

PRIME MINISTER

INNER CITIES LAUNCH - PRESENTATION

The objective of the launch of the booklet tomorrow should be to create the following impression:

- (1) - your determination to sharpen up the attack on inner city problems with practical measures and to change the face of our urban environment over the next ten years or so;
- (2) - your determination to advance across a broad practical front - as evidenced by the involvement of so many Ministers at the Press Conference;

*Business & the Community
Investors & Industry
British Under Development*

(3) your success in winning the increasing involvement of the private sector - the key to real success because it engages the commitment of people who have a real stake in the inner cities;

your deliberate approach to the issue over the last six months culminating in the publication of the booklet, the announcement of a dozen measures and the further involvement of the private sector, bringing the many disparate parts of the overall approach cohesively together; and providing a day to day focus for the effort through Kenneth Clarke, backed up by a free phone arrangement.

I think you should give the impression of being broadly satisfied with the way things are going - although you always want more to happen in less time - and of being determined to keep visiting inner cities to see how things are progressing.

I think it is very important for you to indicate you will be a "hands on" Prime Minister so far as inner cities go - for that is what will give confidence to all those you want to get involved with a development.

Questions

I rehearse below some of the main questions which are likely to arise and suggest some answers.

Local Government

Q: Is not your entire inner city policy designed to marginalise local government?

A: No. But equally we cannot allow anti-enterprise, spendthrift, irrelevant local government to condemn urban areas to deprivation for which the Government is then blamed. The attachment of some local authorities to high rates, gay rights, Nicaragua and nuclear free zones does not offer much hope to their residents. Through a whole raft of policies from rate, education and housing reforms, encouraging land sales and partnership with the private sector, we are trying to get local government to be more responsive to people's needs. And where we find useful instruments such as Urban Development Corporations and City Action Teams we should press ahead with them.

Q: But won't your policies mean worse rather than the better people offering themselves for local government service?

A: No. The prospect of a more vibrant urban environment should encourage rather than discourage successful people to identify with that success. Where we bring hope we shall also bring people who want to make a go of it.

Q: Doesn't all this smack of Whitehall knows best?

A: What you are really saying is that if a local authority wants to proceed indefinitely with decline, decay and a dependent culture then it should be allowed to do so. But it doesn't work out like that. They don't go into an election saying vote for us and you will get more decline, more decay, and you will love it. Instead they present the Government as the reason for their incompetence. Well, I am no longer prepared to leave

them to their ill-founded excuses. That is the message of our rate, education and housing reforms and our determination to ensure that inner cities share in the country's prosperity. For too long some local authorities have conducted a guerilla war against the Government at the expense of their rate-payers. It has got to stop.

Money

Q: This is not much of a package because you are not spending much more money. Where's the beef?

A: The beef is in the £3,000 million (£3 billion) of taxpayers money we are spending this year in inner cities - an outlay which will bring much more in profit investment. Our aim is to spend it more effectively and more tellingly and to coordinate the action better. If spending taxpayers money could solve problems we would have much fewer of them by now. What we have got to do better is to see that the money going in is more effectively applied and encourages others to invest. Over the years you will see whether that is happening - as you can already see for example in London Docklands, on Merseyside and in Salford Docks.

Booklet

Q: Does the booklet have the status of a White Paper? If so why haven't you made a statement to the House?

A: The booklet is not a White Paper as such, though if it were it would not be much different in its coverage. We have produced this free booklet - 12,000 copies so far - with one very clear objective: to excite the interest of all those people who might play a part in regenerating our inner cities. Consequently it shows what is being achieved, what the opportunities are, how the Government can - and is - helping and how the private sector can get involved. It is money well spent.

[So far as a Parliamentary statement is concerned we are not so much announcing new policies as intensifying the attack through existing policy. We have placed the booklet and supporting material in the libraries of both Houses.]

NB: It would serve your purpose if the Opposition were daft enough to ask for a statement.]

Timetable

Q: How quickly do you expect our inner cities to be transformed?

A: There is no date you can put upon it because different cities have different problems. No one is alike. But already you can see a difference in many parts of the country - East Central Glasgow, London Docklands, Albert Docks, Liverpool, Gateshead Metro Centre, Salford Quays. I don't suppose I shall ever be satisfied with the pace. But we are determined to make it happen.

Teesside

Q: When do you think you will see the wasteland on which you were photographed transformed?

A: Well, not this month but watch this space. [Eric Sorensen says he hopes for an April announcement.]

Vanessa

mp BERNARD INGHAM

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