Inside the Home Office

The full text of Stephen Moxon's affidavit to the Sunday Times is below. It is an authentic and considered account which, for the first time, reveals the true state of affairs in the Immigration and Nationality Department of the Home Office. The government have accepted that his account is broadly correct.

The following is the statement, copyright of Steve Moxon, February 2004, submitted to The Sunday Times as part of the original disclosure that led to the series of stories concerning Home Office immigration procedures in The Sunday Times. Publication of the article is therefore within the Public Interest Disclosure Act on condition that no fee or any fee in kind (including to a charity) is paid to or on behalf of the author. This appears on the Migrationwatch website on that basis.

'Managed Migration' is the unintentionally comically named department for which I worked, within the Home Office's Immigration & Nationality Directorate. The name could be straight out of 1984, being a seeming classic oxymoron of government George Orwell could have dreamed up. Overwhelming levels of migration and the inadequate management thrown at it, clearly required a name to try to contradict the reality. My experience of working for six months as a frontline caseworker (literally: I was in an ICS - an 'initial consideration' team) was a long and deepening experience of a progressive institutional failure to apply the immigration rules. Even apart from the substantial amount of time the rule book was effectively torn up completely, we were always at two removes from the legislation, with the guidance notes and then what was euphemistically called 'pragmatism' that management directly, or indirectly through senior caseworkers, ensured everyone applied in practice. The law I was supposedly working to implement had been lost sight of.

The overriding principle, often mentioned as justification for a seemingly unfathomable reason for granting an unworthy application, was that if it arrives on your desk then you should grant it if at all possible, because if you don't then he/she/they will simply disappear and stay in the country illegally anyway. At least this way, it was reasoned, we could keep some sort of tabs on people. With so few resources allocated by the Immigration Service to removals work it was recognised that there was slim prospect of anyone who was refused actually being found and deported - nil chance in the

case of a family that had been here for any length of time. The whole exercise provided a semblance of administrative control over temporary and permanent migrants, but in effect we were an arm of the current Government supplying spurious information to the Office of National Statistics, allocating to ourselves a proportion of incomers to reduce the massive numbers of those gaining illegal entry or (much more commonly) overstaying; the extent of which David Blunkett admits he has not the slightest idea. This is because embarkation controls were removed in the mid-1990s, with the result that nobody has any notion of how many of those admitted to the country actually subsequently leave.

Exacerbating matters further, from last August most types of application were charged for, so stress was placed on our being a customer service organisation with tight deadlines for decision making. "We are in the business of granting people" was an expression often heard according to one of my colleagues. Even so, there were always backlogs and sudden arrivals of huge volumes of cases that had been held up or put somewhere and forgotten down in the main Casework Unit at Croydon (I worked at the one in Sheffield). Any decision which looked remotely like attracting an appeal with any chance of success was turned around to a grant (we were closely supervised in a mentoring stage following 'training', then allowed free rein but closely checked, and later a proportion of work was sampled). How many people this charging (at £155 a time) put off even bothering to make us aware of their continued presence in the country nobody knows, but it placed still further emphasis on routinely granting applications instead of examining them. On the face of it we were making some money for the Treasury -- at least paying our own way -- but of course the long-term costs of failing to apply immigration rules properly render this immediate gain in comparison insignificant.

Fostering a lack of proper consideration was at the core of management strategy, with targets set for the number of daily decisions a caseworker should make. If a case was too complicated to easily decide either to grant or to refuse, then a caseworker had an option to 'extend' (as was the term) to a team of more experienced caseworkers; but out of 15 cases we were supposed to handle daily, only three should remain without an outcome in this way. Crucially, you earned no credit whatsoever for an extension, no matter how well considered; only for a grant (or, much more rarely, a refusal) did you earn a 'stat', as management referred to them; yet 'extensions' often entailed more work. "Why give the 'stat' to the guy in CLS?", it was often said (the CLS being the corresponding team of more experienced caseworkers that dealt with our ICS team's extensions). The manager who was the chief numbers man attended our team meeting and I asked him whether this proportion had been arrived at by research. He admitted it was simply a target handed down from senior management. In other words, management had a budget for staff and made estimates of likely caseload and divided the one by the other to come up with the rate of decision making required.

