



Prime Minister

I should be grateful for your approval to appoint Sir Robert (Robin) Cooke special adviser for the Palace of Westminster, on all matters affecting accommodation. I have entrusted Ministerial responsibility for the Palace to Geoffrey Finsberg and Sir Robert would work very closely with him. I have consulted Norman St John Stevas, Christopher Soames and George Cholmondeley (as Lord Great Chamberlain) informally, and, of course, Sir Robert Cooke has indicated that he would be willing to serve, if asked, as a special adviser. I propose that the appointment be paid at the same rate as a Vice Chairman of a New Town Development Board, currently £2,835 per annum for 1 day per week; my officials are in touch with the Civil Service Department on this. Sir Robert would also be reimbursed expenses in the normal way.

I do not need to rehearse Sir Robert's very special knowledge and experience of the architecture, furnishing and history of the Palace of Westminster. His energy and talents were most notably displayed during the period of the last Government when he showed himself to be an outstanding Chairman of the Accommodation and Administration Sub-Committee of the House of Commons Services Committee. He was also an extremely valuable member of the House of Commons Works of Art Committee. There is a strong feeling in the House of Commons, which I share, that his talents should continue to be used. This is illustrated by the Early Day Motion (number 45) in the Order Paper for Friday 15 June 1979.



I am copying this to Christopher Soames,
Norman St John Stevas and Michael Jopling.

WJH

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26 NOV 1979