

## PRESENTATION OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT POLICIES

NOTE OF A MEETING ON THURSDAY 15 DECEMBER 1983

PRESENTSecretary of State  
for the Environment

Lord Bellwin

Mr Waldegrave

Lord Skelmersdale

Mr Mockler

Mr Heiser

Mr P Owen

Mr Rowcliffe

Mr Bright

Secretary of State for the  
Home DepartmentSecretary of State for Education  
and Science

Mr Jameson DES

Secretary of State for Wales

Secretary of State for Transport

Mr Yass ) DTp

Ms Ramsay ) DTp

Minister for the Arts

Minister for Health

Mr P Fletcher DHSS

Minister of State,  
Department of Employment

Mr Bernard Ingham, Nol0

1. The Secretary of State for the Environment outlined the campaign that was being mounted against the Government's policies on rate limitation and abolition. The Government could only mount an effective response if the policies of individual departments and the presentation of those policies were properly co-ordinated. It was important that individual departments did not give the impression, however inadvertently, that the general need to restrain local authority expenditure and increase inefficiency, did not apply to their services.

2. The Secretary of State went on to draw attention to the Audit Commission's handbook on Economy Efficiency and Effectiveness distributed the previous day. It demonstrated the ways in which savings in all services could be secured. Together with the information available from LAMSAC the handbook gave the Government considerable support in its campaign.

3. In discussion the following points were made -

(i) DOE Ministers would need to conduct a series of bilateral meetings with Ministers in other Departments to consider the representations made during the consultation periods on abolition.

(ii) DOE Ministers had now begun to meet with their panel of local authority advisers. It would be useful for other Ministers to attend or receive notes of points made where this was not possible.

(iii) Factual material needed to be co-ordinated. There also needed to be a co-ordinated political response. While it was for DOE to take the lead on the former it was for the CCO to take the lead on the latter. The structure of the relevant Cabinet Committees might need to be reviewed.

(iv) While the DTp was in one sense leading the field, because of the London Regional Transport Bill, in another sense it was DES. While the ILEA continued to be so extravagant there was little incentive for other authorities, who were already considerably more efficient, to make greater efforts.

(v) Ministers and Conservative Party members would be better equipped to defend the Government's position on the media if an early decision could be taken on policy towards concessionary fares and the Arts. Meanwhile the production of factual material now underway in DOE, would give some immediate help.

4. The Minister of State, Department of Employment, in his capacity as Chairman of the Conservative Party outlined what had already been done on the political side. A London Committee had been set up under the Chairmanship of Anthony Berry MP, to bring together London issues; Central Office records were being used to produce a Zip card for all councillors and some steps had already been taken to brief and equip MPs for appearances on radio and TV.

5. It was agreed that -

(i) Each Department should nominate a Minister and an official as the point of contact for DOE.

(ii) DOE Ministers would hold bilateral meetings with Minister in other Departments to consider the representations made during the consultation periods.

(iii) Other Ministers should attend, where possible, the meetings organised by DOE Ministers with local authority advisory panel. Ministers not present should, as appropriate, receive a note of the points made.

(iv) The possibility of using Cabinet Committee machinery to co-ordinate the flow of material and responses should be investigated. The present responsibilities of MISC 95 for abolition and E(LF) for rate limitation might be combined in one committee. There were a number of issues upon which decisions were still needed.

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(v) A copy of the Audit Commission's handbook on Economy, Efficiency and Effectiveness should be sent to each Minister present (with a separate copy for their special advisers) with the intention that their officials should consider the examples in it of ways in which the local authority services, for which they had a responsibility, could be run more efficiently.

(vi) The Secretary of State for education said that he would provide a note on possible examples of ILEA extravagance. The low number of hours worked by teachers and the amount of teacher training were possible examples. The note would be discussed with the Secretary of State for Environment before being circulated to other Departments.

(vii) The Secretary of State for the Environment would meet Greater London MPs shortly after the recess.

