



PRIME MINISTER

LOCAL GOVERNMENT BILL: LONDON

We are meeting Philip Goodhart and Alan Greengross at separate meetings on Thursday 21 March, and will then be discussing the handling of the London issue with the business managers on Tuesday 26 March.

### Background

We considered the "Voice for London" issue before the publication of 'Streamlining the Cities'. We decided then that we should not provide for any permanent London-wide bodies except for the new Fire Authority and an appointed London Planning Commission. One of the main lines of attack on the White Paper was the absence of a body that could 'speak for London'.

We reviewed the issues again when we considered the responses to the White Paper, and decided to hold to our previous line. The Bill therefore makes no provision for a permanent London-wide body. The issue was debated when the House considered clause 1. An amendment to provide for a new directly-elected London authority was defeated by only 23 votes. Some 18 of our supporters voted for the amendment, but the number of deliberate abstentions is unknown, as there was only a 2-line whip in force and normal bisques were operating.

Two of those who voted in favour of the amendment - Patrick Ground and Edward Leigh - have continued the argument in Standing Committee. They have moved a series of amendments to turn the temporary, appointed, Residuary Body into a permanent, elected local authority, and to give it a number of functions. In this they appear to have worked closely with Alan Greengross.

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### Pressures for Changes

A large number of suggestions have been put forward in both public and parliamentary debate. Many of these claim to start from the principle that abolition is right, but that a London-wide body with more clearly defined, and limited, functions is still needed. On examination, most of these proposals turn out to be proposals for a GLC Mark II.

This certainly applies to the proposals put forward by Alan Greengross. He envisages an elected authority which would have virtually all existing GLC functions. He claims that the activities of the new body could be closely circumscribed; but in practice they could not. A note on the Greengross proposals, together with a recent letter challenging him to say how his body would differ from the GLC, is at Annex A.

Similar views have come from other Tory members of the GLC including Cyril Taylor (in his Bow Group Pamphlet 'London Preserv'd'). However, Geoffrey Finsberg has now laid it down that an elected body is no longer on the agenda for discussion in the Party's "London Policy Committee" which he chairs.

More modest proposals have been related specifically to the need for a London-wide view on planning issues. The South East Regional Planning Conference (SERPLAN) have said that they favour an elected body which would be the "strategic planning authority" for London. Recognising that this will not be acceptable to us they have put forward the alternative of a borough-based body, which would have only an advisory role. They would see this as replacing the proposed London Planning Commission.

The other main line of argument is represented by Philip Goodhart. This concentrates on the need for a Parliamentary forum for discussion of London issues. A note on his latest proposals is at Annex B. You will see that he now proposes both a London Grand Committee and a London Select Committee.



### Options

We cannot accept the re-creation of an elected body for London. Our Manifesto pledge (see Annex C) was to abolish the GLC and devolve powers to the Boroughs - nothing more. It will be important to ensure a good majority against the amendment that will again be moved at Report Stage by our own backbenchers, seeking to set up such a body. But we must also be ready to respond to other proposals which may be pressed at Report/Third Reading or in the Lords. Any body that might be set up (for example following the SERPLAN proposal) could not have authority over the boroughs. Nor could it have responsibility for any major services, or be a major spending authority. This leaves only a narrow range of options. In essence there are two:-

(a) a statutory body with membership drawn wholly or mainly from the boroughs, with advisory and not executive functions, and with no power to precept - in effect a statutory London Boroughs Association; or

(b) a Parliamentary solution, building on Philip Goodhart's proposal.

A note on a possible borough-based solution, with the emphasis on discussion of land-use planning issues, is at Annex D. The advantages of this approach would be that it could provide a solution within local government - which would meet the views of some critics - and that it could be presented as a response to the SERPLAN initiative. As a "London Boroughs Forum", it would replace the London Planning Commission, and so would involve no increase in the number of new bodies created by the Bill. The disadvantages are that it could be seen as accepting the case for some successor to the GLC, and that it could be difficult to limit the scope for the boroughs to build up the role of the body, and impossible to stop a Labour Government converting it into a GLC Mark II.



