

cc Master CONFIDENTIAL

JCHACQ *Jie*

SUBJECT



10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

2 August 1984

Dear Janet,

ABOLITION OF THE GLC

Lady Faithfull came to see the Prime Minister today to discuss the Abolition Bill. She said that she and perhaps seven to ten others taking the Conservative Whip were unhappy about the Government's proposals. This, in conjunction with opposition from Alliance and Crossbench Peers, could create difficulties for the Government in the Lords.

She recognised that the GLC as at present constituted had to go. But she felt there was a great deal of grass roots feeling in favour of a smaller London authority with limited powers. Under the Government's proposals, there was perceived to be a lack of a "voice for London". She doubted whether certain services such as ancient buildings and monuments, the arts, parks and waste disposal were being adequately catered for. There could also be a reduction in the grants to charities. In her experience joint boards did not function effectively. In the field of planning she thought it was often helpful for there to be a second local authority to whom the citizen could appeal. She wondered whether some of these services could be grouped together under the smaller authority or could be attached to the new ILEA.

The Prime Minister said she did not accept these arguments. One had to ask what was left for the London authority to do. Provision had been made for services such as the arts and ancient buildings and monuments. The GLC did not have responsibility for social services, its housing function had been handed over to the London boroughs, transport had gone to London Regional Transport, and the education service would go to the new ILEA. The fire services could perfectly adequately be run by a joint board.

What was left could not possibly justify an elected body. London did not need a new elected body to fill the

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representational function which was carried out perfectly well by the Lord Mayor of the City of London and the Lord Mayor of Westminster. Planning would be dealt with more economically by one borough and MPs and the local authority ombudsman provided adequate facilities for appeal.

The Prime Minister said that to establish a small authority would inevitably provide a platform from which local authorities could operate on the national stage. The danger was particularly acute as the authority would not have enough to do. Far from damaging grants to charities, the establishment of a small authority would mean more money being wasted on special interest groups. The Prime Minister did, however, suggest that a Select Committee of London MPs could be established.

When she left, Lady Faithfull did not appear to have been persuaded. We undertook to provide her with a copy of Mr. Jenkin's recent paper on the transfer of functions .

I am copying this letter to John Ballard (Department of the Environment), Mike Bailey (Lord Bellwin's Office), and David Beamish (Government Whips' Office, House of Lords).

*Yours sincerely
Andrew Turnbull*

(ANDREW TURNBULL)

Miss Janet Lewis-Jones,
Lord President's Office.