the suggestion and write to my hon. Friend.

Mr. Kaufman: The Minister says that he is determined to make as much information as possible available. Will he arrange for the immediate publication of the Treasury forecast on unemployment?

Mr. Channon: My responsibilities do not extend to forecasts from the Treasury or any other Department.

DOC 2

Whitehall brief: How public right of access to official information is curtailed

Secrecy shrouds No 10 directive on open government

By Peter Hennessy

Now that the Prime Minister has been obliged by events to withdraw the Government's Protection of Official Information Bill, which if passed would have maintained Britain's position as the Monte Cassino of secrecy in the Western world, it is timely to inquire about the positive side of the secrecy business' and pin down the Cabinet's precise position on open government.

Waiting for Mrs Margaret Thatcher in No 10 on May 4 was a paper on possible expenditure savings prepared by the Civil Service Department (CSD), of which she is ministerial overlord. It suggested she might wish to curtail the dispersal programme for moving civil servants into the regions. She did, and so, incidentally, did the CSD. She might want to avoid further costly steps towards more open government. She did, and so did the CSD.

The CSD managed to claw back even more. The department had never forgiven its former chief, Lord Croham, for saddling the Civil Service in July, 1977, with an open government commitment in what became known as the Croham Directive. Officials particularly resented having to keep lists of material released under that policy to send to a handful of



Mr Whitmore: Classified letter on openness as "confidential".

"faddists" on the Labour back benches and in the quality press who kept ringing up and asking for them.

Ministers were persuaded that that was a waste of public money. Departments no longer keep lists and, according to insiders, the increasing flow of paper emerging in Mr Callaghan's last 18 months in office has dwindled to a trickle.

On top of that, Mrs Thatcher did not replace GEN 146, the

Cabinet Committee of civil servants appointed by Mr Callaghan to prepare a variety of open government schemes designed to "buy off" Mr Clement Freud's Official Information Bill if it came anywhere near becoming law. Miss Caroline Morrison and Mrs Barbara Sloman of the CSD were redeployed on other work and Mr George Moseley, chairman of GEN 146, could again devote all his time to worrying about personnel matters of the Civil Service.

This slightly jaundiced analysis has been privately challenged in Whitehall. True, GEN 146 has gone and the Croham Directive has been amended, but look at Mr Paul Channon's statement in the Commons on June 20 that "it will be the practice of this Government to make as much information as possible available, including background papers and analytical studies, relevant to major policy decisions".

What is more, the informant continued, the Prime Minister has made it crystal clear to ministers that they must personally ensure that their departments push out as much material as they can. Given the hold she has over her colleagues, "this Cabinet could be more effective in their open government policy than the last one, which never really believed in it".

Mrs Thatcher's personal injunction to openness takes the form, it transpires, of a letter dated June 20, signed by Mr Clive Whitmore, her principal private secretary, and sent to his equivalents in the private offices of Cabinet ministers. For some reason Mr Whitmore classified it "confidential", thereby ensuring that the latest Whitehall directive on open government must remain a secret.

A telephone call about the Whitmore letter to Mr Bernard Ingham, the Prime Minister's press secretary, elicited the following "on-the-record" reply which a Downing Street spokesman insisted must be quoted in full or not at all:

It is not the Government's practice to release the texts of correspondence between ministers or their private offices, so I am afraid I cannot release a copy of the letter you mentioned. I can, however, confirm your understanding that the letter conveyed the Prime Minister's wish that ministers should give close personal attention to and take the initiative in publishing information, especially on major issues of parliamentary interest, to the greatest possible extent.

The spokesman omitted to mention that the Whitmore letter goes on to say the Prime Minister has no intention of introducing legislation to establish a public right of access to official information and that no

further formal steps will be taken to that end.

To supplement the No 10 statement and Mr Channon's answer, Mr Francis Pym, Secretary of State for Defence, has agreed to release the minute he circulated in his department on June 21 in response to the Whitmore letter. Headed "Release of information to Parliament and the public", it reads:

The House of Commons was informed yesterday that it will be the practice of this Government to make as much information as possible available, including background papers and analytical studies relevant to major policy decisions. We must ensure that these arrangements are effective in defence, and publish information, especially on major issues of parliamentary interest, to the greatest possible extent, consistent with the requirements of security. It will be for ministers to decide what material can be released in each specific case, and I should be grateful if you would bear this consideration in mind.

