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GOVERNMENT

MACHINERY

July 1979

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PREM 19/246							



OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION
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From the Minister

8 February 1980

Dear Jim,

In your letter of 31 January following the Prime Minister's talk with Mr Marten on our scientific work, you asked for further information on the possible transfer of responsibility for the Centre for Overseas Pest Research to the University Grants Committee or to one of the Research Councils at a net saving to the aid programme.

Mr Marten considers that the work of COPR is an important component of our aid programme and that wherever it is done it will have to be paid for out of public funds. A brief note about some of the more important aspects of its work is attached.

The work of COPR involves applying British skills and techniques to overseas circumstances. By contrast the five Research Councils are funded by the DES and their Royal Charters require them to spend this money on fundamental research relevant to Britain's needs.

The application of funds administered by the University Grants Committee ultimately depends upon the Universities' own decisions about the lines of research they wish to pursue. Some of the work they choose to do is indeed close to the scientific fields in which COPR operates but there are safeguards against duplication of effort. The Universities are represented on the research committees which provide professional guidance to the Centre and there is similar representation in the opposite direction from COPR.

There have been instances, and will no doubt be others, where work originating in COPR has developed in such a way as to make it appropriate to transfer the effort, at aid programme expense, to a Research Council or other institution. ODA professional advisers keep a keen eye open for possibilities of this sort, but the general principle concerning overseas oriented work is unaffected.

I am sending copies of this letter to George Walden (Foreign and Commonwealth Office) and Peter Shaw (Department of Education and Science).

Yours,
Susan Unsworth

(Miss S E Unsworth)
Private Secretary

T Lankester Esq
10 Downing Street

CENTRE FOR OVERSEAS PEST RESEARCH : SOME EXAMPLES OF THE WORK

COPR provides research, training, advice, information and assistance on the use of modern control compounds and techniques, to increase crop yields, improve animal and human health, reduce costs of control programmes and diminish environmental contamination. This improves food supplies world wide.

1. Locusts

Methods initiated by COPR have resulted in Migratory Locust and Red Locust in Africa ceasing to be major problems. The threatened plague of Desert Locust in 1978 was checked by campaigns coordinated by COPR. FAO is now assuming this role, and we are moving out of it.

2. Armyworm

The threat of the African armyworm to crops and pasture became critical in the 1960s. COPR responded to appeals for help by creating a forecasting system for outbreaks so that the armyworm moths can be dealt with on arrival.

3. Tsetse and trypanosomiasis (sleeping sickness) control

COPR's multidisciplinary approach enables it to cover all aspects of tsetse research and control and its services are much in demand. In Somalia for example the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development agreed to finance a five year \$5 million survey and research scheme provided that we, through COPR, provided the technical and supervisory backup.

4. Cooperation with British industry

COPR is a world authority on ultra low volume spraying. It assists in the development of special chemicals for major pest problems. Through its wide international contacts COPR has introduced many firms to new markets.

5. Staff of COPR

There are at present approximately 100 scientists including biologists, chemists and physicists, and about 50 other staff. (Some projects are undertaken for multilateral institutions on repayment terms). Net cost this year about £1½ million.



28 FEB 1960



Subject

6/f 7-2-80



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FILE

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

31 January, 1980.

When your Minister called on the Prime Minister this afternoon they had a brief discussion about the Centre for Overseas Pest Research. Mr. Marten explained that the Centre had done excellent work on the problems of locusts, which had not been very costly; but in any case, this work was now being handed over to the Food and Agricultural Organisation of the United Nations. Apart from one or two staff who were assisting with the handover, the direct expenditure by HMG on locust work would shortly cease.

As for the rest of COPR work, annual expenditure on this was currently running at £1.8 million. The Centre was doing very good work on pest control which was of great benefit to a number of countries. Expenditure on it represented an effective use of aid money.

