

21 September 1983  
Policy Unit

PRIME MINISTER

ASSOCIATION OF LONDON AUTHORITIES

We view the setting up of the ALA with cheerful equanimity. The existence of local authority associations has never worked to our advantage. The Association of Metropolitan Authorities, for example, has claimed to be the "voice of local government" in the big cities. In fact, it has usually been the voice of big-spending Labour councils. The emergence of nakedly political groupings of councils destroys these pretensions to objectivity, and makes it easier for Government to be seen to be representing the interests of all the people.

The sooner, therefore, that we set up a counter Conservative voice, the better. But we ought, if at all possible, to resist legislation which merely inflates the self-importance of these groupings. Our position should be: "We are ready to consult any body representing elected local authorities, but we shall continue to act in the best interests of the nation as a whole".

We recommend a low-key approach:

- (1) recognition of the ALA, accompanied by a statement on the lines of Patrick's Annex B;
- (2) speedy consultation with London Conservative leaders to set up a counter voice; but
- (3) no hurry to discuss these essentially trivial questions with the other associations; and
- (4) no consideration of options for defining in law which associations have to be consulted.

FERDINAND MOUNT

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*Brandy & Westminster  
to start legal action.*