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10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

MR. HATFIELD
CABINET OFFICE

ABOLITION OF THE GLC AND MCC'S

I attach a record of a discussion between Lord Whitelaw and the Prime Minister. As you will see, the Prime Minister is minded to hold a meeting to discuss abolition. I envisage this will serve two purposes; to consider whether the policy set out in 'Streamlining the Cities' is correct; and if it is to reinforce the commitment of Ministers to that policy. You will note the suggestion that such a meeting might be held with London members of the Government, plus the Lord President and Chief Whip.

BF | Before deciding what kind of meeting to hold, and with what agenda, the Prime Minister would welcome Sir Robert's advice. It was suggested that he might first want to speak to Sir George Moseley.

I understand the deadline for responses to the White Paper was 31 January. Replies are still coming in but DOE expect to have marshalled them by end February. One possibility, therefore, is to ask Mr. Jenkin to write to colleagues and/or London members of the Government, summarising the views expressed. Such a note could then form the basis for a meeting.

AT

Andrew Turnbull
14 February 1984

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SUBJECT
CC MASTER

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NOTE FOR THE RECORD

ABOLITION OF THE GLC AND MCC's

Lord Whitelaw came to see the Prime Minister yesterday. During the course of the conversation, he expressed his worries about the legislation for the abolition of the GLC and MCC's. His concern was not that the Bills could not be got through Parliament, but that the proposals themselves might be defective. His concern was all the greater because this Bill was probably the most important in the 1984-85 legislative programme. He was less worried about the abolition of the MCC's, which had a smaller role and where the case for abolition was stronger. (He noted however that business interests were coming to the support of Merseyside which was regarded as a moderate and sensible authority in an otherwise militant area).

His main concern was with the GLC where he did not think the Government had all the answers to the questions being posed. He certainly felt that he did not have the answers himself. A major source of opposition was the arts lobby but he was hopeful that the proposals which he was discussing with Lord Gowrie would succeed in heading them off. It would not be possible to postpone the Bill for a year to allow more time for thought as this would probably make it impossible to deny the holding of elections.

The Prime Minister said that, for her part, she was committed to the policy of abolition. She did not accept the argument that a GLC-type body was needed to 'speak for London'. She had never recognised the GLC in this role. She asked how the work of MISC 95 was progressing. It was noted that the Committee was heavily engaged in detailed issues such as transitional provisions and the prevention of obstruction.

It was suggested that the Prime Minister should hold a meeting with those members of the Government representing London constituencies. This could discuss whether the Government was following the right course and, if it was, how support for the policy could be reinforced. The Prime Minister agreed to consider holding such a meeting but before

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doing so she would seek the advice of Sir Robert Armstrong on how elaboration of the policy was proceeding and on the work being done by MISC 95.

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