

SUBJECT
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RECORD OF A MEETING HELD AT 10 DOWNING STREET AT 1730 HOURS
ON 4 OCTOBER 1984, TO DISCUSS LONDON DIMENSION OF ABOLITION.

PRESENT

Prime Minister
Secretary of State for the Environment
Minister for Local Government
Lord Avon
Mr. Letwin
Mr. Turnbull

Mr. Baker outlined the legislative timetable for the Abolition Bill. The third print would be available next week, when it would go to the House authorities to be checked that the Bill was not hybrid. The Bill would go to Legislation Committee on 21 November and be introduced in the House before Christmas. It was hoped to complete the legislative stages and receive Royal Assent by July.

Mr. Baker said the trickiest issue was the demand for a "London Voice" for which there was substantial pressure. Mr. Baker said that under no circumstances could there be a new elected authority or a new executive authority to succeed the GLC. Nor should there be any building on ILEA. The idea of a statutory London Boroughs Association should be resisted (the Conservatives could lose control of this).

Nevertheless, it might be necessary to concede an advisory body. He had in mind an advisory committee similar to the South East Region Planning Commission. This would have no money-raising powers and would be concerned solely with land use planning.

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It was essential that the arguments for a London body should be resisted fiercely at the outset. If a new body were conceded at Second Reading or in Committee it would quickly attract new functions and grow into a mini GLC. Mr. Baker suggested, therefore, that if such a concession were necessary it should be made at Report Stage in the Commons just before Easter. Mr. Jenkin suggested an alternative was a London Grand Committee which could be set up without legislation. The Prime Minister said this would be no more than a talking shop and the Government should not consider it unless it was driven to it.

The Prime Minister asked about the possible uses for County Hall. Mr. Baker said it would be preferable to sell it to the private sector; under no circumstances should a Government Department be put in there. The Prime Minister suggested either a prestigious hotel or the location of the British Library which would obviate the need for the expensive new building which was just being started.

Mr. Baker hoped the building would be sold for an advantageous price which would allow a dividend to be paid through the rates. Alternatively, the proceeds could be devoted to a useful capital project such as a road scheme.

Mr. Baker promised to send the Prime Minister a note on the possible uses for the building.

The meeting ended at 1800 hours.

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4 October 1984

ANDREW TURNBULL