Paragraph 9 of the note touches on the possibility of widening the membership of such a body to include Government-appointed members, as well as borough representatives (there are precedents for this in some other countries). This would, however, weaken the argument that the body represented a local government solution - it could no longer be presented as simply a "statutory LBA".

The advantage of the "Parliamentary solution" is that it would not create any new local government body which might, in time, expand beyond our present intentions. There are, however, three significant difficulties:

- a. It would create new fora for extensive Parliamentary discussion on ministerial decisions affecting London - including matters quite unaffected by abolition (eg the police). Clearly other colleagues - in particular Leon Brittan and Nick Ridley - could have views on this, and need to be consulted before we can form a final view;
- b. I understand that John Biffen takes the view that we could not resist arguments for setting up similar arrangements for the mets; and
- c. In any event, such a proposal might not carry sufficient weight with our opponents and would not do much to ease our path in the Lords.

#### Conclusion

Against this background, I suggest that we take the following line at the two meetings this week:

## CONFIDENTIAL CMO



a. We should listen sympathetically to Philip Goodhart, but bear in mind that his solution could create long-term difficulties for colleagues, - and perhaps not do much to help our position in the Lords.

b. We must make it quite clear to Alan Greengross that there is no possibility of our accepting an elected authority, or any general-purpose body with responsibility for major functions.

You will no doubt want to review the position with us at your meeting on 26 March.

I am copying this to the business managers in both Houses, to the Chief Secretary and to Sir Robert Armstrong.

Atkin

for  
P J

19 March 1985

Approved by the SAS and  
signed in his absence

## ABOLITION OF THE GLC: VIEWS OF CLLR GREENGROSS

1. Cllr Greengross has consistently claimed to support the manifesto commitment to abolish the GLC, while arguing that the GLC should be replaced by a single London-wide body, to take responsibility for functions which cannot be devolved to the boroughs or adequately provided by other means. Such a body could also provide a "Voice for London".
2. Cllr Greengross's ideas were embodied in the GLC Conservative Group's response to Streamlining the Cities in January 1984, which included a call for an inquiry into London's local government.
3. In June 1984 Cllr Greengross produced "Getting It Together for London", a refined version of the White Paper response, but with few substantive changes. One such was that the new body would not be a local authority, and would therefore have no general powers. Day-to-day operation of London-wide functions would be conducted by individual "service units", whose budgets would be controlled by the new body.
4. Cllr Greengross's latest ideas were set out in his February 1985 paper "London After Abolition", which again had much in common with earlier proposals. The body would have 28 directly elected members. It could, Cllr Greengross argues, be brought into the Bill by building on the provisions for the London Residuary Body.
5. The Government have consistently argued that Cllr Greengross's proposals would merely create a "GLC Mark II", by making the new body responsible for most existing GLC functions and devolving very little to the boroughs. In his reply of 14 February to "London After Abolition" (copy attached), the Secretary of State challenged Cllr Greengross on this point; Cllr Greengross has not so far replied.



2 MARSHAM STREET  
LONDON SW1P 3EB  
01-212 3434

My ref:

Your ref:

14 February 1985

Dear Alan,

Thank you for your letter of 4 February enclosing a copy of your latest pamphlet.

I have to say once again that your proposals do not begin to be compatible with our commitment to abolish the GLC. I do ask you to look at the list of functions in Annex B to your pamphlet and consider - what is left to be passed to the boroughs?

*copy attached*

I cannot believe that abolishing the GLC only to pass all its functions to a successor body elected on a basis seen to be advantageous to Conservative interests would be the best way of honouring our manifesto commitment. Nor do I believe that it would give us an easy passage in the Lords. Your comments on the powers conferred on the Secretary of State in the Bill have been answered again and again. I am disappointed that you repeat what is now discredited GLC propaganda.

Of course, I am always prepared to meet you to discuss any constructive proposals; but I doubt whether any useful purpose would be served by a further meeting at this stage.