It was realised that these targets were unrealistic, especially for new caseworkers (who would take between three and six months to be regarded as

experienced), and it was a relaxed civil service work environment with a refreshing eschewal of clock watching. Even so, it was made clear that meeting 'stats' was the only route to advancement away from the production line style of work of a first rung caseworker on the grand salary of £12,300, if indeed you could get off probation. The temptation to which you were fully expected to succumb was to cut corners. Unstated as of course this was, it was a difficult task to assimilate the deluge of e-mail updates of procedure and guidance into the already massive body of knowledge you were expected to have at your fingertips and apply them to make accurate decisions. Caseworkers who had made good notes detailing what evidence had been submitted and why they made the decision they had, progressively cut down the information they recorded. Our counterparts at Croyden frequently made virtually no notes at all, and so spared us any useful information about a previous application that could help in deciding the current one. In this way, ill-considered granting was compounded, because in the absence of a warning note about missing evidence or breach of conditions, a previous grant was often taken to be reason itself to grant an extension of leave to remain if there was doubt about the current application.

On top of the routine failure to implement immigration rules, whenever there was a significant backlog then all cases were assessed under what was termed 'BRACE conditions'. This was the jargon for a rubber stamping exercise of varying severity. Latterly we were under 'ultra ultra BRACE', which literally meant that you opened the plastic pouch in which the application was held and without any consideration whatsoever the case must be granted. (There are conflicting views of what the acronym 'BRACE' stands for: a contraction of a manager named Brandon, the man who originally devised the scheme, and 'clearance exercise'; or - and this is its stated meaning currently - 'Backlog Reduction Accelerated Clearance Exercise'. I suspect the latter was a forced re-naming after Bill Brandon left.)

I put it to Home Office minister Beverley Hughes that our function was a smokescreen for the fact that immigration, both legal and illegal, was out of control. I likened us to those civil servants who compile figures showing NHS waiting lists have shortened (when everyone knows the real problems lay elsewhere). The minister paid us a visit on December 4, but only a handful of picked individuals were invited to a supposed 'open forum' to ask questions. Not being amongst them, I put mine in the form of an approved e-mail that I sent to those few who could have asked on my behalf, but a manager intervened, despite the fact that management had already agreed that my questions could be tabled. They were then blocked by Human Resources until January 12, and I am still waiting for any kind of ministerial response, even an acknowledgement, at what is now three months since I first tabled my questions.

All of the several dozen different 'work streams' (types of applications) were under BRACE when I started working on 'live' cases after two weeks of highly inept lecturing - untrained experienced caseworkers simply reading from the guidance notes -- that was all the training we received. One area of work in particular never escaped one form or other of BRACE throughout my entire six months. These were the applications from citizens of the 10

countries destined to accede to the European Union. Apart from overtime work every weekend for caseworkers from all teams, there was a full-time team dedicated to dealing with the European Community Association Agreement (ECAA) under which any citizen of the 10 countries (including Bulgaria and Romania, despite the fact that these countries do not become part of the EC until 2008) could apply to set up in self-employment and then renew after a year and settle after four years. At the time I left, these applications were under 'ultra ultra BRACE'.

Applicants could apply for 'entry clearance' in their home countries, or they could simply arrive in the UK as a visitor (or seasonal worker, au pair, etc) and then apply to 'switch'; either way without having to fill in any kind of form and for no charge. This would be regardless of any adverse immigration history: I had to grant a case of a man who had been deported and simply came back within days to claim under the ECAA. The original guidelines based on immigration rules were torn up so that from the first day of last August the only requirement was a business plan. This could be a single sheet containing no financial data of any kind, usually prepared by one of a plethora of representatives, many of whom simply produced identical plans for all their clients: for a builder in the case of almost all males and a cleaner in the case of almost all females. No evidence whatsoever of any ability, experience, training or qualifications was required - and not even the most rudimentary command of English, oral or written -- and an applicant was free to arrive in the UK entirely penniless, without any necessary equipment for his/her supposed business, and without any address, private or business. This would secure a grant of twelve months UK residence, after which he/she could apply for a further three years. Supposedly at this point proper checks would be made, but again, from August last, requirements were similarly relaxed. All that was needed were proof of some payment of National Insurance contributions (just a few pounds would do), a photocopy of the most recent tax return (which may or may not actually have been submitted), some accounts (their own would do, uncertified by an accountant) and "some bank statements" (the actual vague instruction we were given). Astonishingly, if none of these were submitted we were still required to grant a further year. The "normal requirements" were supposed to include evidence of payment of tax, bank statements over the past 12 months, declarations that all work had been and would continue to be self-employed and that there had been and would not be recourse to public funds. This last of all things was specifically withdrawn in the "current flexibility requirements".