Until Mr Whitmore's letter is declassified and released at the Public Record Office on January 1, 2010 (by which time Mrs Thatcher may be in the House of Lords or its equivalent), the Downing Street statement and Mr Pym's minute will be all Whitehall watchers have to go on, unless, of course, Parliament manages to pass a freedom of information Bill in the meantime amending the 30-year rule.

Mr Prentice cannot intervene' to help boy

By Peter Healy
Services Correspondent
Reg Prentice, Minister for Security, has declined to intervene in an appeal against a 10% reduction of mobility allowance for a boy aged 14 suffering from Down's syndrome.
A letter to the Child Poverty Action Group yesterday could not influence an appeal claim. His statement was described as "nonsense" by Nicholas Warren, the group's legal officer.
The last government promise these children would get a 10% allowance", Mr Warren said. "When the regulations were published we were told they would cover the syndrome."
At least one medical appeal has found it impossible to side a case under the regulations, introduced last year after a test case established that Down's syndrome was covered with walking difficulties.
Martha Street, of Carcently won an appeal on behalf of a boy aged 14 who refused the allowance because of the old regulations and in April when a medical panel reviewed the case under the new rules.

Welsh nationalists shown road to socialism

Choreographer

Guernsey tax

ACTION TO REDUCE DEPARTMENTAL STAFF COSTS

1. Ministers have called for a range of options up to the levels of 10%, 15% and 20% from which they can select a set of reductions in Civil Service staff expenditure. The attached tabulations show the functions and activities which comprise the options for CSD. Figures for CCA are shown separately.
2. The content of these options has been approved by CSD Ministers, and the material will now go forward for Ministers to consider collectively. CSD Ministers recognise that cuts of this magnitude cannot be undertaken without due regard for all the consequences, including the effects on the staff of the Department and on the Service as a whole.
3. It is important to note that at present this material has the status only of options. No decision has yet been taken on the level of cuts, if any, to be required of any particular Department. Several items in the tabulations are at present under review and their ultimate contribution to any agreed level of cuts may need to be adjusted in the light of circumstances.
4. It should be noted also that the options aim to pick out particular functions and the posts attached to them, rather than simply to reduce the number of staff available to carry out an undiminished range of activities. This means in consequence that there cannot be any significant future reinstatement of activities unless resources are available: and since the Government intend to bring about a permanent reduction in the scale of government activity, it is likely that resources for future new work can only be made available if they are released from other current tasks.

OPTION

		<u>Cash Saving</u>	<u>% of CSD</u>
<u>Dr Allen</u>	1. improved staff efficiency	15,000	0.07
	2. reduced staff and advertising costs resulting from overall reductions in Departmental recruitment	340,000	1.51
		280,000	1.24
<u>Mr Burrett</u>	3. savings from the absence of incomes policy	56,000	0.25
	4. computerise pensions awarding	40,000	0.18
	5. reduce pensions policy work	18,000	0.08
	6. give up some control of superannuation in fringe bodies	70,000	0.31
<u>Mr Moseley</u>	7. reduction in PRISM service	150,000	0.67
	8. savings in personnel management and training divisions, eg drop assignment on micro processing, less work on training liaison and bursaries, and reduce MAS regional offices	155,000	0.69
	9. reduction in work on structure, including unified grading, and at the College	197,000	0.88
	10. 10% saving in CISCO net PES expenditure	114,000	0.51
<u>Mr Wilding</u>	11. reductions in SIEB	45,000	0.2
	12. reductions in external consultancy in MS	77,000	0.34
	13. reduce MS(SA) management review capacity	75,000	0.3
<u>Mr Lawrance</u>	14. change from weekly to monthly pay	324,000	1.44
	15. reductions in scale of PS, OS and Chessington resulting from general 10% reductions;	294,000	1.31
<u>Footnote</u>	(1) Since the cash savings figure equals 10% of the rounded CSD baseline, the discrepancy in the percentage column is due to rounding errors.	2,250,000	9.98 (1)

