

Tasks that

face new man in job

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The successor to Mr Parkinson will be assuming control not only of the government's biggest department of state but also of that charged with carrying out much of the industrial privatization programme, one of the cornerstones of Conservative economic policy.

The foundations for selling chunks of state-owned industry were laid by Mr Patrick Jenkin, the last Secretary of State for Industry and Mr Parkinson spurred on the policy. The new incumbent will find considerable progress in the complicated and controversial process of privatizing British Telecom.

Regional policy is another area where the new minister will need to be fully and rapidly briefed. Mr Parkinson has already submitted proposals to a Cabinet committee for a radical shake-up of how to distribute regional financial aid, placing greater emphasis on job creation, and a White Paper is expected by the end of the year.

Mr Parkinson's replacement may also have to take an early decision on the proposed deal between the British Steel Corporation and United States Steel for exporting Scottish slab steel. The project could involve the BSC in a multi-million pound investment needing government approval.

Policy decisions will also be needed on aid being sought by British Aerospace (£400m) and Rolls-Royce (£100m) for new projects, and a speedy build-up of knowledge will be required about the parlous state of British Shipbuilding.

During Mr Parkinson's few months as Secretary of State for Trade and Industry his most significant and controversial achievement was settling the five year legal battle between the Stock Exchange and the Office of Fair Trading.