

CF: for tomorrow's meeting folder.

14/11

LPS / C. HC / PJ / S. GY

? 1630 on Tue 15 Nov

~~Delayed~~

Have you told MA

D

PRIME MINISTER

BRIDGE STREET SITE

This is to bring you up to date with events following your meeting with Mr. Jenkin, Mr. Biffen and Mr. Rees.

i) The Treasury and Environment have come to an agreement on finance for the redevelopment of the site.

ii) Mr. Jenkin has met Sir Hugh Casson and the latter has agreed to make a number of amendments to the design of the Parliament Street facade (subject to the need to press on)

iii) There is likely to be a debate in the House in the week beginning 21 November.

iv) There will be an exhibition of the proposals from 14 - 25 November. If you would like to look in Sir Hugh Casson or one of his partners would be delighted to be on hand to talk about the design.

Would you like us to find a time for you to look in?

Yes please no

D

9 November 1983

~~Time~~: Fixed for 1630 on Tues 15<sup>th</sup>  
Sir Hugh Casson, the Lord Privy Seal  
and either Mr Jenkin or Sir George  
Young will be there.

D  
11/11

AMA

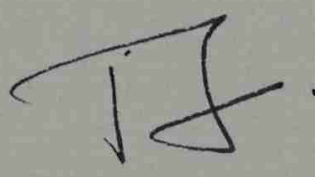
PRIME MINISTER

BRIDGE STREET SITE

You are to view the exhibition of the proposed redevelopment of Bridge Street tomorrow at 1630. This note is to remind you about the background.

In 1982 Michael Heseltine announced proposals to redevelop the area bounded by Cannon Row, Bridge Street, Parliament Street and Derby Gate with public funds and to explore the possibility of redeveloping the remainder of the site with private capital. The Casson Condor partnership was commissioned to produce a feasibility study which will be reflected in the exhibition. The estimated cost of phase one is about £23 million (construction £19½ million; furniture and equipment £1 million; and consultants' fees £2½ million), on the assumption that the work is done over the period 1984/5 to 1988/9. Phase one will provide some 180 offices to accommodate 90 Members and their support staff, or fewer Members but a number of officers of the House to free accommodation in the House itself. The proposals are due to be debated in the week beginning 21 November on the Report of the Services Committee. Sir Hugh Casson and Mr. Jenkin have been considering the design and Sir Hugh has agreed that it should be possible to make some amendments to the Parliament Street facade in order to avoid the "toothless" effect that it now presents.

14 November 1983





Westminster Renovation

CONFIDENTIAL

ALL MINISTERS

ms

TUESDAY, 22ND NOVEMBER

In accordance with the usual practice there will be a free vote on the Motion on a new Parliamentary building. Nevertheless it will be very unsatisfactory if this Motion is not agreed to, and I hope that all Ministers and Parliamentary Private Secretaries will remain after ten o'clock for this business to vote for the Motion. If you are unable to remain please let Alastair Goodlad know.

JOHN WAKEHAM

17th November, 1983.

200 Buildings Prime Minister: WBFM

2 PPS



It seems that amendments can be made to the design for the Parliament Street facade of the Bridge Street site. Redesign of the whole plans, would, of course, put back the redevelopment by an unacceptable period. Would you like us to find time to look at the exhibition to which

2 MARSHAM STREET  
LONDON SW1P 3EB

01-212 3434

My ref:

Your ref:

Dear Tim the letter refers?

9 November 1983

DB 9/11

My Secretary of State was grateful for your letter of 24 October recording the meeting which the Prime Minister took to consider the redevelopment of the Bridge Street site. Subsequently Treasury officials confirmed that the additional bid for funds had been accepted.

She will wish to know that the Leader of the House has provisionally suggested a debate in the House some time during the week beginning 21 November. An exhibition of the proposals is planned to start on Monday 14 November and last until Friday 25 November. This will be announced by an arranged PQ this week as well as a note on the Whip. Should the Prime Minister wish to have a look at this exhibition, which will be manned at key hours for Members on three days only, I would be grateful for warning of the expected time so that Sir Hugh Casson or one of his partners could be on hand to answer any questions the Prime Minister might have.

My Secretary of State has had a briefing session with Sir Hugh Casson and PSA officials. Sir Hugh explained why it had been decided to prepare plans based on retaining the facades (and parts of the buildings behind them) fronting onto Parliament Street and Bridge Street, and Mr Jenkin understands that the Prime Minister is content to proceed on that basis. Sir Hugh agreed however that it should be possible to make minor amendments to the design of the Parliament Street facade in order to avoid the somewhat "toothless" effect it now presents. On this basis my Secretary of State is of the view that, subject to the approval of the House, the proposals we now have should proceed as quickly as possible so that this valuable opportunity for progress is not lost.

Copies of this letter go to Charles Marshall (Lord Privy Seal's Office), John Gieve (Chief Secretary's Office) and Murdo Maclean (Chief Whip's Office).

Yours sincerely

L. Robinson

LUCY ROBINSON  
Private Secretary

Timothy Flesher Esq





2 MARSHAM STREET  
LONDON SW1P 3EB

01-212 3434

My ref: JK

Your ref:

Dear Charles

9 November 1983

Thank you for your letter of 2 November about the redevelopment of the Bridge Street site. You subsequently telephoned to say that the timing of a debate had slipped to the week beginning 21 November. My Secretary of State is grateful that Parliamentary time seems likely to be made available so quickly now that the additional bid for funds has been accepted by the Treasury.

Approval is being sought for an exhibition to be held about the scheme in Westminster Hall. This would open on Monday 14 November and last for two weeks, thus giving Members an opportunity to inform themselves about what is proposed before the debate. My Secretary of State is also arranging for copies of Casson Conder's up-to-date Feasibility Study (dated October 1983) to be available in the Vote Office before the debate. In order to explain why the exhibition is being held, and to inform Members about the Feasibility Study, my Secretary of State suggests that a Written Question be put down for answer this week. I attach a suggested Question and Answer. It would seem appropriate for the Lord Privy Seal to handle this, and you will no doubt make the necessary arrangement with a Member. I understand that Sir Paul Hawkins might wish to put the Question. We would also ask the Serjeant at Arms to include a note on the Whip.

/ Copies of this letter go to the recipients of yours.

Yours sincerely

L. Robinson

LUCY ROBINSON  
Private Secretary

C M J Marshall Esq

DRAFT QUESTION

To ask the Lord Privy Seal: if he will make a statement about the Government's response to the recommendations of the Third Report from the Select Committee on House of Commons (Services) in Session 1982-83.

DRAFT ANSWER

I hope it will be possible for the House to debate the recommendations of this Report in the near future. I have therefore asked my Rt Hon Friend, the Secretary of State for the Environment, to arrange an exhibition of the proposals put forward for Phase 1 of the site by the Casson Conder Partnership, and to ensure that copies of an up-to-date version of Casson Conder's Feasibility Study are available in the Vote Office before the debate. The exhibition will be held in Westminster Hall and will last for two weeks starting on Monday 14 November. The Government will decide what further action to take on these proposals in the light of the views expressed by the House.



CONFIDENTIAL



PRIVY COUNCIL OFFICE  
WHITEHALL, LONDON SW1A 2AT

2 November 1983

Dear Lucy,

BRIDGE STREET DEVELOPMENT

H  
3/11

Following the Prime Minister's meeting on this subject on 24 October, we spoke about the possibility of holding an early debate.

I understand from the Chief Secretary's Office that the question of how Phase 1 should be funded has now been resolved, and we have it in mind that the proposed debate might take place after 10 pm sometime during the week commencing 14 November. As I explained, the Lord Privy Seal, as Leader of the House, intends to open for the Government with a short speech of about 12-15 minutes, and believes it would be appropriate for an Environment Minister, perhaps Sir George Young, to wind up. You indicated that you were content with this arrangement; but no doubt you will let me know if you foresee any difficulty.

I shall be in touch about the precise timing of the debate in due course.

I am copying this letter to Tim Flesher, John Gieve and Murdo Maclean.

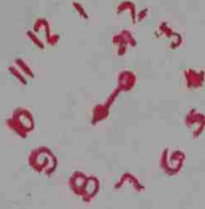
Yours,  
Charles

C M J MARSHALL  
Private Secretary

Ms Lucy Robinson  
Assistant Private Secretary to  
the Secretary of State for the Environment  
2 Marsham Street  
London  
SW1

Govt Bldgs,  
Westminster  
Area  
pt 2

3 NOV 1983





[Continuation from column 262]

## BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

*Ordered,*

That, at this day's sitting, the Motion relating to New Parliamentary Building may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour.—[*Mr. Garel-Jones.*]

### Parliamentary Building

10.16 pm

**The Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Biffen):** I beg to move,

That this House agrees with the Select Committee on House of Commons (Services), in their Third Report in the last Session of Parliament, House of Commons Paper No. 269: New Parliamentary Building (Phase 1).

Tonight's debate provides an opportunity for the House to consider the recommendations made in the third report by last Session's Services Committee regarding the development for parliamentary purposes of what is generally known as the "Bridge street site", and, more particularly, that part of the site bounded by Parliament street, Derby gate, Cannon row and Bridge street.

I am well aware that parliamentary accommodation is a matter on which many hon. Members have strong feelings. I will, therefore, briefly set out the general background to the Committee's proposals. There is a long history of abortive suggestions for developing this key area for the use of Parliament. The present unhappy state of most of the buildings on the site speaks more eloquently than I can of those delays.

