



2

Home Minister

Req Pd

2 MARSHAM STREET
LONDON SW1P 3EB

N Hinchey is proposing the establishment of a UDC to cover the Medway Towns following the closure of Chatham Dockyard. He suggests, putting up an interim proposal from N Hinchey, but Robin says - Committee should chair the UDC. But amending legislation will be needed to set up a UDC in an area that is not a metropolitan district or a London borough.

My ref:

Your ref:

12 February 1982

See Patrick

KW

17

MEDWAY TOWNS

attached

I am sorry not to have been able to have replied before now to your letters of 23 December and 3 February but, as you know, I felt the need to consider a rather different approach and to look into the matter personally. I visited Chatham Dockyard myself on Wednesday and met representatives of the local authorities, with whom I had a useful discussion.

Like you, I do not believe the local people can be expected to cope unaided with the extra loss of jobs which the Dockyard will bring, on top of the basic economic problems of the area. The question is what form of local organisation should be adopted to deal with these matters.

The authorities made it clear to me that they recognise the need to co-ordinate their activities, and that to achieve this they would be willing to set up some sort of joint committee and probably to delegate certain powers to it. They would be prepared to see the Chairman of such a committee drawn from outside, as you suggest, and would expect it to cover an area substantially greater than the Dockyards alone. While this is a constructive proposal and a move in the right direction, I do not think it goes far enough.

First, it would be very difficult for me to exempt from spending targets the revenue expenditure that the authorities would need to undertake. Those targets have to be based on principles applicable to all local authorities, and I could not alter them simply in favour of the Medway Towns, without facing charges of inconsistency from other authorities with at present high levels of unemployment. Again, I would be exposed to similar charges if I paid the Medway Authority's Urban Programme grant at anything beyond the normal 75%; yet to ask them to meet the remaining 25% would be to impose a further rates burden on the industrial and commercial firms in the area.

Secondly, and perhaps more important, the authorities are by no means united in their objectives. They disagree, for example, about the priority and location of the new roads which may be necessary for development: Rochester and Gillingham naturally each wish to favour their own industrial estates, while the county as highway authority has other priorities. They also have different views, for example, on the importance of the historic Dockyard and the need to spend money to preserve it. Given the divergence of interests and their history of local antagonism - despite recent valiant efforts to paper over the cracks - I think it likely that any joint committee would be largely ineffectual, able to agree only on the most non-controversial issues and unable to survive any substantial disagreement between its members.

Gillingham and Rochester do seem to agree that their existing industrial estates should be occupied before the Dockyard sites are developed (apart from development, probably on a minor scale, which is essentially dock - or water-related). They point out that major industrial development of the Dockyard would generate heavy traffic through the centres of Rochester or Gillingham, which are already congested. But some of the existing estates are said to require new roads, which the authorities cannot afford.

What clearly is needed is to develop an overall strategy for the area, which for this purpose might well need to include Gravesham and Swale as well. Relative timings and priorities would be a most important feature of this strategy, and an organisation with some authority will be necessary. My own view is that if we leave matters to a joint committee of local authorities, even with a Chairman of the calibre you suggest, in 2 or 3 years time little will have been seen to be achieved. But by 1984 the authorities claim that the current level of unemployment will have risen from 14% to 22%, as a direct consequence of the Government's decision as employer.

I think the best answer is that we should form an urban development corporation for the area, and that we should propose this to the local authorities without delay. This solution would overcome the problems of co-ordination and resources and could deal with the problems of the area in a coherent and comprehensive fashion, taking in the immediate problems of the Dockyard as part of the wider picture. We should get away from the antagonisms of local politics, committees and decision taking, and would gain all the advantages of a unified local planning authority replacing the existing two-tier structure. And we would be seen to make a real contribution to the regeneration of the area.

I would not wish to force a UDC down the throats of unwilling local authorities, but I think there is a real chance that they would accept it willingly.