*Your ever  
Patrick*

PATRICK JENKIN

Councillor Alan Greengross

ANNEX 'B'

LONDON-WIDE FUNCTIONS

London-wide functions for which a London-wide body would be accountable and for which executive bodies would need to be created, would be

(a) Planning Functions

- (i) Transportation
- (ii) Framework and structure planning
- (iii) Housing mobility
- (iv) Tourism

(b) Financial Functions

- (i) Debt Management
- (ii) Managing residual assets and liabilities
- (iii) Rate equalisation
- (iv) Staff, pensions
- (v) Funding of London-wide voluntary bodies

(c) Service Functions

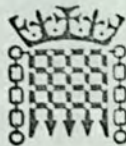
To ensure, in addition, that effective arrangements operate for the provision of the following services, to fund them London-Wide and to monitor their delivery and performance.

- (i) Fire Service
- (ii) Civil defence
- (iii) Flood prevention and land drainage
- (iv) Refuse disposal
- (v) Resource recovery
- (vi) Setting London-wide pollution standards
- (vii) Statistical services
- (viii) Research and analysis
- (ix) Scientific services
- (x) An archive service
- (xi) Historic Buildings
- (xii) Regional Arts
- (xiii) Regional Parks
- (xiv) Green Belt
- (xv) Specialist Housing Teams
- (xvi) A Concessionary Fares Scheme
- (xvii) The South Bank Arts Complex
- (xviii) Magistrates' Courts in Outer London



London Grand Committee and Select Committee

1. Since March 1984, Sir Philip Goodhart has been developing his idea for a London Grand Committee. Up to and including Second Reading of the Local Government Bill, the proposal was for a London Grand Committee consisting of all 84 London MPs, meeting twenty or twenty-five times a session. The Committee would discuss "the wider interests of London as a whole" and monitor, scrutinise and debate the activities of Ministers with respect to London. Ministers have expressed some interest in the proposal to Sir Philip Goodhart, but have taken the line that it is essentially a matter for the House rather than the Government.
2. Following criticisms that the Grand Committee would be an ineffective talking-shop, Sir Philip has recently modified his proposals. He now proposes (see attached letters) that there should be:
  - (a) a London Select Committee of nine or eleven members; and
  - (b) a London Grand Committee of all London MPs which would discuss the reports of the Select Committee, and Ministerial responses thereto.
3. The Select Committee would deal with London-wide subjects in which Ministers have, or will have after abolition, some direct responsibility. Sir Philip suggests that it might initially spend half its time on transport issues. He also suggests that it should deal with issues allocated to lead boroughs or joint boards for which Ministers have a residual interest. He cites waste disposal, grants to voluntary organisations, the fire service. But Ministers interests in some of these will be very marginal. For example, on waste disposal, the Secretary of State will have a power to set up joint authorities of borough councillors if the boroughs do not reach appropriate voluntary agreement.
4. There are, of course, a number of London non-local government functions in which Ministers have at least an equal interest - health, water, industrial development, employment - which would presumably also come within the scope of the Committee. It is difficult to see, also, how it could be deterred from discussing matters relating to the new ILEA, and (as Sir Philip virtually concedes in his letters) to the Metropolitan Police. This could raise questions about the relationship of the Committee to the existing Select Committees.
5. Finally, Sir Philip argues that it would be possible to confine the proposal to London on the grounds that London is the capital, and that the Local Government Bill gives Ministers wider powers in relation to London than in relation to the metropolitan counties. The latter point is doubtful; of the eight powers cited by Sir Philip, seven apply equally to the metropolitan counties.



HOUSE OF COMMONS  
LONDON SW1A 0AA

March 12th 1985

The Rt. Hon. John Biffen, MP,  
House of Commons.

Since we last talked about the London Grand Committee and the whole problem of discussing London-wide issues after the abolition of the GLC, there have been some changes in the proposals. These changes have largely stemmed from correspondence and conversation between myself and John Wheeler, Chairman of the London Members' Committee.

We now propose that the main Parliamentary body for the monitoring of London's problems should be a London Select Committee, which would consist of eleven or nine Members. (My preference would be for eleven Members, as it will be necessary to accommodate at least one Conservative backbench Member of Parliament who is opposed to abolition.) The London Grand Committee, which would consist of all London MPs, would then meet solely to discuss the Reports of the London Select Committee and the Ministerial responses thereto.

