



10 DOWNING STREET

h.c. Mr Letwin

From the Private Secretary

10 May 1984

Dear John.

Direct Elections to ILEA

The Prime Minister held a meeting at the House last night at 9.30 p.m. to discuss the Alliance amendment to the Paving Bill providing for direct elections to ILEA in May 1985. Present were the Lord President, Lord Privy Seal, Secretary of State for Education and Science, the Chief Whip, Minister of State, HM Treasury, Mr. Waldegrave and Mr. Buckley.

The Secretary of State For Education said that under existing plans the earliest that direct elections to ILEA could take place would be the second half of 1985. This would require a transitional regime from May 1985, implying three differently constituted bodies in three years. This would provide an obvious focus for criticism. He sought advice from colleagues on how he should response to the amendment. In discussion, it was noted that there was little pressure from Government supporters. Accepting the amendment would create the need for a Report Stage in the Commons which it was hoped to avoid. It was not clear whether accepting the amendment would widen discussion on the Bill (for example on the schedule setting out the precise form of the election) or whether agreeing to an amendment sought by the Opposition would speed its passage. Difficulties were more likely to arise in the Lords where the voting intentions of Government supporters would be more difficult to predict.

Summing up, the Prime Minister said the meeting still favoured the existing proposals and that the Secretary of State for Education should continue to resist the amendment. If, contrary to expectations there was very strong pressure, he should be authorised to

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indicate that the Government would be prepared to introduce its own amendment in the Lords. If the amendment were successfully resisted in the Commons the issue would need to be looked at again when the Bill got to the Lords.

I am copying this letter to Elizabeth Hodkinson (Department of Education and Science), Janet Lewis-Jones (Lord President's Office), David Morris (Lord Privy Seal's Office), Murdo Maclean (Chief Whip's Office), David Peretz (HM Treasury) and Michael Buckley (Cabinet Office).

Yours sincerely
Andrew Turnbull

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