

10/4/84

PRIME MINISTER

Meeting with Lord Beloff - Tuesday, 10th April at 9.30 am

Lord Beloff had originally been intending to come and talk to you about ILEA but this was before the decision to go for an elected ILEA.

He did see Lord Whitelaw on this subject and Lord Whitelaw suggested that he should keep his appointment with you. Lord Beloff is anxious to do this because it will give him his first chance since August to bring you up to date on the Research Department etc.

It therefore looks like being a general discussion!!

Stephen

STEPHEN SHERBOURNE

9.4.84



23rd March

for meeting

3.45 - 4.15

3rd April

From Lord Beloff.

Dear Allison,

I write to inquire about the possibility of a brief meeting with the Prime Minister whom I have not seen since last August. The matter about which I would like to see her is the future of ILEA and in particular the possibility of replacing it by a directly elected body instead of a joint board. The arguments are of course familiar by now and my only reason for seeking a personal word is that I believe that this idea which has much Conservative support would if put forward by the Government, much help the progress of the local government legislation though the House of Lords which looks like being a tricky business.

If however you feel that the Prime Minister has heard enough on this topic or is too occupied with more important matters, I shall quite understand.

Perhaps you would reply either way. If the Prime Minister does wish to see me then I would phone your office at No. 10 in the usual way for an appointment.

yours very sincerely,

Michael Allison, M.P.



10 DOWNING STREET

Prime Minister

You might like to look through the reactions to Sir Keith's statement on ILEA, before you see Lord Beloff. (Flag A)

Most Government supporters were in favour but Mr Farman, Dr Hampson and Mr Silvester were sceptical. The latter two both said to be convinced afterwards that "you will live to regret this".

AT 9/4

Mining Dispute (Police Action)

4.3 pm

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I wonder whether you have made any representations to the Leader of the House or to those who arrange business in the House, in view of the fact that, during the course of the past fortnight at least, you have been inundated with requests to have a debate on a very important matter which is specific and urgent—the coal mining dispute and the associated police activities—and in view of the fact that you have been placed in the middle of what is obviously a tug-of-war between the Government and others who have some influence in arranging business.

Since the Leader of the House has said several times already that there is a lot of pressing business to arrange, my constituents—particularly those who watched the police put blankets over the heads of a handful of strike-breakers and bundle them into a bus and take them through the picket line—will never believe that a debate on the Ginns and Gutteridge, Leicester (Crematorium) Bill is more necessary to the nation, and to civil liberties, freedom of the individual and police activity than a debate on a matter which most people in the country are discussing.

It seems to me extremely strange, Mr. Speaker, that you have been placed in this predicament, in which we are this afternoon to debate for three hours the Ginns and Gutteridge, Leicester (Crematorium) Bill, yet there is no time to debate such an important matter.

Mr. Speaker: I must say to the hon. Gentleman and to the House that the Speaker is frequently in the middle of a tug-of-war.

Mr. Paddy Ashdown (Yeovil): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. As I am sure you will recognise, the rules about Standing Order No. 10 are wondrously complicated, especially for new Members like myself. If I remember correctly, one of the requirements is that the matter be urgent. How is it possible, therefore, for the Leader of the Opposition to give five days' notice, as he did during business questions, about raising a matter under Standing Order No. 10, and is this not an abuse of the system?

Mr. Speaker: We have not heard that application yet, and I cannot rule on what is still a purely hypothetical matter.

Easter Adjournment (Debates)

4.5 pm

Mr. Speaker: I remind hon. Members that, on the motion for the adjournment of the House on Friday 13 April, up to eight Members may raise with Ministers subjects of their own choice. Applications should reach my Office by 10 pm on Monday next. A ballot will then be held on Tuesday morning and the result made known as soon as possible thereafter.

Inner London Education Authority

4.6 pm

The Secretary of State for Education and Science (Sir Keith Joseph): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I wish to make a statement about the future of the Inner London education authority.

The Government have been considering the responses to the White Paper, "Streamlining the Cities", and the associated consultation documents. We have now reached a decision on the future arrangements for education in inner London. We think it right to inform the House of this now.

The White Paper proposed that there should continue to be a unitary education service in inner London, run by a single education authority. It also proposed that the authority should be a joint board of councillors appointed by the inner London borough councils and the Common Council of the City.

Those whom we consulted, in particular those Members of the House and others with a close understanding of the needs of education in inner London, were overwhelmingly in favour of a directly elected authority. We have been persuaded by their arguments. The nature, scale and importance of the education service in inner London, taken together, justify a directly elected authority in this special case.