The Select Committee would not discuss those issues which came solely within the competence of individual Greater London Boroughs. It would primarily deal with those London-wide subjects which are now the responsibility of Ministers - (mainly Traffic and London Transport, and those issues which have been allocated to Lead Boroughs or Joint Boards, but for which Ministers retain residual responsibility - Historic Buildings, payments to voluntary organisations, the Fire Service, Waste Disposal, etc., etc.) In the first few years, the Select Committee would probably spend as much time on Traffic and Public Transport as on all other subjects put together.

I enclose a letter on the proposed machinery that I have written to Patrick Jenkin. This letter was written after a meeting on February 28th in his office, attended by him, Kenneth Baker, Geoffrey Finsberg and myself. It was agreed that this plan offered the best hope of meeting justifiable criticism, and providing a framework which would deal satisfactorily with a real practical problem.

The new proposals effectively counter the criticism that a London Grand Committee would just be a talking-shop. Many Members on both sides of the House now have a vested interest in not criticising the Select Committee system. It isn't easy for anyone to argue that Select Committee Reports are meaningless.

The new proposals also meet the fear that a London Grand Committee would add a burden of unspecified weight to the shoulders of a lot of very busy MPs. The proposals will mean a lot of extra work for eleven Members. It will give all other backbench London MPs an opportunity (which they do not have to take) of making four or five speeches a year in a well-publicised forum, on subjects close to their constituents' hearts.

Cont..



Meanwhile, the Select Committee/London Grand Committee idea has an impressive volume of support on our side. I have not told all the London Conservative backbenchers about the Select Committee proposal, but I find it very difficult to believe that anyone who was originally in favour of the Grand Committee concept will not be even more enthusiastic about the Select Committee version.

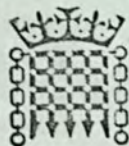
Those who actively support the scheme include all the senior London Conservative backbenchers who have been Ministers or who are Chairman of Select Committees, or are currently Chairmen of the major Party Committees. Apart from myself and John Wheeler, this includes Geoffrey Finsberg, Hugh Rossi, William Clark and William Shelton. Supporters of the plan also include a substantial majority of other Committee Chairmen and Parliamentary Private Secretaries - Tim Eggar, Toby Jessel, Colin Moynihan, Nigel Forman, Angela Rumbold, Michael Shersby, Roger Sims and Ivor Stanbrooke. The younger supporters include Terry Dicks, Jeremy Hanley, Humfrey Malins, Neil Thorne and Richard Tracey.

With only one exception that I know of, those who are opposed to the Parliamentary forum idea are opposed to the whole idea of scrapping the GLC without replacing it with "Son of GLC". Those who do not like the idea include Ted Heath, Hugh Dukes, Cyril Townsend and John Wilkinson. Hugh Dykes has written: "I do not agree with your arguments which I fear are positively dangerous, for they allow the Government to get off the hook too easily." But at least some of those who hanker after "Son of GLC", such as John Wilkinson, John Gorst, and even Hugh Dykes himself, are willing to concede that the Select Committee/Grand Committee idea would be better than nothing if they cannot get their way on a directly elected London-Wide Body.

This leaves a Regional problem, but I think the answer to this is self-evident. Apart from the fact that London is the world's greatest city, and the Capital of this country - factors which do distinguish it from Birmingham and Merseyside, etc., the Local Government Bill confers upon Ministers a wide range of powers which will not apply in the Regions. Clauses 9, 21, 40, 59, 61 and 80, and particularly Clauses 92 and 93, are only a few of the Clauses which give Ministers substantial extra powers over the life of London. When Ministers are given such powers, it is only right that Parliament should have adequate machinery to monitor the use of those powers.

The passage of the Local Government Bill is bound to add to the work of Parliament. If no changes are made, Parliament's arteries are going to get clogged. I think that the Select Committee/Grand Committee proposal offers the best solution to a difficult problem.

Sir Philip Goodhart



HOUSE OF COMMONS  
LONDON SW1A 0AA

The Rt. Hon.  
Patrick Jenkin, M.P.,  
Secretary of State,  
Department of Environment.