15% OPTION

		<u>Cash Saving</u>	<u>% of CSD</u>
<u>Dr Allen</u>	10% option	635,000	2.82
plus 1.	drop recruitment for fringe bodies and Crown appointments	34,000	0.15
2.	drop EO and CO Limited Competitions	295,000	1.31
<u>Mr Burrett</u>	10% option	184,000	0.82
<u>Mr Moseley</u>	10% option	616,000	2.74
plus 3.	further cuts at College	219,000	0.97
4.	savings in personnel management area, eg drop Imitax contract, less work on interchange, less statistical support	174,000	0.77
5.	additional 5% saving in CISCO	58,000	0.26
<u>Mr Wilding</u>	10% option	197,000	0.88
<u>Mr Lawrance</u>	10% option	618,000	2.74
plus 6.	reductions in scale of PS, OS and Chessington resulting from general 15% reductions; reductions in Library, information work, career development; closure of some doors	345,000	1.53
		<hr/>	<hr/> (1)
		3,375,000	14.99

Footnote (1) Since the cash savings figure equals 15% of the rounded CSD baseline, the discrepancy in the percentage column is due to rounding errors.

20% OPTION

		<u>Cash Saving</u>	<u>% of CSD</u>
<u>Dr Allen</u>	15% option	964,000	4.28
plus 1.	less efficient recruitment	118,000	0.52
2.	close regional offices	103,000	0.46
<u>Mr Burrett</u>	15% option	184,000	0.82
plus 3.	give up control of pay of various public bodies	15,000	0.07
4.	give up control over Armed Forces pay	16,000	0.07
5.	give up involvement in pay and conditions of fringe bodies	53,000	0.24
<u>Mr Moseley</u>	15% option	1,067,000	4.74
plus 6.	give up or reduce work on development of personnel management policy, and cut training support work	180,000	0.8
7.	further 5% saving in CISCO	62,000	0.28
<u>Mr Wilding</u>	15% option	197,000	0.88
plus 8.	cuts in Manpower staff	27,000	0.1
9.	cuts in MS/MG staff	174,000	0.77
<u>Mr Lawrance</u>	15% option	963,000	4.28
plus 10.	reductions in scale of PS, OS and Chessington resulting from general 20% reductions and reductions in central secretariat functions, training, welfare, audit, messengerial, clerical and other support staff, and closure of CISCO support work within Central Group.	377,000	1.68
		<hr/>	<hr/>
		4,500,000	19.99

Footnote (1) Since the cash savings figure equals 20% of the rounded CSD baseline, the discrepancy in the percentage column is due to rounding errors.

CENTRAL COMPUTER AGENCY

	<u>Cash Saving</u>	<u>% of CCA</u>
<u>10% OPTION</u>		
1. savings from amalgamation of work and delegations to departments	125,000	4.55
2. abolish Economy Programme branch	50,000	1.81
3. reduction in studies of technical problems and systems design	100,000	3.64
<u>15% OPTION</u>		
10% option	275,000	
plus		
4. delegations of authority to purchase computer equipment	138,000	5.0
<u>20% OPTION</u>		
15% option	413,000	
plus		
5. further reduction in studies of technical problems and systems design	113,000	4.11
6. further delegations of authority to purchase computer equipment	25,000	0.89
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	551,000	20.0



CIVIL SERVICE DEPARTMENT

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7 December 1979

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Dear Head of Information

CIVIL SERVICE MANPOWER CUTS: OPEN GOVERNMENT

This is to let you know that in answer to a request from Peter Hennessy of the Times for background information about the manpower cuts, CSD Ministers have decided to make available to him the CSD's own list of 10%, 15% and 20% options for cuts in this Department. Hennessy has also asked us for a complete set of departmental options papers, but on this we are taking the line that it is for each departmental Minister to decide what background information on the cuts in his own Department can be released under the Government's freedom of information policy.

You may therefore wish to be considering what your own departmental response should be if you are asked this question. As you know, the Government's policy is to make as much information as possible available, including background papers and analytical studies, relevant to major policy decisions.