However, many hon. Members will recall that in the early 1970s much time, effort and expense was expended on plans, approved by the House, for an entirely new parliamentary building on the site. When that controversial scheme was eventually abandoned for lack of funds, attention then turned to a series of more modest ad hoc expedients and adaptations. Those included the use of the Norman Shaw buildings. In 1978, however, following approval of the fifth report from the Services Committee in the 1977-78 Session, the president of the Royal Academy, Sir Hugh Casson, and his firm, Casson Conder and Partners, were commissioned by the Department of the Environment on behalf of the House to undertake a further feasibility study of how the entire Bridge street site might be redeveloped. The objective was to retain and restore what was of quality, and to replace the rest to a coherent design. In his report Sir Hugh recommended that the most practical approach would be a phased development extending during several years. As a first stage, which has come to be known as phase 1, he proposed the early development of the area bounded by Parliament street, Derby gate, Cannon row and Bridge street.

The report by the Services Committee, which is now before the House, builds on Sir Hugh's proposals and makes recommendations for the use to which the phase 1 accommodation might be put. In accordance with Sir Hugh's feasibility study, the report endorses the importance of generally preserving whatever is of quality in the existing buildings. Hence, the existing Parliament street facades would be retained or restored to their

original design. The mid-Georgian houses 43 and 44 Parliament street, in which the 18th century Clerk's Department was accommodated, would, with their interiors, be restored and retained. Other features and rooms of value would also be renovated and adapted.

The Committee's view is that Members most require more individual offices; and that the priority should be to provide office accommodation for as many Members who want it as near to the Chamber as possible. As the House will know, less than one third of hon. Members other than Ministers, have an office to themselves; still fewer an office within the palace of Westminster. The report accordingly proposes that the predominant use of the phase 1 site, if the House decided tonight in favour of its redevelopment for parliamentary purposes, should be as individual offices. There would be potential scope for about 180 rooms.

The recommendation is that, at least initially, these rooms might be made available mainly to members, but that in the longer term certain supporting staff now housed in the Palace of Westminster should be transferred to the new rooms. In this way perhaps between 50 and 85 more hon. Members could be found office accommodation in the Palace. If it were decided to go ahead with this scheme, I judge that the House would favour making further accommodation in the Palace available for Members, and that this should be sought as rapidly as possible.

If these buildings were converted to parliamentary use, there would need to be communication between them and ready access to the House. Both these problems are covered in the report, and hon. Members will have noted the proposal for a tunnel to the Palace to run from the rear of No. 37 Parliament street. It is also proposed that some limited library and refreshment facilities might be provided, perhaps in No. 47 Parliament street. This is the building at the junction of Parliament street and Derby gate.

The remaining main recommendation in the report concerns the development of the rest of the Bridge street site if it were decided to go ahead with phase 1. It suggests that further consideration should be given to this and the possible involvement of private capital in such development. But no proposals are before us and I suggest that in this respect the House need only note the position.

The matter for decision by the House tonight is, therefore, whether to proceed with phase 1 on the basis proposed in this report.

**Mr. Andrew Faulds** (Warley, East): If we accept this motion, are we not presupposing a commercial involvement in this development?

**Mr. Biffen:** No, not in respect of phase 1.

The constant increase in the activities of the House and its Committees, and the growing numbers of supporting staff, have placed increasing pressures on our accommodation. We have now virtually reached the end of the scope for any further ad hoc developments of our existing buildings. Furthermore, there can be no doubt that constant uncertainty has for many years caused a blight on an extremely important central site.

**Mr. Jack Straw** (Blackburn): I accept that the scope for further ad hoc development in the House is limited. Does the Leader of the House share my surprise on discovering that there are 100 rooms within the House of Commons precinct and 44 rooms within the House of



[Mr. Jack Straw]

Lords precinct which are given over to residences and bedrooms? This compares with only 251 rooms used by Members in the House as a whole. Does he agree that the Lord Chancellor's Department occupies 22 rooms? While I hope that we shall all support this scheme, there is still scope to look carefully at the use of accommodation in the Palace to see whether more rooms now used as bedrooms and residences could be used as offices.

**Mr. Biffen:** I do not suggest that if the House accepts the motion it would be prevented from considering the matters raised by the hon. Gentleman. I suggest that, for the sake of clarity during this debate, we should concentrate our consideration on the proposals for phase 1.

Finance has been one of the principal causes of the uncertainty. Major schemes have been planned and debated and have then lapsed because of lack of funds. It would therefore, I suggest, be futile for the House to consider this report without a clear understanding of the Government's intentions in this respect.

It is the Government's firm intention that, should the House decide in favour of the proposals made in the report, the necessary public funds would be made available. At today's prices, the construction costs would be just over £15 million, exclusive of VAT, spread over four financial years. In addition, there would be expenditure on furnishing the completed building and on the fees for the various consultants concerned. That is likely to raise the cost to £23 million.

In making up their minds on the proposed expenditure, hon. Members will no doubt bear in mind that this must necessarily be a question of competing priorities and that this expenditure, if agreed, would in present or any circumstances necessarily reduce public funds available for other purposes.

If the House were to approve the report, the next step would, I suggest, be the establishment, as proposed in the report, of close liaison between the Services Committee, the Department of the Environment and the architects to ensure that the views and wishes of Members about the detailed nature and use of the facilities should be properly taken into account as the work proceeds. The Services Committee estimates that it will take about five years from the time when the detailed brief is given to the architects to completion of the work.

**Sir Kenneth Lewis** (Stamford and Spalding): So that people in the country will know, will my right hon. Friend make it clear that as the project will take five years to complete the cost will be spread over that period so that there will be very little public expenditure involved in each year?

**Mr. Biffen:** My hon. Friend makes a helpful interpretation of the facts, but I am sure that the House would not wish to conceal from itself the fact that the project will cost £15 million rising to £23 million, albeit spread over five years. We may also conclude, however, that for Parliament to work effectively it needs appropriate accommodation.

Finally I should like on behalf of the House to thank Sir Hugh Casson and his partners for their original feasibility study, which has not been debated before. I should also like to thank the members of last Session's Services

Committee whose report and recommendations we are invited to confirm in the context of the funds that are now available to convert the Bridge street project into a reality.

10.26 pm

**Mr. John McWilliam** (Blaydon): I thank the Leader of the House for his clear statements about the new parliamentary building. Members of Parliament, especially my predecessors on the Services Committee, have been here before on many occasions. It took 16 years to plan and construct the building in which we now sit and it is 25 years since the Services Committee first tried seriously to tackle the question of the shortage of accommodation for Members. I congratulate the Leader of the House on having brought this proposal before the House at this time. I am sure that it will be welcomed in all parts of the House.

There are three problems. First, there is the shortage of accommodation in the Palace and its vicinity. Secondly, the site open to us — the Bridge street site — is architecturally probably one of the most sensitive sites in Europe. Thirdly, since the third report of the Select Committee last Session, the Plowden report on Members' pay and allowances and the subsequent votes in the House, it is now generally agreed that being a Member of Parliament is a full-time job and requires the necessary level of supporting facilities.

The shortage of accommodation was alluded to in the fifth report of the Services Committee in 1978. Paragraph 34 states:

"The House has virtually exhausted all major possibilities for the provision of additional accommodation within the Palace."

Those hon. Members who have been around even for as short a time as I, will recognise readily the accuracy of that statement.

Paragraph 35 states:

"In general, the majority of the accommodation now being used by Members and other people who work in the Palace of Westminster is sub-standard, either because of the nature of the historic building which cannot be altered or because too many people are trying to work too closely together."

I suggest that not many grounds for dissent could be put forward about that statement.

We are dealing not just with the problem facing hon. Members, but the problem of accommodation faced by the staff who perform important and detailed tasks. If the boxful of civil servants here tonight had to tolerate the same conditions, we would hear their loud cries. I make no complaint about that. I have, in the past negotiated on behalf of my civil servant colleagues on accommodation matters. It is right that we should provide a better standard for the people who serve us so well, as well as a better standard for hon. Members. The implications within phase 1 are that, initially, accommodation for hon. Members will be provided as quickly as possible. That matter arises from the Casson report. As a result of the changes taking place in the House, the staff will have access to decent accommodation. That is no bad thing.

The quality of the accommodation is not our only worry. The site is architecturally extremely sensitive. We are privileged to hold the debate in what is probably the finest Victorian building in the world — certainly the best known. The building attracts people from all parts of the world just to look at the outside. Therefore, we must be sensitive about what will be put alongside this building. Thankfully, we are in an enlightened age that does not condemn that which our forefathers built as being



necessarily unacceptable. The new building must live happily with this building, which is probably the most magnificent example of Victorian architecture that any hon. Member has had the opportunity to see. I do not think that any hon. Member would willingly wish to put anything on the new site that would diminish the architectural value of this building, or of the buildings that we are seeking to replace.

I welcome the suggestion in phase 1 of the study that the facades will remain, that what has been added on and was not good will be taken down and replaced with what was originally in place, and that the building will be designed to act in harmony with the other buildings which are within the near vicinity. It may seem unimportant to some, but it is important to the many millions of people who come to see this building every year. In view of the statement on tourism made earlier today, it is also important for our balance of payments position because it attracts so many people.

There are other problems. The job of a Member of Parliament has changed even since I was elected. Decisions have been taken about new departmental Select Committees and the procedure to be adopted on finance, both of which have implications for staffing. That is reflected in the Plowden report on Members' salaries and allowances. The Select Committee report, when dealing with Members' secretaries and research assistants, states "each of which would be shared between two MPs", which contrast sharply with paragraph 119 of the Plowden report—which has largely been implemented already—and which states:

"We consider that increased provision should now be made to enable MPs to employ one member of staff on a full-time basis and one on a half-time basis."

We have changed the basis for the employment of staff in the House since the report was published, so the pressing problems of accommodation have been exacerbated by our own decisions. That is no bad thing, but it has implications for the number of hon. Members who can be accommodated in the new building, and also for bringing Members back to this building.

I thank the Leader of the House for his assurance that he has achieved funding from the Treasury. That is no small achievement. From reading the reports of previous debates and previous Select Committees, I suspect that previous proposals have foundered on the inability of Leaders of the House to achieve funding.

