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cc: D. Kemp

10 DOWNING STREET

THE PRIME MINISTER

8 February, 1985

My dear Lord Bishop.

Thank you for your letter of 21 January. I am sorry I did not pick up your point about the adult training strategy in my earlier letter.

I fully understand your concern that our support for adult training in Merseyside, particularly for the unemployed, should not be reduced. Let me assure you that there is no question of any reduced commitment to supporting adult training on Merseyside or other areas experiencing high unemployment. In fact, we plan to more than double the number of adults trained on Merseyside with the Manpower Services Commission's support next year. Nearly 7000 adults are expected to be helped by the Commission's training programmes, and this increase will substantially benefit unemployed people, who will account for about half of those supported, as well as those already in jobs. We are introducing new programmes which we hope will be more relevant to the local labour market and expanding the successful elements of existing schemes, such as training for people to set up small businesses.

We are able to help more people within the same level of resources nationally and with minor adjustments at regional level by tailoring training to local needs and ensuring it is delivered cost-effectively.

RW

As far as the particular problems of areas such as as Liverpool 8 are concerned, I assure you that the Manpower Services Commission will continue to take these fully into account when considering which training courses to support, and will continue to work closely with other organisations and departments, including the Task Force, in tackling the needs of Merseyside. In the particular case of the review of the Skillcentre network, I hope you would agree that our main concern should be to provide more training which is more relevant to the needs of the area rather than to preserve courses and institutions which are not proving effective. But the Manpower Services Commission's proposals for Skillcentres certainly envisage retaining the best of the Skills training currently provided at Airtree and elsewhere on Merseyside.

I hope this information is helpful. Thank you for writing on this important matter.

Y  
ours sincerely

Margaret Thatcher

The Right Reverend the Lord Bishop of Liverpool