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LORD PRESIDENT

LOCAL GOVERNMENT/LONDON TRANSPORT

You will recall from the attached paper (Annex A) I proposed that in July the Government should mount a campaign to regain the initiative over rates control and abolition of GLC/MCCs.

I followed up this paper with D/Environment today and we reached the following conclusions:

- i. We should set in hand work with the objective of mounting a major effort in the last week of July when the White Paper bringing the public up to date on abolition, and the allocation of powers, will be published.
- ii. Provided both were presented bullishly, there could be additional shots in the locker before the Recess in the shape of the initial list of local authorities to be rate capped and the RSG announcement.
- iii. We shall meet again next week to take our planning further.

It should, however, be noted that there are three possible complications:

- i. the outcome of the Paving Bill in the Lords;
- ii. Liverpool (July 11); and
- iii. the unsolved problem of LA capital expenditure overrun on which Mr Jenkin is seeking an urgent meeting of Ministers.

Our planning will have to take account of these risks. But we intend to make as much mileage out of the White Paper for Mr Jenkin and the Government policy.

Are you content we proceed on these lines?

London Transport

I have also had a meeting today with D/Transport on the need to make the most of Royal Assent of the London Transport Bill.

There are three focuses for action:-

- Tomorrow (Friday) - Appointed Day; and announcements of the new members of the LRT Board and the Passengers' Committee (consumer council)
- July 16: announcement of LRT objectives
- about July 23: announcement of improved LRT/BR Travelcard, including travel on buses instead of just the Underground.

I am assured that the Secretary of State for Transport is geared up to make maximum use of tomorrow's announcement to get over the positive immediate message - eg about pensioner concessions, services, network and fares - on radio and television.

I have asked D/Transport to coordinate with LRT their approach to publicity, both free media and advertising. I am also bringing D/Transport together with D/Environment in the planning of the July local government campaign since their publicity needs affect each other.

I have explored the idea of advertising with D/Transport and reached the preliminary conclusion that this is primarily a matter for the new LRT Board and not D/Transport. In any case, the D/Transport does not have any money set aside for the purpose.

But we need to be exceptionally careful about any advertising campaign given that:

- i. there may well be substantial fare increases from January 1, 1985;
- ii. the continuation of the pensioner concession is ultimately dependent on a response from the boroughs;

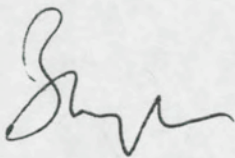
iii. the network, stations and service cannot and must not be frozen into a set pattern, even though no immediate changes are planned;

iv. presentation, and the claims which can be made in it, are dependent upon a series of decisions yet to be taken; and

v. we must avoid the charge we now make against the GLC and MCCs of political advertising, thereby making the passage of the local government legislation more difficult.

I shall have a further meeting with D/Transport early next week.

Content for me to proceed in this way?



BERNARD INGHAM
28 June 1984

PERSONAL AND CONFIDENTIALLOCAL GOVERNMENT REFORM - MEDIA CAMPAIGN

This note sets out my views on the next steps in the effort to preserve the Government's local government policies positively and effectively.

Background

I have continually been struck during my attendance at D/Environment campaign meetings how little I, as a relative outsider, have been affected by public campaigning, even though I live in a London Borough - Croydon.

But for my privileged position, and awareness of the tremendous effort being made within Government, I would but dimly perceive the ebb and flow of the battle.

Separating, as best I can, my perceptions from my inside knowledge, I have the following impressions:

1. Some considerable disarray in Government, with perhaps worse to come in the Lords, because of internal but public and Parliamentary, disagreement over the policy.
2. Increasing regard for Ken Livingstone as a political figure and publicist.
3. Growing restiveness among supporters at the Government's failure to beat Livingstone at his own game.
4. Next to no impression of how the argument is going in the Metropolitan Counties.

In other words, the Government's problems arise for broadly two reasons:

- i. disagreements within its own ranks; we have failed to neutralise the dissidents; and
- ii. Livingstone's success as a publicist, which is not perhaps surprising with a budget £3m more than is properly available to the Government for paid publicity.

But, there has latterly been one demonstration that the GLC's position is as insecure as a pack of cards: the effect of the Talgarth Road right turn on its reputation for sensitive administration.

