

NOTE FOR THE RECORD

Mr. Langford

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Dispersal: Wales

The Secretary of State for Wales, accompanied by Michael Roberts, MP, Ian Grist, MP and John Stradling-Thomas, MP, called on the Prime Minister at their own request in her room at the House on 25 July at 2030 to discuss dispersal.

Mr. Edwards said that he thought the Prime Minister should be made aware of the political consequences of the decision to deprive Wales of the share in civil service dispersal which had been promised. This would be seen in Wales as a major slap in the face: having been at the top of the list Wales was now at the bottom and would get virtually nothing. The political difficulty lay in the fact that the ground for the reception of a large number of civil servants, primarily from the MOD, had been so thoroughly and publicly prepared in South Wales. Advance parties of civil servants had been entertained by the City of Cardiff, receptions for them had been publicised and hopes raised. The Conservative Party had real political hopes in South Wales, for example with gaining the Speaker's seat on his retirement. He suggested to the Prime Minister that, even if the decision could not now be changed, he hoped it would be possible to find 1500 or so civil servants in Whitehall who could be made new candidates for dispersal. There was no problem in Cardiff about office accommodation; 2000 civil servants were about to move out of the existing Welsh Office into a brand new building and their places could be taken by new arrivals. Mr. Edwards acknowledged that Wales had been given 750 civil servants from ECGD: but this move was already completed and would not salve the wounds of the impending announcement.

The Prime Minister told Mr. Edwards that he should not exaggerate the number of dispersed jobs which were going to Scotland. She saw the point which Mr. Edwards and his colleagues were trying to make but would like them to go away and prepare more detailed chapter and verse, with reference the Hardman Report, for their case. She could not hold out much hope, at this stage, that it would be possible to do anything to meet their concerns.

*BM*

26 July 1979