

The Rt Hon The Lord Irvine

28 June 1994

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The Rt Hon Mr John Gummer
Secretary of State for the Environment
2 Marsham Street
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Dear Mr. Gummer,

I understand that the Inspector appointed to enquire into and advise on the Barnet Eruv Planning Permission has now concluded that this should be granted, presumably enabling you to rule accordingly. As one who (together with my successor Chief Rabbi Dr Jonathan Sacks) appeared before the Public Enquiry to explain and plead for the Eruv, I write to express my great satisfaction.

The decision will be greeted with great relief by thousands of Sabbath-observing Jews in the area, particularly mothers of infants, and ailing and elderly people who were hitherto imprisoned in their homes on the Sabbath and who will now be able to use prams and wheelchairs.

The decision will also bring London into line with numerous cities the world over, from New York to Melbourne, and from Jerusalem to Antwerp where such a facility exists.

I am aware that there is some Jewish opposition on purely religious grounds. The objections, as far as I know, have nothing to do with Planning considerations. Nor are they new. In Manhattan and in Melbourne, where I had been personally involved, the opposition was very much more fierce than here. Yet once the Eruv was established it was accepted without argument by those who wished to avail themselves of it, while the others were free to follow their conscience by not using it, and the strife soon died down completely. I am confident the same will happen here.

In my submission at the public hearing I had argued that the denial of this facility to thousands of local Jewish residents amounted to an infringement of their civil rights. Had the decision gone against them, I was quite prepared to raise the matter in the House of Lords.



On a personal note, I well recall the invaluable help you rendered, as Minister of Agriculture, to religious Jews when you supported our traditional method of slaughtering animals. Your renewed involvement in helping members of our community to preserve their religious heritage is once again deeply appreciated.

With warm personal greetings and every good wish

Yours as ever

Immanuel Jakobovits