

*cc Mr. Goffin*

*If we are going to do this we shall have to start the other way round*  
① *Reception - fill chairs in dining room.*  
② *Then to Pillared room for reception.*

Reception for Innovators and Entrepreneurs

You were a little disappointed with the shape of the guest list for 26 January, and you said that you did not want to extend the evening.

We have added a few names which have come to our attention more recently, and we have also now invited three Department of Industry Ministers and three Treasury Ministers. Are there other Ministers or back bench MPs you would like to include?


Even though this will now be a 1½ hour reception, John Ashworth has argued strongly that we should give the occasion some structure. Many of the guests are "achievement- oriented" - ranging upwards from an 18-year-old who won the Design Council's Schools Award and was then discovered to be running his family business after his father's death (he describes himself as too busy to go to university). If you simply give them a drink, they may leave with an impression that you have shown interest, but that the Government still takes a dilettante approach to their interests. The numbers are quite modest. If you were to receive in the normal way, and then circulate for a while in the White and Blue Drawing Rooms, we could then invite everybody to move into the Pillared Room where chairs had been set out. You could say a few words. You might explain that your guests had been invited because of your concern that innovators outside established companies/organisations often felt deprived of Government backing and private sector finance. Several case histories had brought this home to you. You had asked ACARD to present a quick report to you on the subject (we will send all the guests copies of that about a week ahead of the party). You had had a chance in the first half hour of the party to have an informal word with most of the guests. You would like to spend the next three-quarters of an hour or so with a slightly more structured discussion on a number of relevant questions. You could then go on to suggest two or three themes, and treat it as an informal seminar.

An alternative approach would be to divide the guests in advance into about 4 groups, selected to discuss different topics, and with a Minister earmarked for each group. After everyone had had an initial

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drink, we could ask them to spend half an hour plus in a group of about 10 people on an individual topic, and we could leave time for a brief round-up before people left at around 8 o'clock.

Neither format would produce conclusive discussions. But it would ensure that your guests all get a fair opportunity to make their personal points to you or a Ministerial colleague, in the course of a serious discussion and not merely as cocktail chat. I do think it is worth operating along these or similar lines. Do you agree?



9 January, 1981.