There was the comedy of warnings to caseworkers regarding certain representatives. Some were regarded as too unscrupilous to deal with, so we had to hand cases to ECAA team senior staff. It was hard to spot the difference between the activity of these singled out representatives and most of the rest. In any case, the position of how to treat these changed and reversed and then changed again: one week regarding a particular rep we must not deal with them, the next they were about to be registered and were deemed OK, and later we were told to look closely at the applications before granting. But to look for what? You could play a little game to keep yourself awake: guess the name of the rep from simply viewing the business

plan. Because reps usually produced identical business plans for all their clients this became quite easy and the game very quickly became too easy to play. It was clear that few of the business plans submitted had had anything to do with the individual on behalf of whom they were being submitted, if indeed the applicant could even subsequently read the application or understand the business culture of which the process was supposed to be a part.

Initially it was mentioned that we should be aware of 'disguised employment'; that is, when someone was purporting to be self-employed but actually was an ordinary PAYE employee. But whenever I queried with senior staff a pattern of similar or identical sized BACS or BGC (or cash) weekly payments into bank accounts, I was told simply that this was not inconsistent with someone self-employed with a regular contract. When an ECAA team caseworker came to our ICS team meeting, she admitted that it was: "difficult to prove disguised employment, especially at present when the Inland Revenue seem to accept most of our applicants as self-employed". She appeared to be admitting that ECAA team staff regarded many (if not most) applicants as bogus, but were at a loss to know what to do in the face of lack of interest by the tax authorities.

How little an ECAA worker had to show he/she earned to still be accepted as not falling foul of immigration rules was startling. Several times (before I gave up) I took cases to senior staff of applicants who by their own admission earned paltry sums yet were living (sometimes with dependents) in London or the South-East where a rent alone was likely to swallow almost all income; yet I was repeatedly told that we should be very reluctant to refuse on the grounds of insufficient funds: "It's none of our business". If people were happy to be dirt poor then it was not for us to pass judgement. Never once to my knowledge was a benefits check made on an applicant, regardless of it being obvious that on the levels of income declared, survival was possible only by claiming public funds; and that indeed they would be eligible for benefits on low income grounds and could successfully apply if they fraudulently did not disclose that although they had an NI number, that did not entitle them to claim benefits. The possibility of approaching the Inland Revenue to check if there was a record of the person working and paying PAYE was never even broached. Even on occasion when I drew attention to clear fraud I got the same "it's none of our business" answer; such as when someone was declaring a low income offset by a reduced cost of maintenance by flat sharing, though at the same time claiming a single person occupancy discount on Council Tax..

If this was not bad enough, endless weekend overtime did not prevent an ever mounting backlog of ECAA cases, until we started receiving e-mails from management warning that a backlog of 11,000 'switch' and 'leave to remain' (those applicants who had already spent a year here under the scheme) cases would shortly mean all teams stopping work on all other types of casework and taking part in a highly accelerated ECAA clearance exercise. This took place and was accomplished in a week, and included Bulgarian and Romanian nationals. We were told that: "in the interests of fairness and consistency the exercise will extend to the applications made by nationals of the two

countries that do not accede (Bulgaria and Romania)". Apart from those who applied well after their leave-to-remain had expired, "all other applications are to be granted 12 months/ 3 years leave to remain with no further consideration into the merits of the ECAA application, nor must any further requests be made for documentation". In other words, we were to spend day after day in the archetypal administrative duty of literally glancing at a case and accepting it. Apart from recording details on computer this was literally rubber stamping, in that the only process performed was the despatch department stamping the passport.

The justification for such an easy way out of the mess of an unexpected deluge of applications, we were told, was that "the refusal rate across all categories of application is 2.1%. This low rate and the nationalities involved point to a low risk of applicant in terms of immigration and security". What this amounts to is the department compounding its own incompetence; using the results of its own amazing lack of scrutiny to in turn justify no scrutiny at all.

This still left an accelerating build-up of cases that will require other 'ultra ultra' clearance exercises in the near future, but on top of that are all the entry clearance cases, which we were told "will not come under the remit of this exercise as a high proportion of the backlog of these applications involve applicants not achieving freedom of movement on 1 May." In other words, Bulgarian and Romanian nationals, who do not get free movement until 2008. The size of this backlog can be judged by the comments of a senior manager who came to one of our team meetings in January and told us that in just one week there had been 2,000 entry clearance applications from Bulgaria alone. For this reason from February four entire teams in addition to the dedicated ECAA team were used just to process these entry clearance cases.