We propose therefore that the successor body to the ILEA should be directly elected. We intend to provide for this in the main legislation abolishing the GLC and the metropolitan county councils, to be introduced in the next Session.

It remains our intention that the new education authority for inner London should be made subject to statutory review in the light of experience.

4.7 pm

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): May I congratulate the Secretary of State on accepting the advice of the people of London to have a directly elected body to run education in central London? Why have the Government not listened to the people over the GLC as well? Will the Secretary of State now join me in congratulating all those who campaigned to retain a directly elected democratic body in inner London, the parents, all those who work in schools and ILEA itself, on a major victory?

Will the right hon. Gentleman tell us whether any of the boroughs within inner London will be allowed to opt out or have any powers of veto? Will he confirm that the financial arrangements for the new, democratically elected body are to remain the same as those set out in the White Paper, "Streamlining the Cities"? Will he confirm that he now accepts that inner London has extra costs in running education in the centre of a major capital city and that the authority is not a profligate spender but achieves educational excellence as a result of a sound financial policy? Will he also confirm that it was one of only six authorities out of about 100 which had a clean bill of health from Her Majesty's inspectors?

Finally, will the right hon. Gentleman explain to the House what will happen in inner London over the next three years? Is it true that there will be three separate administrations in three years, in that the present body will continue until May 1985, to be succeeded by a transitional

[Mr. Andrew F. Bennett]

body for one year, which will be replaced on the introduction of a new body from May 1986? Are the Government expecting all these bodies to implement cuts in education spending? Does he accept that the rate-capping measure will give all three bodies an extremely difficult task? Is he aware that the sharing of responsibility between the three bodies is likely to cause administrative chaos? Surely it would be far better to allow ILEA at least to continue until the new body is elected.

Sir Keith Joseph: The Government have decided firmly, as is their right, on the abolition of the GLC and the metropolitan county councils. With the abolition of the GLC it becomes necessary to find a replacement body for the conduct of education in inner London. On implementation, though not on that decision, we consulted widely, and today's announcement reflects the results of the consultation. We are not qualifying the decision to abolish the GLC and the metropolitan county councils.

Inner London boroughs will not have the right to opt out. The Government have decided that there should be a continuing unitary authority for inner London. As I have said, there will be a power in the main Bill to review those arrangements following a study of the performance of the replacement authority.

I agree with the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) that inner London faces extra education costs. However, the extra costs are provided for in the special factors that are built into the rate support grant. Despite all the zeal of those concerned with education in inner London, I cannot agree with the hon. Gentleman that the result represents satisfying value for money for the ratepayers or parents.

The proposals for the next three years, including those for the replacement authority, concern important details which will fall for consideration when the main Bill comes before the House.

Mr. John Maples (Lewisham, West): May I tell my right hon. Friend how much his statement is welcomed by many of us and how much many of us hope that a directly elected ILEA will lead to better education standards and better control of education expenditure? Does he agree that it would be a natural extension of the excellent idea of a directly elected ILEA for the authority to issue its own rate bills, so that Londoners can correlate their vote with education policy and the cost of that policy?

Sir Keith Joseph: My hon. Friend will be glad to learn that arrangements are proposed that will provide a clear sign to London ratepayers of the cost of education in inner London.

Mr. J. Enoch Powell (Down, South): Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that this fascinating innovation, or rather reversion to an earlier stage in the evolution of local government, will have a wide range of application elsewhere wherever single services are administered by an appointed or indirectly elected body over a wide area?

Sir Keith Joseph: No, on this occasion I do not agree with the right hon. Gentleman. The nature, scale and importance of the education service in inner London, when taken together, justify a directly elected authority for such a unique operation.

Mr. Nigel Forman (Carshalton and Wallington): Is my right hon. Friend aware that in settling the tricky conflict between the interests of democratic accountability and financial responsibility for education in inner London he has obviously opted for the former? Is he aware that in doing so he is running a great risk, in that it will be difficult to control the spending of the new body, and that in many ways it will become a legitimate pressure group for spending in excess of what would otherwise be legitimate in such an area?

Sir Keith Joseph: My hon. Friend is on to a real point. However, he has forgotten that almost any body or organisation concerned with education in inner London will probably represent widespread, though not universal, demands for more spending. In this instance it is likely that the authority will be exposed to nomination for rate-capping. We believe that direct elections will slightly enhance the propensity to look for value for money. We think that healthy influences are being brought to bear by the Government's general education aims and, apparently, by ILEA through its recently published Hargreaves report on value for money and quality in education.

