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**CONFIDENTIAL**

PRIME MINISTER

I have for some time been giving thought to the future of the National Ports Council. This is the body which advises me on my various functions in relation to the ports industry. It is also the most important "quango" for which my Department is responsible and costs the industry over £1m a year. I thought you would like to know now that I have decided that the Council should be abolished. My decision will be included in Sir Leo Pliatzky's report which I understand he will be submitting to you very shortly, although I hope to make an announcement before Sir Leo's report is actually made public. Abolition will require legislation which I would aim to seek in the 1980/81 session.

The ports industry is an industry where there is all too little efficiency at present and where it is obviously of crucial economic importance to achieve it. But I am convinced that any arrangements for securing increased efficiency in the ports industry must have the support and cooperation of the industry itself. It is clear to me that the Council cannot, despite a good and dedicated Chairman, achieve either. I shall therefore be looking for less expensive and more effective arrangements (which, I should say, are bound to involve a small increase in my Department's staff). But my announcement of my intention to abolish the Council will make it clear that implementation of the decision will depend on the development of satisfactory arrangements for improving the efficiency and productivity of the ports industry.

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I am sending copies of this minute to Keith Joseph, John Nott and Christopher Soames and also to Sir Leo Pliatsky and Sir Robert Armstrong.

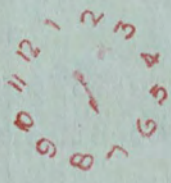
NORMAN FOWLER  
22 November 1979

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Gov Machinery

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

26 November, 1979.

*Dear Annie*

The Prime Minister has seen the Minister of Transport's minute of 22 November, about the future of the National Ports Council.

She is pleased to know that Mr. Fowler has decided that the Council is amongst the "quangos" which can be abolished. She is content to leave the timing of an announcement on this particular body to Mr. Fowler.

The Prime Minister has noted that future arrangements for the ports industry will involve a small increase in the Department of Transport staff, and she hopes that it may prove possible to handle the extra work by transfers of staff within the Department in preference to an overall increase.

*Yours sincerely*

*Mike Pattison*

Miss E.C. Flanagan,  
Department of Transport.

copies: Ellison (Department of Industry)  
Hampson (Department of Trade)  
Sir Leo Pliatzky and Vile (Cabinet Off)

*S*

PRIME MINISTER

Mr. Fowler intends to abolish the National Ports Council. This will be amongst the major executive bodies to be closed down as a result of Sir Leo Pliatsky's study.

Mr. Fowler speaks of a small increase in his Department's staff. Following the Cabinet discussions on manpower, I expect Lord Soames to argue that the necessary staff should be found by transfer within the Department, not by overall expansion in the Department.

*Yes - but we must not ask or expect the impossible.*

- 1) Agree that Mr. Fowler should be asked to <sup>possibly</sup> make arrangements to handle ~~any~~ extra work without an overall increase in staff? *whether it is*
- 2) Subject to this, agree to the abolition of the National Ports Council, to be announced by Mr. Fowler shortly? *Yes not*

*MAP*

23 November 1979