

Ref. A085/2729

PRIME MINISTER

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Inner City Youth

*withdrawn?*

In his minute to you of 23 October the Home Secretary reports on a meeting he had with some Cabinet colleagues after the Cabinet meeting on 15 October, and he suggests a somewhat new direction for urban policy in the light of the recent disturbances. As the Home Secretary indicates, a new policy initiative in this area would probably carry with it some implications for current arrangements for policy co-ordination and development. The Secretaries of State for Employment and the Environment have commented on the Home Secretary's minute.

2. Urban policy was reviewed in MISC 104, under your chairmanship, in July-November last year. The starting point for that exercise was the "Urban Policy and Programme Review", which essentially applied FMI techniques to an analysis of the Urban Programme itself; the report to the group of 21 November 1984 (MISC 104(84) 10) summarised a range of options for enabling the Government to get better value for its spending in the inner cities. The exercise concluded with the establishment of the MISC 116 group, which is designed to oversee much better co-ordination of departmental activities in the five partnership areas, through the City Action Teams.

3. In considering the Home Secretary's minute, then, the first thing is to establish what new aspects he is raising that we did not consider or emphasise in last year's work. It seems to me that he is making three essential points in the aftermath of the riots.

(i) That an initiative should specifically focus on inner city youth.

(ii) That there should be more emphasis on people (rather than on infrastructure aspects)

(iii) That it should be acknowledged that at the heart of the problem there are pools of totally alienated, virtually unemployable young people, mostly black.

4. As things stand at present, the Government's response to the riots has been a firm and very necessary commitment to the police and a refusal of any judicial inquiry on the lines sought by the Opposition. It is still an open question whether that is a sufficient policy in itself, or whether the Government should set <sup>train</sup> in/a complementary line of policy development on, or similar to, the lines sketched in by the Home Secretary. It is to be noted in that connection that Mr Hurd ended his speech in the debate on the disturbances on 23 October by saying that "most strenuous and imaginative work will now be required".

5. The dangers in this are obvious. A meaningful response to the Home Secretary's third point - the total alienation of the groups we are talking about - could well involve supporting some highly innovatory activities, though some of this might be better managed through voluntary organisations rather than by direct departmental involvement. On the other hand, and given the history of frequent reviews of urban policy by administrations of both complexion, there must be a risk of raising expectations that cannot be fulfilled. Nevertheless, there would be considerable advantage to be won if the immediate response to the riots, summarised above, could be filled out by a complementary initiative, though the Home Secretary's minute does not give us anything like a sufficiently precise agenda on which to proceed.

5. You may prefer to hold a meeting yourself with the departmental Ministers concerned, for a general discussion of policy objectives, before considering how further work would best be carried forward. But there is a good deal of "jockeying" among

Departments in this field, and it might be useful that, by way of preparation for a Ministerial meeting under your chairmanship, I should discuss this further with the Permanent Secretaries involved, so as to clarify departmental attitudes both on policy objectives and on means of co-ordinating action in pursuit of them.

6. If you agree to approach the matter in that way, it would be appropriate to defer consideration of the co-ordination machinery until the policy objectives are clearer. At this stage, however, I doubt whether the MISC 116 group is appropriately constituted to carry forward a significant initiative in their field; I would judge that a new Ministerial group (or possibly a rearranged MISC 104) would need to be established for the purpose.

*RS*

*for*

ROBERT ARMSTRONG

*Approved by Sir Robert and  
signed in his absence*

28 October 1985

CONFIDENTIAL

PRIME MINISTER

INNER CITY YOUTH

The Home Secretary said at Cabinet on 15 October that he would be discussing the inner city disturbances with interested colleagues. The correspondence below is the result.

I suggest you look at Mr. Hurd's minute (Flag A), and Mr. Tebbit's minute (Flag B). Lord Young's minute does not, I think, add much (Flag C), but you might like to read it because you are meeting him for a bilateral tomorrow.

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Sir Robert Armstrong's minute (Flag D) discusses the procedure and suggests a way ahead.

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Agree:

i. Sir Robert Armstrong should discuss further with Permanent Secretaries, as a prelude to a meeting under your chairmanship.

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ii. I should agree with Cabinet Office a tight timetable to work towards an early meeting chaired by you to get the work properly on the road?

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Yes MS

DN

DN

30 October, 1985.

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