I have one or two caveats and one or two questions which I hope that the Minister will answer. Is it implicit in the funding that if we go ahead with phase 1, that includes the ability to make the changes in the present building to enable the objective of the Select Committee on House of Commons (Services) to be achieved—that being to transfer hon. Members back to this building and transfer staff out of it?

Secondly, the Committee's report refers to savings. A Mr. Coates, who I believe was the London officer for the Property Services Agency, said

"I think it is quite clear that well over half the current expenditure on the Palace of Westminster and the other Parliamentary buildings is irrevocably committed to things which are essential to the operation of the House and the House of Lords, and that of the uncommitted expenditure of about £4½ million, quite a lot is for items which there would be difficulties in deferring."

He talks about savings in this area offsetting the cost of the building. What is the implication of the idea of savings within this building? Will the Minister spell out what is at

present programmed to be done, and is therefore not to be done as a result of those savings? Will he also tell us what needs to be done and will now be delayed as a result of those savings? At least £2 million will be needed whether we proceed with the proposal or not, simply to stop the existing buildings from falling on our heads. Would the Minister please give us a little more information?

There is a reference in the report to residences as well. I make no complaints about Mr. Speaker's House. It is very well used, and serves a need. I am talking about the two residences within the site of phase 1. There is an overriding need for office accommodation. Is it the Minister's intention, if it is impossible to bring some of the accommodation up to office standard, to transfer some of the sleeping accommodation inside the House to the new building, and transfer Members' accommodation to the areas now occupied by sleeping accommodation?

This is merely another aspect of what we dealt with earlier this year, when we discussed Members' pay and allowances. One of the beauties of the House and the Parliament which we serve is that it is not static: it is always developing. I pay tribute to hon. Members on both sides of the House who have changed the rules and the way in which we operate, so that we bring democracy closer to the people and improve and increase the power of the Back Bencher. When we do so, we also increase the responsibility of the Back Benchers and their need for decent accommodation and decent back-up services. We now have an opportunity at least to make a start on the problem of accommodation. It will only be a start. We shall not solve the problem of the shortage of accommodation, but we will help Members to play their part in an active and questioning democracy. I suggest that any hon. Member who has misgivings about the proposals should think about his role in the House and within our democracy. There may be some hon. Members who are not prepared to vote the necessary moneys to enable us to have the facilities to do the job which Parliament has decided that we should do. They ought to think about their role in this place. I commend the project to the House.

10.43 pm

**Mr. Edward du Cann** (Taunton): I am happy to join the hon. Member for Blaydon (Mr. McWilliam) in expressing the hope that the House will give a very warm welcome to these proposals. They are modest, absolutely necessary and very long overdue. It seems remarkable that, in one way or another, the House has discussed five previous sets of proposals.

The history of this matter—the provision of necessary accommodation for Members of Parliament and those who assist them in their responsible tasks—is one of prevarication. It is never the right time to deal with the conditions under which Members work. However, tonight there is an opportunity for decision and I hope that that opportunity will be taken.

Like my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House and the hon. Member for Blaydon, I should like to pay my tribute to those who worked on this report. I thank my hon. Friends the Members for Norfolk, South-West (Sir P. Hawkins) and for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack) who are in the Chamber, and my previous colleagues Mr. Ford, who was Chairman of the services Committee in the previous Parliament, and Sir Victor Goodhew, an old friend of many of us and one of the secretaries of the 1922 Committee.



[Mr. Edward du Cann]

There are others to whom tribute should be paid for bringing us to the stage that we have reached. When he was Secretary of State for the Environment, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence did a great deal of practical pioneering work in this regard. Another old friend who worked hard and unobtrusively in this building to maintain the admirable standard of its construction—Sir Robin Cooke—deserves warm applause from us all for his work for this place, which he loves as we love it.

I hope that my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House will allow me to pay tribute to him for bringing the measure before us tonight and for giving us a clear undertaking on behalf of the Government that the funds will be available for its prosecution and completion.

It is incontrovertible that this Palace of Westminster is grossly overcrowded and sadly ill-used. Out of that comes considerable inconvenience to Members of Parliament who are elected to work here, and, by no means least, considerable security problems.

All that was put well, as the hon. Member for Blaydon said, in the fifth and ninth reports of the Select Committee on House of Commons (Services) in 1978. We need not go over all that ground again. Suffice it to say in a sentence, as my right hon. Friend did, there is almost no scope for further ad hoc improvements in accommodation in this building.

I regret much of the development of the work of Members of Parliament. Over the years we have become too much officebound, paperbound and some of us, let it be acknowledged, are in thrall to our own servants. Too many of us allow questions to be put down in our names which are a mere sop to the vanity of those who work for us as research assistants. [Interruption.] Any examination of the Order Paper will make the point.

We have not yet gone as far as the United States, where there are some 20,000 staffers on Capitol Hill, nor yet as far as the Romans, whose freed men were often seen to be more important and influential than the Roman citizens who employed them. Nonetheless, look at all that how one may, the pressure of work on Members of Parliament, and the increase in it, is a fact, though there are some of us, and I admit to being one of them, who would like to see certain aspects of it increased still further. For instance, if I could grind an old axe, I should like to see us continuing to do more work in exercising closer and more continuous control over the workings of the Executive.

However one regards any of these matters, the fact, as paragraph 16 of the report makes clear, is that Members of Parliament, to do their work properly and well, need adequate facilities in this building, and, as my right hon. Friend said, as near to the Chamber as possible.

There are other reasons for what I am about to allege, but the fact is that the intrusion of large numbers of non-parliamentarians into this building has meant that personal contacts, liaison and meetings between Members are very much more difficult than they ever were.

I endorse strongly the principle enunciated in the first paragraph of the report. We must set as an objective the need to move out of this building the proliferating staff that we have allowed to occupy it.

As the hon. Member for Blaydon said, it took Barry and those associated with him, Pugin and many others, some 16 years to create this masterpiece. The hon. Gentleman was wrong when he said that it had taken us 25 years to

come to a decision on this matter. I put it longer than that. I would say 35 years. I repeat what I said at the beginning, that we have vacillated about this matter for far too long.

It is our duty to give the people of this nation, whom we are privileged to serve, the best service we possibly can. To do that we need proper facilities and accommodation. I hope that the House will warmly endorse these modest proposals.

10.49 pm

**Mr. George Robertson** (Hamilton): The unanimity of the speeches that have been made so far show the depth of feeling about the physical circumstances in which we have to work. It is inevitable that some hon. Members will say that, in a time of public expenditure cuts, we should not spend such large sums of money on such a project. Their views have often been paramount in the past and they have delayed grander projects than that which we are discussing.

Some hon. Members will say, as they have in the past, that what is being proposed is much too lavish and inappropriate. They talk of a style of Member that died out many years ago. As the right hon. Member for Taunton (Mr. du-Cann) said, we have a job to do and we now have to do it in wholly inappropriate circumstances. He said that it has taken 35 years to reach this decision. That is correct. As the reports before us show, complaints began not long after the building was reopened after the second world war.

It is 23 years since the then Minister of Works announced that the Bridge street site had been acquired for the use of Parliament. Since then there have been debates, reports, committees, design competitions and delays. We are now considering the plan for the first stage in a project that will use a site that was bought specifically for the use of Parliament in 1960.

This is not, and never has been, a partisan issue. If there has been a conspiracy to prevent the development, it has been an all-party conspiracy. We are all to blame and must share responsibility for the lack of guts which has left us in this magnificent but overcrowded and inappropriate building.

The Leader of the House spoke of blight in the Bridge street site. Delays have undoubtedly created blight in the heart of the most historic part of London. If people see behind the scenes, as increasingly they are doing through the BBC programme on the Palace of Westminster, they will discover what internal planning blight is hidden by skilful use of architecture and adaptations.

We must strongly welcome the plan as a crucial first step towards providing what Members need to do their job. The rest of the site remains undeveloped, however, and I cannot help wondering whether a modern and up-to-date legislature can do its work even with the facilities that the completed project will provide. Before the general election campaign I had a conversation with Mr. Ben Ford, who was then the Chairman of the Accommodation and Administration Sub-Committee, about the glaring anomaly that at 1, Victoria street, which is within a stone's throw of this building, the then Department of Trade,—now the trade section of the Department of Trade and Industry—sits in magnificent splendour within easy access of the House of Commons. At the other end of Victoria street there stands the old British Overseas



Airways Corporation building, which is now empty of people and services. It lies vacant, on a market that probably does not exist.

Surely there is a possibility for transferring the Civil servants at No. 1 Victoria street to the vacant and essentially Government-owned building at Victoria, along Buckingham Palace road, and allowing the various services that at present have space in the Palace of Westminster to go to No. 1 Victoria street. It is within as easy walking distance as the Norman Shaw buildings. There is a possibility for considering whether in the longer term that is an answer to the general accommodation problem.

Each time in the past that we have chickened out on taking the decision to get proper and appropriate facilities for this one legislature in the United Kingdom, we have handicapped not just Members of Parliament but those whom we seek to serve. The continual delays have usually been the result of a fear of the costs involved and of the public hostility that it was thought would be engendered by spending on ourselves. That was a foolish reticence. We are judged much more harshly on what we do and how we do it. If we prevent ourselves from doing our best for our constituents, we shall come under much deeper and harsher criticism. I strongly support the plan.

10.56 pm

**Mr. Patrick Cormack** (Staffordshire, South): At the end of his speech, the hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) made an important point. Our debate comes down to deciding how we can best serve this place and our constituents. The role of a Member of Parliament has changed over the years, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Taunton (Mr. du Cann) said in an eloquent speech, which left little else to be said.

We are expected to do different things than our forebears did when this great building in which we are privileged to serve was first erected. Over the years, successive Services Committees have agonised over the problem. I have had the privilege of being on the Committee during the last Parliament, and serving again on the present one. I earnestly beg every hon. Member to support this most modest proposal. Although essentially modest, it has virtues.

