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Prime Minister ②

P. S. J. J. J.

MEA 18/2



FROM: CHIEF SECRETARY

DATE: 17 February 1986

PRIME MINISTER

CIVIL SERVICE MANPOWER

You may like to know that at 1 January the number of civil servants in post was 596,506. This represents an increase of 742 over the total at 1 October 1985; but is below the published target of 600,475 for 1 April. We will, as usual, be reporting the 1 January figures to Parliament next week by means of a Written Answer.

2 We can expect another staff in post increase by 1 April (in part because of the 2,300 additional posts approved recently for DHSS), but it is unlikely that the target for that date will be exceeded, although we may come close to it.

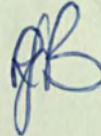
3 The 1986 Public Expenditure White Paper published a manpower target of 600,400 for 1 April 1987. This allows for some additions to departmental profiles agreed during the 1985 Survey. These additions mean, however, that the manpower contingency margin for that date has been substantially reduced and there are already claims of an urgent nature against it. Given the importance we all attach to holding on to the success already achieved in reducing the size of the Civil Service we shall need to exercise continuing restraint in 1986 and 1987 if we are to hold to our published manpower targets for those years. We must avoid all but the most urgent and compelling increases in numbers and seek offsetting savings wherever possible, even within departmental allocations, by

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improvements in efficiency and elimination of unnecessary work. I know I can count on the continuing co-operation of colleagues to achieve this. I will, of course, report on this in the Summer as the 1986 Survey progresses.

4 I am copying this to all Cabinet colleagues, the Minister of State Privy Council Office and to Sir Robert Armstrong.



for JOHN MacGREGOR

[Approved by the Chief Secretary]

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