

It is a good idea  
but not at that  
price. I just don't  
believe that a one-room

PRIME MINISTER

+ bathroom + shower  
can cost 26,000.  
A. C. some other elements.

Geoffrey Finsburg has suggested that I should seek your agreement to some small improvements which I would like carried out to my office in Cathays Park, Cardiff.

Prime Minister

Mr Edwards wants to build a flatlet in the Cardiff H.P. of the Welsh Office.

It would be a sensible move for the reasons set out below. But it is also likely to be criticized - you may remember the saga of Mrs Horst's Ministerial Bathroom.

Agree that Mr Edwards should go ahead, provided he is confident that he can

depend it? MAF 30/

The accommodation used by myself and my Parliamentary Under Secretaries of State in Cathays Park falls very far short of a reasonable Ministerial standard and, of course, unlike George Younger, I do not have an official residence at my disposal. A scheme for improving Ministerial accommodation, by providing larger rooms and a shower/ changing room, had been agreed with the Property Services Agency but has now been deferred because of the reduction in the Agency's work programme; a turn of events which I entirely accept.

However, two years experience has shown me that there is one requirement that we really should seek to meet, particularly at a time when some renovation work on the old Welsh Office building will be needed in any case. There is at present no overnight accommodation of any kind in the building for Ministers or senior officials, or indeed any room (other than one's own office or the staff lavatory) where they (or their wives) can change. It is an inherent part of the job of Welsh Office Ministers that they should attend a large number of public engagements in Cardiff and they are frequently detained in the city late in the evening. I am fortunate in having a house an hour's drive away but Wyn Roberts lives in North Wales and future Welsh Office Ministers may well not be as lucky as I am. Even in my own case I frequently have to stay at a hotel and Wyn has to do so on almost every occasion that he is in South Wales. Any official who has to stay in the building to deal with an emergency as inevitably happens from time to time can only camp in their own offices. This seems to me to be a preposterous situation, which in the long run will prove wasteful as well as inconvenient. Having, in an initial burst of enthusiasm during my first few weeks in office, vetoed the installation of a bathroom for Ministers on grounds of expense I have now come to hold the view that we should install a small flatlet within the building. What I have in mind is a single room/bedsitter with bathroom which could be equipped with the minimum necessary for an occupant to cook a simple breakfast. This would be used by Ministers and senior officials forced to stay overnight in Cardiff and also for them to change in before attending public functions.

/I am told



I am told that the provision of a flatlet would cost up to £20,000, and a bathroom alone £6,000. I appreciate that expenditure of this kind always invites criticism but I have no doubt that the provision of basic facilities of this kind is long overdue, is a real need and in no sense a luxury, and I should therefore be grateful if you felt able to approve the necessary work.

*RNE*

RNE  
28 January 1981