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NOTE OF A MEETING IN THE LORD PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL'S ROOM,
HOUSE OF LORDS, AT 5PM ON 8 MARCH 1984 TO DISCUSS EDUCATION IN LONDON.

PRESENT: The Lord President of the Council (in the chair)
 The Secretary of State for the Home Department
 The Secretary of State for Education and Science
 The Secretary of State for the Environment
 The Chief Secretary to the Treasury
 The Attorney-General

SECRETARIAT: Mr M S Buckley Cabinet Office
 Mr C J S Brearley Cabinet Office
 Mr J F Stoker Cabinet Office

THE LORD PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL said that Cabinet that morning had discussed proposals for providing for direct elections to a reconstituted Inner London Education Authority (ILEA) on the context of abolition of the Greater London Council. The Secretary of the Cabinet, in consultation with officials of the departments concerned, had been instructed to provide the Cabinet with a note on certain matters raised in the discussion, to be circulated in time for them to resume their discussion on Thursday 15 March. He had convened the present meeting to give officials guidance for the preparation of that paper.

In discussion, the following were the main points made.

FINANCE

(a) Several members of the Cabinet had argued that a directly-elected ILEA must have power to levy a rate; and that a precepting body would be insufficiently accountable. The official paper, however, should examine all available options, namely, precepting; a separate rate collected by the boroughs as agents of ILEA; and a separate rate collected separately by ILEA. It should cover the relative costs of the options.

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(b) The cost of separate billing by the ILEA could be reduced if it used the administrative facilities of the boroughs: the water authorities did this. But some London boroughs might be unwilling to cooperate in this way. It would be for consideration whether to make cooperative arrangements mandatory.

(c) The paper should make it clear that the levy of a discriminatory rate on different boroughs or classes of property would be prevented; and why the arrangements proposed did not present problems for rate-capping or the London Rates Equalisation Scheme.

STATUS

(d) The status of ILEA as a special committee of the GLC meant that arrangements to convert it into a directly-elected body would inevitably be unorthodox. The paper should set out the implications of including in the Paving Bill a provision, to be activated by Order following Second Reading of the main Abolition Bill, for direct elections to ILEA from 1985; or, alternatively, including in the main Bill a provision for elections from 1986. For completeness' sake, the paper should also deal with the third option of a separate Bill this Session to set up from 1985 an elected ILEA with separate status from the GLC, though it was generally accepted that there was no reasonable prospect that this could be achieved in time.

PROVISION FOR
REVIEW

(e) It had been proposed that the legislation should make provision for a review at an appropriate time of educational arrangements in inner London. However, such provision would be more appropriate to the main Bill. The paper should make this point; but it should not discuss the substance of a review provision.

ELECTIONS

(f) The paper should point out that the only satisfactory basis for elections in May 1985 was likely to be to use parliamentary constituencies, with two members for each; and should mention as

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a matter for eventual consideration whether the Local Government Boundary Commission should be required eventually to sub-divide the constituencies so as to provide for single-member elections.

LEGISLATIVE TIMETABLE

(g) It would be for Ministers to assess the Parliamentary aspects and the implications for the legislative timetable of including provision for direct elections in the Paving Bill. But the paper should state the key dates. It should also bring out that to include provisions for elections would widen the scope of possible amendments; and that it might be accused of prejudging the principle of abolition.

THE LORD PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL, summing up the discussion, said that the Secretary of the Cabinet's paper would naturally be confined to technical questions: when the Cabinet considered it, it would be for Ministers to advance any relevant political arguments. If the Ministers wished to circulate papers setting out their own political assessments, they were free to do so. He and the Lord Privy Seal reserved the right, as the Government's business managers, to express views in Cabinet on the broader political practicality of what was proposed and on the possible implications for other Bills in the Government's programme. The meeting had been concerned only to give officials guidance, not to reach conclusions binding on those present.

The meeting -

Took note, with approval, of the Lord President of the Council's summing up of their discussion.



CABINET OFFICE

70 Whitehall, London SW1A 2AS Telephone ~~xxxxxxx~~ 01-233-7029

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Reference No: E020

9 March, 1984

Miss Janet Lewis-Jones,
Lord President of the Council's Office,
70 Whitehall,
LONDON SW1

Dear Janet.

Education in London.

I attach a note of the informal meeting held yesterday evening by the Lord President of the Council about further work on the organisation of education in London.

2. Copies go to the Private Secretaries to the other Ministers present, to David Heyhoe (Lord Privy Seal's Office), to Andrew Turnbull (No 10), and to Richard Hatfield here. I should be grateful if all recipients would show copies only to those officials with a clear 'need to know'.


Yours sincerely,

Michael Buckley

M S BUCKLEY

Attachment:

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lec B1.
Mr Turnbull  COPY
Prime Minister ②
To note progress
AT 9/3

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