Daft regulation of the month [1]

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The last Conservative administration under John Major used to agonise about passing too many regulations. They even set up a taskforce to reduce it. Tony Blair replaced that with a ?Better Regulation Taskforce? and better turned out to mean more ? the flow of new regulations doubled. No surprise there.

Although two thirds of the regulatory burden in money terms arises from EU-sourced regulations, less than one third of the number of regulations are due to the EU. In other words, the UK afflicts about 200 regulations on itself which the rest of the EU consider unnecessary.

Both the Major and Blair governments claimed they would reduce the stock of existing regulations. In both cases, the Whitehall machine ground down the suggestions to the point where some administrative simplification was achieved, some groups were consolidated (e.g. fire regulations) and a very few regulations were nullified, perhaps five a year compared with the 250-300 new ones. Both governments emitted positive noises about deregulation and called for suggestions. The IoD was one of the organisations that responded with a list, a little list, of regulations that would not be missed, that never would be missed. 258 of the IoD?s suggestions were, in October 2009, batted into the long grass. Just 11 would be ?taken forward?. And I wouldn?t hold your breath on those.

The government claims that regulation is a net benefit but their numbers take alleged benefits for the voting public and then subtract the costs to business. Having business pay for welfare is attractive to the Chancellor but it is covert taxation. Business, in bearing the cost, becomes less competitive and less productive. The unions are happy in the short-term but they have learned nothing from the London and Liverpool docks.

As regulation drags Britain down we can at least have a little fun at Whitehall?s expense. Each month ASI will publish a recent daft regulation which we do not need even if the mandarins think we do. Watch this space.

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2. The Building (Local Authority Charges) Regulations 2010 [4]
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