I remember the debate—I initiated it, as I came out top of the ballot—on the Spence-Webster new building way back in 1971 or 1972. Many of us who felt that it was right that Members of Parliament should have better accommodation nevertheless felt that that building was totally out of scale and utterly unharmonious on this, the most sensitive site in the Commonwealth. We also felt that it provided accommodation that verged on the lavish and the grandiose.

**Mr. David Crouch** (Canterbury): Nonsense.

**Mr. Cormack:** My hon. Friend mutters "Nonsense." Perhaps it is appropriate to have sauna baths and so on. However, there was real and deep division in the Palace about that. The scheme did not proceed. There was opposition on aesthetic and many other grounds.

We now have a modest proposal. Sir Hugh Casson has done the House a great service. The symmetry and scale of this most sensitive of sites will be preserved, yet at the same time we shall have new rooms and accommodation for more Members of Parliament.

I do not believe that any Member of Parliament can effectively discharge the multitude of duties that fall upon him unless he has, at the least, a private room where he can telephone confidentially, see and talk to constituents and others. If we go along this road, accept the Casson proposals and endorse the Services Committee's report, within a parliamentary generation, most Members will enjoy that modest facility.

What is more, if we can carry through what the Services Committee urges us to carry through, we shall be able to move Members of Parliament over here, to the main building. That is important. I happen to believe that the Chamber is the key place in this Parliament. Despite the proliferation of Select Committees and other things, which I applaud, the Chamber should be the focus of every parliamentarian's attention. It will be conducive to that aim if more and more Members are able to have an office within the Palace itself.

I very much hope that the House will approve this proposal. I hope also that the Government, who have given a positive lead—it is the first time that a Leader of the House has endorsed a proposal in such unequivocal terms; my right hon. Friend deserves every praise and credit for that—will not become nervous or shy and that they will ensure that whatever is necessary will be done so that hon. Members can be moved over to this place. I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, South-West (Sir P. Hawkins), who has served with me on the Services Committee, feels particularly strongly that hon. Members should be here.

There is no aesthetic objection to the plan. I do not think that there can be any objection on cost. If our constituents write to us to complain, it should be pointed out firmly—hon. Members should not be afraid to write firm letters to their constituents—that if they want us to do the job of super welfare officers, as so many of them appear to want us to do, we must have a modicum of privacy and a degree of accommodation to perform that task. If we are to scrutinise the Executive, which is the laudable ambition of my right hon. Friend the Member for Taunton, as it should be the ambition of every Member of Parliament, we need the facilities to study and read quietly in privacy and to be able to arm ourselves with the right questions and to have the proper ammunition.

This plan will set us on that road. It is modest and sensible and incorporates buildings that are much loved in this part of London. It will not disturb the harmony of the centre of the capital. The hon. Member for Blaydon (Mr. McWilliam) talked about the residential accommodation. I do not entirely agree with him that that should be discounted. Sir Hugh Casson made a good case to the Services Committee and I believe that there is probably a strong case for giving close to Parliament a residence for Mr. Deputy Speaker and one for the Leader of the Opposition. Neither has one at the moment, and that should be considered in the future.

The series of proposals that the Services Committee has put before the House are worthy of the House's enthusiastic endorsement. I hope that without undue delay this evening we can proceed to give that endorsement and that the plan can begin because we do not want the Government to have cold feet and we do not want my right hon. Friend's enthusiasm to be dampened. On the contrary, we want his vigour to be increased, we want the building here and we want our offices now.



11.4 pm

**Mr. Walter Harrison** (Wakefield): I thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to discuss this subject, to which I have been a witness since 1965. I was told to make my first maiden speech short and sweet, but, having been in the House for 18 years, and having listened to quite a few speeches, I hope that I shall be given a little more opportunity in my second maiden to express myself a little more fully. I hope that, with your tolerance, Mr. Speaker, I shall be permitted to go back over the years.

Some Members have spoken about 25 years with the Services Committee. Twenty-five years ago the Services Committee was not in existence. I want to pay tribute to a man, long gone, who gave us a real opportunity to get things done. I am referring to Charles Pannel, from Leeds. In December 1965 he gave us the opportunity to put things right.

In 1830 there was a character who, I believe, got the sack on the Monday morning. He was the caretaker who put the tally sticks on the boiler and set fire to the place. Barry and Pugin then got their chance to put things right, but they got it wrong, because in 1850 one of the first things to be said was that the place was overcrowded. So the problem has not existed for only 25 years: it has been here since 1850.

The Leader of the House in 1977 got a majority of 64 on a Division on this subject at a time when the Government had a majority of three. We then had the opportunity to go forward, but we have been scared. My right hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Mr. Silkin) said that we were concerned about the economy. There is never a right time. There has never been a right time to discuss our salaries, our fringe benefits, other things to which we are entitled, and our accommodation. However, it was not just that. We have not even fought for the people who work for us. We have not even had the guts to do that. That is terrible. It is worse than not fighting for ourselves.

We have talked about transferring accommodation, moving 60 here and 60 there. In 1968 my right hon. Friend the Member for Deptford, who was my Chief Whip, said to me, "Walter,"—he was the Member for Deptford at the time, and still is, and Walter was the Member for Wakefield, and still is, but only just—"we have a problem. I have just come down from the Services Committee. It is an accommodation problem, and I am putting it on your plate." I had it until 24 October of this year, so I am entitled to say a few words about it.

The first thing that I sought was some good advice—I had to seek advice in those days. I decided to go to the Serjeant at Arms office. That was no mistake. In 15 years I have had the full co-operation of that office. There are good people there. Not once have they misled me. On that occasion, in 1968, I took the problem there and I was told, "Yes, Mr. Harrison. We have one Member who has a room to himself, with three sub-tenancies, squatters' rights, and there is just enough room in the trade union room as well. He gets no payment from his sub-tenants, but he has control."

So we looked down the list, and it was true. We did an exercise. We took a piece of paper and wrote, "Please contact me urgently." We put the date on, put the paper in an envelope, and addressed it to the Member, who

should have been there. Fourteen days later I went back to collect the papers. It had been addressed to the wrong chap. So we were in chaos then.

I want to compliment the Services Committee and all those associated with the progress that has been made over the last 15 or 16 years. At least we sorted out that chaos. We got rid of the sub-tenancies and the squatters. We finished up with one hon. Member applying for a desk, possibly with nine others in the room, but at least everyone who wanted a desk was allocated one.

I pay tribute to people gone from this place such as Sir Robin Cooke, Ben Ford and about nine Leaders of the House of Commons. They were all in accord in that they wanted to do the job; they all wanted to get better accommodation; they all wanted to have single rooms; they all wanted to do what we are seeking to do in these proposals; but what happened? We chickened out.

When I was first on the Services Committee—and we had that majority of 64 in favour of going ahead with the proposals—the building was to cost, for 420 Members of Parliament and 420 secretaries, £11 million, but we fluffed it. In 1974, having "gone through" my third and fourth Minister, I put a question to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Hall Green (Mr. Eyre). I said, "It was £11 million when I started on this job. Now, five or six years later, how much will it be?" The Minister was not to blame, but the "boys in the Box" could not tell him. He asked, "Walter, will you be kind enough to accept the insertion in the report of the details of the meeting?" I said that I would. Five years had gone by and it cost us £53 million for hesitating, for not grasping the nettle and saying, "This is what we are entitled to have and this is what we should really have."—[*Interruption.*] I am being told to sit down despite my not having got to my feet in the Chamber for 18 years. It was £53 million.

We arrived at the stage of having another Leader of the House Commons—this was in 1979—but, in view of economies generally, he did not propose to get involved with this job. In about 11 years we had made marvellous progress: it was £11 million when I started, we had still not done the job and we had added a nought to the costing for it would then have cost about £100 million to carry out the full scheme that was proposed. These millions may be fictitious for me to present my case, but we just added a nought in all those years.

Gradually we progressed, infilling a bit here and there. When I think of the problems I have met in Parliament over the years, I could tell hon. Members a few tales. I have mentioned a few already, but let me mention one more. I have had hon. Members write to me saying, "Walter, we are willing to share a room," and when I have seen them in the Tea Room they have come up to me and repeated, "We are willing to share." But after that they have come to me individually and said, "Do not believe my letter, Walter, and do not believe what I said in the Tea Room. I want a single room to myself, and I am telling you that now, in private, because I do not want to fall out with him"—"him" being the hon. Member with whom he had previously said he would be prepared to share.

If the House does not get hold of the problem tonight we shall be called "chicken" yet again. This scheme probably will not be done in my time, but let us get cracking on it. Nobody should object to making a start, and to that end I have some advice for the Whips on both sides: if any hon. Member votes against the motion, check



p and find out whether he has a room. If he has, take it away from him. I do not believe in sanctions, but at times they are necessary. We must get cracking.

The Leader of the House has my support tonight. I shall keep a careful watch on any hon. Members who oppose him.

11.17 pm

**Mr. Colin Shepherd** (Hereford): How does one follow that? It is an enormous pleasure to complement the right hon. Member for Wakefield (Mr. Harrison)—deservedly right hon.—and while it would be wrong of me to say that I am sorry that the Conservatives did not win his seat at the last election, it was a great pleasure to listen to his remarkable comeback.

It is not often appreciated what a depth of knowledge the right hon. Member for Wakefield has in this place. I came to appreciate it in the last four or five years while serving on the Services Committee. His wisdom and guidance at all times have been of the first calibre, marvellously disinterested in the sense of not being partisan. I know that at the Whips level he has been as capable as any Whip, and the House is the poorer for the loss of his services as Labour Deputy Chief Whip on that Committee from 24 October last. That in no way casts aspersions on his successor; I was just sad to see him relinquish that post. Although it was a great burden to him, he discharged it marvellously.

