

PM has seen
MAJ
7/11

PRIME MINISTER

c.c. Mr. Whitmore
Mr. Coles

PRESIDENT REAGAN'S ARRIVAL AT THE PALACE OF WESTMINSTER

I mentioned to you the question of whether President Reagan should enter the House of Lords through the Sovereign's Entrance. I have today learned that there is strong political advice against this. We need a decision no later than Monday, to meet the programme printing timetable. I therefore set out below the points to be considered.

Initial planning for this part of the programme has covered only two options: the Norman Porch or the Sovereign's Entrance. Those responsible for security in the Lords recommend the use of the Sovereign's Entrance. It has clear advantages over the Norman Porch, at which the arrival would be in the open air.

There are, however, four possible entrances in the same vicinity. The two additional ones both lead off the archway at Chancellor's Gate. The more formal of these two is unsuitable, because it leads to the wrong side of the Royal Gallery. But the entrance on the right-hand-side of Chancellor's Gate leads through to exactly the same point as the other two entrances. It is normally fairly untidy because it is used for trades people, but it could easily be tidied up. It appears to be as satisfactory on security grounds as the Sovereign's Entrance.

Having learnt today of the Chancellor's Gate alternative, both Commons' Chief Whips are strongly of the view that President Reagan should use the Chancellor's Gate entrance if security makes the Norman Porch unacceptable. There is no precedent for a visiting Head of State to be accorded the use of the Sovereign's Entrance. Its use would therefore offer an excuse for another political fuss, perhaps leaving the Americans with the feeling that a significant proportion of our MPs and/or the British public wanted to embarrass the President.

/The suggestion

The suggestion for the use of the Sovereign's Entrance was made entirely on security grounds. There was no suggestion of a conscious decision in protocol terms to add extra splendour to President Reagan's visit compared with, say, President Giscard d'Estaing. If another option is equally valid in security terms, there is therefore a strong case for using that.

I have asked for urgent confirmation that the security authorities do place the Chancellor's Gate entrance on a par with the Sovereign's Entrance. If that is confirmed,

the choice should rest between the Norman Porch and the Chancellor's Gate entrance?

MA

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