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MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD  
WHITEHALL PLACE, LONDON S.W.1



*From the Minister*

12 November 1980

PRIME MINISTER

CIVIL SERVICE MANPOWER REDUCTIONS: DEPARTMENTAL TARGETS

On returning from Brussels I have today seen Christopher Soames' minute to you of 7 November, in which he proposes that the Departmental targets for staff in post for April 1984 should be announced this week (I gather that he is thinking of doing this by Written Answer tomorrow).

I think this is highly undesirable. The announcement of Departmental targets will lead to immediate and continuing pressures from the Trade Union Side and from all the outside interests concerned for details of precisely how we intend to achieve them. Most Ministers in charge of Departments cannot at this stage give such details, either because plans for the privatisation, transfer or abolition of functions are not yet sufficiently advanced or because measures to improve efficiency are still being worked out.

This will make our decision on numbers look wholly arbitrary, and maximise the uncertainty and concern which Christopher is anxious to avoid. I suggest that it would be better to leave it to Departmental Ministers to announce their own plans for staff reductions as and when they find it convenient to do so.

I am sending copies of this minute to Cabinet colleagues and Sir Robert Armstrong.

PETER WALKER

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