The Prime Minister commented that it might be preferable to bring the Centre within the responsibility of the University Grants Committee or one of the Research Councils. In this way, it might be possible to reduce the aid programme, and it was questionable whether the work of the Centre would be any less effective.

The Prime Minister would be grateful for a note on whether this would be a possibility.

The Prime Minister also raised the question of the usefulness of aid programme expenditure on the Directorate of Overseas Surveys. She understood that this came to nearly £4 million per year. Mr. Marten replied that this too was cost-effective and a beneficial use of aid money.

I am sending copies of this letter to George Walden (Foreign and Commonwealth Office) and Peter Shaw (Department of Education and Science).

T. P. LANKESTER

Miss Susan Unsworth,
Office of the Minister of State for Overseas Development.

PRIME MINISTER

ms

Locusts and other beasties

Can I offer a serious comment about the work of the scientific units funded under the aid programme, before we all start to collapse in mirth every time the word locusts is mentioned?

You have taken an interest in the Directorate of Overseas Surveys and the Centre for Overseas Pest Research (which incorporates the locust work). The cost of running these units is a relatively small part of the aid programme - DOS just under £4 million last financial year, COPR about £1.8 million. They work in fields where British scientists developed unique knowledge, and through which Britain gained an international reputation for helping developing countries overcome technical problems and develop a technical capacity for themselves.

There may well be a case for re-assessing the range of activities of some of these bodies, for checking the genuine future need for their work, and for checking that, individually, they are run as tight ships. But if they are made a particular target of attack, or subjected to random cuts, the result could be to destroy sources of unique expertise. The savings you can make from the programmes are small. If economic necessity makes the aid programme a major target for public expenditure cutbacks, you might look at the much greater sums spent to buy (on grant terms) goods produced by uneconomic UK industries and foisted on developing countries in an attempt to keep those industries operating when a planned run-down would be logical. Obviously, there are cases where such sales can tide over an industry through a bad period, but we are far from having sorted out our priorities in that field.

Some of the exchanges in yesterday's Foreign Affairs Debate touched upon helping the Third World in ways which showed continuity of purpose. Helping countries to develop their maps, over a period of years; providing the scientific basis to control risks of a resurgence of the locust threat over about 40 countries; specialised research into storage techniques in the Third World; and other specialised scientific work like these examples, all provide a continuous link with high quality British expertise for a number of developing countries. The money involved is not a high price to pay for the high quality reputation it can help us to maintain in the countries concerned.

Of course we need to re-assess from time to time the way in which we provide these services, and the reasons for doing so. The reason that I mentioned the locust work to you was because it illustrated the self-preservation instinct often to be found in the public sector. The work was originally done by

/a body

a body called the Anti-Locust Research Centre. This body really did get a grip on a major international problem which was very difficult to control because locust plagues are not regular, although devastating when they come. British work laid the foundations for international monitoring and an international system of control to be called into operation when there were signs of new locust problems. But the Anti-Locust Research Centre then metamorphosed into the Centre for Overseas Pest Research and spread its net wider to deal with other pest control problems. I know that some of that additional work is very highly regarded. In Pakistan, for instance, there have been contacts over a period of three years with the various cotton research institutes, to develop a major project on cotton pest control. The decline of the cotton crop has been about the single most negative factor in Pakistan agriculture over the last dozen years. If British help with research reversed this, the several million pounds which might be spent over 5-8 years would do far more for our reputation than the three unwanted ships we have just agreed to subsidise at something nearer £20 million. Even so, it is fair to ask whether the transition from Anti-Locust Research Centre to Centre for Overseas Pest Research was more about preserving the jobs of a group of scientists than about helping developing countries.

