

MR BARCLAY

OVERDUE SCRUTINY DECISIONS

Thank you for your minute of 20 February commissioning letters to Departments to press for speedier implementation and decisions as appropriate. Here are drafts to relevant Private Secretaries. Sir Robin Ibbs has indicated his consent to them all.

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7 March 1984

DRAFT PRIVATE SECRETARY LETTER

P/S S/S for Social Services

SCRUTINIES AND VALUE FOR MONEY

The Prime Minister has recently been looking at the state of play on improving value for money in government through scrutinies and closely related work. She continues to be impressed by what can be achieved in this way and hopes that Ministers will continue to target scrutinies on good areas and that Permanent Secretaries will use their best people as examining officers.

The Prime Minister feels, in addition, that we need to maintain a strong presumption that scrutinies lead to prompt decisions and action. She is concerned that, unless momentum is maintained, the system will clog up and prevent the right sense of urgency being achieved.

On the basis of the data you supply to the Efficiency Unit, Mrs Thatcher noted that your Department has one of the best records in commissioning work to improve value for money. She hopes that this record can be maintained and that, wherever possible, the record on implementation can be improved even further.

Your Secretary of State's recent action to publish and push forward action on the NHS scrutinies is an important step. The Prime Minister is wholly behind him in this. The savings possible here are large and Mrs Thatcher is very keen both to release the money concerned for better purposes in the Health Service and to encourage those in the service who want to do better for the taxpayer's pound. She would be grateful to be kept informed of progress through the Efficiency Unit.

Mrs Thatcher also hopes that firm decisions and early dates for securing outstanding benefits can be agreed for the residual points in earlier departmental scrutinies:

- She noted that from the 1979 scrutiny of the Methods of Benefit Payments £10 million a year of savings are not currently expected until 1985/86 and £5 million a year not expected until even later; the Prime Minister wonders if anything could be done to speed this up.
- Savings of a further £25 million a year are believed likely to be achieved from the scrutiny of the Validation of National Insurance Contribution Records but there is, as yet, no firm commitment to secure them.
- Response to the 1982 scrutiny of the payment of benefits to people in hospital is still outstanding.

I am copying this to Sir Robin Ibbs and Sir Robert Armstrong.

DRAFT PRIVATE SECRETARY LETTER

PS S/S Defence

SCRUTINIES AND VALUE FOR MONEY

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The Prime Minister feels, in addition, that we need to maintain a strong presumption that scrutinies lead to prompt decisions and action. She is concerned that, unless momentum is maintained, the system will clog up and prevent the right sense of urgency being achieved.

On the basis of your Secretary of State's plans for improving value for money in 1984/85, Mrs Thatcher has commented that she is encouraged by the speed with which Mr Heseltine is seeking action. The Prime Minister has asked me to say that she is wholly behind your Secretary of State in this. She hopes that the same sense of urgency will be possible in setting dates for action on recommendations from earlier value for money work such as:

- contracting-out major aircraft repair other than for the front-line for an estimated saving of £16m a year (RAF support services review);
- bringing Army and Royal Navy pay practices up to the standard of the RAF with a potential saving of £19m a year (scrutiny of Service and Civilian Pay);
- the scrutiny of the Met Office, saving £7m a year;

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DRAFT PRIVATE SECRETARY LETTER

P/S S/S for the Environment

SCRUTINIES AND VALUE FOR MONEY

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The Prime Minister feels, in addition, that we need to maintain a strong presumption that scrutinies lead to prompt decisions and action. She is concerned that, unless momentum is maintained, the system will clog up and prevent the right sense of urgency being achieved.

With everything else that is currently under discussion in the Property Services Agency the Prime Minister is anxious that steps to use scrutinies to identify improvements, and subsequent action to secure those improvements urgently, should not be overlooked. She has noted, for example, that although the main recommendations in the 1982 Resource Control Review of District Works Offices have been accepted in principle there is still no firm commitment to a date by which these useful improvements can be expected to be realised. The Prime Minister hopes that this can soon be brought to decisive action.

I am copying this to Sir Robin Ibbs and Sir Robert Armstrong.

DRAFT PRIVATE SECRETARY LETTER

P/S S/S for Trade and Industry

SCRUTINIES AND VALUE FOR MONEY

The Prime Minister has recently been looking at the state of play on improving value for money in government through scrutinies and closely related work. She continues to be impressed by what can be achieved in this way and hopes that Ministers will continue to target scrutinies on good areas and that Permanent Secretaries will use their best people as examining officers.

The Prime Minister feels, in addition, that we need to maintain a strong presumption that scrutinies lead to prompt decisions and action. She is concerned that, unless momentum is maintained, the system will clog up and prevent the right sense of urgency being achieved.

On the basis of the data you supply to the Efficiency Unit, Mrs Thatcher noted that progress with the 1980 scrutiny of the Patent Office has been slow and she would be grateful if your Secretary of State could consider how the identified improvements might be achieved quickly.

I am copying this to Sir Robin Ibbs and Sir Robert Armstrong.

