

cc Apppts



Prime Minister

## INQUIRY INTO LOCAL GOVERNMENT PRACTICES AND PROCEDURES

In my minute to you of 16 January I proposed to sound out a number of possible members for the Widdicombe Inquiry.

I am now in a position to propose the following members for your approval, all of whom have expressed their willingness to serve:

Mr Peter Newsam Presently Chairman of the Commission for Racial Equality. As you know, he has been a highly respected educational administrator with long experience first in the North of England and then as Education Officer of the Inner London Education Authority. I believe that he will, above all, keep the Committee in mind of the need to maintain the professional standards of local government without losing sight of the need for political sensitivity.

Sir Lawrence Boyle Formerly Chief Executive of Strathclyde Regional Council, Sir Lawrence has an unrivalled experience and knowledge of local government in Scotland. He has also the advantage of extensive contacts in the business and financial world. He is a member who will give an impressive amount of weight to the Committee as well as lending the necessary Scottish dimension to their work.

APPOINTMENTS IN CONFIDENCE



Mr George Russell He is credited with a dynamic performance as Managing Director of Alcan UK and is held in the highest regard by the Department of Trade and Industry. I have no doubt he will add an incisive cutting edge to the Committee's proceedings. He is presently a member of the Independent Broadcasting Authority - his experience here will be invaluable in the Inquiry's initial task of tackling the problem of local authorities' spending on publicity.

I should add that, although I have considered very carefully nominations which have been made to me in the course of my discussions with the Opposition party spokesmen and the local authority associations, none of them have met the very exacting criteria which I believe necessary for membership of this sensitive and important Inquiry.

I am also sure that we should not include serving Councillors on the Committee if we are to maintain a necessary impartiality. George Younger and I have therefore decided that it would not be wise to appoint Sir Alan Smith, as proposed in my minute of 16 January, since we understand that he remains a member of Tayside Regional Council. For the same reason I fear that Keith Joseph's suggestions in his letter of 22 January might be open to question. On further consideration I agree that Sir John Boynton is perhaps not the man for this job and, as you have said, Mrs Heather Brigstocke is almost certainly too busy to take on this additional commitment.

APPOINTMENTS IN CONFIDENCE



Although Kenneth Baker and I are taking soundings of a possible fifth member, I consider that we are now in a position to announce the substantive composition of the Committee. I would propose to do this at the earliest opportunity in answer to an arranged Parliamentary Question. I should therefore be grateful for your approval to the appointment of Mr Newsam, Sir Lawrence Boyle and Mr Russell to the Committee of Inquiry.

I am copying this to Cabinet colleagues and Sir Robert Armstrong.

*W. G. G. G.*  
for P J

25 February 1985

*Approved by the Secretary of State  
and signed in his absence*

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