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Prime Minister

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Opting-Out of ILEA

The Secretary of State would like to secure two specific decisions at tomorrow's meeting of E(LF) - a commitment to include opting-out in the Education Bill as set out in the Manifesto and a on a timescale such that boroughs could opt out by but not before 1990.

1. Manifesto Commitment

The Manifesto makes a strong commitment to allow individual boroughs to opt out of ILEA. It appears that Nick Ridley and the DOE would like to backtrack on this, and force a compulsory break up of ILEA.

There are very good reasons for our Manifesto commitment and we would look foolish if we were to change it now, particularly for a more draconian alternative.

2. Timescale

The second issue to be decided is a commitment for boroughs to opt out in April 1990, but not before. This is because

- (a) the Community Charge will be in place by then. If opting out were to be introduced in 1989 it would be under the present rating system, would involve a major change the following year and which would inevitably lead to a very messy situation;

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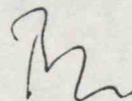
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(b) the boroughs who wish to opt out will need time to plan their education policies, make appointments etc and this will take time. This morning the Councillor from Tower Hamlets who has been asked to look into opting out of ILEA came to see me and handed me a list of 17 questions (Annex A). They are a Liberal Council but very sympathetic to our proposals. Neverthelss as you can see from the questions it is a major step forward for a borough such as Tower Hamlets, and they will clearly need a few years to get their act together.

Conclusion

The weakness of the paper from the Secretary of State is that it does not discuss in detail any of the difficult issues associated with opting out. I am told that DES officials are preparing papers and that we shall be sent them later.

It might be useful to emphasise the need for comprehensive and meticulous work by DES on this issue - as it will be very hard fought politically, with many Left-wing boroughs using first class minds to oppose us.



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KEY QUESTIONS ON EDUCATION

1. When will appropriate legislation be introduced and what is the expected time for passage through the Commons?

2. What powers will there be for individual London Boroughs to withdraw from the ILEA and establish themselves as Education Authorities?

3. What will be the major powers available to Local Authorities wishing to establish themselves as Education Authorities?

4. What will happen to the Careers and Youth Services?

5. How will these services be financed in the future?

6. Will the National Curriculum set a required minimum standard for quality of education in each Education Authority?

7. Will individual Education Authorities be empowered to take account of special education needs within their areas?

These to include special schools provision.

Language teaching for ethnic minority children.

Have decisions been made on the locations City Technical Colleges?

9. Will these be Government funded?

10. What will be the relationship between City Technical Colleges and Manpower Services Commission?

11. Will there be specific action to deal with the mismatch between employer's requirements and lack of skills among many of those leaving school after formal education?

12. Will each new Local Education Authority have a specific capital programme?

13. What will happen to accumulated capital debt, particularly in the IIIA area?

14. What additional resources by way of revenue support will the Government make available to the new Education Authorities by way of subsidy?

15. How will those Authorities which have been and are rate-capped be affected. Should they establish themselves as Education Authorities?

16. Will teacher's pay and conditions be determined nationally or will this become a local responsibility?

17. Will there be a specific budget for essential equipment and for books and other teaching materials?