The numbers we were dealing with completely blow apart the Government's repeatedly stated upper estimate of the total expected influx of workers from all of the acceding nations after May 1, of between 5,000 and 13,000 (which became 13,000, before David Blunkett dropped making any estimate). Apart from the fact that these figures show this to be a wild under-estimate, the suspicion must be that the whole ECAA exercise is a deliberate ploy by the Government to siphon off as many individuals as possible to be here before May 1, ostensibly as bona fide business persons, so that they do not appear in the figures for those post May 1. Of this the Government has remained silent.

There was a written response by Beverley Hughes to a Parliamentary question by Simon Hughes MP, that as of July 2, 2003, the Sheffield Casework Unit had already handled 20,128 ECAA applications, of which 17,027 had been decided. On the figure we were provided of a refusal rate of just 2.1 %, then the Government's supposed overall figure of 13,000 after 1/5/04 had been well exceeded by the previous July, and may well have been exceeded by the first of May 2003 -- an entire year before day one of accession. Since last July the rate of ECAA decision making has rocketed. Not only has BRACE been in continuous operation since August 1, but staffing levels in the Sheffield

Casework Unit of Managed Migration have climbed steeply, with large intakes for initial training in July, August and September. Then there were (and continue) the massive clearance exercises. The number of people from EU accession states already here officially must run into many tens of thousands, and that does not count those who have simply arrived as visitors and overstayed without declaring themselves. Even discounting these, the Government's upper estimate may be out by a factor approaching an order of magnitude even before the starting pistol, as it were, has been fired.

What should have caused alarm and a reaction of properly applying immigration rules, followed by tightened legislation; instead propelled the Government into exactly the reverse. Rather than managing migration the Government has simply tried to hide the actual figures, and in doing so has actually compounded the mess. The state of the processing of ECCA applications was well summed up by a senior caseworker on the ECAA team when I asked her incredulously if what we were being asked to do was correct. "Look, we all know it's pants; so don't ask me about it because I'll just get annoyed".

Similar problems bedevil other workstreams, especially by far the two largest types of applications: students and marriage. Out of several dozen kinds of applications, students make up over half, and those intending to settle as married partners of someone already settled make up a very large portion of the remainder. Yet these are the case types which are dealt with by the most cavalier adherence to immigration legislation, despite clear knowledge by the Home Office that very widespread abuse is taking place.

Perhaps the easiest way to enter the UK as an economic migrant from outside the EC is to fraudulently claim to be a student. As a student it is stamped in your passport that you are allowed to work -- part-time, supposedly -- and minimal checks are made that you are bona fide. Most applicants are not here to do full-time courses at universities, but are ostensibly on minimal contact 15-hours per week courses; English especially. An applicant is supposed to show proof of funds or sponsorship, and any kind of letter from anyone appears to suffice, especially if there is the offer of accommodation. Untranslated Spanish or Chinese is fine, as is a brief handwritten note from (literally) anyone. That the return address for the passport is usually given as a different address from the one stated as where resident, is seen as normal and is never questioned. An enrolment letter for the course is required, but proof of payment of fees is not; so anyone can apply and be accepted and then simply fail to turn up and not be out of pocket. In fact, a letter merely offering a place will do (as we were only recently reminded).

Many economic migrants just register at one of the large number of bogus colleges set up to hoodwink the Immigration Service, and Managed Migration are fully aware of this problem. An e-mail between senior caseworkers was circulated, complaining: "unfortunately, the common factor I have found in all of my investigations on the L** (a confidential list of all known educational establishments) and bogus colleges is that although Ministers recognise that student abuse is on the increase, there is little or no

commitment from anyone to investigating potentially bogus colleges/ students unless a particular case or college has hit the headlines -- IS visits are very very rare, and the message coming from IS at quite a high level is that this kind of thing is currently low on their list of priorities. The only thing I can suggest is that any suspicions you have should be sent to ICC* who currently have responsibility for L** but have little time to devote to it so the chances are that little or nothing will be done with the information . there are no systems in place to adequately provide meaningful stats and there is little commitment from IS".

