



cc MASTER SET

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

2 August 1984

EDUCATION IN LONDON

The Prime Minister held a meeting today to discuss the future arrangements for education in London. Present were the Lord President, Home Secretary, the Secretaries of State for Education and Science and the Environment, the Chief Whip and the Chairman of the Party. The meeting had before it the Lord President's minute of 24 July, the Secretary of State for Education and Science's minute of 25 July and the Chairman of the Party's minute of 1 August.

The Lord President said he had sought the meeting as the group he had convened had been unable to agree. The options they had identified were to hold elections to ILEA in the autumn of 1985; or to hold elections in February or March of 1985 just before the GLC and its ILEA Committee came to an end. Under the first option the councillors elected could either become a shadow body, along the lines of the shadow joint boards, responsible for the preparation of the following year's budget or they could replace GLC councillors from the date of the election in their role as ILEA councillors, thereby assuming responsibility immediately. The Secretaries of State for Education and Science and the Environment preferred elections in the autumn, preferably with the councillors so elected displacing the existing GLC councillors. This would allow adequate time for the incoming councillors to prepare the budget of the new ILEA.

The Chairman of the Party opposed elections in the autumn of 1985. Though some London MPs preferred the ILEA elections to be separate from the Borough elections, most of the Government supporters in London favoured holding the two elections at the same time, if for no other reason than that it would save Party funds.

In his minute, the Chairman had put forward a third option under which ILEA would be constituted as a separate

entity, independent of the GLC from September 1985. The existing councillors would however continue to serve on this interim body until elections in May 1986.

In discussion the Secretaries of State for Education and Science and the Environment said the option suggested by the Chairman was not possible. Formally ILEA was merely a sub-committee of the GLC and it was the latter which held all the assets. It would not be possible to transfer this to another body in the middle of a financial year. Furthermore, all ILEA's staff were employees of the GLC and it would not be possible to complete the transfer of their contracts to the new ILEA by September 1985.

The Prime Minister said she opposed elections in 1985. It would look very odd if, having so recently extended the term of GLC councillors, the Government replaced them as ILEA councillors before the end of their extended term. She doubted whether there was any advantage from having new ILEA members in place in September either as replacements or as shadows. It was not at all clear that an ILEA elected in September 1985 would be a major improvement on the present one. In any case ILEA would be rate capped.

She proposed that ILEA should continue as a committee of the GLC with its present members until 1 April 1986. Thereafter it would be constituted as a new entity but with the same council members who would remain in office until elections in May 1986. This could be presented as analogous to the arrangement of the GLC as a whole, ie the terms of existing members were extended until newly elected members were ready to take over. She did not find the argument about having councillors in place early in order to prepare the budget convincing. It was often the case, with May elections, that an incoming council inherited a budget prepared by its predecessors.

The Chief Whip said the Labour Party would oppose whatever course the Government adopted. If elections were held in the autumn of 1985 they would argue that this was inconsistent with the decision to extend the term of GLC councillors; if elections were delayed until May 1986 they would argue that the Government was delaying the point at which directly elected councillors could take over. It was argued that if, in the Lords, the Government proposed May 1986 elections but were forced to adopt earlier elections it could not be accused of gerrymandering. The most dangerous course would be to propose elections in the spring of 1986 and then be forced back to the autumn of 1985.

Summing up the discussion the Prime Minister said the preferred course was to extend the term of GLC councillors until May 1986, first as councillors of the existing ILEA,

and from 1 April 1986 to May 1986 as councillors of the new ILEA. It was also agreed that ILEA elections should be synchronised with Borough elections. The Secretary of State for Education and Science was invited to consider when it would be best to announce this.

I am copying this letter to Hugh Taylor (Home Office), Elizabeth Hodgkinson (Department of Education and Science), John Ballard (Department of the Environment), John Gieve (Chief Secretary's Office), Henry Steel (Attorney General's Office), Michael Bailey (Lord Bellwin's Office), Brian McCarthy (Mr Gummer's Office) and Richard Hatfield (Cabinet Office).

ANDREW TURNBULL

Miss Janet Lewis-Jones,
Lord President's Office.

To: The Prime Minister

1st August 1984

cc. The Rt. Hon. Viscount Whitelaw, CH, PC, MC.
The Rt. Hon. Patrick Jenkin, MP.
The Rt. Hon. Sir Keith Joseph, Bt., MP.

From: John Gummer, MP.

ILEA ELECTIONS

1) You will know that there is considerable dismay among Conservative supporters in London because they feel that the abolition of the GLC has not given them the popularity which they expected. Mr Livingstone has been transformed from an ogre to a media star. This may well have been inevitable but it is certainly unacceptable to the majority of our supporters.

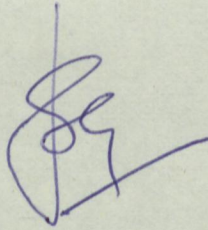
2) The pressure for an elected ILEA was certainly supported by a majority of our activists in London. They are particularly interested therefore in the date for the election. I would not pretend that there is complete unanimity in the Party - voluntary or Parliamentary. There is real divide between those who feel that the limited issues of ILEA and the strong case which the Conservative Party can put forward on education ought to provide them with an opportunity to win more seats in ILEA than would likely be the case if we were to make ILEA elections at the same time as the Borough contests.

On the other hand, there are many who believe that any such election will be politically dominated. They point to the fact that ILEA will be used by the Labour Party as an issue to promote very considerable increases in educational spending. However, there is a very clear indication from the Party as a whole that they would prefer to have the ILEA elections on the same date as the Borough elections. Most people believe that it would do great damage to the Party if an ILEA election were to be held before the Borough elections; we are bound to do badly in it and that would set a tone which we would prefer not to have.

An election in October 1985 has clear disadvantages. It comes at a mid point between the date upon which we argue through the Abolition Act and the date at which the GLC formally ceases to exist. These elections are therefore bound to be used as a referendum irrespective of the subjects which are supposed to be being discussed. There is no doubt that a poor result in October would vitate the effect of the Conservative Party Conference.

There are those who suggest that we ought to have the ILEA elections in March or late February. This seems to be almost certainly too late to affect ILEA's budget and it still provides us with the problem of having to fight elections in which we will do relatively badly just three weeks before the Borough elections in which we hope to do very much better. It is therefore my view that we should hold the ILEA elections at the same time as the Borough elections in May. I realise this has problems but I think they can be overcome. Obviously it would be difficult to extend ILEA's life by a month or six weeks - that would be seen as gerrymandering and I can understand the educational reasons why this

is not wholly satisfactory. There is however an alternative which I believe would work. We should announce in the Abolition Bill that from the 1st September 1986 ILEA becomes an independent corporation separate from the GLC and holding all the school properties. It would of course be a temporary organisation but it would continue until the May elections of the following year. We would therefore not be extending the life of ILEA but placing it instead on the different footing which its needs demand. As far as the Party is concerned I am sure this is the best of a series of very difficult alternatives and I very much hope this will be adopted.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a vertical line on the left, a loop at the top, and a horizontal line extending to the right.