



10 DOWNING STREET

THE PRIME MINISTER

17 July 1981

*Private and Confidential*

*Dear Councillor Goldheim,*

Thank you for your letter of 24 June about the problems of Merseyside.

I was very glad that you were able to be present at the meeting which I had with representatives of the County Council and City Council when I came to Liverpool on Monday of this week. I, for my part, found that that occasion gave me a very useful insight into the problems of Merseyside and I of course took note of the point that you made - which was already contained in your letter - that far from being at the top of the "strike league", Merseyside is about half way down when compared with other major industrial conurbations. Nonetheless, what I said in the House of Commons on 23 June was, I am afraid, a reflection of what you rightly describe as the general public's view "that, at the drop of a hat, Merseyside will be militantly out on strike". This image may be a false one but there are many people who believe it to be accurate. As I said at our meeting on Monday, when I was in the United States, General Motors told me that they were reluctant to invest further in Britain because of their experience at Ellesmere Port.

Our task now - and it is the task of local government as much as of central government - is to tackle the problems of Merseyside as vigorously as we can and to make sure that firms will invest in the area in future. I believe that this

*HC*



can be done and this is why, as a first step, I have asked Michael Heseltine and Tim Raison to come up to Merseyside next week. I enclose a copy of what Willie Whitelaw said in yesterday's debate about the remit I have given them. I am sure that if anyone can find the right solution, it is Michael Heseltine, and I look forward to receiving the report which he will put to me and my other colleagues when he returns from Merseyside in a fortnight's time.

Yours sincerely

Raymond M. H. H. H.

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Councillor Neville C Goldrein



Cols 1404-1405

CIVIL DISTURBANCES

Mr Whitelaw

All that I have said this afternoon matches the purpose and extent of phase two of Lord Scarman's inquiry into the disorders in Brixton in April of this year. The inquiry that he is undertaking fits exactly, and in the most timely way, into the interlocking policies I have outlined for trying to promote the conditions in which violence cannot flourish.

Merseyside to discuss with the local authorities there, with the urban development corporation, and with representatives of industry, commerce, the unions and the various communities, the problems of the area, the urgent issues raised by recent events, and the opportunities that exist. He will not only be concerned with those areas of policy for which he has departmental responsibility; he will be looking generally at Government policies, into the way in which they interact with the responsibilities of the local authorities, and into the ways in which ideas, resources and energies can be brought to bear from a wide social and industrial background. He will be based on, and will spend much of his time in, Merseyside. He will be accompanied and supported by my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Home Office, the hon. Member for Aylesbury. They will be supported by a small team of officials from the two Departments and will be able to call upon the advice and support of other Government Departments, including the regional directors of the various Departments in Merseyside.

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton) *rose*—

Mr. Whitelaw: My right hon. and hon. friends will start by convening a meeting of the partnership committee. My right hon. Friend will report the outcome of his consultations to his colleagues in the Government, and we shall then consider both how we should proceed in relation to Merseyside and the extent to which the procedures adopted and the measures envisaged in respect of Merseyside are capable of being, and ought to be considered for extension to other areas with similar problems, with the intention of reporting to the House again when we resume in October.