I appreciated the clear way in which the Leader of the House set out the Government's position in accepting the Committee's proposal, a proposal that presents a great opportunity. It may not be as big as we would have liked, it may not cover as great a scope as we would have wanted, and it will cost more than the £11 million to which the right hon. Member for Wakefield referred. But it marks the first tangible step forward in breaking out of the log jam position in which we have been for so long.

When I first came to the House there was much activity in this Chamber. It may have been a hung or tight Parliament, with excitement on every division and at every speech, but I sometimes felt that it was the development of some of the ad hoc "outbuildings" that led to the desertion of this Chamber. The tensions stayed during the course of that Parliament, and it was not until the new Parliament started in 1979 that everybody decided that he could go back to their rooms and forget about the Chamber. That is why I am anxious that we should try to make it possible for people to come back to the Chamber. I back up the remarks that my hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack) made, and those made by my right hon. Friend the Member for Taunton (Mr. du Cann), in his wise and eloquent speech.

I shall use this opportunity to put out a marker on the future of the tool of the trade that we use in this place—the Library. I have the privilege to be the Chairman of the Library Sub-Committee. I find it a fascinating and challenging institution. It is taken for granted and is like a Gulag archipelago in that it spreads all over the place, with little puddles here and little puddles there, grottoes and pieces in the depths. It lives in the Norman Shaw north, and the Norman Shaw south. The report suggests that there should be a branch Library in the new development. That would mean four Library sites and about 25 little islands, a fragmented structure trying to provide us with a better service.

Every Parliament over the past six Parliaments has called upon the Library service more and more. The plateau of inquiries for the research services has started above the last Parliament each time and increased through the course of that Parliament. The Select Committees to which right hon. and hon. Members have referred have put another load on this system. The Library does a super job, and I take this opportunity to congratulate the Library staff on what it does. We are stacking the odds against its members.

I hope that the scheme will go ahead. We should expand the thinking set out in the report and the feasibility study to begin to consolidate the Library research and information services into one site, in the northern section of this development. That would free space in this building and make a more effective service possible, providing the better Library research service that we asked for back in 1945 when the House first accepted the report of the Services Committee on the duty of the Library. That is the opportunity in front of us. If we take it and develop it as part of the next phase of the feasibility study, we can have the finest Library research and information service of any Parliament of any Commonwealth country, and, outside Capitol hill in Washington, in the world.

The feasibility report talks in terms of a 68 month time scale. That is five years and eight months, which means that, if we say "Go" tonight, we might be in business by autumn 1989, but only if nothing goes wrong in the meantime. That is a long time. The right hon. Member for Wakefield said that it would not be in his time, although I should like to doubt that. There is a big risk that something will go wrong. We cannot afford to delay—we must progress. We must get on with the job as fast as we can and make certain that nothing is put in its way.

11.23 pm

**Mr. Dafydd Wigley** (Caernarfon): I am in a somewhat strange position in that my political objective is to depart from this place and move myself 150 miles westwards to Cardiff, as the hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) wants to move to Edinburgh. However, as the time scale of a move northwards or westwards is a little longer than we thought it would be a few years ago, I join in the welcome being given to the proposals, and I shall take up some of the points that have been made.

As the first Opposition Member to speak in the debate, may I congratulate the right hon. Member for Wakefield (Mr. Harrison) on his second maiden speech, as he called it. The House should recognise that for 18 years it has lost a speaker of great wit. I thank him for all his courtesy and assistance to Members of the minority parties during his time at a Whip. He was completely fair in his handling of the minority parties, and we deeply appreciate that.

Every hon. Member who has listened to the debate so far would find it difficult to stand in the way of the proposals. The danger is that they are too modest, and that once again we have been reticent in introducing proposals that meet the requirements of modern age Members of Parliament. Being a Member of Parliament is a full-time job, whereas a generation ago, or a little less, it was not. It is also a full-time job for those who work with and for Members. In facing our responsibilities, we must not forget our responsibilities to our secretaries and research assistants.

It is high time that we got on with this proposal, but my only caveat is about the time scale. Is there no way in



[Mr. Dafydd Wigley]

which the scheme can be speeded up, and will £23 million be enough? Can we be sure that, as time erodes the value of that sum, and we need a little more, it will not be used as an excuse to stop progress on the project?

The conditions of work here are appalling. In my previous job in industry, if I had expected people to work in the conditions that we experience in the Palace of Westminster, I should have been fired. There is no reason why we should be allowed to employ people to work in those conditions, when we expect people outside the Palace of Westminster not to do so. My one reservation about the report is the space standards referred to at page 48 in annex 3. Research assistants are allocated 100 sq ft each—that is 10 ft by 10 ft—and secretaries are allocated only 55 sq ft. It would appear that secretaries need less space than research assistants. Is 55 sq ft—or 7 ft by 7 ft—the standard applied to the secretaries of heads of departments in the Civil Service? Is it an acceptable standard?

Annex 3 also states that one secretary and one research assistant should be shared between two Members, but we are moving towards the time, with our present workload, where we need a secretary each. We should plan the facilities of the complex, both on this side and on the other side of the road, to accommodate at least one secretary and one research assistant for each Member of Parliament.

Hon. Members spoke of the need to move those hon. Members whose offices are across the road back to the main building. I have had an office in Norman Shaw building north for the past eight years, and I have experienced no difficulty. We must balance the advantages of being near the Chamber, and being able to pop in and out, with the advantages of being close to our secretaries and being able to work with them when necessary. We need space, whichever way we allocate it, but perhaps we should consider further the way we do so. At present we need a tunnel from Norman Shaw building, and we shall certainly need one from the proposed building.

The hon. Member for Hereford (Mr. Shepherd) made an interesting point about the Library. I have some reservations about the Library moving from this building, because of the advantages of its proximity to the Chamber—

**Mr. Colin Shepherd:** The hon. Gentleman misunderstood me. I had no intention of recommending that the main Library should move from this building, but that the research and information services should.

**Mr. Wigley:** I take the hon. Gentleman's point. We must consider not only the development of the Library, but the introduction of modern technological facilities for information transferal and retrieval not only in the Library but in hon. Members' rooms so that they can be linked to a basic information service. I foresee a time when this will be part of our infrastructure. We ought to keep that in the back of our minds when we examine the future location of services. Some hon. Members do not agree with that point.

If we are on the other side of the road, we may not be able to dash in and out of the Chamber to hear a particular hon. Member speaking because, by the time we arrive in the building, the next speaker may have been called. There

must be a case for having the enunciators carry a sound track system so that we can pick up hon. Members' contributions. That could easily be facilitated.

As our workload increases, so does the workload in the constituencies. Perhaps, we should put down a marker for future facilities in each constituency. There should be a Members' office—not a party office—where, although the incumbents change as parties lose and win seats, there is continuity, and the constituents know where to find the Member and his base. This would be similar to the office of a mayor or a town clerk. There is a strong argument for a Member having a base in a constituency. Although that point goes beyond our discussion, we should be examining it.

We should be looking at the possibility of having more and different meeting rooms. Our meeting rooms are limited in their scope, and we should bear that in mind when we redesign.

It is important that we progress rapidly. I should like to ensure that, in making progress on this proposal, we are not closing any options for even more radical development that may be necessary between now and the turn of the century.

11.32 pm

**Mr. David Crouch (Canterbury):** This debate is about providing more facilities for Members of Parliament, and I welcome that step. I have been pressing all the time that I have been a Member for better facilities to help us to do our job in serving our constituents and the Chamber. I welcome the idea of extra accommodation for Members of Parliament on the other side of Bridge street and the further proposal that in time, having established a building for more people, we can make space there for staff, so that we have more room in the Palace enabling Members to be close to the Chamber and the Committee rooms.

I am one of those Members who, in the past—there are a number of such Members in the Chamber—have served on the Advisory Committee on Works of Art in the House of Commons. There has been disagreement on the work of art aspect. Distinguished names are attached to the recommendations, including advisers in the Department of the Environment and parliamentarians who have already spoken about the need to get something done quickly. There are distinguished advisers from outside Parliament, including the president of the Royal Academy, Sir Hugh Casson. I am amazed that a man who is so distinguished in the world of architecture should recommend that we keep that impossible facade on Bridge street and Parliament street. He believes that in 1983 we, the successors of those parliamentarians who appointed Barry and Pugin, should say in this enlightened age of democracy when there is greater efficiency in serving our constituents that we will accept this facade because it exists. Barry and Pugin did not accept it, nor did Parliament, its leaders or leaders in art thought over 150 years ago.

I therefore suggest not that we should stop but that we should pause to think again and say to Sir Hugh Casson and to my right hon. Friends the Secretary of State for the Environment and the Leader of the House that we must consider what we are doing. We are embarking on a small expenditure. The right hon. Member for Wakefield (Mr. Harrison) spoke eloquently and passionately about the need to do something, and I support every syllable that he said. We must not delay, but when we make advances such



is this we must advance in the right direction and not stand marking time in the architectural past. I share many of the Victorian loves of Sir John Betjeman, but I do not love the facade from 47 to 31 Parliament street. The Services Committee has done a wonderful job, but the whole basis of its thinking about the preservation of that facade is wrong.

**Mr. A. J. Beith** (Berwick-upon-Tweed): Is it not possible that Sir Hugh Casson and some of us in Parliament recognise that the history of Whitehall involves a variety of types of building, including some on a quite domestic scale such as those in Parliament street, and that if Whitehall becomes solely a collection of large public buildings it will not be true to its history and we shall not understand that history?

**Mr. Crouch:** Of course there is great variety in Whitehall. I hope to explain in my short contribution why I am concerned about this one aspect of what we are doing.

**Mr. Cormack:** Does my hon. Friend realise that if the House accepts his advice we shall have to go back to the drawing board and it will be the year 2000 before anything is done? We have been down this road before. I urge him please not to tempt us down it again.

