

JOHN WARD, GENERAL SECRETARY, FDA/ROBIN DAY, WORLD AT ONE
THURSDAY 12 NOVEMBER

Robin Day: I asked Mr Ward why he had described the decision to abolish the Civil Service Department as curious and irrational?

John Ward: There was a very thorough investigation about a year ago at the request of the Prime Minister as to whether the two departments of the Civil Service and the Treasury should be merged and the conclusions which were reached by that investigation and indeed by the select committee of the House of Commons on the Treasury and the Civil Service was that the two departments should not be merged and if the speculation in the press is right and they are to be merged it is a decision which goes right against the evidence of that investigation. To my knowledge there hasn't been any further investigation and this seems to me to be a very strange and irrational thing to do, ^{an} arbitrary thing to do, because it flies in the face of evidence and I fail to see the justification.

RD: But was not the abolition and breaking up of the Civil Service Department recommended in the investigation by Sir Derek Rayner, the Prime Minister's adviser on bureaucratic waste?

JW: Yes it was indeed. But also recommendations against that happening were made by a number of distinguished people from all walks of life and was the conclusion of an all-party select committee of the House of Commons that it should not be proceeded with.

RD: So the establishment wanted to keep the Civil Service Department and the Prime Minister's adviser from Marks and Spencer on waste said it should go.

JW: I think that is very unfair because people from all walks of life wanted to keep the Civil Service Department and the Prime Minister herself said in the House of Commons in January announcing her decision not to merge, to go ahead with the merger would mean that all the concentration would go on the reorganisation rather than dealing with problems and if the Prime Minister said this in January I think we are entitled to know what has happened to make her change her mind.

/RD: .

RD: But has not the very big event happened over the Civil Service pay strike which the Prime Minister is reported to have thought rather badly and weakly handled by the Civil Service Department.

JW: That indeed has happened and it is very disturbing if the Prime Minister has come to these conclusions because what the Civil Service Department was trying to do we understand and what Lord Soames was trying to do was to reach a settlement which was fair to all sides and if as a result of their efforts they are going to be abolished this is very discouraging and alarming implications for civil servants.

RD: How will all the civil servants, whether high civil servants or lower rank, be harmed by the abolition of the Civil Service Department without which we managed in this country for hundreds of years before 1968?

JW: I think the most immediate and alarming implications are on the pay front. We are in the middle of an independent enquiry into Civil Service pay and the evidence which we are putting towards that on behalf of the Civil Service unions is that Civil Service pay has got to be taken out of politics. It must not be used as a means for the Government fulfilling its macro-economic policies. Now taking on board the Treasury, if speculation is correct, of the Civil Service pay function, suggests that the Government is not prepared to look at Civil Service pay on its merit, in its own right, it is looking to use it as an instrument of economic policy, to set an example to the rest of the community, and it is bound to discriminate against civil servants.

RD: How can you possibly argue as you seem to be arguing there Mr Ward, public sector pay and Civil Service pay is part of that should be taken out of politics? Public sector pay is at the very heart of politics or economic political argument.

JW: I am arguing that if we are going to use arguments as the Government has done in the past the nation can only afford a certain amount of pay increase for civil servants then the only fair way of doing that is to say the same for the community as a whole. But to single out Civil Service pay for ^{special} treatment in this way I think is bringing Civil Service pay into politics in a completely unjustified

way.

RD: Do you think the abolition of the Civil Service Department will reduce the number of bureaucrats in Whitehall?

JW: Well I challenge the implication that there are too many bureaucrats in Whitehall. We are in favour of having a slim a Civil Service as can give a good service to the community. There already are a number of efficiency exercises taking place with which the unions are co-operating wholeheartedly. and if the Civil Service Department had been allowed to go on and do its job which the co-operation of the unions then I am sure that we would have had a Civil Service which is of the right size for the task which the Government and the community like to impose upon it.