

CONFIDENTIAL

230
230
F00
5700
PRIME MINISTER

9 July 1984

EFFICIENCY MEETING, HOME OFFICE

The Home Office has two very different types of task: managing large, mundane activities (prisons, fire services, immigration control); and coping with ticklish one-off problems, such as the Libyan Embassy siege. The HO needs to establish the right management systems to cope with the former tasks, leaving more of its skills free for the latter.

(a) HO Management

The Immigration Department is a vast paper factory employing several hundreds of people on complex rules of entry and control. Its overhaul was long overdue. In April this year it was re-organised and now has direct responsibility for its budgetary management, is improving management information on the scale and outcome of its casework and is studying the ways in which information technology may speed up procedures. It may be too early to ask what progress has been made, but the Prime Minister might wish to know whether other parts of the HO will be similarly reformed.

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

(b) Inspectorates

If the Inspectorates are to enable the Home Secretary to satisfy himself that individual parts of his far flung empire are performing efficiently, the quality of their staff needs to be extended and improved.

To take the Prison Inspectorate as an example. Its statutory duties, under Section 57 of the Criminal Justice Act 1982 (amending Section 5 of the Prison Act 1952) require the Chief Inspector to report in particular on "the treatment of prisoners and conditions in prisons". The emphasis is on the physical environment: efficiency, financial management and management of the prison staff are not mentioned.

These terms of reference lead the Inspectors to carry out their task by looking at selected institutions each year. The May Committee of 1979 recommended that the Inspectorate should examine "more general aspects of the Prison Service". Although the Chief Inspector has noted the desirability of carrying through this aim, he has not the staff or the resources to do it properly. In 1982 the Prison Inspectorate had only six full time and two part time inspectors under the Chief and his Deputy, supported by a small staff. During the first year of a supposedly beefed-up independent Inspectorate in 1982 there was a 70% turnover in staff, visits to prisons were cancelled, reports

CONFIDENTIAL
- 2 -

CONFIDENTIAL

dwindled and a review of working methods postponed. The use of outside consultants was regarded as a step towards overcoming these problems.

In the light of this experience it would be pertinent to ask:

- (a) whether the terms of reference of the Prison Inspectorate should be extended so as to include management matters;
- (b) whether the right calibre and numbers of staff are employed in the Inspectorate;
- (c) whether the use of management consultants would yield greater benefits in achieving higher efficiency than the present practice of staffing Inspectorate by long-standing members of the service concerned.
- (d) whether the Inspectorates should be more closely integrated with Policy Divisions.

At Scala

NICHOLAS OWEN/PETER SHIPLEY

PP

CONFIDENTIAL - 3 -