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27 November 1984

You wrote to George Younger on 20 August with a proposal for a special initiative to tackle unemployment in the Cowdenbeath area. I am sorry I have not been able to let you have a considered reply before now.

I acknowledge your concern about employment opportunities in Cowdenbeath. It can, however, be misleading to consider individual communities in isolation from the employment opportunities in the whole of the Travel-to-Work Area of which they are part, since TTWAs are considered as largely self-contained in relation to work and residence. At 14.1% (in October 1984), the unemployment rate in the Dunfermline TTWA, which contains all the communities you mentioned except Kinglassie, is below the Scottish rate of 15.2%. The unemployment figures for the area do not themselves justify a major initiative by the Scottish Development Agency in Cowdenbeath of the type you suggest. This will not however prevent the Agency from undertaking other work such as land renewal or financial assistance to business and industry in the area as opportunities arise. When we met on 13 November you raised with me the Agency's factory building programme in the area. I am of course having enquiries made and will write separately on this point.

There is good scope for a local economic initiative in the area, and I understand that there has already been some discussion involving the local business community about establishing an enterprise trust for Dunfermline and West Fife. This would be an excellent development, since enterprise trusts in other areas have shown they have a valuable role to play in stimulating local initiative and helping to create new jobs. I hope you will give the Chamber of Commerce your support in taking this proposal forward.

ALLAN STEWART

PM : meetings with Gordon Brown
9/83