

PRIME MINISTER

GOVERNMENT STATISTICAL SERVICES

During the recent review of Civil Service Manpower some colleagues proposed reductions in the Statistical work of their departments. You will have seen the Chancellor of the Exchequer's letter of 20 December to the Secretary of State for Trade proposing a further reduction in the Customs & Excise Statistical Office. The Rayner project which studied the statistical activities of the Departments of Industry and Trade showed that worthwhile savings and improvements in efficiency can be obtained in this field. There are more than 20 departments who provide statistical services of one sort or another and much of this activity crosses departmental boundaries. I believe it is now time for a general review of Government statistical services.

Such a review would start with a set of short, sharp studies conducted in and by Departments of their statistical services. None of the studies should last more than 3 to 4 months; many should be shorter. They will build on work that has already been done or is in hand, though the official responsible should be able to go behind this if he feels something should be probed. (Michael Heseltine has in hand, for example, a review of the information required from local authorities.) A key part of the review would be the central assessment of services which meet wider needs than those of one department, including the work of the Central Statistical Office.

The Director of the Central Statistical Office supports the review and Sir Derek Rayner has kindly agreed to oversee and co-ordinate it. I have agreed with Sir Derek that he should look to the Civil Service Department, in collaboration with the CSO, for staff and professional support.

We should aim to complete the review by the end of the Summer. I suggest that Sir Derek Rayner might then put to you and the Lord President his report with recommendations for improved efficiency, cost savings and tightened cost control. We can then advise on follow up action.

If you agree with the idea of a review, I propose that I should launch it by writing individually to the Ministers concerned. At the same time, we will arrange for the study of the CSO to begin under Sir Derek Rayner's direction. (I hope that we will be able to find a suitable person from outside the Civil Service to help him with this.) Would you be prepared to mention in Cabinet that you had authorised a review on these lines? That would be extremely helpful. *Yes*

I am copying this to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and to Lord Cockfield with whom I discussed the review before Christmas. I am also sending a copy to Sir Derek Rayner, Sir Robert Armstrong and Mr Boreham.

P.C.

PAUL CHANNON
14 January 1980



10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

21 January 1980

The Prime Minister has seen Mr. Channon's minute of 14 January about the Government's statistical services.

She agrees that a review on the lines set out in Mr. Channon's minute should now be initiated. As Mr. Channon has suggested, she will try to find an opportunity to mention this in Cabinet.

I am sending copies of this letter to Martin Hall (HM Treasury), N.V. Brotherton (Lord Cockfield's Office, HM Treasury), Clive Priestley (Sir Derek Rayner's Office), Martin Vile (Cabinet Office) and Peter Unwin (Central Statistical Office).

M. A. PATTISON

G.E.T. Green, Esq.,
Civil Service Department.

GT



Treasury Chambers, Parliament Street, SW1P 3AG
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PRIME MINISTER

GOVERNMENT STATISTICAL SERVICES

I have read with interest Paul Channon's minute of 14th January to you about reviewing Government statistical services which he copied to Arthur Cockfield and myself. I should say at once that I fully endorse his idea of mounting such a general review.

2. Of my departments the Inland Revenue, the Customs and Excise and the Department of National Savings collect statistics largely for their own purposes whilst the Treasury, though not a significant collector, is a major user of statistics collected in other departments. I therefore think it is important that economies in individual departments should be assessed in relation to the effects on the statistical system as a whole. I therefore welcome the idea of a systematic review and I would think it important that studies in individual departments should be supplemented by a central assessment of costs and priorities. While CSO should be aware of our interests in most respects, we would hope to be consulted as users at relevant stages of the review.

3. I am copying this to those to whom Paul Channon copied his minute.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to be 'G.H.' with a flourish.

(G.H.)

18 January 1980

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10 DOWNING STREET

PRIME MINISTER

Mr. Channon is now ready to review Government statistical services. You have been pressing for this.

Derek Rayner is to be in charge. One of his projects focussed on statistical services at Trade and Industry. He regards the report as one of the very best. I have put a marked-up copy in the weekend box in case you would like to glance at it.

1. Agreed that the review should be set in hand as proposed in Mr. Channon's attached minute (Flag A), for completion by the end of the summer? (The Chancellor's minute at Flag B supports the proposals.)

2. Would you like to mention this in Cabinet as requested by Mr. Channon?

Yes out

MAD

18 January 1980



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Yes

MAD

18 January 1980



Govt made

10 DOWNING STREET

Mike

Yes. PM has now
seen & agreed. End
of this episode. MAP

When I checked Cabinet
Office this morning for
comments on the review of
the statistical services

Martin Vize said their
comments were incorporated
~~in~~ Paul Channon's minute
to the PM of 14 Jan 1980 which
is, I believe, with you.

Tessa

21. 1. 1980