J F BALLARD  
PS/Secretary of State  
Department of the Environment

16 December 1983

Distribution

1. Those present
2. PS/Lord President
3. Mr Turnbull N010
4. PS/Sir George Moseley  
Mr McDonald



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cc FM to note X

2 MARSHAM STREET  
LONDON SW1P 3EB  
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NBPM  
AT  
19/12

Local Govt  
Notes

My ref:

Your ref:

16 December 1983

Dear Janet

/ I enclose a note of the meeting held in this Department on 15 December to discuss the presentation of local government policies. You will see that it was agreed (paragraph 5(v) of the note that officials should look at the Audit Commission's handbook on Economy, Efficiency and Effectiveness for examples of ways in which the local authority services, for which they have a responsibility, could be run more efficiently. I understand that the Audit Commission are sending copies of this handbook direct to all Cabinet Ministers, including the Lord President. The further copy for Special Advisers will be sent by this Department as soon as possible.

X | I would be grateful if this letter and enclosed note could have a restricted circulation, on a strictly need to know basis. Copies go to Hugh Taylor, Elizabeth Hodgkinson, Colin Jones, Dinah Nicols, Steve Godber, Mary Brown and Andrew Turnbull.

Yours sincerely

John Ballard

JOHN BALLARD  
Private Secretary

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Miss Janet Luce-Jones

LORD PRESIDENT

Local Govt file  
with copy to BNPL file  
cc

Prime Minister ②

To be aware. The  
papers at x are with AT  
you. 15/12

MS

MEDIA

This note supplements briefing No 10 Press Office has supplied for your meeting with the press at noon tomorrow.

We are ending the year in reasonably good presentational shape. But there is one current worry which the meeting I attended on your behalf this afternoon on local government presentation did nothing to allay.

Patrick Jenkin presided and also present were Mr Waldegrave, Lord Bellwin, Leon Brittan, Sir Keith Joseph, Nicholas Ridley, Nicholas Edwards, Kenneth Clarke, Lord Gowrie, Lord Skelmersdale and John Gummer.

Mr Jenkin made the following points by way of opening:

- X / - it was thoroughly unfortunate that papers associated with the meeting were in the hands of the Opposition spokesman, John Cunningham; though he was clearly more concerned that Dr Cunningham should have the covering letter than that he had the briefing material;
- the purpose of the meeting was to secure more effective presentation of the Government's case in the face of a very well organised, professional and expensive opposition;
- Government must stand together; Ministers and Departments cannot opt out. (He instanced a case where apparently the Probation Service had been less than rigorous in discussions with local authorities).

The meeting then went on to worry about the machinery. Mr Jenkin saw bilateral discussions between his and other Departments developing. Lord Bellwin said he had got together panels of sympathetic local leaders separately for London and the rest of the country. John Selwyn Gummer also drew an organisational distinction in CCO between London and the rest (and underlined his limited resources). He added that the party felt that the ILEA was crucial since other county education authorities felt its spending was disgracefully extravagant.

Nicholas Ridley added point to the London problem and wanted to be sure that the whole of the presentational problem was effectively co-ordinated. Those asked to talk about London Transport reorganisation quickly found themselves embroiled in the projected local government changes and vice versa. Mr Jenkin was sure that co-ordination should rest with D/Environment and there was apparently no dissent.

It was at this time that I had to leave for Prime Minister's Questions. I have since spoken to Mr Jenkin's private office and they have welcomed my suggestion that I should put a note into his box tomorrow night (Friday).

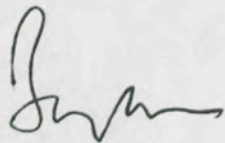
If you agree, I would propose to forward the attached at Annex A.

#### Nuclear

Meanwhile, I should report that I have this week had a meeting with Heads of Information in Environment, Energy and MAFF about the Windscale mess, since it seemed that co-ordination left something to be desired. (I had earlier cleared the idea with the Prime Minister).

The Heads of Information were very unhappy about presentation but felt I could not be of much use until Ministers had sorted out policy and BNFL had taken a management/PR grip (which I had urged it to do in concert with D/Energy).

I agree  
AT I am not convinced that nothing can be done within Government, and I am going to keep a close eye on it. But BNFL today made a statement setting out the facts about the recent contamination accident and announcing a set of measures to prevent another incident. To that extent our consultations have borne fruit.



B. INGHAM

15 December 1983