



10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

2 April 1985

The Prime Minister had a word today with your Secretary of State about the proposed large scale household survey envisaged in his minute of 28 March.

The Prime Minister said that she shared Sir John Boreham's reservations about whether the survey would produce sufficient new information to justify the £15m cost. There were many other sources of information which were collected routinely and which did not seem to be fully utilised. Examples were school registrations; voter registration; Post Office records of pensioners; and DHSS records of other claimants.

Your Secretary of State said that his advice was that such figures did not produce sufficiently organised information to assist in assessing GREs. Indeed much of the information on which current GRE assessments were made was considerably out-of-date, relying as it did on the 1981 census. These assessments were becoming increasingly difficult to defend and DOE Ministers were receiving a regular stream of delegations from local authorities complaining that their assessment was out-of-date. He recognises Sir John Boreham's reservations but, in the end, it was DOE Ministers who were accountable to Parliament for the accuracy of the GRE system. Nevertheless, he would look once again at the range of information provided by other Departments as part of their routine collection of data to see if any could be deployed in GRE assessments. He was not however sanguine about the prospects.

The Prime Minister said that she was grateful for your Secretary of State's agreement to look at the problem once again: she was more optimistic about the possibilities. Nevertheless, she noted that your Secretary of State reserved the right to return to the issue if he remained of the view that a survey was still needed.

I am copying this to Richard Broadbent (Chief Secretary's Office) and Sir John Boreham. I am sending a copy to Judith Rutherford (Department of Employment) whose Secretary of State was present during the meeting and who

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offered to consider if Department of Employment channels could be used to provide some of the information at which the proposed survey was aimed.

Tim Flesher

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