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31 December 1984

Mr Turnbull o/s

I think we probably need
a draft letter to David
Shepherd?

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31/12

Dear Andrew,

Thank you for copying to us your note of 16 November on the meeting between the Prime Minister, the Archbishop and the Bishop of Liverpool. During the discussions the Bishop referred to the Youth Training Scheme and made a plea for more Mode B provision in Merseyside. The Prime Minister said she would look into the matter - hence this letter.

As you know, the Youth Training Scheme aims to provide all eligible youngsters with the type of course best suited to their needs. In the majority of cases we believe that this will mean a place on an employer based scheme which offers both experience of a realistic working environment and the best chance of employment after completion of the programme. This does not of course mean that there is no role for Mode B Schemes. We realise that there will continue to be a need to cater for a number of youngsters through the provision of training workshops, community projects and linked Mode B2 schemes particularly in areas such as Merseyside. However, we must ensure that the provision of this type of training, which is far more expensive to provide than that offered on employer led schemes, is closely matched to the local demand from youngsters.

During the first year of the Youth Training Scheme, from April 1983 to March 1984, 6112 Mode B1 places and 2327 Mode B2 places were approved in Merseyside but peak occupancy never exceeded 3750 on Mode B1 or 1500 on Mode B2. This level of unfilled provision represented a very considerable financial burden on the taxpayer. It costs around £2,000 per year to support an unfilled Mode B1 place and you can see that a very large sum of money was therefore being spent training nobody.



In 1984/85 the Manpower Services Commission are offering some 4800 Mode B1 and 1100 Mode B2 places in Merseyside and we are confident that this level of provision will adequately meet the demand from eligible youngsters without leading to the excessive number of empty places we had last year. At the end of October occupancy on Mode B schemes in Merseyside was around 85% although this figure will include a number of 83/84 entrants to the Scheme who will shortly be finishing their training programmes.

We have spent a considerable amount of time deciding on the level of provision in Merseyside for 1984/85 and earlier this year Mr Morrison, the Minister of State for Employment, personally reviewed not only the general situation in the area but also the planned provision for each Mode B1 scheme with the Manpower Services Commission's Regional Director for the North West and officials from the two Merseyside Area Offices. Ministers have also had meetings with the Bishop to discuss the Youth Training Scheme in Liverpool and careful account was taken of all the points made by the Bishop.

I think you will agree no realistic justification can be made at the present moment for an increase in Mode B provision. We do of course appreciate the Bishop's concern that youngsters in Liverpool should not be denied the opportunity of taking part in the Scheme and I can assure you that the current level of provision is adequate to meet the needs of eligible youngsters. In this respect the Commission are confident that they will have no difficulty in meeting the undertaking we have given of an offer of a place on the Scheme before Christmas to every eligible minimum age school leaver who wants one.

I am copying this letter to Leigh Lewis, Private Secretary to the Minister without Portfolio.

*Yours sincerely,
Judith Rutherford*

JUDITH RUTHERFORD
Private Secretary

REGIONAL POLICY: Liverpool: P.S.



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