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PS/ Secretary of State for Trade and Industry

26 March 1984

David Barclay Esq
Private Secretary to the
Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
London SW1

DMB
26/3

Dear David,

SCRUTINIES AND VALUE FOR MONEY

In your letter of 8 March, you asked if my Secretary of State could consider how implementation of the 1980 scrutiny of the Patent Office might be expedited.

2 The Secretary of State attaches importance to the efficiency strategy programme, and is in full agreement with Sir Robin Ibbs on the future development of this out of Departmental efficiency programmes in consultation with the Efficiency Unit. There has been an intensive work programme in this Department with five recent reports, four of which are very recent with action documents in preparation. A major priority for 1984 must be maintaining the momentum to implement action decided upon for these and other efficiency work.

3 It is not the case that action is outstanding in any general sense on the Patent Office scrutiny. Difficulties have arisen in one major respect only, the computerisation project. This has proved to be much larger and more difficult than had been anticipated, and the need for reassessments of strategy and direction has caused delay. This has been the lesser evil, to make sure that the end product meets the needs of the Patent Office. The Secretary of State is, however, anxious that all possible speed be made, and additional resources have been allocated to this project. Officials here will be briefing the Efficiency Unit on the details.

4 I am sending copies of this letter to Sir Robin Ibbs and Sir Robert Armstrong.

Yours ever,

RUTH THOMPSON
Private Secretary

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26 MAR 1964





10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

8 March 1984

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 letter to Sir Robin Ibbs and Sir Robert Armstrong.

David Barclay

Callum McCarthy, Esq.,
Department of Trade and Industry.