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What regulations? [1]

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Those with long memories will recall that the new government intended to clamp down on new regulation and insist, for example, that one existing regulation of similar or greater burden would be removed for every new one introduced. The only exemptions would be regulations derived from the EU, which we have no control over.

The 2nd report of the Regulatory Policy Committee (RPC) is just out. They reviewed 189 Impact Assessments (IAs) which appeared in the last quarter of 2010. Since one regulation may have more than one IA, that is not necessarily 189 proposed new regulations. Of the 189, 57 were EU sourced and 132 from Whitehall. The Coalition has changed the remit of the RPC to advising the new Reducing Regulation Committee (RRC) which is chaired by the Business Secretary, Vince Cable, and charged with rejecting unnecessary new regulations.

The RPC concluded ?44 % of the IAs we scrutinised were, in our opinion, inadequate?. They do not report the split of inadequacy between Whitehall and Brussels nor whether the government (RRC) continued with the regulation nonetheless nor whether the regulation and IA re-appeared after further work. Neither do they produce any findings in terms of ?one in and one out?. The number of IAs (189 in one quarter) indicates that the tide of new regulation is even higher under this government than the last.

The opinions of the RPC are not available to the public so we cannot assess any of these matters for ourselves. How is that for transparency? According to the BIS Library of IAs, accessed today, there have been only 14 IAs produced in the eight months to 31st January 2011. This includes the one to which the department (HMRC) failed to given a title or any detail. The BIS seems to have forgotten about their own system.

For 20 years governments have talked the talk on reducing, and challenging new, regulation. The 2nd report of the RPC seems to indicate that the Coalition is no more walking the walk on regulatory reduction and transparency than its predecessors.

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