From my experience of the East End of London, it is an illusion to believe that co-ordination committees of local government have the decisiveness and common purpose to tackle problems of the magnitude we face in the Medway Towns. It was, of course, largely for that reason that it was necessary to replace the Docklands Joint Committee, which has delegated powers, by the London Docklands Development Corporation.

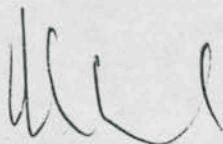
I must point out however that if we wish to move in the direction I propose it would be necessary to delete Section 134(2) from the

Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980, which restricts the power to establish UDC's to metropolitan districts and certain London Boroughs. A suitable legislative vehicle would have to be found, on which I should of course need to consult colleagues.

Going down this road would of course mean that it would be some months before an Urban Development Corporation could be set up. But this need not hold the local authorities back. If they were persuaded that a Corporation ultimately offered the best instrument then they could use the interval to set up a version of their proposed joint committee which could effectively pave the way for a UDC. Robin Leigh Pemberton could as you suggest be asked to play a leading role and thus be in place to be appointed as UDC Chairman with a Board membership which aptly reflected the interests of the local authorities as well as those of central government.

I am copying this to members of E Committee, Francis Pym, George Younger, Nicholas Edwards and Michael Jopling.

Yours ever



MICHAEL HESELTINE

12 FEB 1962

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0 9 8 7 6 5



reg Pd



Prime Minister (2)
ms 12/3

2 MARSHAM STREET
LONDON SW1P 3EB

My ref:H/PSO/11659/82

Your ref:

12 March 1982

[Handwritten scribble]

Dear Secretary of State

Thank you for your letter of 26 February.

As you say, I believe it is important to take effective measures in the Medway area to demonstrate the Government's concern - though I believe that the establishment of a UDC is much more than a public gesture.

I accept what you say about pressure from other areas. But I believe that there is much more of a distinction than you suggest between areas affected by the direct effects of government policy, such as the Medway area, and others. I do not suggest that an Urban Development Corporation is an apt solution for every area with economic problems, and I can certainly assure you that I do not have it in mind to establish Urban Development Corporations throughout England and Wales. On the other hand, I would not rule out the possibility that there may be other cases where a UDC would be the right thing to go for: but the Medway case seems to be an urgent and important one where the Government has a special responsibility, and I believe that we can resist its use as a precedent by others.

I am copying this as before.

Yours sincerely
J. Jones

P.P. MICHAEL HESELTINE

Approved by the Secretary of State
as agreed in his absence.

0 2 MAR 1982





Secretary of State for Industry

Prime Minister (2)

DEPARTMENT OF INDUSTRY
ASHDOWN HOUSE
123 VICTORIA STREET
LONDON SW1E 6RB

TELEPHONE DIRECT LINE 01-212 3301
SWITCHBOARD 01-212 7676

12 March 1982

The Rt Hon John Nott MP
Secretary of State for Defence
Ministry of Defence
Whitehall
London SW1

Dear John,

Thank you for your letter of 12 February supporting the approach on the Medway Towns problem outlined in my letters of 23 December and 3 February to Michael Heseltine. I should like to make one or two comments on the points you raised and also to bring you up to date on recent developments.

2 On the question of local leadership in the Medway Towns I have had a meeting with Robin Leigh-Pemberton to discuss the possibility of his providing such leadership. He seems to have a clear appreciation of the problems involved, but has asked for time to reflect on the matter and to consult with the contacts in the area. I should be hearing from him shortly.

3 As regards co-ordination in Whitehall - a point of some concern to the local authorities - I agree with your suggestion that informal meetings of Ministers would be valuable. You will have seen from my letter of 2 March to Michael Heseltine that I have suggested that at official level something along the lines of the Merseyside Task Force may be needed to provide clear and effective co-ordination. It would offer local authorities a single contact point. It would also minimise the risk of "buck passing" between Government Departments in areas which might be the concern of more than one Department. Such a group of officials, under Department of Industry leadership, could report regularly to the meetings of Ministers you proposed in your letter.