The feeling nonetheless in Government is that we are losing out with the public; that the devil has all the best tunes; and that we badly need to come up with a fresh and preferably electrifying presentation.

Problem

As I see it, the presentational problem has three distinct aspects:

- i. Immediate: how do we turn the tide now?
- ii. Medium Term: How do we secure and retain the initiative during the Recess? and
- iii. Longer Term: How do we persuade the public over the next 12 months or so that the Government's policy is not merely going ahead but is necessary and will bring benefits to ratepayers?

Immediate

How do we turn the tide?

This is easier said than done if only because June is so fiendishly busy: Botha, Reagan visits; Economic Summit in London: Euro-Elections; Euro-Council - all in quick succession. Moreover, we need to be sensitive to the needs and performance of the Lords re Rates and Paving Bills.

Yet what we need is a dramatic demonstration of Government purpose which is arresting both in terms of power and language.

I am reluctantly forced to the conclusion that we should, if we can, bide our time until July and use June to plan a publicity strike early in July.

In an ideal world, what we need is:

i. a speech by the Prime Minister, followed by her appearance on eg the Jimmy Young Show, Nationwide or Thames TV Eye, or a combination, the following day, which puts the Opposition on the defensive;

ii. Cabinet Ministers, armed with the same remit, to hammer the message home in London and the six Metropolitan areas over the following two days, backed up by radio, television and local newspaper interviews and articles;

iii. Mobilisation of articulate and impressive supporters from local government to:

a. advertise their support in local regional newspapers at the same time - can the Government raise by other means the money to pay for this?

b. carry the message through the local media for the rest of July.

iv. Mobilisation of MP support to assist and underline the efforts of local government supporters during July.

The keys, however, to the success of the exercise are:

i. surprise;

ii. lead from the top with fresh language;

iii. continued effort to demonstrate Government power and commitment;

iv. follow through, as indicated; and if possible, the identification of prominent individuals from many walks of life who will weigh in as required to back the Government's policy.

Substance

As always, the credibility of any Government effort of the kind advocated will depend to some extent on the current degree of dissidence in the Government's ranks. The objective must be to crush that out of sight: to use such heavy armour that the opposition, for a period at least, is obliterated.

In my view, the main elements of the appeal should be:-

- i. Manifesto commitment;
- ii. Local Government always derived bulk of its money as well as its existence and authority from central government which therefore cannot ignore local spending;
- iii. wide measure of autonomy at local level within overall framework and ceilings; need more rather than less imagination, creativity and management expertise at local level, acting in interests of ratepayers within established and familiar limits;
- iv. but don't need a tier which has proved it has a very limited role that can be properly exercised by lower tiers, where necessary acting together;
- v. inevitably savings will arise from elimination of unnecessary tier - and Government is determined that the inevitable happens;
- vi. (for London) don't intend to put up with hypocritical nonsense from a Palace revolutionary about ending of elections when there are good precedents and administrative efficiency arguments in favour;
- vii. London has no need of GLC representation when the Lord Mayor of London has not looked back since Dick Whittington; nothing can replace the prestige of the Lord Mayor of London;

viii. the administration of London under Livingstone and Labour has everything not to commend it, especially the real interests of workers whose firms are being driven elsewhere by high rates and profligate expenditure;

ix. the Government meanwhile will play the game by arguing its case persuasively without cost to the taxpayer while the GLC and MCCs spend ratepayers' money without authority.

I believe that we need a new speech written by someone - eg me - who is not too close to it all, which takes on frontally all the arguments, both substantive and political, with the objective of powering the Government to the ascendancy.

But if we are to overcome the expenditure of £3m plus by the GLC and MCCs we need to mobilise the full weight of Government and its supporters.


Medium to Longer Term

Any campaigns over the medium and longer term - ie recess and next 12 months - can be considered realistically only in the light of immediate plans.

I suggest we concentrate our thinking on how to make an immediate impact, and then commission work on how to carry with us public opinion after that.

A powerful strike in July which carries the argument and puts the opposition on the defensive will win a lot of time. That should be used to prepare a White Paper, of whatever size or substance, to carry the case forward to actual abolition.

I hope this is helpful.



BERNARD INGHAM