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): Will the Secretary of State acknowledge that his statement today will be most welcome, as it represents a tribute to the excellence of the service provided by the Inner London education authority, the popularity of that authority and a credit to all those who have campaigned to retain it as an elected body? Will he recognise that the tremendous success and popularity of that campaign will prove an inspiration to those in London who wish to preserve the GLC and to protect borough councils from rate-capping? Will he acknowledge also that if he intends to continue with his proposition for a statutory review after the new body has been established, that will mean only that the Inner London education authority in its new form will be bedevilled by the uncertainty which has diverted so much enthusiasm, experience and commitment from improving standards within the authority to defending the very organisation itself, a defence which has continued ever since the 1979 general election?

Sir Keith Joseph: I am glad that at last the hon. Gentleman has brought his unwieldy syntax to a close. I cannot agree with any part of his rodomontades. The Government's decision reflects the serious study that they have made of the responses to the consultation process, and especially to the persuasive powers of the arguments of many bodies, including hon. Members, the Churches and the majority party in ILEA. Perhaps I should refer particularly to Professor David Smith and his Conservative colleagues in the minority party at County hall.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): As a former employee of ILEA for 43 years, may I warmly welcome direct elections, as I know the teaching staff throughout the authority will? What kind of directly elected body does my right hon. Friend have in mind? Will there be multi-member constituencies, and will the City be involved? Secondly, will he tell Labour Members that the future of ILEA was never in doubt and that it was grossly wrong of the authority to spend hundreds of thousands of pounds of ratepayers' money on a spurious campaign to save itself, which resulted in the disruption of children's education?

Sir Keith Joseph: I fear that I cannot answer the first part of my hon. Friend's question. He has referred to

important details, but they are not for the immediate decision of the House. They will come before the House when the substantive Bill comes before it.

Mr. John Cartwright (Woolwich): Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that the welcome elections that he has announced will not be meaningful unless inner Londoners are given the opportunity to decide for themselves through the ballot box important issues such as the spending and staffing levels of the authority? Will he therefore withdraw the proposal in "Streamlining the Cities" that decisions on these important matters should be imposed on the elected authority by Ministers?

Sir Keith Joseph: The Government would not have embarked upon the decision to rate-cap if it were not for the conduct of a number of local authorities throughout the country including, on its present performance, ILEA. No decision will be made about which authority might be rate-capped until nearer the time when we are able to judge recent performances.

Dr. Keith Hampson (Leeds, North-West): I know that my right hon. Friend has a special case to plead, but will he say what warrants education having this special treatment as against transport, for example? What advantage does he see in replacing Mr. Ken Livingstone with Mrs. Morrell, the leader of ILEA, who will become only directly elected leader in London? Does he believe that she will do other than try to speak for London and the world?

Sir Keith Joseph: My hon. Friend is seeking to sour my relations with some of my right hon. Friends. I am forced to say that education in inner London deserves unique treatment because of its nature, scale and importance. As for Mrs. Morrell, or anyone who seeks to succeed her, I hope that she will have a very hard fight to retain her position on any successor body.

Mr. Alfred Dubs (Battersea): Can the Secretary of State explain the relationship of his statement to the Bill that we are to discuss next Wednesday, which will abolish the next GLC and ILEA elections? Does he propose that that Bill should be amended to allow the present elected councillors who run ILEA to continue in office and provide continuity, because it seems that that is the most sensible course, otherwise he will be causing great disruption to a well-run and sensible authority?

Sir Keith Joseph: So far as I understand it, there is provision for some of the members on the present Inner London education authority to have a continuing existence in the successor authority. I must tell the hon. Gentleman that these important details are not for the paving Bill, but for the main Bill.

Mrs. Angela Rumbold (Mitcham and Morden): I understand fully the reasons why my right hon. Friend has taken this course of action and welcome the fact that he has come to these conclusions. Can he tell the House whether it is in his mind that the direct elections to the new education authority will be conterminous with the borough elections, or whether they will be held in separate years?

Sir Keith Joseph: I am sorry to have to give the same answer even to my hon. Friend, but those important matters are not for the paving Bill. This afternoon I am sharing with the House a crucial decision that the Government have made. The important details will have to be settled later.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): Does the Secretary of State realise that the emphasis that he has laid on the nature, scale and importance of ILEA will be widely welcomed on both sides of the House? Why does he think that either the Secretary of State for the Environment or the Chancellor of the Exchequer is equipped to decide how much ILEA ought to spend on education?

Sir Keith Joseph: That is a question that the House has debated. I think that the debate gave the House the answer that the Government have given.

Sir Kenneth Lewis (Stamford and Spalding): If the undoubted realism of my right hon. Friend tells him and me that creating a directly elected education authority for London will give better value for money—his term—why should he hesitate to extend the proposal to other parts of the country?