4 The recent correspondence between ourselves and Michael Heseltine about Chatham dockyard clearly shows that we are agreed on the need to establish effective machinery for dealing with the problems of the Medway Towns. It is the precise nature of this machinery which needs to be agreed, which I hope we will be able to do at next Tuesday's "E" Committee.

5 I should also like to mention Mr Sieff's letter about the

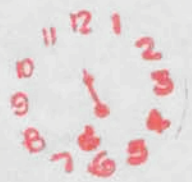


initiatives in the Portsmouth and Chatham areas by Business in the Community. These initiatives should make a valuable contribution to regenerating the local economies, and I am sure that it is important that we are seen to be giving them every encouragement. You may like to know that John MacGregor is hoping to launch officially the Chatham Enterprise Agency in early April.

6 I am sending a copy of this letter to the recipients of yours.

Your ever
Patel

12 MAR 1982



118



DEPARTMENT OF INDUSTRY
ASHDOWN HOUSE
123 VICTORIA STREET
LONDON SW1E 6RB

TELEPHONE DIRECT LINE 01-212 3301
SWITCHBOARD 01-212 7676

Secretary of State for Industry

Handwritten mark

2 March 1982

Prime Minister 2

The Rt Hon Michael Heseltine MP
Secretary of State for the
Environment
2 Marsham Street
LONDON
SW1P 3EB

Mr Jenkin does not agree with Mr Heseltine's suggestion that we should set up a UDC to cover the Medway Towns (which would need legislation). He feels instead that his Department should take the lead in Government and set up something on the lines of the Merseyside Task force.

WR 4/3

Dear Michael,

MEDWAY TOWNS

Thank you for your letter of 12 February in which you propose the formation of an Urban Development Corporation for the Medway Towns area.

2 Since you first mentioned the matter to me, I have been brooding on your suggestion but I feel bound to question whether it is indeed the right solution for the area. Certainly, there is a need to develop an overall strategy for the area, and certainly, the initial signs were that the local authorities were likely to be at loggerheads. More recently however I am gaining the impression that faced with the need to respond positively and constructively to the closure both of the Isle of Grain Refinery and of the dockyard, the local authorities are now making very considerable efforts to work together. What they need is leadership and expertise in what is ultimately a promotional effort. They need a focus for their own efforts and they want to feel that all the Government Departments involved - Defence, Industry, Employment, Environment and Transport - are working together with a common purpose to help them through the difficult years ahead.

3 So far as the first requirement is concerned - local leadership and a focus for their efforts - I had a meeting with Robin Leigh Pemberton on 24 February to discuss with him, in the light of your comments about him, the possibility of his playing a leading role in coordinating local initiatives in the Medway Towns.

4 His immediate response was thoughtful and well informed. He already has a clear appreciation of some of the problems with which he would be concerned if he accepted the invitation to assist the local effort. Quite rightly he has asked for time to

/reflect ...



reflect on the matter and to consult with contacts at local level. I expect to receive his answer quite soon.

5 On their second requirement - their wish to feel that Government Departments are working in concert to help and support the local effort - I believe that we may want to establish something along the lines of your Merseyside Task Force. In view of the fact that the real requirement is promotional, I would be prepared to accept that this Task Force should be under Department of Industry leadership. It does seem to me very important that we should reduce to the absolute minimum the chances of Departments passing the buck and so generating frustration and anger. The local authority coordinating body needs to be able to knock at "one front door" in their approaches to Government and I think we owe it to them to make that a reality.

6 All this seems to me to be very different from the conditions which justified setting up the two existing UDCs in London Docklands on Merseyside. These were created quite deliberately to take the development of two particularly rundown areas out of the hands of ineffectual and warring local authorities and under the wing of Central Government. Where such action has to be taken we have to face the consequences. First it very substantially weakens the role of local government in the area; second, it leaves us with a future re-entry problem when the area reverts to local authority control. UDCs may be a solution if it is believed that the only way to solve an areas problems is to take it out of the hands of local government and to set up an autonomous and, it has to be said, largely unaccountable quango. But if we were to do that for the Medway Towns, where would it stop? There are many areas that could point to comparable problems; are we to face demands for UDCs there too?

