

22 September 1987

MR NORGROVE

INNER CITIES

You asked for my comments on the machinery of Government aspects of the Inner Cities Final Report.

There are two reasons for the current preoccupation with inner cities:

- political: the outcome of the election;
- the Government's failure to win sufficient credit for what it has already achieved, compounded by the capacity of its political opponents in charge of inner cities government to vilify central Government while simultaneously taking credit for projects financed from Westminster.

This being so, presentation is crucial to the future success of the Government's inner city programme.

There is no doubt that the Department of the Environment is the major player and that logically the Secretary of State for the Environment should be in charge.

There is equally no doubt about the DTI's claim in the public's mind to DTI leadership. Reports of intense rivalry between the Departments are all too regular - and all too damaging to Government credibility.

There is in my view a simple solution: for Mr Ridley, saddled as he is with the heaviest legislative load of any Minister, to make a virtue out of necessity and with the Prime Minister's blessing to invite Kenneth Clarke to take responsibility - not for the co-ordination of policy, which is the Prime Minister's responsibility in E(UP), but for the co-ordination of presentation. If Mr Ridley did this he would acquire a reputation for "big mindedness". I have planted the idea with his Director of Information who shares my view that this is the best outcome.

The prospects for this ideal solution are, I am told, slim.

This being so, I do not believe that the course proposed by Sir Robert Armstrong is second best. This is because it will effectively mean that the whole of the co-ordination of presentation of inner cities will be delegated to David Trippier

(who I am sure can work happily under Kenneth Clarke's leadership and with complete loyalty to Nicholas Ridley) at PUSS level.

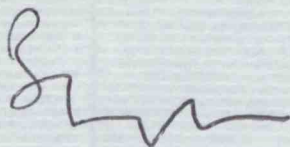
This "demotion", as it will be seen, will sit oddly with the priority the Prime Minister has accorded urban regeneration.

In my view a second best solution would be to:

1. designate the Secretary of State for the Environment as the lead Department for co-ordination, overview and presentation on the grounds that D/Environment has the major role and key responsibility;
2. recognise that the Secretary of State for the Environment has the heaviest legislative workload of any Cabinet Minister; and arrange for the appointment of a major political David Young-type figure outside Government to head an inner city co-ordinating unit and to secure maximum credit for central government across the country for its inner city effort. (NB: I have my thinking cap on over who this figure might be*);
3. underpin the whole operation with a Cabinet Office official co-ordinating committee which includes a Government Information Service representative whose role is to look at co-ordination through promotional eyes.

* Bernard Ingham

- Denis Cassidy, ex MD
British Home Stores, Geordie,
committed to helping
unemployed;
- Ron Deering.



BERNARD INGHAM

Regional Pol. Inner cities PT10