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Submission to the "30 years review"

From Professor Donald A. Preece
Queen Mary, University of London.
D.A.Preece@qmul.ac.uk

RELEASE OF "DRAFT" DOCUMENTS

I believe that a relevant consideration, which I have not seen mentioned so far, concerns the release of documents that are in some sense "Drafts". The problem arises because enquirers, whether or not they are trouble-makers, now seem ready to slip into the belief that any change to a draft is a malign intervention resulting from "pressure" brought to bear on the author(s).

In fact, drafts are of different types, e.g.

1. A **very** preliminary draft may be written by someone (junior or senior) who knows little of the subject-matter, but who wants "to get something on paper" so as to "start the ball rolling". This is an "Aunt Sally" document. It will be much revised - perhaps rewritten from scratch.
2. A draft may encapsulate the aspirations of one party to the matter, before other parties have been consulted. The author may or may not be willing to take on board the views of other interested parties. In particular, the author may be very willing to jettison sections of the draft if criticisms from other parties shows these sections to be defective, whether in specifics or in general emphasis. Still an "Aunt Sally" document.
3. A draft may incorporate the views of all interested parties, but may have to be altered to make its proposals practicable. (It may not have been costed.)

All this suggests that drafts, whenever they are to be released, should be clearly labelled to indicate their status. As I do not know what labellings are used in the Public Service, nor whether early drafts go into the files or the shredder, I cannot know the implications for the timing of releases, but I am persuaded that there are indeed implications.

I am content for these comments to be seen by anybody who may be interested in them, and I do not seek anonymity.

D. A. Preece