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Ref. A085/2922

PRIME MINISTER

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Inner City Youth

At your meeting on 14 November you will be considering the Home Secretary's minute of 23 October, together with the comments on it by the Secretaries of State for the Environment and for Employment, the Chief Secretary to the Treasury, the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, and Mr Ancram on behalf of the Secretary of State for Scotland. My own minute of 12 November is designed to bring out the main themes and to serve as an agenda.

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BACKGROUND

2. Overall urban policy is directed at a diffuse and most intractable set of problems. The whole subject was reviewed last year in MISC 104 and there is no purpose in going again over all that familiar ground now.

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3. What is immediately at issue is the nature of the threat disclosed by the recent riots and how far the Government should be seen to be responding to that by taking action to reduce the risk of future riots.

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On the one hand, a full analysis of what has gone wrong in the inner cities would inevitably lead into areas of social identity and family structure and discipline that are exceptionally hard to grip. It would also have to confront more concrete issues - like the failure of many schools in these areas to deliver education - which can be put right

only on a long time-scale. There are clearly no instant solutions and encouraging unrealistic expectations could be actively counter-productive.

On the other hand a Government stance that will be seen as consisting only of the, very necessary, initial emphasis on support for the police has obvious dangers. It is doubtful whether the CAT co-ordinating machinery - well conceived though it is - can be strong enough to take the full load of the Government's presentation of its response,

*Note at end* // especially when urban programme money is to be reduced.

4. The Home Secretary's suggestion, I think, is that we need to develop a crisp, identifiable, positive initiative focused on making the present pool of disaffected youth less dangerous, and heading off recruitment to the pool. This would need to be congruent with existing urban policy machinery and there would doubtless be some overlap. But the tempo of the operation would need to be much faster and the presentation much more visible.

5. A development of this kind would be characterised by a heavy emphasis on people and less on infrastructure and machinery. A main aim of the exercise would presumably be to undercut the hard left local authorities and other undesirable manipulators by taking the initiative in involving people in the trouble spots and giving them the feeling that they were being listened to.

6. Above all, the focus of an exercise of this kind would need to be kept very narrow. If the problems of Gateshead and Glasgow were fed into the package in order to balance it, we would be on the path to addressing all the ills of the urban scene once more.

7. The purpose of the meeting is to assess the feasibility of this kind of initiative and to agree the general nature of the



objectives. If it is agreed to go ahead, you do not need to take decisions on the spot about the machinery to be adopted to take the matter forward. (My recommendations about that are contained in my minute of 4 November).

8. It will, however, be necessary to reach some understanding at the outset about resources. An initiative that was denied any money whatsoever would not look plausible. One of the first things that would need to be worked up would be ways in which existing urban programme and related money could be tapped for the present purpose. The meeting on 14 November should recognise this.

#### HANDLING

9. You may wish to suggest that the meeting takes my minute of 12 November as the agenda. You may also wish to say at the outset that you will be making up your mind how to take the matter forward in terms of Ministerial responsibilities outside the meeting.

10. The statement of "the present position" in my note may be taken as read. The main purpose of the meeting is to consider the issues raised in paragraphs 4 to 7 of my note under the headings "The Problem" and "Aims of a new initiative". You may wish to ask the Home Secretary to speak first, and especially to tell the meeting how he would define the objectives indicated in his minute, and what relationship he sees between such a new initiative and existing urban policy machinery. How far would he see the emphasis being on youth? Or black youth? And to what extent should presentation rest on the prevention of disorder? The Home Secretary may register the point that consideration of policing methods (paragraph 7 of my minute) should be taken forward as a separate issue, and I recommend that you accept that.

11. The Secretaries of State for Employment and the Environment should be asked to speak next, and most Ministers present will wish to express views.

12. You may wish to discourage the detailed discussion of delivery mechanisms (paragraph 8 of my minute) at this stage. But you may want to ask the Chief Secretary to speak to his minute about resources. The Home Secretary, the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and other Ministers may wish with to comment.

13. You wish to give further thought to the machinery for taking this forward in the light of the meeting. But you may want to say that you would welcome any preliminary views that colleagues wish to express about the kind of structure sketched out in paragraph 10 of my minute.

#### CONCLUSIONS

14. You will wish the meeting to reach conclusions on -

*Note that the fact of the review is public knowledge. See my m.s. note overleaf.*

1. whether an initiative broadly on the lines advocated by the Home Secretary should be taken ahead;
2. how the objectives should be stated;
3. the time scale for the exercise;
4. what approach should be taken towards resources in working up a new initiative.



15. On apportionment of responsibilities and other organisational points you will want to be in a position to tell your Cabinet colleagues how you wish to proceed very shortly.

MS

for

ROBERT ARMSTRONG

13 November 1985

~~There is~~ The sentence on urban programme money is a bit ambiguous. This year's PEP shows

	1985-86	86-87	87-88
	241	230	230.

So a declining path in real terms.

The Autumn Statement said:

1. The Government is reinforcing the level and effectiveness of assistance for the inner cities. Meanwhile provision for the urban programme remains unchanged.

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