

Prime Minister



REVIEW OF GOVERNMENT STATISTICAL SERVICES

At Back of file in folder.

1. I attach the report on the Review of Statistical Services which you commissioned last January. The review has consisted of

- 19 scrutinies in departments;
- a scrutiny of the Central Statistical Office, reported to you separately;
- and, in addition, the examination of certain inter-departmental questions by a central team (para. 14 below).

2. The review followed on a "Rayner project" in 1979 on the joint statistical services of the Departments of Industry and Trade. In parallel with it there was a scrutiny (as part of the scrutiny programme) of the economic and statistical services of the Department of Energy.

3. I judge that this experiment, in extending the scrutiny technique to a multi-departmental topic, has been a success.

4. The Lord President and I propose the following action to carry the Review through to a conclusion.

Informing Ministers

5. The sharing of knowledge gained on a common subject should be an important benefit of the approach. We recommend that you circulate the Report to Ministers who have taken part. This would also provide the opportunity

Recn. 1



Recn. 2

for you to encourage them to implement their report's recommendations vigorously. We recommend that you do this through a Personal Minute; I attach a possible draft.

Informing Parliament and the public

Recn. 3

6. We recommend that the completion of the Review and the scale and nature of its proposals should be announced in a short statement to Parliament. You may wish to do this yourself or to ask the Lord President or Minister of State, CSD, to do so.

Recn. 4

7. Departmental Ministers are consulting outside interests as necessary and making decisions on the recommendations in their own reviews. We recommend that the aim should be to complete this as soon as possible and by the end of March at the latest. A few Departments may require a little longer on particular issues, but most have had their Reports since the end of the summer and should be able to meet this timetable.

Recn. 5

8. In our view, it would then be beneficial to make the Report available to Parliament and the public, together with a detailed statement of the decisions reached. We so recommend.

9. The timing should conform, we think, with publication of the White Paper on efficiency and elimination of waste which the Lord President is preparing.

Monitoring progress and keeping up pressure from the centre

Recn. 6

10. We recommend that CSD Ministers should see the Review through to implementation, with the help of the Head of the Government Statistical Service. You might ask the Lord President to arrange for the Ministers most concerned to take decisions on the Report's inter-departmental recommendations; to monitor implementation of the departmental recommendations; and to keep you in touch with progress.

The Central Statistical Office

11. You have considered and taken decisions on the report on the work of the Central Statistical Office.

12. I should draw your attention to a factual reference to the office of Prime Minister. This is in connection with the General Household Survey in paras. 17 and 21 of Part 2 of the attached report. I understand that the CSO has taken the lead responsibility for this Survey as a matter of central statistical policy, namely because the survey ranges over the interests of several Ministers. That makes you theoretically responsible for it, as for other aspects of the CSO's work.

Future Duties of the Head of the Government Statistical Service

13. The future duties and accountability of the Head of the Government Statistical Service are matters for your decision. If you agree with my recommendations in paras. 57 to 61, I recommend that you should issue the Secretary of the Cabinet with up-to-date guidelines for the Head of the GSS. A draft minute for this purpose is contained in Annex F of the report.

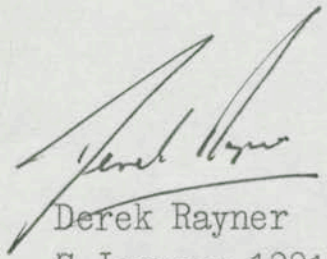
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Acknowledgements

14. The former Minister of State, CSD, made the original proposal for the review. I am grateful to him and to the Director of the CSO for providing me with a central team to co-ordinate the separate departmental scrutinies and to deal itself with the inter-departmental questions raised; I commend to your notice the work done for me by the team, especially Mr R H Wilson, Assistant Secretary, CSD, and Mr I B Beesley, Chief Statistician, CSO (who has now joined my staff).

15. I am also grateful to Ministers and their top management for their co-operation and to Sir Robert Armstrong and Sir John Boreham for the help they have given me throughout.

16. I am copying this to the Lord President, the Minister of State, CSD, Sir Ian Bancroft, Sir Robert Armstrong and Sir John Boreham.



Derek Rayner
7 January 1981

Encs: Draft Personal Minute to Ministers in charge
of Departments

Review of Government Statistical Services

Draft Minute to the Secretary of the Cabinet
(forming Annex F of the Review)

DRAFT PERSONAL MINUTE FROM THE PRIME MINISTER TO MINISTERS
IN CHARGE OF DEPARTMENTS WITH STATISTICAL SERVICES

REVIEW OF GOVERNMENT STATISTICAL SERVICES

1. I am grateful to Ministers for arranging for their statistical services to be examined as part of the government-wide review which I asked Sir Derek Rayner to undertake last January.

2. He has submitted to the Lord President and me his final report summarising the results of the departmental reviews and making general recommendations for the future conduct of our statistical services. I am sending you a copy herewith and shall be announcing the results shortly. I believe that this report should be made widely available and am asking the Lord President to consider how this can be done.

Potential savings

3. We inherited statistical services costing £104 m million a year and using 8800 staff. If all the recommendations made in the review are implemented, there will be savings of £20 million in annual spending and 1700 in manpower. With other actions in hand, it is now possible to contemplate a reduction in the workforce to around 6000 by 1984 at a cost of £75 million. That would be a valuable tightening of our administration, but the costs, activity and manpower engaged would still be substantial. It is accordingly of great importance that we should all apply the recommendations made in respect of our

departments vigorously and promptly.

Professional Head of the Government Statistical Service

4. As part of the review I have received a report on the Central Statistical Office. I have approved the proposals put to me by the Director of the CSO and the Secretary of the Cabinet for implementing its recommendations and I have issued guidance for the Director of the CSO, with particular reference to his functions as the professional head of the Government Statistical Service. I place particular emphasis on the help the Director can give Ministers and their departments in the search for economy and greater value in government statistical services generally.

Management

5. The report recommends ways in which we can strengthen our management of these services, drawing on the lessons which have been learnt from the departmental reports. I commend Sir Derek Rayner's advice to you. You will wish to ensure that your senior management, lay and professional, takes full account of it and submits to you early proposals for improved arrangements to keep statistical services cost-effective. Statistics are not an optional extra for good policy management but the watchword should be to do the minimum necessary and to do it well.

6. I invite Ministers to make full use of the advice of the Director of the CSO on economy in statistical services. I have asked him to provide me with an annual report on the improvements in methods and processes across government which have been achieved by the statistical services.

Implementation

7. I have asked the Lord President, with the help of the Director of the CSO, to take the lead on my behalf in following through the review to implementation with a view to publishing a statement of the results around Easter. He will be arranging for decisions to be taken by the Ministers concerned on the report's inter-departmental recommendations and will monitor and keep me in touch with progress with the implementation of departmental recommendations.

8. This is copied to Sir Ian Bancroft, Sir Robert Armstrong, Sir John Boreham and Sir Derek Rayner.

MHT

Enc: Review of Government Statistical Services.