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File



2 MARSHAM STREET
LONDON SW1P 3EB
01-212 3434
My ref:

Your ref:

2 (September 1984

Dear Andrew

VISIT TO LIVERPOOL ON 2 OCTOBER

I enclose a draft speech together with
background briefing

Yours truly
John Ballard

JOHN BALLARD
Private Secretary

Andrew Turnbull Esq

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DRAFT SPEECH FOR THE PRIME MINISTER TO DELIVER AT WAVERTREE TECHNOLOGY
PARK - 2 OCTOBER

Sir John, I am delighted to be here at the Wavertree Technology Park and I would like to take this opportunity of thanking you personally for what you have done to get this imaginative project off the ground. But my purpose in coming to Liverpool is broader than that. I must therefore say a few general words about Liverpool before I come back to this morning's ceremony.

Let me quote - "The present prosperity of Liverpool has evidently arisen from a combination of causes and among these may be chiefly noticed its natural situation its free water carriage with the numerous manufacturing towns, and mines of the County, and the enlightened policy of its civil government."

You will gather that this description was not written recently. It was made at the beginning of the Nineteenth century. There have been a few changes since!

The problems experienced in the latter part of the Twentieth century by cities which grew rapidly in response to the burgeoning demands of the first industrial revolution are not unique to Liverpool. They are being experienced in many places both in this Country and elsewhere in Europe.

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Liverpool's decline has been particularly steep. Even before the world recession the City was losing 11,000 jobs a year. Over the last 20 years it has lost a third of its population and often these have included a disproportionate share of the able and energetic.

Shifting patterns of world trade have contributed to the long term decline of the port - and with it the traditional industry and commerce which were the source of so many jobs.

The Government has responded to help Liverpool tackle its problems. In 1981 I asked Michael Heseltine to take a special interest in the area. This special responsibility is now with Patrick Jenkin. I have asked them to consider ways to make the fullest and most efficient use of available resources.

Today I have seen some housing areas in Liverpool. They are a perfect illustration of the problems and the opportunities. Much of the housing reflects immediate post-war policies which we now see were in many ways ill-conceived. We are left with a legacy of poorly planned, poorly constructed and badly managed housing. It is clear to me that the issue is not whether improvement is needed. It is how to achieve that improvement in a cost effective fashion. In a way which provides housing choice and involves the private sector and the energy of local people. One cardinal lesson of the past is the foolhardiness of assuming that public authorities always know best - they don't.

Encouraging owner occupation is the surest way of gaining lasting improvements in living conditions. I am justly proud of my Government's record on that. But in the cities like Liverpool there will always be a substantial legacy of council housing. Building more council houses will not improve conditions for the tenants of that housing. What is needed is better management of the existing assets, providing an effective maintenance service, bringing those services closer to tenants, widening the housing choice, engaging the private sector in tackling problem housing.

There are many examples on Merseyside of partnerships with the private sector: Stockbridge Village, Edge Lane in Sefton and Woodchurch in Wirral. There are now twelve community refurbishment schemes across Merseyside. Local tenants are at work in improving their own housing. Over six thousand dwellings are benefitting.

I commend these initiatives and examples to Liverpool and to other authorities which face similar housing problems.

The resources available to Merseyside are substantial. They are not concentrated in the public sector alone. Local people, the business community, and voluntary effort all have a part to play.

At the heart of the Government's inner area policy lies the concept of partnership with the private sector. Liverpool was built on the motivation energy and resources produced by individual initiative and enterprise. These qualities must again be harnessed to play an essential part in the process of revitalisation.

The Government is prepared to play its part in full. The highest level of regional assistance to industry and commerce is available here in Liverpool. The Inner City Partnership Programme has been aimed at schemes designed to stimulate the economy of the inner area as well as support for voluntary effort and improvement of the rundown environment. Over £120M has been made available to the Partnership since we took office in 1979.

In 1981 we established the Merseyside Development Corporation to tackle 840 acres of rundown dockland on the Liverpool and Birkenhead waterfront. Later today I shall be visiting the Development Corporation's most spectacular achievement to date - the International Garden Festival. Over three million have already seen the Festival. Many said it could not be done in the time available when the event was announced in late 1981. They were proved wrong. The Festival has

demonstrated what can be done in Liverpool, by Liverpool people.

