

cc B/JP

PRIME MINISTER

E(A) Meeting on 21 July 1986

Urban Policy

I attach separate briefs for the two items on the agenda. You will, however, want to use the meeting to take stock of the Government's overall stance on Urban policy during the coming months.

2. As you made clear at the time, the events of last autumn showed that the operational capacity of the police to deal with riot situations needed some sharpening up. The Home Secretary has seen that programme through, including the increases in police manpower that were approved at the meeting you held on 12 May. In his minute of 23 October and again in his recent minute, however, the Home Secretary is concerned that the pool of disaffected, mostly black, young people in the cities should not be allowed to increase, and that visible action should be taken to better the "life chances", of this very difficult group. The main result of the Home Secretary's earlier intervention was the initiative in eight areas under the Paymaster General, who is now reporting on his initial impressions.

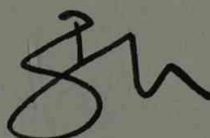
3. Taken together, the two items on the agenda cover all the main variants of new machinery to attack the inner cities' problems that have been identified over the last few years. City Action Teams - which were set up following the Urban Policy Review of 1984 - are mainly directed at better harmonisation of mainstream Central Government functions in the regions. The eight areas initiative is based on the premise that the areas of greatest deprivation - which also present the greatest threat to public order - are quite small pockets, with highly localised problems, and that radically new delivery systems are needed on the ground to get through to them.

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(The task forces are not intended to represent a policy themselves: they are pilot studies for the formulation of new policy.) Urban Development Corporations were devised to address planning and development problems in a single-minded manner in particular derelict areas and Mr Ridley is now proposing to exploit that vehicle across a very much broader front.

4. Running through all these devices - and the Urban Programme, Enterprise Zones and Partnership Areas - is the local authority question. Should the objective be to work in co-operation with them, or to displace their functions against their wishes? It may well be that it is neither possible nor desirable to be totally consistent about this, but it is important to ensure that the Government can present the variety of approaches chosen within a coherent global policy. *Surely they could also be seen to some extent as experiments.*

5. As the Home Secretary says, nobody can write off the possibility of more riots this summer. In the nature of things, improvements in police hardware and riot control methods can be delivered on a much shorter timescale than changes can be effected in the underlying social and structural urban scene. You will, however, doubtless wish to use the meeting to ensure that the presentation of the Government's policies is solid and confident.



J B UNWIN

18 July 1986
Cabinet Office

