



Ref. A085/963

PRIME MINISTER

Large Scale Household Survey

— I sent forward to you yesterday a minute by Sir John Boreham, suggesting that the Department of the Environment should not proceed with the Large Scale Household Survey proposed for 1986 by the Secretary of State for the Environment.

- 2. You will see from the attached copy of a letter from the Chief Secretary that he shares Sir John Boreham's doubts.

Approved by
ROBERT ARMSTRONG
and signed in his absence.

28 March 1985

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FILE No.

Treasury Chambers, Parliament Street, SW1P 3AG

Rt Hon Patrick Jenkin MP
 Secretary of State
 Department of the Environment
 2 Marsham Street
 London
 SW1P 3EB

27 March 1985

Dear Patrick

LARGE SCALE HOUSEHOLD SURVEY

I have seen your letter of 19 March to Willie Whitelaw about your plans for a Large Scale Household Survey in 1986.

I am very doubtful about the value of spending so much on a survey of this kind. Is it really worth around £15 million to secure a marginal improvement in the accuracy of the GRE calculations and hence of grant distribution? There are, I understand, doubts about the reliability of the results at a local level. And should we for the longer-term be looking for ever more sophisticated - and hence more complicated - GRE methodologies, rather than a simpler assessment of the needs of each area?

You put forward the need for expenditure provision for this survey as a bid in the 1984 Public Expenditure Survey. I resisted any additional provision then on the grounds that the survey represented poor value for money.

My view remains that the survey is poor value for money. Given the other pressures on public expenditure - not least from local authorities - I think we should seize the opportunity to make a worthwhile saving by dropping it.

I am copying this letter to the other members of H Committee, Sir Robert Armstrong and Sir John Boreham.

Peter Rees

PETER REES

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