



PS

Merseyside County Council

MAFF

County Councillor Neville C Goldrein MA (Cantab)
Leader of the Council

The Prime Minister,
(The Rt. Hon. Margaret Thatcher, MP),
10 Downing Street,
London, W.1.

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Liverpool
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12th February, 1981

Dear Prime Minister,

R14/2

I am writing not only as Leader of this County Council but as the Conservative Leader, to state in stark terms the impact of the possible closure of the Tate & Lyle Liverpool Refinery and its enormous repercussions, not only on the 1500 workforce or the spinoff effect, but also on the Conservative Party's reputation, nationally and locally.

I was informed that an approach had been made to you by the Chief Executive of the Liverpool City Council asking for you to be good enough to meet a delegation of representatives from Merseyside, including myself. You promptly replied to him on the 11th February declining - and I quite understand your reasons - to see a delegation at that stage. Unfortunately the newspapers reported this as a snub to Merseyside and quoted you as having stated that those seeking to save the jobs at the refinery should "see the Management concerned."

It became quite clear to me that you had not been made aware at that stage that I had already had a long discussion with Earl Jellicoe, the Chairman of Tate and Lyle. He confirmed to me that, provided the sugar beet quota were kept to 936,000 tonnes per annum, not only was he prepared, but it was his positive wish, to keep open the Liverpool Refinery. Indeed, Earl Jellicoe has agreed to be a member of a delegation should you choose to receive one.

At 4.30 p.m., on the evening of Monday, 2nd February - about the shortest possible notice - I was offered an appointment with Mr. Peter Walker at 9.30 a.m., the following day, Tuesday, 3rd. This was in response to a letter I had written to Mr. Walker seeking an appointment, and naturally I was anxious to accept. I left Liverpool before the crack of dawn on the Tuesday morning and arrived at the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food at 9.25 a.m., to be told that Mr. Walker had left for Paris, but that unfortunately his private staff had not taken the trouble to inform me of the cancellation of our meeting for which I had made a special journey.

I am now hoping to arrange a fresh private meeting with Mr. Walker for Monday next, 16th February.

The whole matter stands and falls on the sugar beet quota. Tate & Lyle is not just another factory in Merseyside but part of its history, character and geography. The impact of its closure would not only be the job loss but the ripple effect would be enormous both industrially and politically. I would not use that as a basis of argument - but the whole of local Conservative support looks upon this issue as crucial.

In nearly 25 years in local government I have never before known an issue in Merseyside which has been felt so deeply right across all political parties, labour, management, and a unique spectrum of Merseyside life, including the churches.

Of course I appreciate how tremendously precious your time is. Nevertheless, if you could enable me to have even ten minutes of that precious time, whenever and wherever convenient to you, I would very much appreciate it - as would indeed every Merseysider.

Yours sincerely,

Mervin Goldstein