Sir Keith Joseph: I hope that my hon. Friend will not force me to give the House a catalogue of the orders of magnitude by which Inner London education authority spending exceeds that of any other municipal service. It is a multiple of five or six, which justifies me in talking about the "scale" of this unique service as well as its "nature" and "importance".

Ms. Harriet Harman (Peckham): Is it not appropriate for the House to congratulate all those who stood up for London's education service—parents, teachers, non-teaching staff, the governors and the Labour-led ILEA—and forced this U-turn on the Government? Is it not the case that London's education is still suffering grievously because of spending cuts? What an odd sense of priority the Secretary of State has when he chooses to criticise and punish ILEA, which is one out of only six of the 96 education authorities in the country which his own inspectors have said is providing a service for the full range of educational needs. Should he not—

Mr. Speaker: Order. Much of what the hon. Lady has said would be appropriate for the debate on the relevant Bill.

Sir Keith Joseph: An education authority for inner London was never in question or in any way at risk. What we concluded about was implementation. We have heeded the results of that consultation. As for the spending of ILEA, I think it can fairly be said that, despite the zeal of most people concerned, value for money is not its predominant characteristic.

Mr. Peter Bottomley (Eltham): Does my right hon. Friend agree that one of the ways of dealing with ILEA would have been, and might still be, to allow those boroughs that want to do so to take over their own education? Does he also agree that even with direct elections there is no assurance that the leaders of ILEA will be those who appear to be the leaders at the time of the election? We have seen two changes in ILEA since the last GLC election. [Interruption.] Would it be a good idea if all parties started to look at the future of ILEA in terms of education and educational improvement following the Hargreaves report, rather than patting themselves on the back and thinking what a marvellous job they have done so far?

Sir Keith Joseph: As my hon. Friend says, delegation to the boroughs would have been an option, but the Government have decided that there should be a unitary

[Sir Keith Joseph]

authority, although we are building into the main legislation a right of review. I can agree with my hon. Friend that some Labour leadership posts seem to be precarious. I must take the opportunity once again to pay tribute to a great deal of the contents and spirit of the recently published Hargreaves report of ILEA, where so much common ground with the Government is apparent on the pursuit of quality.

Mr. John Fraser (Norwood): May I put it to the Secretary of State that if he persists in the proposals in the White Paper "Streamlining the Cities", under which the Government will have control for three years over the expenditure of ILEA, all that he is doing is creating a new breed of municipal eunuchs who will be elected to perform a duty but then will not have the power to do it because of restrictions contained in other legislation?

Sir Keith Joseph: Once again I must say that this subject has been debated by the House.

Mr. Richard Tracey (Surbiton): In drafting the undoubtedly unique piece of local Government legislation will my right hon. Friend bear in mind that proper provision must be made to ensure that expenditure is only on education and not on propaganda, advertising or information supply?

Sir Keith Joseph: It will be open to my hon. Friend to put those arguments when the main Bill comes before the House.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): I do not welcome the announcement, and I do not see why the House should be grateful, because the Inner London education authority is already a directly elected local authority and I speak as a directly elected member of it. I suggest that the Secretary of State should not expect to receive gratitude. Will he look carefully at the Local Government (Interim Provisions) Bill? Will he not have to amend it because the last paragraph makes a direct reference to the form of elections for ILEA, which is appointment via the boroughs? In those circumstances, that measure will have to be amended. Will he confirm—

Mr. Speaker: Briefly.

Mr. Banks: Yes, indeed, Mr. Speaker. Will the Secretary of State confirm that there was no mention of scrapping elections for ILEA or the GLC in the Conservative election manifesto or in the Gracious Speech? Now he is giving his right hon. Friends something of a conundrum.

Sir Keith Joseph: I appreciate any welcome, even if it is not unanimous. I do not think that what I have announced calls for any amendment to the paving Bill. The decisions following this afternoon's announcement will be involved in the main Bill.

Mr. Robin Squire (Hornchurch): May I add my congratulations to my right hon. Friend on his statement, which I believe will increase the accountability of those administering education in inner London to those whom they seek to serve? In a similar vein, will he consider in the detail the possibility of a proportion of those thus

elected being elected each year, and also having a proportional system of election to increase further accountability?

Sir Keith Joseph: That is a perfectly viable option to put to the House and to the Government when we consider the main Bill.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): May I associate the Liberal party in London and nationally with the welcome that is due to the Secretary of State not only for being persuaded to retain direct elections but for improving the system? I hope that the Secretary of State will accept that a great disservice is being done to the educational needs of children in inner London by capping and cutting. If the proposals that are before the House for a change in the authority next year, a suspension of the elections, an interim authority and then new elections, are implemented, they will cause untold disruption. Will the Secretary of State accept that it would be opportune for him and his right hon. Friends to consider introducing different proposals?