7 Then there is the question of money. I am sure that because the Government is quite rightly seen as having created the problem on the Medway by the closure of the Naval Dockyard, the Government must be prepared to help to some extent with providing additional resources (eg for roads). But I believe this could be handled within the existing structure and arrangements. Within a UDC, there would surely need to be substantial backing if it is to achieve anything. Without mentioning sums, I think we in this Department could point to much more deserving cases for significant sums of money, for instance, on the Tyne and Wear, in West Cumbria and perhaps Glasgow - but we doubt whether any of these areas would want a UDC.



3.

8 For all these reasons it does seem to me that the proposal to establish a UDC in the Medway Towns is one which would require a stronger justification than seems to me to be present. We do need however to get ahead with putting our own house in order and I am asking my officials to follow this up with officials in other relevant Departments.

9 Copies of this letter go to recipients of yours.

You are
Patrol

-4 MAR 1982



Regional Ad



CB

Pl by whom we
have Mr Jenkins

reply

MMS 2/3

2 MARSHAM STREET
LONDON SW1P 3EB

My ref:

Your ref:

2 March 1982

see Patrick

MEDWAY TOWNS: UDC

I wrote to you on 12 February about this. Since then several colleagues have briefly commented on my proposal for a UDC, although you are, I think, yet to respond yourself.

We are both agreed on the urgency of reaching decisions about next steps on Chatham. The appalling unemployment prospects facing the Medway area over the next few years, with the Dockyard closure central to these problems, mean, moreover, that there is a political imperative here. We cannot afford to let matters drift.

I gather you are shortly to depart to the USA for several weeks. This is a matter which affects a number of colleagues. In the circumstances, it seems to me that the most appropriate way forward is for colleagues to discuss this matter urgently in E Committee on the basis of my earlier letter. My feeling is that we should at least discuss the principle of the proposal quickly so that we can make progress.

I am, therefore, copying this letter to the Prime Minister, colleagues in E Committee, the Lord President, the Secretaries of State for Scotland and Wales and to Sir Robert Armstrong.

Yours ever

MICHAEL HESELTINE

Rt Hon Patrick Jenkin MP

E 2 MAR 1982



Regional Policy

NBPM

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Rt Hon Michael Heseltine MP
 Secretary of State
 Department of the Environment
 2 Marsham Street
 LONDON SW1P 3EB

26 February 1982

D. Michael.

MEDWAY TOWNS

Thank you for sending me a copy of your letter to Patrick Jenkin of 12 February proposing an Urban Development Corporation for the Medway Towns.

From what I am told by my officials the establishment of the London UDC has had a powerful effect on morale in the area and on the sense of purpose of the local authorities, although from other local sources I hear a distinctly different story. Nonetheless I quite understand that you would want to make some public gesture to indicate your concern at the problems of the area and I fully agree that it is no use relying upon local government which has been given the wrong structure and is bound to be ineffective.

I have one major reservation. I accept that the special feature of the Medway Towns is the fact that the sharp increase in unemployment expected there in the next couple of years will be seen as the direct result of the Government's decision to close Chatham Dockyard. But MPs, local authorities and others in areas where there have been steel or shipbuilding closures, for example, are unlikely to recognise the distinction between the direct and indirect results of Government policy. We must therefore expect those principally concerned with areas of high unemployment, some far higher than the Medway towns, to redouble their efforts to secure additional aid, either in the form of UDCs, enhanced assisted area status or otherwise if Chatham is singled out in this way. I wonder if you have yet decided how to resist such pressures or if you have it in mind to establish a number of Urban Development Corporations throughout England and Wales?

I am copying this letter to those to whom you sent yours.

