

RESTRICTED

SL 3A 85



10 DOWNING STREET

SUBJECT CC MASTER  
OPS

THE PRIME MINISTER

Personal Minute

No. M/16/86

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR TRADE AND INDUSTRY

REGIONAL BRIEFING FOR MINISTERS

I believe that we need to improve the arrangements for getting our message across in the regions. At present, departments provide their own Ministers with some briefing when they go on regional visits, but this is usually confined to that department's activities and concerns in the region to be visited, combined with some basic economic statistics. There is no central point in Whitehall which pulls together information on what other departments are doing so as to provide the comprehensive picture.

To meet this gap, I suggest that your Department, as the Department responsible for regional and industrial policy, should provide regularly updated briefing on each region. This would cover the whole range of Government activities including not only economic matters but also information, for example, on the health service, number of council houses sold, and infrastructure. This would be available to any member of the Government and would be somewhat similar to the Treasury's excellent Economic Brief.

I understand that the Minister of State at the Department of Trade and Industry (Mr. Morrison) is willing to supervise this work and I should be grateful if all the Departments to whom I am copying this minute would give him full co-operation in preparing the briefing material. He should discuss with the Scottish and Welsh Offices how these arrangements might apply to their responsibilities.

RESTRICTED

ECL

I am copying this minute to Ministers in charge of Departments, the Minister of State, Department of Trade and Industry, and to Sir Robert Armstrong.

*Nagendra Prasad*

21 July 1986

proposal

B

Ref. A086/2115

MR WICKS  

---

You invited comments or suggestions on the proposal in the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry's minute of 16 July to the Prime Minister.

2. Sir Robert Armstrong sees merit in the proposal that Ministers should have a concise factual brief on Government activities in each region, and agrees that this would most easily be prepared and updated by a single Department with a regional network.

3. Sir Robert's only doubt was whether the Department of Trade and Industry were the automatic choice for the role; for example, the Department of Employment might think themselves the natural ones to undertake it. I therefore took the precaution of asking the Private Secretary to the Secretary of State for Employment, on a strictly personal basis, what their reaction might be if the Prime Minister were to invite Mr Morrison to take the lead. The response was very reassuring: Employment Ministers would be content if the Department of Trade and Industry were ready to take this on, and had every confidence in Mr Morrison (with his previous experience in the Department of Employment). I have not conducted similar checks with other Departments (DHSS, Inland Revenue etc) whose role in such an operation would be less central; but the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry is already conscious of the need for co-operation from other Government Departments, and providing the proposal is put forward in that spirit there need be no resentment of a "DTI takeover".

MS

M C STARK

18 July 1986



## PRIME MINISTER

Mr. Channon has suggested (Flag A) that Mr. Morrison should be put in charge of arrangements for improving briefing available to Ministers on the regions. If you agree with this suggestion, I suggest you send Mr. Channon the minute below. Sir Robert Armstrong agrees (Flag B) that this is a sensible proposal.

N.L.W.

N L WICKS

18 July 1986



CONFIDENTIAL

PRIME MINISTER

### MINISTERIAL BRIEFING

I am concerned that we are failing to get our message across in the regions as effectively as we might. At present, Departments provide their own Ministers with some briefing when they go on regional visits but this is usually confined to the activities and concerns of the particular Department in that region, combined with some basic economic statistics. There is no central point in Whitehall which pulls together information on what every Department is doing so as to get the whole picture.

2 In order to remedy this, I suggest that my Department, as the Department responsible for regional industrial policy, should provide a regularly-updated brief on each region which would cover the whole range of Government activities; thus, it would detail not only economic statistics and assistance but also information on the health service, number of council houses sold, infrastructure expenditure etc. This would be available to any member of the Government and would be somewhat similar to the Treasury's Weekly Brief.

3 To co-ordinate this exercise, I would assign an official in my Department but it would obviously also require co-operation from other Government Departments. If you are content, Peter Morrison will be given Ministerial responsibility for supervising the operation and will liaise

JF2B00



with Ministers in other Departments. It would obviously greatly help him to do this if you could write to him asking him to take this on.

P. C.

PAUL CHANNON

16 July 1986

DEPARTMENT OF TRADE AND INDUSTRY

JF2B00

1671  
1871



1871

1871