



# Merseyside County Council

C/7 pps

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Leader of the Council

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The Prime Minister  
The Rt. Hon. Margaret Thatcher, M.P  
10 Downing Street  
LONDON

16th April 1981

*Dear Prime Minister,*

I would first like to thank you most sincerely for giving me some of your very valuable time and for listening to the matters I raised on behalf of Merseyside. I fully realise that the Government does not have money to spare and that anything we ask for must cost little or nothing. However, if you manage to bring something out of the bag before the 7th May, clearly it would be of very great assistance.

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I attach a separate sheet setting out very briefly the ideas I mooted to you and, if you would like further information directly or through your offices, I should be very happy to send it to you.

Once again, I extend my most grateful thanks.

*Yours sincerely,  
Neville Goldrein*

THE MATTERS RAISED IN DISCUSSION BETWEEN  
THE PRIME MINISTER AND THE LEADER OF  
MERSEYSIDE COUNTY COUNCIL

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1. Young People - Apprenticeship

As I pointed out, there are some 22,000 unemployed youngsters in Merseyside which matches the unemployment of a similar age group in the whole of Greater London. We, the County Council, have formed a company, Merseyside Limited, and one of its subsidiaries will be a company for training youngsters in conjunction with Manpower Services Commission. These companies depend very much upon the co-operation of the private sector, who are, indeed, involved in the structure at Board level.

We are hoping that we will be able to use the old Liverpool Royal Infirmary as a training centre, and it is possible that up to 1,000 youngsters may be given training in the course of any one year.

The problem is that after that year they go back on to the unemployment list. I was suggesting that it may be possible for the Government to arrange for industry to assist in their further apprenticeship, so that, instead of the employer having to pay 90% of a skilled person's wage, he only pays perhaps 50%, with MSC paying the balance. Alternatively, perhaps the money may be obtainable from the European Social Fund.

2. Exchange Station Site - Government  
or EEC Departments

As you know, there is the large area of 'desert' which was Exchange Station and which was at one time to be used for relocation of a Government department. If such a department could be relocated here it would be a tremendous help, not only for employment but also to morale and confidence. There is a lot of white collar experience in Merseyside - insurance, shipping, service industries, etc. This

would help in improving the appearance of the City (and County) centre but the restoration of confidence amongst our citizens would be even more important.

If we are respectable enough for a main Government Department in the County Centre, it would encourage others.

### 3. Tunnel Tolls

We are getting something of a complex about the Mersey Tunnel finances, thanks to the unusual financing straitjacket imposed upon us. Instead of being triumphant that we are reaping £7 million per annum from the private motorist, we are miserable about the apparent increase of our indebtedness. This was due to the provision of the £40 million second crossing of the Mersey in 1970 which has not resulted in attracting sufficient additional traffic. The debt outstanding is now £78 million, £30 million of which we owe to the DOE. Ideally we should like an undertaking that the tolling of the tunnels will cease as soon as practicable but in the short term specific remission of some of the outstanding debt would be more than helpful. It will keep the toll levels down. As things stand, people commuting from one part of the County to another will shortly be paying 80p per day return in the car apart from parking and motoring expenses. If London Bridge levied a toll of this proportion it would divide the Greater London County.

### 4. Enterprise Zone

As I mentioned, the old airport is included in the Enterprise Zone, but it would be of tremendous assistance if the new airport with its single runway could also be included. By that means we could hope to develop the new airport and to lease further land for industry. Incidentally, if Liverpool City cool off on the Enterprise Zone, we can always find another very suitable area within the County. My Airport Chairman wrote to you on the 2nd April but I am sure he would consider it no discourtesy

if your response to that letter were incorporated in your reply to me.

5. Off-shore Gas

I confirm that I have had long and very friendly discussions with Sir Dennis Rooke and the Gas Corporation to put Merseyside at the head of those offering facilities for servicing of the off-shore gas field. I understand that the gas itself will come on shore at Barrow-in-Furness and so take some industry to that area. If the servicing could be from Merseyside, with its superb connections, it again would be of tremendous help in every way to the County. I also think that Cammell Laird Shipbuilders, with their tremendous expertise, could probably construct the semi-submersibles, particularly if some of the work was sent there which is otherwise given to Scott Lithgow.

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