Yours faithfully
Norman

1 MAR 1962





Prime Minister

hu

24i

Treasury Chambers, Parliament Street, SW1P 3AG

Rt Hon Michael Heseltine MP
Secretary of State
Department of the Environment
2 Marsham Street
London SW1P 3EB

ms

23 February 1982

2 Michael,

MEDWAY TOWNS: A NEW URBAN DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

You copied to me your letter of 12 February to Patrick Jenkin, suggesting that we set up a new Urban Development Corporation in the Medway area affected by the Chatham dockyard closure.

You will understand that I cannot take a view about this until I have been able to consider the financial implications in the normal way. No doubt you will be writing to me about this shortly and I have asked my officials to get in touch with yours. In the meantime, I must ask that nothing be said about the proposal to the local authorities or to anyone else outside the Government.

I should say, however, that my initial reaction to the proposal is that, irrespective of the undoubted problems of the Medway area, it is premature to start talking about setting up another UDC. The first two have scarcely got off the ground and we have had no real chance to see how effective they are as organisations.

I am copying this to members of E Committee, Francis Pym, George Younger, Nicholas Edwards and Michael Jopling.

Leon

LEON BRITTAN

7 FEB 1982
12 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

...





Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster

*Regional Develop
ment*

Management and Personnel Office

Whitehall London SW1A 2AZ

Telephone 01-273 4400
GTN 273

23 February 1982

Helen Ghosh
Private Secretary to the Secretary of State
Department of the Environment
2 Marsham Street
LONDON SW1P 3EB

NSM.

MW

24ii

Dear Helen

MEDWAY TOWNS

Your Secretary of State copied to the Chancellor of the Duchy his letter to the Secretary of State for Industry of 11 February.

I think they mean 12/2/82

Establishing an Urban Development Corporation would of course add to the number of executive non-departmental public bodies. However that would not be a prime consideration if it was clear that a UDC offered advantages in terms of effectiveness. Presumably your Secretary of State would want to set a (renewable) time limit upon the Corporation's existence.

A further point about a possible additional UDC concerns handling in the Lords. The London Docklands and Merseyside Orders involved considerable hybrid instrument procedures which placed a substantial and unexpected burden on the resources of the House. It would be desirable to have the earliest possible warning if the proposed UDC has the same sort of implications.

I am copying this letter to Private Secretaries to the recipients of Mr Heseltine's, and to Michael Pownall (Private Secretary to the Leader and Chief Whip (Lords)).

Yours sincerely

Douglas Board

D R H BOARD
Assistant Private Secretary

24 FEB 1962





DEPARTMENT OF INDUSTRY
ASHDOWN HOUSE
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Secretary of State for Industry

3 February 1982

The Rt Hon Michael Heseltine MP
Secretary of State for the
Environment
Department of the Environment
2 Marsham Street
London SW1

P&NL
BAM
P&P
Miss Mueller
Mr Young
Mr Jardine
Mr Dick
Mr Rancey
Dir-SECRET (file)

Dear Michael,

MEDWAY TOWNS: CO-ORDINATION OF LOCAL DEVELOPMENT EFFORTS BY A
MAJOR INDUSTRIAL/COMMERCIAL FIGURE

You will remember that in my letter of 23 December I mentioned that a major industrialist should be invited to act as a focal point for local initiatives. I am anxious to approach a suitable candidate soon. There has been considerable local publicity for this proposal and I am sure we would all wish to avoid any suggestions of lack of urgency on our part.

2 Among the principal qualifications needed are first hand knowledge and direct experience of the awkward relationships between some of the local bodies. Certainly the nominee would have to be a person of national status and reputation in his particular field if he is to generate the sort of "clout" which will lead local interests to believe that they are likely to benefit from his assistance and interest. Acceptability to these interests, including the dockyard unions, is important. Easy access to the business/administrative network in North Kent and at County level will also be needed. Above all the person concerned must be willing to devote considerable effort to what could easily be a time-consuming and frustrating task.