DRAFT PRIVATE SECRETARY LETTER

P/S to the Minister for the Arts

SCRUTINIES AND VALUE FOR MONEY

The Prime Minister has recently been looking at the state of play on improving value for money in government through scrutinies and closely related work. She continues to be impressed by what can be achieved in this way and hopes that Ministers will continue to target scrutinies on good areas and that Permanent Secretaries will use their best people as examining officers.

The Prime Minister feels, in addition, that we need to maintain a strong presumption that scrutinies lead to prompt decisions and action. She is concerned that, unless momentum is maintained, the system will clog up and prevent the right sense of urgency being achieved.

On the basis of the data you supply to the Efficiency Unit, Mrs Thatcher noted that important decisions from the 1982 scrutiny of the Victoria and Albert and Science Museums have been deferred until the Trustees have settled in. She hopes that it will be possible to ensure that the Trustees will deal with these outstanding matters promptly.

I am copying this to Sir Robin Ibbs and Sir Robert Armstrong.

DRAFT PRIVATE SECRETARY LETTER

P/S S/S to the Home Office

SCRUTINIES AND VALUE FOR MONEY

The Prime Minister has recently been looking at the state of play on improving value for money in government through scrutinies and closely related work. She continues to be impressed by what can be achieved in this way and hopes that Ministers will continue to target scrutinies on good areas and that Permanent Secretaries will use their best people as examining officers.

The Prime Minister feels, in addition, that we need to maintain a strong presumption that scrutinies lead to prompt decisions and action. She is concerned that, unless momentum is maintained, the system will clog up and prevent the right sense of urgency being achieved.

On the basis of the targets for improving value for money in 1984/85 Mrs Thatcher is most impressed by the action your Secretary of State is taking to improve performance. She has asked me to say that she is wholly behind your Secretary of State in all this and looks forward to seeing implementation of the results. The Prime Minister would also be grateful to be kept informed of progress in securing the improvements identified during the recent review of the Prisons and hopes that urgent action will be possible to take advantage of this work which has opened up new possibilities of management action in a difficult area.

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DRAFT PRIVATE SECRETARY LETTER

PS S/S for Education and Science

SCRUTINIES AND VALUE FOR MONEY

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The Prime Minister feels, in addition, that we need to maintain a strong presumption that scrutinies lead to prompt decisions and action. She is concerned that, unless momentum is maintained, the system will clog up and prevent the right sense of urgency being achieved.

On the basis of the data you supply to the Efficiency Unit, Mrs Thatcher noted that progress with implementation of the findings of the scrutiny of supporting services in Research Councils is disappointing. She hopes that your Secretary of State will take an interest in speedy action from the Heads of the Research Councils to realise the improvements, and in pursuing urgent action from his officials to implement the more general findings which fall to him to take forward.

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DRAFT PRIVATE SECRETARY LETTER

P/S S/S to the Chancellor of the Exchequer

SCRUTINIES AND VALUE FOR MONEY

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The Prime Minister feels, in addition, that we need to maintain a strong presumption that scrutinies lead to prompt decisions and action. She is concerned that, unless momentum is maintained, the system will clog up and prevent the right sense of urgency being achieved.

On the basis of the data you supply to the Efficiency Unit, Mrs Thatcher noted that significant decisions are still outstanding on the Customs 1982 scrutiny of Import Entries and on three of the Inland Revenue scrutinies (Rating Procedures of 1980, Schedule D of 1981, and visits to the public of 1982). She would be grateful if <sup>Treasury Ministers</sup> your Minister would consider how early decisions on these matters can be reached and firm dates set for obtaining the improvements.

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DRAFT PRIVATE SECRETARY LETTER

P/S S/S of Employment

SCRUTINIES AND VALUE FOR MONEY

The Prime Minister has recently been looking at the state of play on improving value for money in government through scrutinies and closely related work. She continues to be impressed by what can be achieved in this way and hopes that Ministers will continue to target scrutinies on good areas and that Permanent Secretaries will use their best people as examining officers.

The Prime Minister feels, in addition, that we need to maintain a strong presumption that scrutinies lead to prompt decisions and action. She is concerned that, unless momentum is maintained, the system will clog up and prevent the right sense of urgency being achieved.

On the basis of the data you supply to the Efficiency Unit, Mrs Thatcher noted that although many of the recommendations from the 1980 scrutiny of Payments of Benefits to the Unemployed have been implemented, significant savings are still associated with other recommendations for which decisions have not yet been taken. The Prime Minister hopes that it might be possible to seek early decisions and firm dates on these matters too.

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DRAFT PRIVATE SECRETARY LETTER

P/S S/S for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs

SCRUTINIES AND VALUE FOR MONEY

The Prime Minister has recently been looking at the state of play on improving value for money in government through scrutinies and closely related work. She continues to be impressed by what can be achieved in this way and hopes that Ministers will continue to target scrutinies on good areas and that Permanent Secretaries will use their best people as examining officers.

The Prime Minister feels, in addition, that we need to maintain a strong presumption that scrutinies lead to prompt decisions and action. She is concerned that, unless momentum is maintained, the system will clog up and prevent the right sense of urgency being achieved.

On the basis of the data you supply to the Efficiency Unit, Mrs Thatcher noted that final implementation of the 1981 scrutiny into the generation and transmission of information will be completed in 1985/86 and commented that it is to be hoped that the work will not slip.

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