March 4th 1985

The problem of how the residual London-wide problems should be dealt with after the abolition of the G.L.C. has added a great deal to the complexity of the Local Government Bill, and has proved to be a divisive issue for our colleagues.

A sizeable number of our colleagues, supported by the majority of the Conservative Members of the G.L.C., will continue to press for a directly elected London-Wide Body with substantial powers. It is plain that if the Government were forced to accept such a directly elected Body, as a result of rebellions in the House of Lords, many commentators would claim that the Government had suffered its most severe party political setback since the General Election of 1979.

Apart from the irreconcilable rebels, there are also a considerable number of London Conservative Members of Parliament who would like to see some additional arrangements for discussing these London-wide or cross-boundary problems. A majority of this group accept that the only place in which these discussions can be held is in the House of Commons itself.

But how can this be done? As Kenneth Baker pointed out, when winding up the Second Reading of the Local Government Bill, our methods of debating London issues are unsatisfactory, and have been unsatisfactory for as long as anyone can remember. The two traditional debates on 'General Powers' and 'Money' have been occasions for petty point-scoring rather than a serious discussion on serious issues.

It isn't easy to see how this situation can be improved without a substantial alteration of our procedures. Some statistics recently released by the Leader of the House show that we may well be sitting longer and later than at any time since the Labour Government of 1945/51. If we just try to add more London debates on the Floor of the House, we shall be making a bad situation even worse.

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All this has led some of us to suggest that a special London Grand Committee should be set up so that London Members of Parliament could debate those London-wide issues where Ministerial responsibilities have been increased by the proposed re-organisation. This suggestion has been criticized by John Wheeler, who argues "that in practice, a hard-pressed and very busy M.P. will find it very difficult to attend the committee meetings and it would end up with the hardy faithfuls fulfilling yet another role."

I think that John Wheeler's criticism is fair, and I have discussed the matter with him at some length. He accepts that new machinery and a new forum are needed. I accept his view that we should set up a London Select Committee of nine or eleven Members. The terms of reference of this Select Committee would confine its activities to monitoring and reporting upon the activities of the Ministerial responsibilities, direct and indirect, for London. It would not cover issues which were the responsibility of the Greater London Boroughs.

Clearly, a major field of activity for this Select Committee would be Public Transport in London, and Traffic in London. I would expect that there would be at least one report on Public Transport in London and one report on Traffic in London every year. The Select Committee could also report on those matters where Ministers will have a general oversight of Management Agencies or Joint Procedures. At an early date, the Select Committee could look at the new arrangements for Historic Buildings, and Waste Disposal.

The reports of the Select Committee on London, which might number three or four a year, could then be discussed by a London Grand Committee, so that every London Member of Parliament would have an opportunity of commenting upon the reports of the Select Committee - and the Ministerial replies to those reports. Indeed, the sole function of the London Grand Committee would be the discussion on a 'take note' basis of the reports of the London Select Committee.

Of course there will be problems. When discussing Traffic, we will have to call in the Assistant Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police responsible for Traffic. This will underline the question of whether the Select Committee for London should be entitled to look at Metropolitan Police matters. John Wheeler and I have discussed this tricky and subsidiary point, and we are inclined to the view that the Select Committee ought to look at such matters as Police Manpower in two or three years' time, but that Police issues should not be on the Agenda immediately.

I believe that the Select Committee concept meets most of the sensible criticisms that have been levelled against the London Grand Committee proposal. It will ensure that specific problems are looked at in a rational fashion by the elected representatives of the people of London.

EXTRACT FROM 1983 MANIFESTO

The Metropolitan Councils and the Greater London Council have been shown to be a wasteful and unnecessary tier of government. We shall abolish them and return most of their functions to the boroughs and districts. Services which need to be administered over a wider area - such as police and fire, and education in inner London - will be run by joint boards of borough or district representatives.



Annex D

## LONDON BOROUGHS FORUM

1. This note considers the nature and modus operandi of a statutory London Boroughs Forum.

## THE NATURE OF A FORUM

2. A Boroughs Forum should clearly be basically a local authority body, though there could be provision for the appointment of additional members (see para. 9 below). In addition, the following assumptions have been made:

- a. it should not be a directly-elected authority;
- b. it should not run a major service (defined as requiring large numbers of staff and/or major expenditure);
- c. it should not be a precepting body.