3 Several names have been suggested to me. They include Geoffrey Robinson (Chairman, Medway Ports Authority), J E Pateman (Managing Director, Marconi Avionics, Rochester), J J Benn (Plant Managing Director, Reeds, Aylesford) and Clancy Scheuppert (Chief Executive, Sheerness Steel). But the person best qualified seems to be Mr Robin Leigh-Pemberton, the Chairman of the National Westminster Bank. He has been a member and Chairman of the Kent County Council. He has extensive industrial/commercial contacts in Kent and nationally. His brother, Jeremy, is Managing Director of a medium sized company at Maidstone and Chairman of the Regional CBI. Obviously as Chairman of the National Westminster Bank Mr Leigh-Pemberton is a national figure in his own sphere. Unofficial soundings suggest that he will be willing to take on the task.



4 Originally I suggested a leading industrial figure. However, Mr Leigh-Pemberton's position, experience, contacts and local knowledge make him a stronger candidate than any of the others I have mentioned. In addition, the National Westminster Bank will be represented on the Medway Enterprise Agency which is shortly to be formed. It is also possible that Mr Dallas MacKenzie, the BP Plant Managing Director at the Isle of Grain, who has been very active in the formation of the Enterprise Agency, may well be able to help Mr Leigh-Pemberton by giving day to day support at local level.

5 If you agree I will approach Mr Leigh-Pemberton and ask him to act in a coordinating role in the Medway Towns. Clearly it will be a matter for him and the local bodies to determine how and through what machinery they will need to operate. In that sense we will not be "appointing" him but merely asking him to offer his services.

6 I am copying this letter to David Howell, to whom I am most grateful for his comments on Mr Geoffrey Robinson. I am also sending copies to Norman Tebbit and John Nott.

You see
Patric



Secretary of State for Industry

The Rt Hon Michael Heseltine MP
 Secretary of State for the
 Environment
 2 Marsham Street
 London SW1

DEPARTMENT OF INDUSTRY
 ASHDOWN HOUSE
 123 VICTORIA STREET
 LONDON SW1E 6RB
 TELEPHONE DIRECT LINE 01-212 3301
 SWITCHBOARD 01-212 7676

cc
 Miss Mueller
 Mr Jardine
 Mr Dick
 Mr Young
 Mr Kearney
 Mr Rees
 Mr Bradshaw - with papers

23 December 1981

Dear Michael,

Medway Towns: Closures of Chatham Dockyard and BP Isle of Grain Refinery

As you will remember from earlier correspondence about 9,000 jobs will be affected by these closures in a locality where the current unemployment level is around 14%.

2 Recently I met the MPs most directly concerned (Peggy Fenner, Freddie Burden, Tim Brinton and Roger Moate). I followed this up on Friday 11 December with a meeting at County Hall Maidstone. About 50 representatives from the local authorities, industrial and commercial bodies and the trade unions were there. The purpose of the meeting was for me to listen to their views about the consequences of the closures and what would be needed to reduce their effects. A brief note about the outcome of the meeting is enclosed.

3 I was particularly struck by the level of common sense and reasonableness which was generally shown. I made it clear that development area status could not be expected and that a major objective must be for the bodies represented at the meeting to get together and co-ordinate their efforts. But clearly they cannot be left entirely on their own to deal with the problems of closure. As was pointed out to me on several occasions, the dockyard closure is entirely the result of Government policy and it is therefore reasonable to expect Government to take some steps to ensure that at least the effectiveness of local efforts are not frustrated. I am writing to you about three issues in particular. They are:

- (a) dockyard assets should not be disposed of piece-meal;
- (b) a major industrialist should be invited to lead the



local effort. I envisage that he might chair a small group of local people who would form themselves into a steering committee. He might also act as a focal point locally and a contact point with Government Departments;

(c) there should be a single Government contact point so that local efforts are not dissipated by having to approach several Departments simultaneously and finding that they pass the buck one to the other.

4 On the question of avoiding piece-meal disposal of the dockyard assets, I very much hope we can agree that this must not be allowed to happen. The fear of the local authorities is that if it did they would be left with the unattractive or even unusable areas. They accept that a future strategy is needed on the question of development and that they must take the first steps. A report has already been compiled by the Kent County Planning Authority about the historic dockyard. I understand that a second report on the other parts of the dockyard is being prepared. One possibility is that at the end of February or early March (when I understand the second report will be available) these two reports, together with a summary of the interest already being shown by private sector concerns, could be considered collectively by Government Departments. The next stage forward with the local authorities could then be discussed.

