



10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

*B/P 21-12-79
for Hansard.*

cc:-HO Soc. Sec.
 Lord Chancellor Duchy
 FCO DOT
 HM Treasury Energy
 Dept of Industry
 MOD Edu & Sci.
 Lord President Chief Sec.
 Dept of Employment
 14 December 1979 Paymaster
 Cab Office
 Lord Privy Seal
 MAFF Dept of
 Dept of Environment Trans
 Scottish Office
 Welsh Office
 NIO

The Prime Minister has seen the Lord President's letter of 7 December to the Secretary of State for Employment about dispersal to Bootle, and your Minister's response of 12 December.

Following the further study of HSE requirements, the Prime Minister agrees that a dispersal package of 1260 posts will now have to be accepted. She recognises that there may well be some criticism to face, and that in presentation of the decision, you may be able to draw some assistance from the possibility of short-term posts in Bootle to help deal with the census. The Prime Minister would be grateful if Mr. Channon would now arrange for the revised Bootle package to be announced before the House rises by means of a Written Answer.

I am sending copies of this letter to the Private Secretaries to Members of the Cabinet, the Minister of Transport and Martin Vile (Cabinet Office).

M. A. PATTISON

G.E.T. Green, Esq.,
 Civil Service Department.

B

PRIME MINISTER

You agreed to defer final decisions on dispersal to Bootle, pending a further study of the numbers to be devolved from the Health and Safety Executive.

Results of the study have been disappointing. HSE offer two options, one involving 420 posts in London, and the second involving 372 posts. These are much higher figures than John Methven had hoped to be able to offer as a viable alternative. We have the impression that the renewed study was not as closely supervised by Sir John as we would have wished.

Despite this, Mr. Prior and Mr. Channon are now agreed that the lower HSE London figure ought to be accepted. This would leave 860 HSE posts for dispersal. Messrs. Prior and Channon also accepted the review's proposals on the Nuclear Installations Inspectorate - dispersal to Bootle in 1985, a little later than the rest.

If you accept this package, Bootle will get 1,260 posts, compared with 1,600 originally agreed in Cabinet, and the apparent expectation in Bootle of about 2,000 posts. Messrs. Prior and Channon advise that the Government should be prepared to face out criticism in the House and on Merseyside, when a 1,260 figure is announced. The alternative, of trying yet again to find more jobs, really cannot be expected to work.

Public presentation could be eased by the possibility of about 1,000 additional short-term posts in Bootle to help deal with the census. (!)

The process of getting a workable decision on dispersal to Bootle has been depressing. The outcome is barely satisfactory. The chances of doing significantly better in a reasonable timescale are minimal.

/ Agree

Agree revised Bootle package of 1,260 posts, to be announced before the House rises through a Written Statement?

(Letters from Mr. Prior at Flag A and Mr. Channon at Flag B.)

Yes and

MAD

13 December 1979



MANAGEMENT IN CONFIDENCE

PRIME MINISTER

1. Jim Prior wrote to Christopher Soames on 7 December about the joint examination by the Health and Safety Commission, the CBI and the TUC of the number of Health and Safety Executive posts to be dispersed to Bootle. I agree with him that we should not challenge their conclusions. We favour their second solution which would provide 860 HSE posts for dispersal to Bootle from London.

2. You will want to decide whether the Nuclear Installations Inspectorate (involving about 100 posts) should be included in the Health and Safety Executive dispersal package. The report concludes that these posts should go to Bootle in 1985 - after the main dispersal. Jim Prior and I are content with this recommendation. It will have the advantage of bringing the London-based Nuclear Installations Inspectors alongside their colleagues who are already in Merseyside, and the other Inspectorates we will be moving there.

3. The revised HSE contribution of 860 posts means that the total dispersal to Bootle will now be only 1,260 posts. This compares with the 1,600 posts in the proposal agreed in Cabinet, and the expectation on Merseyside (related to the known capacity of St John's House, Bootle) that about 2,000 posts will be sent. When we announce a dispersal package of 1,260 posts there may well be criticism in the House and on Merseyside. Jim Prior and I think that we must be prepared to face this. The alternative is to delay a decision yet further by trying to get a higher figure, nearer our earlier proposal. There is no reason to believe that


MANAGEMENT IN CONFIDENCE

Colleagues would find it easier than they did earlier to contribute to an increased dispersal package.

4. If St John's House is ready in time the OPCS will be able to create about 1,000 additional short-term posts in Bootle (to be filled by local recruitment) to help deal with the census. This would be useful for the public presentation of our decision.

5. If you agree, I will arrange for the revised Bootle package, consisting of 860 posts from HSE, 300 from the Home Office and 100 from the Property Services Agency, to be announced before the House rises by means of a Written Answer to a Question.

6. I am sending copies of this minute to members of the Cabinet, the Minister of Transport and Sir Robert Armstrong.



PAUL CHANNON

12 December 1979