



20 November 1984

Dear Chief Secretary,

ABOLITION BILL: ORGANISING COMMITTEES

Thank you for copying to me your letter of 16 November to Patrick Jenkin.

I do not believe that it can seriously be claimed that the organising committees set up under the 1972 Act were a factor in inflating the costs of that reorganisation. What went wrong in 1972-74 was that expensive new permanent bureaucracies were created. The organising committees were purely a temporary phenomenon, with a pretty low-key role.

It will be clear from my earlier letter that I do not envisage a major role for the committees that I now propose. They would simply provide a somewhat more formal mechanism for the cooperation that should be taking place anyway. They would not be able to build up their own staff - they would have to rely on the constituent councils to provide any necessary servicing.

Although I would not want to overplay their significance, I think there is a good case for arguing that organising committees should help to reduce, rather than increase, costs. The White Paper made it clear that the boroughs and districts would need to cooperate closely on some of the services which are being transferred to them, and to make voluntary arrangements for the sharing of specialist staff and equipment. Organising committees could provide a forum where such arrangements could be worked out in advance, thereby reducing the risks of individual boroughs/districts each making their own arrangements without regard to the scope for more economic joint arrangements. This role for the committees is, of course, reflected in the provision that now appears in the Bill (clause 88(2)(b)).

I also believe that the provision could be useful in enabling Labour districts to participate in planning for abolition. Even after Royal Assent there may be some attempt by local Labour parties to stop their authorities from "collaborating". There are certainly some authorities which would be only too glad to have a statutory duty to point to. Indeed we have been pressed by some Conservative London Boroughs to have Organising Committees.

I hope that, in the light of this further explanation, you will be prepared to withdraw your objection.

/ I am copying this letter to Patrick Jenkin and the other members of MISC 95, to the Lord President, and to Sir Robert Armstrong.

Yours Sincerely,

J. Bailey

KENNETH BAKER

(agreed by the Minister and signed
by the Private Secretary in Mr Baker's
absence)

The Rt Hon Peter Rees MP

The Rt Hon

20 NOV 1984

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Treasury Chambers, Parliament Street, SW1P 3AG

Rt Hon Patrick Jenkin MP
Secretary of State for the Environment
Department of the Environment
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 3EB

16 November 1984

ABOLITION BILL: ORGANISING COMMITTEES

I have seen Kenneth Baker's letter of 14 November.

We surely do not want to follow the precedent of the 1972 Act which, on any reckoning, inflated the cost of the 1974 reorganisation. Kenneth's proposal will add another mandatory and expensive committee structure, with its associated bureaucracy, and reduce the savings from abolition, which are already depressingly small. I must ask you to reject the proposal which, as Kenneth says, may well be ineffective. If the boroughs and districts want to make their own ad hoc arrangements, there is nothing to prevent them from doing so.

I am copying this letter to the other members of MISC 95, the Lord President and Sir Robert Armstrong.

PETER REES

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From the Minister for the Arts

The Rt Hon Kenneth Baker MP
Minister for Local Government
Department of the Environment
2 Marsham Street
LONDON SW1P 3EB

15 November 1984

Jean Kenne

ABOLITION BILL: ORGANISING COMMITTEES

Thank you for copying to me your letter of 14 November to Patrick Jenkin.

I welcome this low-key provision for the establishment of Organising Committees in each metropolitan area. Although the provision as presently drafted does not exactly fit our potential requirements, I hope it will facilitate discussion and planning among the Tyne and Wear districts for the maintenance after abolition of the excellent existing integrated museum service. It may, though on a much less significant scale, have the same effect in South Yorkshire.

I am copying this to colleagues on MISC 95, to the Lord President and to Sir Robert Armstrong.

*Yours,
T. G. G.*

GOWRIE