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PRIME MINISTER

Direct Elections to ILEA

The meeting this evening arises from the Cabinet discussion on 5 April where your summing up stated that the Cabinet

"did not agree that it would be right for the Government itself to propose amendments to the abolition Paving Bill to that end. Initially, at least, the Government's stance should be that this was a matter for the main abolition Bill. If there was strong pressure during its passage for provisions to be inserted into the Paving Bill, the matter could be reconsidered in the light of circumstances then prevailing."

This evening the Government will face an amendment inserting into the Paving Bill a provision for elections to ILEA in 1985. Mr. Jenkin and Sir Keith Joseph will argue that if there is strong pressure, they should undertake to introduce their own amendment in the Lords.

The argument for accepting the amendment is that in pure management terms it is a nonsense to have three successive authorities in three years, each constituted differently.

An important argument against, though not one which can be deployed strongly in public, is that elections to the new ILEA in May, 1985 will provide just the platform which the GLC Labour Group are seeking. It would be ironical, when the Government is taking steps to prevent by-elections after the Second Reading of the main Bill, to offer Labour an alternative platform at an even more crucial time as the main Bill is going through Parliament. The meeting you held on 7 May concluded that the weapon of mass resignations leading to by-elections was not very strong as the Conservatives could choose not to contest them. It would have no choice, however, but to fight

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the ILEA elections.

The third argument is that the amendment is inconsistent with the true paving character of the Bill as it introduces a substantive measure. The business managers argue that it would complicate the passage of the Paving Bill through the House (though Mr. Jenkin and Sir Keith Joseph argue that it will make the Bill more acceptable) and it will make it more difficult to resist other substantive amendments.

AT

ANDREW TURNBULL

9 May, 1984

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