AT 3/1

File a Liverpool visit

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

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My ref:

Your ref:

Dear Andrew

3 October 1984

VISIT TO LIVERPOOL ON 2 OCTOBER: MEETING WITH CITY COUNCIL

I said that I would let you have a note of the points made in the meeting that the Prime Minister and my Secretary of State had with the City Council on 2 October.

The Prime Minister invited the City Council's representatives to put to her any points of which they felt she should be aware. They were initially reluctant to do so arguing that they had not been given sufficient advanced warning of the meeting and were not therefore suitably prepared. Councillor Hatton argued strongly that the Council held the Prime Minister personally responsible for conditions in Liverpool; but they would have liked the opportunity to have shown her personally the results of Government action since 1979.

The Prime Minister said that she had seen a range of housing estates and schemes in her tour of the City that morning. She did not accept that present conditions were the results of Government action since 1979. They were the result of policies pursued over a longer term. She had been appalled at some of the housing conditions she had encountered. They indicated severe mismanagement and lack of maintenance. By contrast she had been impressed by the Grafton Crescent Co-operative Estate which had involved occupants in the planning of the estate, with such good results. Equally at Minster Court good quality low priced accommodation had been made available with the help of a private developer working with the Council. She understood however that the Council were not prepared to co-operate on future schemes of this kind. The Government had pursued a policy of encouraging more private money into Liverpool. The Government's policy on housing provided for a variety of provision meeting a range of means. The City's did not and would not rejuvenate Liverpool.

Councillor Byrne said that the Council have, upon taking office, reappraised the strategy. The previous administration had neglected the living conditions in the inner City. This was now to be remedied. The reduction in HIP allocations of £62m since 1979 and the reductions in RSG had made conditions worse. The Council had a responsibility for the whole City.

The Prime Minister observed that over the last twenty years Liverpool had lost over a quarter of a million people. In these circumstances it was important to keep communities together. There had been bad mistakes in the post-war housing policy and later. These all contributed to the present problem. The solution was not however simply a question of resources. This was critical but so was the way in which they were managed.

Councillor Byrne maintained that the Council were prepared to sell blocks of flats to private developers for refurbishment. They were however determined to secure the best price. They were prepared to continue with 'build for sale'. They would also be providing for the sixty thousand unemployed and the pensioners in the City who required municipal housing.

Councillor Hamilton said that he understood that 85% of the youth in the City were unemployed, with little prospect of employment. Housebuilding provided job opportunities which were doubly valuable given the general tenseness in the City. He hoped that the Prime Minister would take on board the wider benefits of the housebuilding programme.

Councillor Hatton asked the Prime Minister to intervene to secure the release of the twelve Cammell Laird strikers who had been arrested, on orders of the court - the twelve people who were attempting to secure their livelihood had been arrested on the orders of 'her' judiciary.

The Prime Minister firmly rebutted any suggestion that the judiciary were in the Government's control. There was no democracy unless the judiciary operated with complete independence. Any respect for his views that Councillor Hatton might have engendered in the course of discussion could not be sustained in the face of such allegations.

Yours sincerely

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