

SUBJECT

see master



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10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

3 May 1984

Liverpool: Commissioners

Your Secretary of State came to see the Prime Minister today to discuss the kind of person who might be appointed as a Commissioner in Liverpool should this be necessary. Your Secretary of State said there was a strong probability that Commissioners would be needed, though he recognised that this was very much a last resort for the Government. The Prime Minister thought that a break-down in services might have to be apparent before Commissioners would be acceptable; indeed it was to be hoped that there would come a point when they would be welcomed.

Your Secretary of State thought that as many as 12 Commissioners might be needed in order to cover the full range of services provided by the Council. Clay Cross, by contrast, was a single service Council. This also reflected the fact that Liverpool City Council needed to be represented on a number of bodies and there was the work on staff and education appeals which was currently shared between 99 Councillors. It would be essential to depose the old Council as it would otherwise obstruct the work of the Commissioners. The existing officers could, however, be retained. The Prime Minister doubted whether a group larger than five or so could take decisions effectively and she wondered whether the number could be kept down by making use of co-opted members to fulfil specific tasks.

On appointments, your Secretary of State thought the chairman should be someone with political experience who would be acceptable to the main stream of Labour voters. One possibility would be a senior MP who might be persuaded

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to retire from the House to take on the job. He suggested Mr. Barnett or Mr. Mason. Another possibility was Sir Jack Smart who was a tough northerner with relevant experience and no love of the Militant Left. Sir James Swaffield could also make an important contribution though not necessarily as chairman. The Prime Minister accepted this approach and hoped either Mr. Barnett or Mr. Mason could be persuaded to take on the job.

They then considered the list of names which your Secretary of State had prepared. He pointed out that it was not exhaustive as the Department had been inhibited from canvassing suggestions. Not all the names on his list were discussed but on the attached sheet I have recorded those who were regarded as suitable for further consideration and those who, for one reason or another, were not thought suitable. It was agreed overtly political appointments should be avoided. If you want further nuance on any particular name perhaps you could let me know.

The Prime Minister said she did not want any external soundings taken for the time being though further work on developing and refining the list could go on. She suggested that Lord Sieff might at some stage be asked to nominate someone.

I am copying this letter and the attachment to Sir Robert Armstrong. I assume you will give this letter only a very restricted circulation.

Andrew Turnbull

John Ballard Esq
Department of the Environment

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Liverpool Commissioners

Suitable for further
consideration

Joel Barnett
Roy Mason
Sir Jack Smart
Tom Baron
Sir John Boynton
Sir James Swaffield
Sir Denis Forman
Des Pitcher
Kenneth Appleton
Malcolm Simpson
George Mann
Philip Carter

Unsuitable or committed
elsewhere

Sir James Hamilton
Sir Oulton Wade
Leslie Young
Sir Pat Nairne
Lord Sefton
Sir Frederick Dainton
James Fitzpatrick
Sir Frank Price
Merlyn Rees
The two Bishops

Failure to appear on this list carries no implication about
the classification of a particular name

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