Sir Keith Joseph: Once again I have to say that although those arguments have a certain validity, they are not for this occasion.

Mr. John Wilkinson (Ruislip-Northwood): I welcome the intellectual honesty and political courage of this statement, which is typical of my right hon. Friend. In the Bill, can he suggest that the direct elections should take place at the same time as the borough elections, and can he use his power of persuasiveness on his colleagues to ensure that this important precedent extends to the supervision of other London-wide functions that will continue to be provided after the abolition of the GLC?

Sir Keith Joseph: My hon. Friend is trying to seduce me with his kind words into saying that it is not a decision for a unique service, and I cannot go along with that. The argument about the actual detail of the election will be appropriate at a later stage.

Mr. Tom Cox (Tooting): The Secretary of State has twice referred to the right of review. Is he aware that when this right of review is incorporated into the legislation there will have to be clear guidelines as to what he means? Is he further aware that when the London borough of Wandsworth attempted to pull its education services out of ILEA, to be controlled by that local authority, there was enormous confusion and great bitterness was created among teachers and parents? Surely this is not what London wants to face in the coming years.

Sir Keith Joseph: There will be ample opportunity for such discussions on the main Bill, in connection with any element in it giving the power of review.

Mr. Gerald Bowden (Dulwich): In congratulating my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, I know that I speak for the vast majority of teachers, parents and pupils in inner London. They feel that at last there is a chance to have in London an education authority that is financially accountable to the ratepayers and responsive to the educational need in London. This is worth while, but I should not wish the House to be under the impression that the advocacy of direct elections in any way endorses the administration of ILEA at the moment.

Sir Keith Joseph: I do not think that what I have announced carries any such endorsement. The Government's views on the qualities, disadvantages and demerits of the service in London are well known.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Will the Secretary of State recognise that the magnificent campaign of parents, non-teaching staff, teaching staff and community organisations in defence of ILEA has been a campaign for democracy in London, and also a campaign to recognise the great areas of deprivation in London, in which higher educational spending is needed to overcome the problems? Following his earlier remarks, will the right hon. Gentleman make a statement that he will lessen central Government control of ILEA after his new administration comes into operation so that members of staff, both teaching and non-teaching, and community organisations can continue to expect the high standards of service from ILEA that they have enjoyed for many years?

Sir Keith Joseph: The hon. Gentleman is evidently yet another person under the illusion that ILEA, or its replacement as a unitary education authority, was at risk. There was no threat to it. The consultations were about the implementation of the replacement. As for the rate-capping possibilities, I and the Government wish only that the conduct of ILEA and a handful of other authorities had not been such as to force the Government to take this action.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: Will the Secretary of State reconsider his answer about what he called the detail of the next three years? Does he not recognise that in that period some children will complete the whole of their nursery education, and that many children will complete half their secondary education, so it will be a key period? He appears to be having three separate bodies responsible for the administration of inner London education during that

period. He says that this will have to wait for the main Bill, but that Bill will not be law until half way through that three-year period.

Therefore, is it not essential that he tells us now how inner London education will be administered? There will be enough difficulty in carrying out the administration with the Government's proposals for cutting funds, let alone for having three separate bodies. Is that not a recipe for chaos? The right hon. Gentleman must tell the House either now or next week what will happen.

Will the right hon. Gentleman show his customary good grace and congratulate Mrs. Morrell, ILEA, the parents and everyone else in the campaign to save democracy in inner London? Will he remember that that campaign was based on the fact that those people wanted good standards and knew that a democratic, directly-elected body would give them those good standards?

Sir Keith Joseph: I ask the House to accept that I am not underestimating the importance of the questions to which the hon. Gentleman has referred by referring to them as details—I have more than once said, "albeit important details". The Government wish to be scrupulous in limiting the paving Bill to do what its title, the Local Government (Interim Provisions) Bill, implies. The purpose of the Bill is to pave the way towards the abolition of the GLC and the metropolitan county councils, but not to anticipate the decisions that Parliament will be asked to take next year on the basis of the substantive Bill.

I must resist the temptation to congratulate Mrs. Morrell on the things that the hon. Gentleman has spelt out. However, I am willing to risk my reputation, such as it is, by congratulating Mrs. Morrell and her colleagues and all ILEA on commissioning a report, the Hargreaves report, which seems to set out arguments on which all the House will agree and which unites ILEA and the Government in seeking a better quality of education for the children in inner London.