Yet it was recognised that not only was there a problem but that it was a problem requiring investigative skills. My own practice was to check to see if the college had a website if I felt it was dubious. But a circulated e-mail pointed out that: ". the 'scams' are very complex and the fact that a college has a website is not an indication that it's bona fide". My own simple checking that a website exists and a simple phone call to check that the contact number was in operation were met with a formal reprimand (by written notice and in a special meeting) from my team management for: "making extensive enquiries on the internet and by telephone into the legitimacy of colleges and educational establishments (making in depth inquiries is not the responsibility of caseworkers)". In any case, given that I was not falling short of set targets for decision making then not only was there no reason why management should have been concerned, but they should have recognised my effort to make more fully informed decisions. Belatedly, two Croydon staff were allocated to update L*, but when I enquired, one of them replied that colleges unknown to the Home Office would still not be visited, so the large number of establishments not on L** or listed but given the residual code should be treated normally in the absence of any information.

When a student (or an economic migrant purporting to be a student) applies for an extension of leave to remain, he/she is supposed to supply bank statements, but when these show unsourced deposits these are almost always simply assumed to back up what is stated on the application form. Round figures deposited in cash or by any other route are taken to be from a sponsor (and never assumed to be earnings from working). Students are not supposed to work for more than 20 hours per week, and are not supposed to support themselves wholly or mainly from earned income, but few caseworkers refuse on these grounds. Applicants are supposed to send in evidence to support their claim that they are working part-time only, but very few do, and on few occasions do caseworkers request such evidence. We were told not to refuse on hours worked unless it was substantially above 20 hours per week, and even then that refusal should not be on these grounds alone - despite the fact that the legislation clearly allows and requires this. I was myself again formally reprimanded by management for: "going out for information on how many hours a student is working (when all other aspects of the case are clear cut)." But again, why should management have been concerned? Rather they should have been appreciative.

Applicants should submit bank statements covering the previous three months but many do not, and in any case they may choose to send statements covering

a period out of term time when the 20-hour restriction does not apply. They need not bother. A senior caseworker circular stated: "Whilst it is preferable for an application to contain the last three months original itemised bank statements, caseworkers should look at the merits of the case and decide whether on the basis of the information already received, this is necessary." But in practice, even if the application enclosed no bank statements at all, a handwritten letter by a friend purporting to be a sponsor would usually or often secure a stamp in a passport. In any case, it is frequently obvious that the account for which statements are submitted is not the account used for usual transactions, and when I raised this, yet again I was told: "it's none of our business". Occasionally someone spots forged bank statements, but detection is rare not least because there is no training.

Clear evidence that the situation had got so out of hand that even senior caseworkers had simply forgotten what they are supposed to be doing came with an e-mail between senior staff cascaded to ordinary caseworkers: "Are we still OK to refuse students solely on the fact that they cannot support themselves/ fund their study without working" -- the legislation clearly stating this is then actually quoted. The reply: "I can see no reason why we cannot refuse on this point alone". This alarmingly points up that even when the legislation is there in print before their eyes, senior caseworkers are so bound up in guidance and the dilution of this in 'pragmatic' practice that it has come to take precedence over the law. (This is not to censure senior caseworking staff, because my experience was that the quality of staff, both junior and senior, was higher than the Home Office should have expected given the low rates of pay. It is an indictment of top management and in particular their political masters who have pressured staff to behave in this way.)

Apart from student applications, the other major proportion of Managed Migration casework consists of marriage applications. There was controversy when the 'primary purpose' rule was axed in 1997, and it was presumed that the obvious invitation to abuse this opened would be met with proper scrutiny of applications, but this is anything but the case. That abuse is rife is shown by another senior caseworker e-mail circular sent in December: "Marriage abuse within the immigration system is an increasing problem. INDIS estimates that there could be in the region of 15,000 sham marriages each year. Reports of suspicious marriages from registrars have been rising from year to year." Of course, this must be merely the tip of the iceberg. Apart from the contrived marriages entered into in the UK, most marriage applications are in respect of those contracted abroad.

Applicants can enter the UK either as a fiancé(e) or as a spouse of someone present and settled, or they can simply switch from whatever temporary immigration category they are under into marriage. An initial two-years is granted as a 'probationary' period, after which full settlement follows. To be granted the first period all that is required is a marriage certificate -- there is not even a requirement that the couple should be residing together -- so you would imagine that there would be very extensive checking when it came to a settlement application, but scrutiny is as lax as that

afforded student applications. The two questions supposedly to be answered are: can they support themselves without recourse to public funds, and is the relationship subsisting? Regarding this last, the rules state that official documents addressed to one or other of the couple at the shared address should cover the range of the probation period, but such are rarely supplied. Usually the minimum is all that is received: a total of five documents (such as gas bills, medical cards) addressed not to both parties at the shared address but to one or other party; and often in the ratio of 4:1. So a single document addressed to the applicant, and on any date within the two years of the probation period, would suffice; even though self-evidently this proves nothing.