Yours sincerely

John Beattall

J S Beattall
Information Division

*M. Gough
Spoke to Mr. Beattall. Advised him
to speak to PMA's office - ^{also} view
is that CIOs should not issue
options ad hoc - there should be
a central directive which is that
options' papers are not made available
to Hennessy. Told him he should
telephone CIOs today saying they
should not respond to Hennessy.
will raise at MIO tomorrow.*

*John Gough
10/12/79*



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MAP

with compliments

MINISTER OF STATE

Please linkup with our Minister's
letter of to-day's date. Apologies for.

CIVIL SERVICE DEPARTMENT
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Telephone 01-273 5563/4086

our usual
J. Murray
13/12



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CIVIL SERVICE DEPARTMENT

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W R B Robinson Esq
 Department of Employment
 8 St James's Square
 London SW1

20 November 1979

Dear Rhys

CIVIL SERVICE REDUCTIONS - RELEASE OF INFORMATION TO THE STAFF SIDE

You will no doubt have seen the letter which our Minister of State sent to the Home Secretary on 19 November, saying (among other things) that we shall need to know centrally what information is being released to departmental staff sides; and John Herbecq's letter to Ken Barnes of 20 November filled in some of the background as far as the Staff Side's complaint to the CAC is concerned. The purpose of this letter is to fill out one or two details.

2. We may be pressed, either by the National Staff Side (or JCC) or by the Press, to disclose information, not only about the decisions that have been taken but also about the options that have been, or are still being, considered. We take it that the response to such enquiries will have to vary as between departments. Some (including for obvious reasons CSD) will already have exposed their full range of options to their staff sides, and will presumably be willing to disclose them more widely if asked to do so under the Government's open government policy. Others, for whom the exercise is now complete in that a definite decision has now been taken either to adopt or to reject each of their options, may now be willing to disclose all of them, or (for whatever reason) only those they have adopted. Others again, for whom the exercise is not yet complete because some of their options are still being studied or considered, may be prepared to say with some precision what they have in train (the scope of the MOD studies, for example, is already known) and may or may not also be prepared to disclose the remaining options they have rejected. And yet another category, who are not yet ready to say what they are still considering, will probably also by the same token not yet be ready to say what they have rejected. All this adds up to a pretty confused picture, which will be apt to irritate the Press and MPs and will certainly make relationships with the Staff Side even more difficult.

3. Clearly, the CSD can only maintain the line that the decisions about how much to say, and when, are for the Ministers in charge of the departments concerned to take. But we shall be in considerable danger of being wrong-footed by the Staff Side, or for that matter by the Press, if we do not know what information departments have released; we have not in fact anything like a full picture of what has been said to departmental staff sides so far about the

options, and this will become more difficult still if we fall behind the game over what has been said about the decisions. At the same time, it will clearly be advantageous if, when we go to the informal CAC hearing, we then give a copious account of the information that has been released by then.

4. Ministers will no doubt be replying to Mr Channon's letter as soon as they have seen their staff sides following the announcement. We shall be very grateful for anything you can do to ensure that these replies are prompt. In addition, it would be very helpful if you and the other recipients of this letter could send to Clifford Bamfield an up-to-date account of what you have disclosed about your options, and make arrangements to ensure that Clifford automatically gets a copy of any other document or record of further information given to your staff side, whether about decisions or about options, after your Minister has made the communication which he will be reporting to Mr Channon. In your case, this should include, please, communications to the staff sides of the DE Agencies.

Copies of this letter go to those on the enclosed list.

Yours wu

Richard Wilding

R W L Wilding

D H Andrews
MAFF

E Broadbent
MOD

N H Calvert
DOE/Tpt

J F Boyd
IR

✓ A M Fraser
C&E

✓ N F Cairncross
Home Office

M D Hobkirk
Lord Chancellor's Dept

✓ C W France
Treasury

R M Russell
FCO

R S Matthews
DHSS

R C M Cooper
DI/Trade

✓ F A Harper
DES

✓ J R Cross
DEnergy

✓ P D Davies
PSA

P L Towers
CSD

D L Pearson
ODA

J E King
Welsh Office

J F Mayne
NIO

✓ J S Robertson
Scottish Office

13 DEC 1979

