cc A.D
JU

2.

Prime Minister National Health

Mr Fowler will be digesting the new figures before suggesting a reply to Ralph Howell.

MAP 26/2.

Prime Minister

NHS MANPOWER

You have put to me a number of questions about the increases in NHS manpower, especially nursing manpower since 1979, and I am most anxious with the increasing interest in this issue among Members, to give you an up-to-date and comprehensive reply which will stand up to attack.

Broad provisional NHS staffing figures for September 1981 have just become available from the NHS Regions. But in order to compare them fairly and effectively with the figures for earlier years, I have had to ask our statisticians to undertake some further work. I hope to be able to present the full picture, answering your detailed questions about nursing manpower, early next week. I would envisage that we might then take the opportunity of an arranged PQ to present these new figures in the way we want them to be seen, providing a basis for future discussion.

The Department of Employment head count - which is of course the best index of the number of individuals with full time and part-time jobs in the NHS - is inevitably far higher than 'whole-time equivalent'. The figure of 1,200,000 in Ralph Howells' recent letter is a head count figure for the UK in 1980. In September 1981 the total number of NHS staff in England, in whole time equivalent terms, was some 820,700.

I am copying this minute to the Chief Secretary, the Secretary of State for Scotland and the Secretary of State for Wales.

26 February 1982

N F