We designated an EnterpriseZone at Speke in 1980.

English Estates are reclaiming the old Tate and Lyle Site and are constructing new office accommodation on the site of the old Exchange Station which lay derelict for so long.

A Freeport, the largest in the UK, has just been established in the North Docks.

In 1981 17,000 places under the Youth Training Scheme have been sponsored in Merseyside by the Manpower Services Commission.

The Task Force the Government set up in 1981 has a major role in the co-ordination of Central Government efforts. And extra resources have been provided where it has been seen that they can be spent in a cost effective manner. Working both with the private sector, local authorities and Government Agencies a wide variety of innovative schemes has been established - many conceived and implemented here on Merseyside for the first time anywhere.

Let no one say the Government is not playing its part. The facts speak for themselves.

And there has been an encouraging response from the private sector.

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I am looking forward later this afternoon to seeing the refurbishment scheme that is taking place on the Albert Dock. £20M of public money is being matched with £30M of private funding to convert this famous building into offices shops and flats.

Barratts, Wimpeys and others have been active for some years in building housing for sale in inner Liverpool. I saw this morning the result of an imaginative scheme at Minster Court where Barratts have converted rundown tenement blocks into much sought after private flats.

British American Tobacco have converted an old warehouse on the South Docks into a small firms centre and another is proposed.

Ten Information Technology Centres have been established on Merseyside with considerable support from the private sector.

The famous Adelphi Hotel is emerging from years of neglect in a major refurbishment scheme financed with the aid of an Urban Development Grant.

I could go on - these are just a few examples showing how effective public and private sector partnerships are helping to change the face of Liverpool.

The Government recognises its obligations and its objectives are clear. We will not falter in our determination to secure a better

future for the nation as a whole - and it is only in the context of a national improvement that the problems of Liverpool can be fully resolved.

Government both local and central, the business community and the community at large must take up the challenge. Much has been started. We now need to extend the work that has been done. This cannot be done by local and central Government alone, the business community and above all the people of Liverpool working together is what is needed to make it happen. Although there is much to be achieved I am confident of success if all the parties play their full part.

But I say again that it is the people of Liverpool who must seize the opportunities that are offered.

We stand today on one of the most dramatic regeneration projects in the heart of Liverpool. For years the site of this Wavertree Technology Park presented a depressing spectacle of rundown buildings and abandoned railway sidings. Less than two years ago work started on the transformation we now see in progress. Government have provided £6M to the County Council in Derelict Land Grant - to remove the eyesores, level the site and provide roads and sewers - and you can see the transformation which will provide an attractive location for high technology industry.

A Technology Park Company involving Plesseys, English Estates and the City and County authorities has been set up under the

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Chairmanship of Sir John Clark. And I know I can rely on Sir John and his colleagues to support the continued development of this emerging centre of high technology.

Already you can see a 40,000 square foot factory which has been occupied by 300 people. Work has started on smaller speculative units. [And I am happy to announce that Powell and Schofield, a local Company in the exciting field of Biotechnology is to establish itself here shortly bringing up to 190 jobs on to the site]. The creation of the Wavertree Technology Park is a potent example of what can be achieved by the private and public sector working together. This must represent the future direction for Liverpool.

But, at the end of the day, it is for the producer, whether of goods or services, to sell them where they are needed. Many smaller firms, however good technologically, find it difficult to make contact with the large companies. And the reverse is true. We need to encourage and stimulate that sort of contact if we are to make the best use of the creative potential of the small, thrusting company and the massive capability of the well-established househouse name. This is why I am delighted to be here today to open this "Meet the Buyer" exhibition where many large companies in the electronics, communications and telecommunications field have come to tell smaller firms what it is they want, and how best to establish a commercial relationship. Both sides must benefit.

I therefore take pleasure in opening this event, and urge

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everyone who attends it to make the most of the genuine opportunities which it presents.

Before I go, I would like to meet some of the participants, but, meanwhile, if the media want to put any questions, now is the opportunity.