

SUBJECT cc Major Set

Meeting with the Church Leaders held in the Liverpool Town Hall
on Monday, 13 July, 1981, at 1300 hours

Present:

The Archbishop of Liverpool, the Most Reverend Dereck Worlock

The Bishop of Warrington, the Rt. Reverend Michael Henshall

The Prime Minister said that she had just spent an hour with the community leaders and she had been amazed at their hatred for the police.

Archbishop Worlock said that although there was a profound mistrust of the police on the part of the local community, this was not the cause of the outbreak of violence. The present situation, which had been developing for a long time, was due to many things. There was a certain amount of racial tension. There was no racial discrimination as such, but there was a silent colour bar. There were, for example, no coloured Councillors in Liverpool, and there was no coloured barrister at the Liverpool Bar. There were only 8 coloured policemen in the Merseyside force; and one did not find coloured assistants in the shops in the way one did in London. The community felt itself to be socially deprived. They were alienated from the rest of society in a very real way. The police were simply a part of an establishment which they were not prepared to accept. If Mr. Wally Brown were to be identified with any establishment figure, he would be disowned by his community.

Archbishop Worlock continued that the main point he wished to make to the Prime Minister was that the local community had to be consulted about the way in which it was to be rebuilt. But if we were to consult them in our way of consulting, we should get no reaction. He saw no alternative but to sit down in groups with the community and talk to them about how the community was to be rebuilt. Many of their ideas would be ill-formed, and consultation would be a protracted and painful process. But this was the only way forward.

Bishop Henshall said that he agreed with what Archbishop Worlock had said. At the moment the community was so alienated that it offered no response to society as a whole; and this was true not only of the black people of the area, but of the whole community. His

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clergy were saying very strongly that reconciliation and not denunciation was the key to the future. In the short term, the hand of the police had to be strengthened. But in the longer term, there had to be reconciliation. Part of this process would undoubtedly be to get the police to be more acceptable to the community. We must get back to a policing system that was community-based, with more local stations and policemen on the beat. It was also important to get the police to visit the schools regularly. It could take a lot of heat out of the present situation if the Government adopted a compassionate stance that showed that it understood the problems. If such a compassionate note could be struck, many of those who wanted the Government's policies to succeed, including its policy of upholding law and order, would be greatly helped.

Archbishop Worlock asked whether it would be possible for a Minister to be made responsible for taking a direct interest in Merseyside. If he could visit the city, say, every fortnight; if he could get to know the inner city problems; and if he could guide and encourage the local authorities, this would give hope and confidence to those local authorities and to the community at large. In this way it might be possible to draw alienated Toxteth into the life of the city, and the alienated city into the life of the country.

Bishop Henshall said that a factor in the general feeling of alienation was certainly unemployment. Another was that, as a result of cuts in public expenditure, people were now seeing reductions in the services available to them. Archbishop Worlock added that the Manpower Services Commission should try to involve the local people in rebuilding their own future. The MSC often seemed to be hamstrung by existing rules, and these would have to be changed if necessary.

The Prime Minister thanked Archbishop Worlock and Bishop Henshall for meeting her. Many of today's problems had been identified 15 years ago. We had thought then that if people were given good homes and good schooling, this would give them the basis they needed for a satisfactory life. But it seemed that this approach

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had not been wholly right. We should have to think again.

The meeting concluded at 1400.

AW.

14 July, 1981.