**Mr. Crouch:** My hon. Friend refers to the drawing board. I hold up for all to see the presentation prepared by Sir Hugh Casson. He is an artist and one of the best draughtsmen in the world of architecture. Nothing could be nicer than his illustrated diaries of London or of his tours around the world. They are the Edward Lear of today. The best features of the presentation now before us are Sir Hugh Casson's drawings. He can make the facade change slightly and I agree with the slight changes. He can make them look artistic, but he cannot make them look right for today.

I do not wish to hold things up until the year 2000. I simply urge my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House and others to think about this aspect. This is a responsible Chamber and there is a great deal of thought in this place. This is not just a matter of getting something done efficiently for constituents but about doing something right in the latter part of the 20th century.

The Services Committee, in the terms of reference to which it worked, seemed to accept without demur the preservation of the facade in Parliament street.

Paragraph 7 of the introduction states:

"Much of PSA's expenditure arises from the correct desire to preserve in good order and enhance a highly important part of the national architectural heritage".

That is some of the nonsense spoken these days which nobody questions. Whoever said that this was part of our national heritage? It is not the Cenotaph which, in my opinion, was Lutyens' greatest achievement.

**Mr. Nicholas Fairbairn** (Perth and Kinross): Absolute rubbish.

**Mr. Crouch:** I do not share the opinion of my hon. and learned Friend from north of the border. We are not discussing Lutyens' but Sir Hugh Casson.

We start from a premise that is not argued against. I read the report, the evidence and interrogation of my colleagues of the witnesses before the Committee, and not once did they question the early premise that we had to preserve this national architectural heritage.

Paragraph 9 states:

"One is the emphasis on conservation, so that as far as possible existing facades on all fronts but Cannon Row will remain."

The last sentence of paragraph 13 is important. It appears in bold type, and states:

"We therefore recommend acceptance of the principle of conservation and its application as set out in the evidence."

When I examined the evidence, I found that in paragraph 74 a Mr. Ramsey—and not Sir Hugh Casson, who was not well on that occasion—was questioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, South-West (Sir P. Hawkins). Mr. Ramsey said, when dealing with these buildings which are to be preserved for ever:

"We do not think the present building deserves its present position."

Anyone stopping and staring for a moment in Whitehall can see that those buildings do not deserve their prominence or the permanence that we are about to give them.

I wish to refer to the terms of reference taken up by Sir Hugh Casson and his partners who, we readily acknowledge, are leaders in the sphere of world architecture and thought.

Paragraph 1.02(a) states:

"the need to conserve, as far as possible, the existing facades to Derby Gate, Parliament street and Bridge street,"

Paragraph 3.02 refers to the civil and historical associations of Parliament square, Whitehall, the Palace of Westminster, the Abbey and so on. It states:

"The frontage of the site facing Parliament street and Bridge street, in particular, are an essential part of this setting."

I accept that they are an important part. One cannot deny that they exist. They cannot be disinvented.

I must part company with what Sir Hugh says on pages 10 and 11 of his study. I confess that I know Sir Hugh Casson and admire him greatly, and not just for his architecture. In paragraph 3.08, Sir Hugh states:

"The site is part of a Conservation Area and all the buildings are now listed as buildings of architectural or historical interest. Those buildings facing Parliament street in particular have formed the background to great occasions of state pageantry and national history. They"—

the buildings. I emphasise "They"—

"have witnessed Cenotaph Services, Coronation processions, the Jarrow March and Victory Parades. They have, therefore, achieved a significance which exceeds their intrinsic architectural value."

I say "Amen" to that. I agree that they vastly exceed their intrinsic and architectural value. We should, as a House, remember that. They are the words of a sound man. To suggest that buildings have witnessed certain scenes and events and, therefore, should be preserved is quite exceptional. Not even Sir John Betjeman does that.

We are missing an opportunity. I do not want to pour cold water on the proposal; I am simply raising a little flag to say that in 1983 we could have done better. As the right hon. Member for Wakefield said, we could have done it properly in 1968. I voted for it then. I did not very much like the designs put forward by Sir Basil Spence. They were modern and, perhaps, not quite the right setting to face the old Treasury building. But I confess that at that time I said we should get rid of the Treasury building and have a modern London and a modern Parliament. —[*Interruption.*] My hon. Friends are gasping in dismay at my suggestion of living in a modern world. We should be modern Members of Parliament, as the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) said. I do not mind looking across the river. Indeed, I rather like modern buildings and what society builds in its own time—



**Mr. Fairbairn:** To think that the hon. Gentleman represents Canterbury.

**Mr. Crouch:** There are some parts of me that are not entirely medieval.

I am beginning to weary my hon. Friends. For a few moments some hon. Members were listening to what I was saying. I hope that it will not be entirely forgotten.

11.46 pm

**Mr. Jack Dormand** (Easington): I shall be brief. It is significant that so many new Members are in the Chamber. One reason for that is that when they come to this place they are deeply shocked by the inadequate facilities. Many of them come from occupations where they have had the benefit of full office and secretarial facilities.

The tone of the debate suggests that the whole scheme is warmly welcomed, but that is not the case. I am sorry that the Leader of the House has left the Chamber. I do not have the slightest doubt that he is genuinely concerned about facilities and is doing his best in difficult circumstances. He knows that I have asked many questions during recent years. On 28 March, in answer to a question, the right hon. Gentleman said:

"I can promise the publication of the report and, I hope, a debate shortly thereafter."—[*Official Report*, 28 March 1983; Vol. 40, c. 18.]

Today is 22 November.

On an earlier occasion the hon. Member for Maidstone (Mr. Wells) asked:

"Is my right hon. Friend aware that every time there is an improvement in accommodation for hon. Members attendance in the Chamber declines? . . . Therefore, will my right hon. Friend think long and coolly before he further discourages hon. Members from coming to the Chamber?"

and the hon. Member for Halesowen and Stourbridge (Mr. Stokes) asked:

"Despite all that we have heard, does my right hon. Friend agree that it is a great privilege to be here and that our work cannot be compared with any other occupation? Is it not therefore somewhat unseemly to have these continual complaints from the Opposition?"—[*Official Report*, 13 December 1982; Vol. 34, c. 18-19.]

That is a train of thought in the House.

The main reason why I rise to speak tonight is that I have a deep cynicism about what will happen with the new building. The report states on page vi:

"To return to the comparative timescales with which we began, the present Palace of Westminster took sixteen years to plan and build in the middle of the last century; we have been nearly twice as long trying to agree on suitable office accommodation in the second half of the twentieth century. It is time progress was made."

The hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) made a very constructive speech. He made the point that it will be five years before the first hon. Members move into their offices in these buildings. If I were to ask the Leader of the House for an assurance that these buildings would be renovated he would not be able to give me that assurance, because other members of his Government take a far more cynical view of the matter than the right hon. Gentleman. I know that his intention is honourable. We have corresponded on the matter, and I have had several letters from him. He has explained that over the years we have operated a system of patching up. In one letter the Leader of the House spoke of 14 additions to this building. Bits are added here and there to try to meet immediate needs.

It is time that we evolved a completely different concept of what hon. Members need to serve their constituents. My right hon. Friend the Member for

Wakefield (Mr. Harrison) to whom we all owe so much has made that point. I hope that the Leader of the House will make it plain to the Chancellor of the Exchequer—and to the Prime Minister who, I am sure, will have a finger in this pie at some time—that we simply will not tolerate the abandonment of this programme. We may well get the first phase. If we do I shall be delighted, but I shall still feel somewhat cynical about the next phase. I remember that a magnificent international exhibition was held a few years ago in Westminster Hall, and an award was made, but suddenly we were told in the Chamber, "Sorry, we do not have the money."

The new Members in this Parliament will not tolerate that situation. I hope that the Leader of the House will inform the rest of the Government of my cynical attitude. We will not stand it this time. We want this building, and phases 2 and 3 as well, and we shall make other demands as well.

11.53 pm

**Mr. Nicholas Fairbairn** (Perth and Kinross): I trust that someone who has not served on the Committee may make a brief speech. The right hon. Member for Wakefield (Mr. Harrison) has reminded us of the immense benefits of enforced silence. If the silence continues for another 18 years, I cannot imagine that a better pudding will come out of the oven. It was a masterful speech, and we all enjoyed it.

Probably the greatest works of art, the greatest thoughts and the greatest writings that Western European civilisation can display are those that were created by a monk in a cell who had silence and solitude and nothing else. When I came to the House, I was given an office in the newly glorified Norman Shaw South—beloved Scotland Yard. It had been turned from offices for the entire Metropolitan police into offices for 120 Members of Parliament and their secretaries at a higher cost per square yard than that of any newly built, fully furnished building in London of which the Royal Institute of British Architects had a record. I abominated that extravagance. I have abominated it ever since. Members of Parliament need solitude and silence. They do not need luxury at other people's expense.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Taunton (Mr. du Cann) was right. The reason why all the schemes have been delayed is that they were unnecessarily extravagant in providing what we need, which is solitude and silence without luxury. I believe that the scheme provides both the requirements and the economy, and I would like to suggest that there is no reason why it should take five years. In five years it will cost 100 times as much. Let us remember that the whole palace, fully furnished, cost £1.4 million, and let the wretched car park downstairs cost £14 million. Let us remember that today, more than at any other time, time is expense. Expense will cause delay and postponement, as the hon. Member for Easington (Mr. Dormand) said. Therefore, we must be fast and economical.

I say to my hon. Friend the Member for Canterbury (Mr. Crouch) that I do not want to invoke the name of the Lord Archbishop, but God help us. As I stand and look out of the windows of the Palace of Westminster, I can see that icebox which occupies part of the glorious site of the original Venetian folly of St. Thomas' hospital, the Ministry of Defence, the Festival hall by Sir Robert Matthews, and every frightful thing that the PSA has put up, bobbing along down the Thames. I cannot believe that



My hon. Friend the hon. Member for Canterbury could design a worse building than any of those, but let me be in Canterbury.

