

PRIME MINISTER

pa
DMS
29/2

ARCHWAY

Mr. Ridley's statement went quietly. With one exception there was universal condemnation of the treatment of the Inspector. The exception was Jeremy Corbyn (Islington North) who refused to condemn the harassment of the Inspector and his family, and instead criticised the Department of Transport for withholding vital evidence in an attempt to override local objections.

The Opposition spokesman, John Prescott, while condemning the treatment of the Inspector, called for a fresh start with the new inquiry. He asked that it should take evidence on the effects of the M25 and of the GLC lorry ban, and on the Hampstead Garden Suburb study. Mr. Ridley said that he would do all that he could to ensure that the fullest possible evidence was available.

Peter Fry argued that the case for major road schemes should in future be considered by Parliament rather than at local inquiries; but he failed to obtain much support for this point of view. Several Conservatives pressed for action by the police against those who may have broken the law in the way they had treated the Inspector. Mr. Ridley said that he understood that the police were examining not only the question of possible past offences but also ways in which the new Inspector might be protected.

Generally speaking, there was much sympathy for Sir Michael and Lady Giddings, and solid support for the line taken by Mr. Ridley.

DMS

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28 February 1984

STATEMENT BY RT HON NICHOLAS RIDLEY MP, SECRETARY OF STATE FOR
TRANSPORT, ON THE ARCHWAY ROAD INQUIRY

With permission, Mr Speaker, I would like to make a statement on the inquiry into the proposals for the Archway Road in North London.

I very much regret to have to tell this House that Sir Michael Giddings, the inspector nominated by the Lord Chancellor and appointed by the Secretary of State for the Environment and myself has withdrawn. This was as a result of the harassment he and his family has undergone. In his letter of resignation he describes how for several months he has been plagued with telephone calls, how callers have sought various means of speaking to his wife, the receipt of hundreds of letters at his private home, some addressed to his wife, two deputations at the house over Christmas, the receipt of a parcel of excreta, trespassers in his garden and the breaking of a window. The Police have been in regular touch and have taken the special steps sought by him in relation to his home. He has told me that while he has no doubt that he could carry the inquiry through he is not prepared to see his wife further distressed or alarmed. He therefore feels he must withdraw.

The Government totally condemns such tactics of intimidation and domestic harassment. They are clearly intended to subvert the statutory processes established by Parliament to protect the interests of the public. In 1978 when announcing the abandonment of the previous Archway Inquiry my predecessor likewise had to tell the House that it had been subjected to a campaign of disruption. The object of any inquiry is to provide a full and fair hearing of all the arguments in the case at issue, and behaviour designed to suppress this is an attack on the rights of the community as a whole.

A new inquiry will be set up as soon as possible with a new inspector nominated by the Lord Chancellor. He has in mind nominating a senior lawyer. Tactics of harassment to prevent a proper hearing of the issues at stake will not be allowed to prevail.

Carbyne inquiry adjourned because of M25

DTP withholding / local objections

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ings shd be open & evidence shd be available

NR: only we not to condemn harassment

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relevant is clear

Si Hughes: associate with condemnation

- hope will be no attempt to circumvent news
inquiry

NR: prosecutor not f in

proba looking at the past and files

Resent: under review
will report be made available
every some

Setting up a fresh inquiry means that the time and money of many people will have been wasted as a result of these actions by the few. I have conveyed to Sir Michael Giddings my deep regret at the personal attacks on himself and his family that they have had to endure.

Prospect: - full condemnation of harassment

- agree object of inquiry is to provide a fully fair hearing

- will be 4th or 5th inquiry

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disrupted ∴ Dept has refused prospects
publication of TI report

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recognise that M25 opening could make a
difference

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time is not for fresh start for all in DTP

- new consultation reports: M25 / Long bar
make available to hearing

NR: know controversial 13rd inquiry

M25 are matter for new inquiry: will do all we can to
make full info available

HR: maj of costs depleted and condemn
we law agst officers

NR: assure full inquiry of law will protect inquiries

Petering: look again at whole basis of inquiry
Path to avoid general principle & leave
only local issues to inspectors

NR proceeds ahead with existing law