5 Regarding the appointment of a major industrialist, I should be most grateful if you would suggest any suitable candidates. Naturally, I have some ideas of my own, but any suggestions you or colleagues may have would be most welcome. Obviously the person concerned needs to be someone of experience and who is likely to command "clout" both locally and in dealing with Government Departments.

6 I have already asked David Young to approach BP. I had already had an informal word with the Chairman of BP(UK)Ltd (Mr Peter Walters) who was by no means dismissive of the idea that BP "owed" the area something and that, as well as a cleared refinery site, they might be prepared to contribute money and people to efforts to provide new employment in the locality. I will keep you informed about any outcome of David Young's discussions.

7 On the question of a central contact point with Government Departments, I should like to suggest that we build on the informal arrangement begun last summer. The arrangement was that one of my officials chaired an inter-departmental group comprising representatives from MSC, Defence, Environment etc. The Department of Industry officials concerned could form a central contact point for the local authorities. Naturally,



there would be no question of our trying to "take over" as it were the legitimate interest of other Departments in the closures. But such an arrangement would at least provide what we are insisting that the local authorities provide, namely a co-ordinated approach and a clearly identifiable contact point.

8 Please let me know whether these proposals are acceptable to you. If they are not, I should be grateful for any changes you would like to suggest. I am sure you will agree that we need to act fairly quickly.

9 I am sending copies of this letter to John Nott, Norman Tebbit and David Howell.

ENC

Your ever
Ratcliff

CLOSURE OF CHATHAM DOCKYARD

MEETING BETWEEN THE SECRETARY OF STATE AND REPRESENTATIVES OF BODIES CONCERNED - HELD AT MAIDSTONE
ON 11 DECEMBER

1 Formal statements on behalf of the following organisations were circulated and summarised orally by the respective spokesmen:-

Mr J Spence	on behalf of the Kent County Council
Mr M Lewis	Leader, Gillingham Borough Council
Mr Gibson	Leader, Gravesham Borough Council
Mr Hargraves	Leader, Maidstone Borough Council
Mr McInness	• Leader, Rochester-upon-Medway Borough Council
Mr Morton	Leader, Swale Borough Council
Mr Tissiman	Trades Unions
Mr Baker	Kent Association of Trades Councils
Mr Robinson	Medway Ports Authority
Mr Boorman & Mr Le Compte	Kent Industrialist bodies
Mr G Sibley	Medway & Gillingham Chamber of Commerce
Mr Brinton	on behalf of MPs for Gravesend, Medway Towns and Faversham.

2 The presentation of statements was followed by general discussion. The Secretary of State summed up the main points as follows:-

(a) The decision to close the dockyard should be taken by all concerned as a firm decision.

(b) Local efforts to deal with the effects of the closure had to be co ordinated. Both the leadership and organisation required to obtain local co-ordination must come from the organisations represented at the meeting.

(c) A major industrialist should be invited to act as a focal point for the local bodies and between these bodies and government departments involved (Defence, Environment, Industry and Transport).

(d) There should be a single, clearly identified contact point on the Government side to co-ordinate the inter-departmental responsibilities involved.

(e) The immediate problems concerned with the dockyard are:-

(i) Piece-meal disposal of assets must be avoided.

(ii) The future use of small building units.

(iii) The future use of the apprentice training school.

(iv) The provision of moorings for pleasure craft and the attraction of ancillary industries.

(v) Development of tourist attractions such as the historic dockyard.

(f) Assisted Area status for the Medway Towns cannot be justified.

3 The Secretary of State concluded proceedings by saying that he would do all that he could, within the resources at his disposal and subject to the views he had already expressed, to help resolve the problems that the dockyard closure would create for the Medway Towns.

SERO

15 December 1981

17 FEB 1967

