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10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

9 March, 1984

SCRUTINIES AND VALUE FOR MONEY

The Prime Minister has recently been looking at the state of play on improving value for money in government through scrutinies and closely related work. She continues to be impressed by what can be achieved in this way and hopes that Ministers will continue to target scrutinies on good areas and that Permanent Secretaries will use their best people as examining officers.

The Prime Minister feels that, in addition, we need to maintain a strong presumption that scrutinies lead to prompt decisions and action. She is concerned that, unless momentum is maintained, the system will clog up and prevent the right sense of urgency being achieved.

On the basis of the targets for improving value for money in 1984/85 Mrs. Thatcher is impressed by the action your Secretary of State is taking to improve performance. She has asked me to say that she is wholly behind your Secretary of State in all this and looks forward to seeing implementation of the results. As you know, the Prime Minister still awaits the report on efficiency in the prison service for which Tim Flesher asked in his letter of 17 March 1983. Mrs. Thatcher hopes that this report will now be forthcoming very soon, since she is aware that the review of prisons opened up new possibilities of management action in a difficult area. She trusts that urgent action be possible to take advantage of this work.

I am copying this letter to Sir Robin Ibbs and Sir Robert Armstrong.

H.H. Taylor, Esq.,  
Home Office

(David Barclay)

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