I have been a lifelong preservationist. The word "conservation" came in about 20 years after I formed the first preservation society. One of the delicacies of the scheme is that it preserves sensitive, simple, beautiful, buildings. I do not believe that they have been watching processions and marches and attending at the Cenotaph. They are lovely, human buildings. If anyone wishes to design a new one for any purpose, let him make his mirage in the desert at Brasilia, or Canterberia, if necessary.

Here we have the chance to restore the great gateway of Whitehall which was before and should be again. We would be doing two things—preserving, enhancing and recreating this country's heritage—as we are in cleaning this Palace and in restoring Westminster Abbey—and creating what we need—just the capacity for solitude and silence in which to do our work without luxury or extravagance. If we can do that fast, let us do it.

I have noticed that when a Government Department or the PSA, whose report I read this morning, involve themselves in something, it is always much more expensive and takes much longer. It amuses me that the PSA spends its time putting little lawns outside compulsive ruins so as to put notices on them saying "Do not walk on this lawn."

I hope that this matter will proceed with great dispatch; that the scheme will be continued, but not in the nervousness of phase 1 first and then, "Let us see."

I have lived through the Edinburgh opera house. [*Laughter.*] There is not one because people proceeded with such caution that the cost seemed so frightful when they were halfway through, that they did not dare to continue.

Let us be brave and take decision one tonight and go on to two and three. If we do not, we never will.

11.59 pm

**Mr. Roland Boyes** (Houghton and Washington): I shall not take long, as it appears that there is unanimity on this matter.

The hon. Member for Canterbury (Mr. Crouch) talked about facades and the hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross (Mr. Fairbairn) talked about solitude and silence, but not necessarily luxury. Neither is in the same league as me, who tries to operate in a slum just around the corner. When I was first elected to Parliament I asked my right hon. Friend the Member for Wakefield (Mr. Harrison) if I could have an office. He said, "Hang on a bit lad, hang on for a month. I have to sort out Front Bench, them behind Front Bench, retreads, and then I will get down to lads like you, but you will be all right because there is an honest draw". After about a month I had got nowt, so I used a few expressions which Yorkshiremen can use to each other with understanding. I do not know how honest the draw was, but I ended up with one of the bad jobs down yonder and I do not suppose that I helped myself by using a few expletives.

My hon. Friend the Member for Easington (Mr. Dormand) says that new hon. Members are shocked. It is more than shock. What we get is an absolute disgrace. It is an insult, not to me, as I have a nice job, but to the constituents who elected me to come here to help them with some of their problems. I have had many constituents down from the north east. The Tories should not forget

that, thanks to the Government we have the highest unemployment and the worst social problems in the country. Members of Parliament need proper facilities with which to deal with them.

I have been put in a corridor. Does one get solitude and silence down there? There are about 20 of us. Our telephones are going all the time and we can hear each other talking. There is no solitude, no silence, no nowt down there. Many hon. Members think that it is all brass down there and that my constituents will not agree to giving hon. Members such as me proper facilities. The people who come and see me at work are more than shocked. They think it is ridiculous, because the opportunity to get something done lies not with people up there, but with us. The only reason why I do not have a proper office is that previous Members of Parliament have not voted for me to have one. I am speaking tonight because if I get back again and some young lad says, "I am down in that slum there, what did you do about it?", I want to be able to refer to after midnight on 23 November and say, "I stood up and supported the building of new and proper offices and facilities for Members."

It is impossible to work properly in those conditions. I do not know how often you go down there, Mr. Speaker, but every right hon. and hon. Member should occasionally have a look and see what it is like. They would then understand why people such as me get a bit annoyed when we have an opportunity to speak. What seems to happen here is that new Members get put in the slum. They are then promoted to one of my right hon. Friend's double offices and they forget what it is like down there. It is a public school thing—someone has to fag and suffer for five years, after which he gets his reward. That is no good. The problems with which I have to deal will not wait five years. The folk I see will not wait five years. They are here this week, next week and every day that I am here. If it takes expenditure to solve those problems, we should pay the price.

I have been lucky enough to be a Member of the European Parliament. In 1979 I went to Strasbourg. There was no office. Two years later every Member had his own office and there were cafes, restaurants, meeting rooms, the lot. I do not see why such building should take five years over here if the French can do it in two. Nobody complained about the expense over there. The French Government realised that the Members needed proper facilities. I believe that people over here realise that Members of Parliament deserve proper facilities.

I was pleased to hear what the Chairman of the Library Sub-Committee, the hon. Member for Hereford (Mr. Shepherd) said. I have been pretty angry this week about the treatment that is being given to a new research assistant whom I have just appointed to help me with all the problems with which I have to deal because of Conservative Members. I told her that I would get her an office. That was my first mistake. I wrote to the Sergeant at Arms Department. I am not complaining, because that Department cannot do any better than Members. If we do not give it the facilities to give to folk such as me, we cannot blame that Department. I asked where my assistant could have an office. The reply was, "As near as possible to you, Mr. Boyes, is down the Embankment." I think that she will get somewhere over there. That is not certain. I said, "Don't worry, Susan, because we have a Library here. You will be near me down in my little corridor, because you will be able to work in the Library." That was



[Mr. Roland Boyes]

my second basic wrong assumption. Susan said, "I cannot use the Library at the moment. I have a temporary card." I said, "We all have to suffer for a short time. How long is 'temporary'?" She replied, "At least until the next election."

Therefore, my new research assistant is out at St. Stephen's House, and the Library that she uses is somewhere altogether different. I am in one building, her office is in another. It is not an office, but a desk. When in opposition, unless one is on the Front Bench, one does not get offices. My assistant's desk is in another place, and the Library is in yet another. When she works for me in the morning, she will spend half the time walking from one office to the other, and each of us will not know where the other is. That is ridiculous.

I agree with the Chairman of the Library Sub-Committee. I am glad that we have that Committee. Very good people work in the Library. Each one of the 650 Members presumably uses the facilities to some extent. The speed at which one gets a reply is incredible. I do not criticise any of the staff in the Library, but I criticise what we have done as Members, to have Libraries scattered over different buildings. I hope that when the Committee meets it will take seriously the fact that researchers appointed by Members cannot use the main Library.

I should like to draw the attention of the Leader of the House to one matter. I hope that none of the young students from America who get placements is working in the Library and keeping my girl out. That would be unfair. She should have access to it, as it is near my office.

I feel better now that I have said a few words, and am grateful for the opportunity to do so. [Laughter.] Tory Members may laugh, but they have their own offices. I bet a pound to a penny that the hon. Member for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack), who talked about silence and solitude, has an office.

**Mr. Fairbairn:** I must advise the hon. Gentleman on this matter. I share a cubicle, in a sort of suspended pre-fab, with my hon. Friend the Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. McQuarrie). The notice on the door says, "Albert and the Lion".

**Mr. Boyes:** I might have said "a pound to a penny", but I now bet a pound to tuppence. It is better to have two folk in an office than 20 in a corridor. I bet that the hon. Member for Canterbury, who talked about facades, has an office as well. He would not be worrying about facades if he were down in my corridor. We must get our priorities right.

New Members, as well as established Members, must have proper working conditions and proper places where constituents, trade unionists and others can make representations to them. Two solicitors came to see me in the past week. I showed them around this spot. One has to keep moving. One of my constituents nearly sat on one of the Benches, and the policeman was quick to move him along. When one has shown them the Chamber and found Keir Hardie's statue, what else is there to do if one does not have an office? Constituents must stand at the side of the desk, with about 20 people shoving them out of the way.

We want proper offices where people can make proper representations, so that we can help to solve some of the social problems that have deliberately been created. We

must remember the money is not the important thing. Representing the people who sent us here and solving their problems is important, and one cannot do that in slums.

12.10 am

**Mr. Robert Banks** (Harrogate): I have been an elected Member of this House now for nearly 10 years. It is quite incredible to think back to 1974 and recall that then we did not have Norman Shaw north or Norman Shaw south. Listening to tonight's debate and to the hon. Member for Houghton and Washington (Mr. Boyes) makes one wonder how it was that we were able then to function.

I have tried Norman Shaw north, Norman Shaw south and Deans Yard and I have come to the conclusion that there is only one place that I want to work in—here in this building. It is the greatest privilege of all to work in such a building. In my estimation, it is certainly the greatest parliamentary building in the world.

Therefore, while I welcome this extending of accommodation and the site in Parliament street, I hope that it will reduce the staff in this place, so that we can be here closer to the Chamber. Whether there is or is not a tunnel, there is still a great distance to go and the essential thing is to be here in this place.

This site is one of the most important and impressive in this country. I sometimes wonder what tourists must think as they have looked year after year at buildings that have been falling into decay, that have been neglected, that are dirty and in a shameful condition. So I support the motion because I really do think that something must be done with those buildings.

Like my hon. Friend the Member for Canterbury (Mr. Crouch), I believe that if we were really brave enough, and if we really had the courage, we should in fact demolish that site and build a new building on a scale and with the care to match the buildings that exist in Whitehall. But I am a realist and I know that that would not go through, so I will support the motion. But we are of course doing the usual British thing and compromising. We are keeping the fronts and some of the structure, and then we are going to build some new bits at the back, so that the architects who build those bits at the back will not come under any criticism because it will not be seen.

Yes, there have been mistakes. The St. Thomas' hospital site is one of the most appalling mistakes that was ever made, and there have been others, but that is not a reason for saying that we should not go on trying, that we should not have the confidence to do it. But one of these days there will be a renaissance of British architecture and we will have the capability to produce a building that is worthy of our times.

But I will make one very important plea. Let us ensure that the inside of the revamped building is modelled with the craftsmanship that we have in this country, which needs employment if we are to have any craftsmanship in this country. Let us adorn the walls with contemporary paintings. We do not need to be reminded of the history of the Houses of Parliament—we have it all here. We are enveloped in it when we are in this place. Let us encourage the hanging of modern paintings and bring in sculpture, too. I was one of the ones who supported the sculptural fountain which we have in New Palace yard. We are in the 1980s. We cannot just submerge ourselves in history.