When it comes to funds, the familiar relativism surfaces: who are we to say what minimum income is sufficient? This is the same line as before: "it's none of our business". These are customers after all. In six months work I have had just one case agreed by a senior caseworker to run a benefits check. This was one of only two benefits checks that I have done in the whole six months I worked at Managed Migration. In this case the couple, with a child, actually stated that they were both unemployed and claiming benefits. I still had to go through the rigmarole of consulting with two levels of senior caseworking staff for approval, making up a pro forma to FAX off to a central checking agency to then await a reply hours (or days) later. Again, just as with ascertaining subsistence of relationship, the full probation period is ignored and the last (or recent period of) three months are usually all that are looked at; wageslips for a short period are all that is required. When I queried the possibility of the applicant being workless and/or receiving benefits for the rest of the period, again I was assured it was nothing to be concerned about. It is possible, therefore, to gain settlement simply by signing up for a temporary job for three months and to have no further engagement with work thereafter.

A very large proportion (I would estimate 80%) of marriage applications are from individuals from the Indian subcontinent (Pakistan, India, Bangladesh), and I would estimate that a large proportion of the remainder are from Africa, and a good number from East Europe. Few -- very few -- are from people who share cultural ties with the majority indigenous UK population. Marriage is used as a major gateway for secondary economic immigration and is only in a small minority of cases what it is supposed to be: the unusual instance of the result of a chance emotional entanglement with a foreigner.

Finally, I should pick out another area of abuse which the Home Office is most certainly aware of but again does little if anything to counteract: use of the NHS. I had to deal with a fair number of applications from those wishing to extend their visit on the grounds of requiring medical treatment - and most appeared to have journeyed here expressly to illegally receive treatment -- but there were few if any instances where the applicant could show payment for treatment received, nor even the financial resources that would enable him/her to pay for treatment. In many cases even the cost of maintenance, let alone the cost of treatment, was not shown to be capable of being met. I cannot recall any instance where I was advised that the applicant could be refused. As ever when I queried I usually got the

inevitable answer: "it's none of our business". Astonishingly even for this I was reprimanded by management. Management misconstrued the information I was requesting and accused me of "going out to check if a private medical patient had paid their fees". It appears that anyone from abroad illegally receiving treatment on the NHS is classed as 'going private' and outside the remit of Managed Migration. Given that the GMC also washes its hand of the problem, then just who is supposed to do anything about it? And who other than Managed Migration would that appropriate department be?

This and the other instances of reprimand I have mentioned above I countered, and another meeting was held when I was told that I had answered by my improved performance all of the points and it was therefore not necessary to address my corrections to the points management had previously made. Instead all of them were subsumed under "requesting further information when it isn't required", and the assessment was that: "checking indicated that in all cases the inquiries were appropriate". A convenient dodge, it would appear, of discussing failure by Managed Migration to properly implement immigration rules.

The vast scale of abuse of immigration becomes apparent when you draw out the lens to look at the overall picture. Managed Migration deals with cases in addition to the 200,000 or so Work Permit grants issued annually, and in addition to Asylum, clandestine entry and illegal overstay. The Sheffield Casework Unit of Managed Migration is the recently formed junior partner of the main office at Croydon; even so, a director e-mailed staff in February to say that Sheffield was "on track to achieve around 130,000 decisions by the end of March", but that this was despite "the delayed introduction of Aspect Court" (one of the two premises) "from May to July 03 and the very gradual build-up of staffing and knowledge through the Autumn and Winter months." The rate of decision making will therefore now be greatly in excess of that suggested by a 130,000 annual figure with the greatly increased capacity phased in. Add the parent Croydon operation, with its apparent cavalier attitude to casenotes and by all accounts resentful, jaded staff making still less well considered decisions; then the overall number of grants annually must run into several hundred thousand. Clearly there is a major problem, and as there is no political will by the Government to tackle it, then for me it became impossible to continue working at Managed Migration without speaking out in such a way that the Government is compelled to take notice.

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