

MR

Prime Minister <sup>(1)</sup>

MR BARCLAY

In the attached minute Sir John Boreham invites you to write to colleagues to remind them of the arrangements for publishing statistics.

Agree with Bernard Ingham's advice below, that the letter should go at private secretary level, with the addition at X?

JMB  
28/2

Sir John Boreham does not advance any reason for such a letter from the Prime Minister at this time, and I would therefore prefer it to go at Private Secretary level.

It is all familiar stuff but I would like to suggest an addition to the first indent in paragraph 3 on page 1 - viz:

- only people who strictly need to know should see sensitive statistics before they are released, but that should not inhibit preparation for their effective presentation and explanation.

My point is that secrecy is no good whatsoever if the only consequence is bad presentation. It is one thing to preserve the integrity of Government statistics; it is entirely another to do that and end up with egg on our faces.

There is in my view altogether too much secrecy over statistics and all too little intelligent planning for their presentation.

B. INGHAM  
27 February 1984

Why the sudden need to write at all?

mb



804

10 DOWNING STREET

*From the Private Secretary*

SIR JOHN BOREHAM

INTEGRITY OF GOVERNMENT STATISTICS:  
PUBLICATION

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Thank you for your minute of 2 March, which I have shown to the Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister considers that there is an insufficient case for her writing to her colleagues on this subject at present.

I am sending copies of this minute to Mary Brown (Lord Gowrie's Office), Mike Corcoran (HM Treasury) and Richard Hatfield (Cabinet Office).

MR. D. BARCLAY

6 March 1984

K

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CABINET OFFICE

Central Statistical Office

Great George Street, London SW1P 3AQ Telephone 01-233 6117

From the Director: Sir John Borcham, K.C.B.

Prime Minister <sup>(1)</sup>

A bit thin.

Do you prefer  
a) to write yourself?  
or b) a private secretary  
letter?  
or c) no letter at all?

MR. D BARCLAY

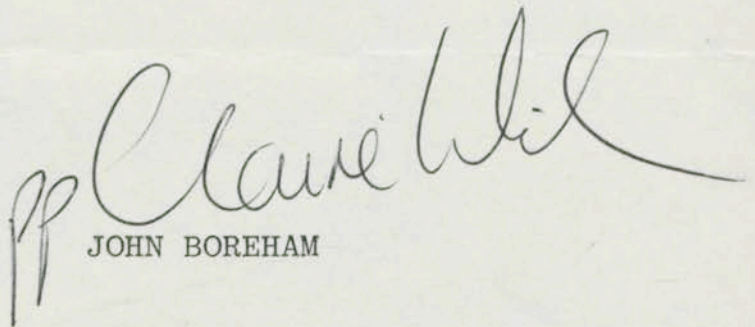
INTEGRITY OF GOVERNMENT STATISTICS: PUBLICATION

You asked for further advice on why a letter should be sent on statistical integrity at the present time.

Ministers in the present administration since 1979 have not received advice on statistical integrity. Minor problems do arise from time to time and it is helpful to have a Prime Ministerial minute to which reference can be made.

DMS  
5/3

No letter -  
not

*pp*   
JOHN BOREHAM

2 March 1984

Thank you for your letter of 2 March which I have shown to the PM

The PM considers that this is a ...

Gov Maan Oct 79 CSO

-5 FEB 1984

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12

CABINET OFFICE

(Cabinet and Sub-Committees)

Great George Street, London SW1P 3AA

For the Secretary, see below

CONFIDENTIAL



Emf

10 DOWNING STREET

*From the Private Secretary*  
SIR JOHN BOREHAM  
CABINET OFFICE

INTEGRITY OF GOVERNMENT STATISTICS:  
PUBLICATION

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The Prime Minister was grateful for your minute of 22 February, in which you recommended that she should write to her Ministerial colleagues to remind them of the arrangements for the publication of Government statistics.

BF

The Prime Minister has enquired why it is thought necessary to send such a letter at the present time. I should be grateful for further advice.

I am sending copies of this minute to the Private Secretaries to the recipients of yours.

MR. D. BARCLAY

29 February 1984

JG

1) Mr Ingham See attached MR P31/4

2) Prime Minister (4)

Content to write to colleagues  
on these lines ? The letter could  
go at Private Secretary level if  
you prefer.

DMS  
23/2

PRIME MINISTER

## INTEGRITY OF GOVERNMENT STATISTICS: PUBLICATION

Publication dates of important economic statistics are announced in advance and closely adhered to. This is of great help in preserving the integrity of statistics and public confidence in it. The dates announced are set to follow as soon as possible after the figures are available; in the intervening period only those with a strict need to know can see the figures.

I think it is helpful, from time to time, for you to remind ministers of these arrangements. I would like you to take the opportunity, also, of extending the practice beyond economic statistics.

I would be grateful if you would agree to sending a minute to ministers in charge of departments, on the lines of the attached draft. The last paragraph of the draft refers to my role as Head of the Government Statistical Service, as set out in the White Paper on Statistical Services in 1981, and in a minute sent from your Private Secretary on 12 January of that year to Sir Robert Armstrong.

I am sending copies to Lord Gowrie, Mr Hayhoe and Sir Robert Armstrong.

JOHN BOREHAM

22 February 1984

DRAFT MINUTE FROM PRIME MINISTER TO MINISTERS IN CHARGE OF DEPARTMENTS

INTEGRITY OF GOVERNMENT STATISTICS: PUBLICATION

It is of the highest importance for the Government to maintain public confidence in the integrity of its statistics. Arrangements for the publication of statistics must give great weight to this.

The release dates of the major economic series are published in advance each month in a Central Statistical Office Press Notice and repeated in "Economic Trends". I should like this to be extended to other major series of statistics and I would like your Department to arrange this, (if it is not already done), in consultation with the Central Statistical Office. Pre-announced publication dates should be strictly adhered to: delays can only be countenanced when there are unavoidable problems in producing the statistics.

Press Notices

Departments generally use Press Notices to achieve fast publication of important series. Arrangements for the issue of Press Notices should take account of the following:

- only people who strictly need to know should see sensitive statistics before they are released;
- there should be an expected delay of at most two working days between the compilation of all the figures for a Press Notice and its release to the Press: this should be reduced to one working day wherever practicable;
- statistical Press Notices should contain a clear and standardised identification that they are prepared by the Government Statistical Service, in order to establish a clear and visible separation of statistical information from any subsequent policy comment and to emphasise their common professional origin;

- Press Notices should include, where appropriate, an objective commentary on the figures; where this includes comparisons with earlier figures, these should normally be over standard periods for any given series; major revisions to earlier published figures should normally be mentioned.

#### Other publications

The guidelines for the issue of Press Notices may not be entirely appropriate for the publication of statistics in regular journals or in special digests. However, it remains important to meet pre-announced publication dates and to distinguish between statistical information and policy comment.

#### Responsibility for action

The senior professional statistician in each department carries responsibility for the integrity and validity of his statistics. He should consult the Central Statistical Office whenever there is any doubt about the form of presentation or timing of statistical series for which he is responsible.

In addition the Director of the Central Statistical Office in his role as Head of the Government Statistical Service has the right of direct access to me on matters concerning the validity and integrity of Government statistics and the professional competence and working of the statistical service. Where he is providing advice to other departments, he may deal directly with the appropriate Minister.



Govt. Machinery Oct 79  
Review of STAFF



23 JAN 1984