But in questioning work like this, I hope you can start your enquiries without implying that no-one can possibly justify the work that is being done. If you and one or two senior colleagues do dismiss every new example in that fashion, you can very easily destroy the morale of the specialists who do this work. They are not particularly well paid by British standards, and can very easily get employed by the United Nations or the World Bank at exaggerated salaries. As you are only too well aware, Britain is not producing much that the rest of the world wants to buy. In some of these specialised areas we are still providing a service that the rest of the world wants. We choose to give it to many countries, but it is also bought by international agencies, and may increasingly be bought by the oil producers and others. It would help if your enquiries could come across as open-minded even if you are sceptical.

MAO

29 January 1980

PRIME MINISTER

Can I clarify the basis on which you would like the

Directorate of Overseas Surveys critically examined for a reduction? On the positive side, adequate mapping is of great assistance for economic development. Britain has special expertise and experience, and this is therefore a service which many developing countries welcome as part of our aid to them. If it was not available from this Government body, it is doubtful whether much would be picked up by UK private sector companies: more would get financed by other countries who are developing some capacity in this field (e.g. Canada).

On the negative side, it employs a lot of people with specialised skills.

Do you feel that this is not the type of activity which we should be supporting within the public sector as a facility for assisting other countries; or is your criticism simply of the scale of manpower employed in maintaining this capacity?

10 August 1979

*Discussed further
with PM. Warned
Mr Martin's office that PM would return
to the charge if manpower cuts offerings
seemed inadequate. 14/8/79*

*1. Govt.
Mach.*

SPK G. Green

*U- is far better that
those countries develop their
own capacity to map and
that when they do so they employ
all the latest techniques (Laser Scan
etc) which seem infinitely better
(downside is that our further
tail to see why so much of our aid should be
on capital for that purpose not)*

PRIME MINISTER

When you discussed dispersal with Messrs. Younger and Channon several weeks ago, you queried the inclusion of the Directorate of Overseas Surveys in the dispersal programme. You felt this sounded like a candidate for winding up.

I asked the Foreign and Commonwealth Office to provide a note about the DOS work, and the demand for it. The attached response claims that there is still a substantial demand from developing countries for the specialist service which DOS can provide. It is one of a group of specialist institutions which have existed for some time, and now work under the auspices of ODA. They are not particularly expensive in themselves, and their costs are met under the aid votes, but they do employ significant numbers of civil servants - many in specialist grades. (The other bodies in question include the Tropical Products Institute, the Centre for Overseas Pest Research and the Land Resources Division.) The work done in these various units has a high reputation internationally, and is a relatively inexpensive and effective part of our aid effort, providing technical help rather than high cost capital goods. The value of the institutions is probably not in doubt, unless you want them examined purely as part of the exercise of reviewing staff numbers in the civil service.

Do you want to take this any further as an individual subject, or leave it to be considered in the context of the Lord President's "further cuts" exercise?

MAD

*It looks like a
candidate for very
severe diminution.*

*Perhaps you would let the
Lord President know - his
it can be relevant for the
next round.*

3 August 1979

MANAGEMENT IN CONFIDENCE



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

2 August 1979

Dear Mike,

Directorate of Overseas Surveys

Thank you for your letter of 19 July.

/ I attach a note for the Prime Minister about the functions of the Directorate of Overseas Surveys and the likely future demand for its services. A copy has been sent to Geoffrey Green in Mr Channon's office.

Yours *awl*

P Lever
Private Secretary

M Pattison Esq
10 Downing Street

MANAGEMENT IN CONFIDENCE

P. Lewis's letter of 2/11/11

DIRECTORATE OF OVERSEAS SURVEYS

1. The Directorate is one of five Special and Scientific Units which are part of the Overseas Development Administration. Its staff of some 360 are Home Civil Servants. Its activities are in support of the aid programme and are financed from the Overseas Aid Vote at an annual cost of about £3.6 million. On occasions the private sector turns to the Directorate for information and advice which is supplied on a repayment basis.

free?
why?
2. The Directorate continues to do invaluable work by mapping the developing countries, for maps are indispensable in planning economic development. Since it was set up in 1946 it has mapped, or re-mapped, well over 2 million square miles of territory. While most of its work relates to former British colonies, it is now active in countries such as the Sudan, Liberia and the Yemen Arab Republic and this widening of its area of operations is likely to continue. As a matter of policy the Directorate seeks to devolve as much work as possible to the Survey Departments of overseas Governments and thus to build up local map-making capacities, rather than do the whole task itself.

