



PRIME MINISTER

WELSH COUNCIL

In his minute to you of 17 July, in which he proposed the abolition of regional economic planning councils, the Secretary of State for the Environment refers to the future of the Welsh Council.

The Welsh Council is in many respects the equivalent of the regional economic planning councils in England, although transfer of functions to the Secretary of State for Wales has made it less necessary or practicable for the Council to act in the economic planning role. It has a wide responsibility for advising the Secretary of State on social and cultural as well as economic affairs, and has long been seen as an all Wales forum and channel of advice to the Secretary of State in the absence of an elected body. It has not played any significant part in structure planning.

The present Council is, however, ineffective, largely because it was pushed to one side in the devolution debate. It needs wholesale reconstitution or to be abolished. I have come to the conclusion that abolition was the better course. Regional

/policy making



policy making can be handled adequately by my department in consultation with the other Agencies; and I can keep in touch as necessary with local authorities and other bodies through informal meetings. About £50,000 a year could be saved by abolishing the Council. But the decision will be controversial in Wales. I am under some pressure to reconstitute the Council and give it a more independent role and support, not only from the Wales TUC (who seek to reconstitute it as a Welsh version of the NEDC, a course which I do not favour) but also from the CBI in Wales, who would like to see a body to review the activities of central government and other public authorities. In defending its abolition, I shall need to refer to our intention to meet the desires of many in Wales for debate and review of our policies by developing Parliamentary methods of scrutiny and review of Welsh affairs, viz more frequent meetings of the Welsh Grand Committee and our intention to set up a Select Committee on Welsh affairs. I shall point out that those developments will leave little room for an independent review body such as a reconstituted and improved Welsh Council.

The decision to abolish regional economic planning councils in England will lead to immediate pressure for an announcement about the future of the Welsh Council. I therefore seek authority to announce the abolition of the Welsh Council as

/soon as



soon as Michael Heseltine announces his decision on the regional economic planning councils.

I am sending copies of this minute to those who received copies of Michael Heseltine's.

24 July 1979

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24 JUL 1979



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10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

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CO(Sir D.R.)
25 July 1979

File TWP
Econ Pd.

The Prime Minister has seen your Secretary of State's minute of 24 July, in which he proposes the abolition of the Welsh Council. As you pointed out in your letter to me of the same date, an announcement of the abolition can no longer be made simultaneously with that of the English Economic Planning Council.

The Prime Minister agrees with Mr. Edwards' proposal, on the understanding that Mr. Edwards is confident that this step will not complicate his position in Wales in the aftermath of the devolution debate.

I am sending copies of this letter to the Private Secretaries to Members of E(EA) and to Martin Vile (Cabinet Office), David Laughrin (Civil Service Department) and Clive Priestley (Sir Derek Rayner's Office).

M. A. PATTISON

G.C.G. Craig, Esq.,
Welsh Office.

TWP

PRIME MINISTER

This minute from Mr. Edwards proposes the abolition of the Welsh Council. (When he signed it, he proposed to make the announcement simultaneously with that of Mr. Heseltine about the England EPCs: but Mr. Heseltine agreed early today that Sir Keith Joseph should make this announcement in the Regional Policy Debate.)

I think this will be a more sensitive decision than the abolition of the English Planning Councils. Mr. Edwards presses for a rapid decision, and argues that he can defend it by referring to other intentions to develop Parliamentary methods of scrutiny and review of Welsh affairs.

Agree that the Welsh Council should now be abolished rapidly in the wake of the similar action for the English Councils?

*Yes - it is all right
SND for Wales -
on Council
Lenny
out.*

24 July 1979

PRIME MINISTER

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Edwards VLB

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M. A. PATTISON

24 July 1979

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FROM THE PRIVATE SECRETARY
TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE
FOR WALES

Dear Tim,

24 July 1979

WELSH COUNCIL

... Since my Secretary of State wrote the attached we have heard that it is now proposed to make an announcement on the English EPCs during this afternoon's regional policy debate.

Clearly in view of these rapid developments it will not now be possible to make an announcement at the same time as that for England - if for no other reason than that my Secretary of State wishes to tell the Chairman of the Council before announcing any decisions. Mr Edwards nonetheless hopes to be able to make an announcement before the House rises. I hope therefore that you will forgive my importunity in requesting a particularly urgent response.

/ I am copying this letter to, David Edmunds (DOE), Andrew Duguid (Department of Industry) and John Stevens (Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster).

Yours ever
G. G. Craig
G. G. CRAIG

Tim Lankester Esq
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Westminster