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Prime Minister

HOUSING ACT 1980 - EXCLUSION OF LEASEHOLD PROPERTIES
FROM THE RIGHT TO BUY

1. Bob Dunn, who is absolutely first class, came to see me this morning.
2. He handed to me the enclosed copy letter dated 11th January from the Leader of the Conservative Group on the Southwark Borough Council.
3. In Dulwich, where, at the last Election, Sam Silkin had a majority of 122 only, a very large number of Council Houses are owned, leasehold, by the Council. But tenants of those properties are in despair because they believe that you promised them the right to buy their Council House or Council Flat. Now they find that they cannot, and they think that they have been betrayed.
4. Bob Dunn says, and I agree with him, that in constituencies like Dulwich, the sense of betrayal which these Council tenants feel (about 100,000 throughout the country) could cost us two or three seats at the next Election.

That is, of course, of importance: what is of greater importance is that having made the promise that tenants would have the right to buy, and having it in our power to give that right, we should do so without delay.

.../...

5. May I again ask, please, that the Bill which has been drafted already should be introduced into the House of Commons forthwith, with a commitment that it should receive the Royal Assent at the earliest possible moment.
6. Whatever advice you may receive from other sources, I still believe that a large majority of our colleagues in the House of Commons would prefer to give up a few days holiday than betray a promise which we gave, which we meant to give, which we have broken, and which it is still within our power to honour.
7. If I have your consent, I would like to send copies of this Minute, and of its attachment, to the Leader of the House, and to the Chief Whip.

10th February 1982



IAN GOW

From: Robert J. Dunn M.P.



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

1st February 1982

Ian Gow, Esq. M.P.
10 Downing Street
London S.W.1.

Dear Ian,

I take the liberty of writing to you because I am very worried about the attitude of Ministers in the Department of the Environment with respect to the provisions of the Housing Act 1980. I attach herewith a letter from T.W.H. Eckersley, Leader of the Conservative Group on the London Borough of Southwark, which is self-explanatory.

I would like to see you to discuss Toby Eckersley's letter and a number of points relating to the Environment. Perhaps you would kindly telephone Dartford 20704 to fix an appointment at the earliest opportunity. I promise not to take up too much of your time, and look forward to seeing you.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Rob'.

ROBERT J. DUNN M.P.



LONDON
BOROUGH OF
SOUTHWARK

MEMBERS' ROOM
TOWN HALL
PECKHAM ROAD
SE5 8UB E.5

Robert Dunn, Esq., M.P.,
House of Commons,
London, S.W.1.

Please reply to:-
30, Berryfield Road,
London, SE17 3QE

Dear Bob,

11th January 1982

Housing Act 1980, Section 2(3): Exclusion of leasehold properties
from the right to buy

I fear I must trouble you again for advice on what can be done to stir up back-bench opinion into urging early legislation to remove this exclusion. Regrettably my own efforts, (and those of others in local government with whom I am in contact) seem to have met with a set-back recently.

Whereas in June 1981 John Stanley wrote to me that he hoped "to be able to give a clear indication of policy before the end of this year", the Prime Minister, writing to me on 17th November 1981, confined herself to stating that "the Government intends to extend the right to buy to such tenants as soon as space can be found in the Parliamentary timetable".

I led a Deputation of Councillors on 14th December 1981 from Greenwich, Camden, Southwark and Accrington (with support from Lewisham, Cardiff and Burnley) to Sir George Young. He assured us that the legislation was already drafted.

Unless a Bill on this matter is introduced with Government support before April our Party will suffer grave embarrassment in Dulwich, and, if the present strength of the SDP continues, Government inaction on this matter may contribute to the loss of all our Council seats. Furthermore, Dulwich is of course a critical marginal parliamentary constituency.

I am writing in identical terms to John Heddle, who, as Chairman of the Bow Group Standing Committee on Housing and the Environment, had been most helpful at an earlier stage.

Would it be possible for you to concert with him an approach to Government? If you would like me to draft a parliamentary question, please let me know.

Yours sincerely,

T.W.H. Eckersley,
Leader of the Conservative Group.