Functions

3. The stages by which the Directorate makes its maps are:-

- (i) Air photography, carried out by commercial firms working under contract with the Directorate;
- (ii) Ground Survey, the labour of which is nowadays greatly shortened by the use of modern electronic equipment;
- (iii) Field completion, ie the addition of local detail (names etc) to the information in the air photographs, always carried out by the Survey Departments of Overseas Governments;
- (iv) Map drawing, undertaken at the Directorate with much elaborate equipment and wherever possible shared with overseas Governments;
- (v) Reproduction, undertaken by the Ordnance Survey at Southampton and paid for by the Ministry of Defence.

/In addition



In addition to these map-making functions, the Directorate provides advisory services and information on all aspects of topographical surveying and mapping overseas, to both the public and private sectors. It also offers valuable training facilities at Tolworth for staff from overseas, and advises the Overseas Development Administration and the British Council on training generally in its field.

Likely demand for future services

4. The Directorate has at present in its programme firm and negotiable commitments extending into 1988 and the demand for its services shows no sign of decreasing in the medium-term future. For the longer term, UN statistics show that requirements for mapping in the under-developed countries will extend to at least the end of this century and the indications are that the Directorate's services which have proved so valuable in the past will continue to be needed for a similar period of time.

Overseas Development Administration

31 July 1979

15-2 AUG 1979



bf 3/8 *File*

19 July 1979

In the course of a discussion yesterday on dispersal, the Prime Minister enquired about the functions of the Directorate of Overseas Surveys, and the likely future demand for its services.

I would be grateful if you could arrange for a note to be prepared on this. It would be helpful if this could reach me by 3 August.

I am sending a copy of this letter to Geoffrey Green (Mr. Channon's Office, Civil Service Department).

M A PATTISON

ce.

Paul Lever, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

CONFIDENTIAL

Original
filed Civil Service-Dispersal
May 79

Extract from a

NOTE OF DISCUSSIONS ON DISPERSAL POLICY IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS ON
WEDNESDAY 18 JULY

Present: Prime Minister
Secretary of State for Scotland
Minister of State, Civil Service Department
Mr. Ian Gow
Mr. Mike Pattison

The Secretary of State for Scotland and the Minister of State at the Civil Service Department met the Prime Minister in preparation for a discussion with the Scottish Group of Conservative backbench MPs.

Mr. Younger pointed out that the brief prepared by the CSD did not give sufficient weight to the longer term benefits offered by dispersal, but placed unreasonable emphasis on the immediate costs. The Prime Minister asked what posts would remain for dispersal to Scotland if the Ministry of Defence jobs coming from provincial centres in England were excluded. Mr. Channon said that there would be a number of defence jobs, and also 650 ODA jobs, with 350 jobs coming later with the Directorate of Overseas Surveys. The Prime Minister asked about the work of this organisation. Mr. Channon said that its workload was undoubtedly declining, and there was fierce resistance to the proposed move because of the loss of specialised staff. The Prime Minister asked whether it should not be abolished rather than dispersed.

The Prime Minister asked when a statement was scheduled on dispersal. Mr. Channon said that this was tentatively set for Tuesday. Mr. Younger said that this was quite unreasonable, as E Committee was only scheduled to reach a decision on Tuesday and the Government could not be committed to a statement when the outcome of the discussion was difficult to predict. Mr. Channon said there was strong pressure for a decision on Tuesday. All the regional centres which expected to benefit from dispersal were demanding to be put out of their misery one way or another. Mr. Younger insisted that Tuesday was unreasonably early for a statement.

/The Prime Minister

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