3. Given these constraints, it is clear that the main role of the body would be a consultative/advisory one. If a body of this kind existed, it could, however, be considered as a suitable home for other minor activities.

Essential Functions

4. The pressure for the body arises principally because of the perceived need to have a body "speaking for London" on major land use planning issues. This would inevitably encompass strategic transportation matters. In practice, also, the body could not be prevented from expressing views on social and economic issues.

5. The purpose of the London Planning Commission (LPC) is to provide advice for the Secretary of State on major planning issues. It has been criticised because it is appointed by the Secretary of State, and not based on local government; and because it has no powers over the boroughs.

6. There is no room in the proposed unitary development plan system for a London-wide body with planning powers. It would, however, be possible to meet the first criticism by reconstituting the LPC as a borough-based body. This would produce a body which could speak for, and coordinate the views of, the boroughs on land use planning and transport issues going wider than the individual borough. Such a body might be needed anyway within the present proposed framework; but it could not credibly play a part in the new planning structure unless it was given a statutory basis.

7. A Planning Forum, replacing the LPC provisions in Schedule 1 to the Bill, could provide a home for some existing GLC activities which the boroughs wish to preserve such as the research and information function (at present proposed to be dealt with on a "Lead borough" basis under clause 86.) However, a body set up by amendment to



Schedule 1 could not properly take on more general activities (eg supplies, scientific services) - which the boroughs might wish to continue in some form after abolition. Nor could it be a general "voice for London" representing London in, for example, relations with other cities. But a more broadly-based body which could look after these tasks might also be able to move into other more controversial fields.

#### Constitution

8. A Forum could be constituted as a statutory joint committee to which each borough would be required to appoint one member. On present political composition, this would give 19 Con 12 Labour and 1 Alliance, plus the City.

9. There is a case for widening the membership to include people outside local government with an interest in London affairs from, say, industry, the voluntary sector, unions, and planning. These would have to be appointed by the Secretary of State. There could be a statutory limit on the number of appointees - eg not exceeding a quarter of total membership which would give up to 11 appointees.

#### Financing

10. A Forum would need to be given access to sufficient finance to enable it to fulfil its role properly, but to prevent it spending recklessly eg in pursuit of doctrinaire economic and social policies. This might be achieved by setting a limit to the amount of the charge which it could levy on the boroughs. There might also be provision that the budget must be agreed by at least two-thirds of the boroughs (though if the necessary two thirds majority was not secured, the Forum would not be able to function).

#### LONDON BOROUGH VIEWS

11. Conservative Borough Leaders have made clear their strong opposition to any new directly-elected London-wide body. They are equally anxious to avoid the creation of any new body which could, in time acquire an independent role.

12. However, a number of Conservative boroughs have expressed concern about the absence of a body to look after some London-wide issues after abolition - examples are the supplies organisation, parts of the scientific services branch, and the research and information function. Some of the boroughs who want a body to carry on work of this kind see it as a "statutory LBA". Such a body would need to be created as a general-purpose one, and not by amendment of Schedule 1.

13. In so far as they are concerned about the future of London-wide activities, the creation of a new body would probably be welcome to most Labour Boroughs. But a borough-based body would not meet the main Opposition argument, which focusses on the need for a directly-elected London Authority; and, even if they accepted the principle of a borough-based body, the Labour boroughs would probably want it to take on far more functions than would be acceptable.





## IMPACT ON THE MET COUNTIES

14. There would be pressure to extend to Met Counties any compromise proposal that was conceded for London. Indeed a "planning Forum" could be presented as giving statutory form to the "planning conferences" of district representatives which are to be convened when necessary to advise the Secretary of State on the issues to be dealt with in his strategic guidance. However, a case can be made for drawing a distinction between London and the Mets so far as planning issues are concerned - the proposed London Planning Commission is already an acceptance of this; and there is virtually no Local support (except perhaps in Merseyside) for a new country-wide body.

