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PRIME MINISTER

CENTRALLY CO-ORDINATED EFFICIENCY EXERCISES 1983:
THE SCRUTINY PROGRAMME

1. Mr Butler's letter of 26 January invited proposals for the scrutiny programme.
2. The Privy Council Office has of course contributed to the annual reviews of running costs, but I understand that my predecessors have taken the view that because of the special nature of its functions, the Office does not offer any scope for inclusion in a scrutiny programme. I share this view and have accordingly no proposals to submit for the 1983 scrutiny.
3. I am copying this minute to the Lord Privy Seal and to Mr Cassels.

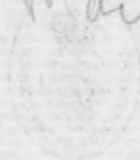
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4 February 1983

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10 DOWNING STREET

From the Principal Private Secretary

26 January 1983

D/F

Dear Private Secretary

Centrally Co-ordinated Efficiency Exercises 1983:
The Scrutiny Programme

The programme of Centrally Co-ordinated Efficiency Exercises proposed in the Lord Privy Seal's minute of 26 November has been agreed by Ministers. It envisages up to 30 further departmental scrutinies and 3 multi-department reviews.

I am writing to invite proposals for the scrutiny programme. Ministers are asked to send these to the Prime Minister by 11 February and to copy them to the Lord Privy Seal and Mr. Cassels.

The target size of the scrutiny programme has again been kept small, having regard to other work in hand or in prospect. So topics should be substantial and significant in terms of the activities or policies of the department. Wherever possible they should also promote the Government's longer-term aims for improving Civil Service management. The Prime Minister will have these factors in mind when considering their suitability for inclusion in the programme.

Specific areas likely to provide strong candidates for scrutinies are:

- (1) Whether the policy processes in use provide Ministers with the right material at the right time on which to take decisions and with adequate information and methods by which to assess the cost-effectiveness of the action taken.
- (2) Large executive questions which are relatively self-contained.
- (3) Areas of work involving specialist groups (e.g. lawyers and accountants).

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(4) The arrangement by which advice, information and help are provided to the public and outside bodies (e.g. the preparation and publication of advice - leaflets, articles, films, advice and information provided by visits).

(5) Administrative tribunals (e.g. appeals boards).

(6) The efficiency and value for money of selected Non-Departmental Public Bodies.

Ministers are invited to put forward at least one scrutiny. Those in charge of larger departments are invited to propose more than one. Each proposal should, as in previous years, contain brief information on:

(1) Subject: the policy, function or activity to be examined.

(2) Cost of the policy, function or activity, and the number of staff involved.

(3) Reasons for selecting the subject.

(4) Terms of Reference.

(5) Proposed starting and finishing dates.

(6) Names of examining officers, if known, and Ministerial reporting arrangements. (In selecting staff to conduct scrutinies Ministers are asked to bear in mind the importance of putting examining officers in charge who have the questioning mind and good judgement fundamental to the scrutiny technique).

Work on scrutinies should not start before proposals have been agreed by the Prime Minister. The programme should begin as early as possible in the year but there is no need for all scrutinies to start on a common date. Notes of Guidance for examining officers will be re-issued shortly and briefing for examining officers will be arranged subsequently.

I am copying this letter to the Private Secretaries of all Ministers in charge of Departments and to Sir Robert Armstrong, Sir Douglas Wass, John Sparrow and John Cassels. Ian Beesley (273 5226) in the Rayner Unit can provide further advice if it is required.

Yours sincerely,

Robin Butler

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