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10 DOWNING STREET

From the Principal Private Secretary

14 May 1984

Dear John,

This morning the Prime Minister discussed with your Secretary of State, the Lord President, the Lord Privy Seal, the Chief Whip and the Chairman of the Party the suggestion of a London Grand Committee to which all London Members of Parliament should belong.

In discussion, it was suggested that the Government should not rush into a commitment to establish a London Grand Committee. It was recognised that the argument that London was being denied a voice by the abolition of the GLC was a powerful one, which a commitment to setting up a London Grand Committee could be useful in countering. But the establishment of a London Grand Committee could be expected to lead to pressure for special arrangements governing the areas of other metropolitan authorities. It was doubtful whether such a Committee, which would not have any powers, would be really effective in providing "a voice for London"; and the precedent of the Scottish and Welsh Grand Committees suggested that Members of Parliament might find the requirement to attend it an imposition rather than a benefit. It might also have the consequence that there would be fewer debates on London matters on the floor of the House. In any case, the proposal was more relevant to the Bill to abolish the metropolitan authorities rather than the Paving Bill, and it would be wrong to make a decision at this stage.

Summing up the discussion, the Prime Minister said that the Government should not at this stage commit itself either for or against the proposal for a London Grand Committee. It could be explained that this proposal would fall to be considered next year in relation to the Bill for the abolition of the metropolitan authorities. This would provide more time for internal reflection on the arguments for and against the proposal.

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I am copying this letter to Janet Lewis-Jones (Lord President's Office), David Morris (Lord Privy Seal's Office), Murdo Maclean (Chief Whip's Office) and Jeremy Cowper (Mr. Gummer's Office).

Yours sincerely,

Robin Butler

John Ballard, Esq.,  
Department of the Environment.

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