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MSPM  
AT 9/11



Treasury Chambers, Parliament Street, SW1P 3AG

Rt Hon Norman Fowler MP  
Secretary of State for Social Services  
Department of Health & Social Security  
Alexander Fleming House  
Elephant & Castle  
LONDON  
SE1 6BY

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*Don't let go of this*

NHS MANPOWER

I have been shown the circular you are issuing on health services development which announced amongst other things a new regime for control of NHS manpower.

As manpower accounts for such a high proportion of NHS spending I am naturally interested in any changes in the system by which NHS manpower is controlled. My responsibilities for Civil Service manpower also give me a concern with manpower in other areas of the public service.

I understand that the intention of the changes you are making is to return to the type of system which had been intended originally, but which you departed from following the 7 July measures last year. While I am in principle content with such a change, it is very important that it should not be, nor be seen as, a weakening of the Government's policy to reduce public service manpower. As described in your circular the new system is capable of applying the necessary steady downward pressure on manpower numbers, but much will depend in practice on how the system works in practice. Experience with Civil Service manpower has shown, I have to say, that departments are not always the best judges of whether a manpower target is achievable. I hope that in presenting the circular and operating the system you will make clear that you are determined to use it to achieve efficiency improvements just as we have used the different Civil Service system of manpower targets to do so. I think that will mean rejecting some of the plans put up by District Health Authorities.

I am asking my officials to keep clearly in touch with yours as your new system develops.



I am sending a copy of this letter to the Prime Minister.

*Very sincerely*

*John Gort*

J- PETER REES

*[Approved by the Chief Secretary]*