This whole venture will of course cost more money than the estimates we have before us tonight. So let us start by



...aying that we are going to be grossly extravagant but that we are going to ensure that it will be done supremely well and that we are going to encourage a whole lot of new people with craftsmanship, arts and skills, to put everything they have got into that building so that at least inside it will be worthy of a site so close to this place.

12.14 am

**Mr. Gary Waller** (Keighley): I, like the majority of right hon. and hon. Members who have spoken tonight, favour the proposals in the report. I shall not delay the House by repeating arguments that have already been advanced. I would have more sympathy with what my hon. Friend the Member for Canterbury (Mr. Crouch) said if we were just talking about a new building behind facades, but as the feasibility study points out, a large number of important and attractive rooms at the front of the building are to be retained. We are concerned only with rebuilding at the back of the building. About half the new site will be considered to be new building, rather than a restructuring of the old.

Although these proposals are imaginative and will certainly greatly improve the external appearance of the Bridge street site, there are still considerable issues to be decided. It is important to remember that this is only a feasibility study, and that before building can start we have to decide what facilities are to be included in the building. The requirement in the terms of reference in paragraph 1.02(b) of the feasibility study says that they should

"be capable of working efficiently and harmoniously together as a single group, without the implementation of any later phases of the redevelopment of the Bridge Street site".

That will inevitably be a great handicap on the architects. They do not know whether that will be a final stage or just the first part of something that is yet to come. So what facilities are to be incorporated?

Today we had a statement about tourism, which I think most hon. Members would agree is one of our country's important industries. Most of the contributions to this debate have centred on the facilities for Members. Those facilities are, of course, vital, but we must not forget that this palace is a magnet for enormous numbers of people who come from all over the world to see this magnificent building. Pugin wanted a permanent exhibition in Westminster Hall of Parliamentary history. Clearly, that will never happen, but is it perhaps possible for us to create something on the Bridge street site so that visitors to the palace could see more than what the hon. Member for Blaydon (Mr. McWilliam) called just the exterior of this building, if they do not know a Member who can arrange for them to see the magnificent interior as well? Should that be incorporated in phase 2? It would probably be more appropriate for it to be incorporated in phase 2, but if there is to be no phase 2, perhaps it should be included in phase 1. Perhaps instead of the shops on the ground floor, we could have an exhibition site close to the stopping point for coaches and the Underground station, where people could see a depiction of the history of this palace.

Another point of principle to consider is whether the separation of phase 1 from the rest of the site by Cannon row is essential. Cannon row is just a rat run for taxis from Whitehall to Bridge street. The separation will merely create problems of security and more noise, which might be avoided. We should therefore consider at this stage whether phase 1 should be carried out in such a way that

we could be linked to further stages of the Bridge street redevelopment. Unless we consider that at this stage, it will undoubtedly be too late.

It is intended that the subway under Bridge street will be solely for the use of Members of Parliament and those who serve them. I can see great attractions in this concept, but the visitor to Westminster will have difficulties crossing what must be one of the most dangerous thoroughfares in London unless consideration is given to providing a second tunnel. There is no reference to this in the documents, but I hope that road safety on that dangerous thoroughfare will not be forgotten.

These issues are to be determined, but they should not delay what is a very necessary building. I hope that my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House will do his utmost to see that hon. Members have that available as soon as possible.

12.15 am

**Mr. Jack Straw** (Blackburn): The debate has been of exceptionally high standard, with many good speeches.

I would like to pay my own tribute to my right hon. Friend the Member for Wakefield (Mr. Harrison) for the funniest speech I have ever heard during my period in the House and for his work for the House as a whole and that of all his hon. Friends. If I may be allowed a small digression, when the history of the last Labour Government comes to be written, that extraordinary political feat of survival without any visible means of support, the role of my right hon. Friend the Member for Wakefield will loom much larger than anyone can anticipate now. *[Interruption.]* The favours done for minority parties should remain locked as secrets in the heart of my right hon. Friend for at least for a short while.

There is widespread agreement in the House that the need for more accommodation for hon. Members is overwhelming. My hon. Friend the Member for Easington (Mr. Dormand) pointed out that the conditions hon. Members have to put up with in the House are appalling. I know from the four years I spent in the cloisters that the conditions that new Members have to put up with are the worst of all. It is a double burden for new Members who have to find their way round to find their feet and put up with conditions that no office workers, and rightly, would ever have to put up with in any circumstances.

The scheme the House is asked to approve is not the most perfect scheme, but I believe that after all these years of discussion it should not make the best the enemy of the good.

It is all very well the hon. Member for Canterbury (Mr. Crouch) talking about what the Victorians did, but the Victorians had great confidence, which was reflected in their architecture as well as in everything else. When this building came to be rebuilt, a committee which was described as the Committee of Taste arbitrated on the competing designs. That committee was able to make speedy decisions, to come to an agreement and to impose it on the public. That is not possible today. The diffidence and uncertainty that the country faces is reflected in our architecture. It is not possible to gain agreement about architectural designs, as we saw in the great row about the design for a new building that was to replace all the buildings on this site. Although money was one of the reasons that design ran into the ground, the fact that many



[Mr. Jack Straw]

people felt the scheme was unacceptable on aesthetic grounds was another reason—in my judgment an understandable reason.

There is no confidence or unanimity in what should replace buildings of the character of those along Parliament street. Although they are not the finest buildings in London, they form, as the Liberal Chief Whip has pointed out, a vital part of Whitehall and of the history of the City of Westminster, of London and of the country. They ought to be retained. I believe there is agreement on that and on nothing else, and because of that we ought to go forward with this project.

When the Minister comes to reply, I ask him to deal with the serious question of the financing of the scheme. The Leader of the House said that public funds will be found for the scheme. He went on to say, however, that spending would necessarily have to be reduced in other areas.

That does not necessarily follow because, while £15 million is not a small sum, in the total of Government spending—compared with £126.4 billion, the spending target for next year—it is a decimal point of a percentage. More worrying is the question whether the expenditure on the new building will be at the expense of necessary maintenance of the existing Palace of Westminster. The suspicion that it might be is raised by paragraph 7 of the main report of the committee, where it is said that it will be necessary for the House to “consider some restrictions on other expenditure . . . as a contribution to the cost of the scheme.”

Does that remain Government policy, or are they willing—for example from the contingency reserve or other funds—to find new cash to fund the project? As has been pointed out, as a year-by-year sum, it is very small indeed. I hope that the Minister will clarify the position on that.

The hon. Member for Hereford (Mr. Shepherd) mentioned access through the tunnel. As I now have an office in Norman Shaw north, I know that it is not that we have separate offices that keeps hon. Members away from the Chamber, but the fact that the offices are so distant. It is a long walk and in cold weather one must put on an overcoat; one is either here or there and it is not possible to dodge from one's office to the Chamber. A small advantage of working in the cloisters is that if something interesting comes up on the monitor, one can pop into the Chamber. I hope that when arrangements are made for phase 1 of Bridge street, consideration will be given at the same time to providing covered access all the way to the Norman Shaw building.

I was grateful to the hon. Member for Hereford for raising the question of the use of phase 1 and the fact that, within the scheme, it will not be completed—although the buildings will be completed—until the staff working in the main Palace of Westminster are decanted into the Parliament street offices, so that hon. Members can then take up the vacant accommodation here. There will be competing claims for those new offices, but I hope that the committees that will deal with that matter will take into account the important claim of the Library to centralise its services.

I pay tribute—as all hon. Members do—to the high standard of work that the Library staff perform in difficult circumstances. None of us should be worried lest the staff

of the Library—who, as it were, run the front of House operation—will be any more distant; they will still be in the Library, but benefit will arise in that the staff who are at present distributed in Norman Shaw north, Norman Shaw south and in odd rooms in the bowels of this building, will at last be centralised, most of them near to the main Palace.

The Leader of the House touched briefly—I was glad it was briefly—on recommendation 25(ii) of the main report, where it is said:

“further and separate consideration should be given to the possibility of developing the rest of the site in association with private capital.”

This is not the time or the occasion to have a discussion about the role of private capital, but the Leader of the House will take note of the view of the Opposition that we think it neither acceptable nor necessary that private capital should be used in the development of any phase of what is essentially a public building. Whatever views we may hold about the use of private capital in the development of trunk roads and railway electrification, this building, which is pre-eminently a public building for the public service of public legislation, should attract public money and public development. I have no objection to anybody considering the use of private capital, but I hope that that consideration will lead to the conclusion that this is not an acceptable way to proceed.

I raised one matter in an intervention in the speech of the Leader of the House. While I passionately believe that we should press ahead with phase 1 I also believe that we should look closely at the accommodation in the Palace that is not used for Members. It came as something of a shock to me to discover, from an answer to a parliamentary question on 16 July 1980, that there are 1,128 rooms in the Palace of Westminster, and that of those only 22 per cent. are used by Members of Parliament. Well under a quarter of the rooms in the Palace are used by Members of Parliament—about 250.

Many of the rooms are used for residences and bedrooms. I am not suggesting that it is not necessary that some of the accommodation should be used as residences and bedrooms, but it seems, looking down the list, that questions must be asked. The second office keeper has a six-room accommodation on the second floor of the House, but does he need to be accommodated, and if so, can he not be accommodated elsewhere within a quarter mile or so of the Palace? Should the manager of the Refreshment Department have a five-room flat on the third floor of a house in Old Palace yard for his occasional use? If it is for his occasional use, could not the accommodation be used for the regular use of hon. Members?

Altogether, 100 rooms are used for residences and bedrooms in the House of Commons and another 44 in the other part of the Palace. This is a substantial proportion of the available accommodation, and, roughly speaking, about 40 per cent. of the accommodation available is used by Members. The matter related to this, which I hope that the Services Committee will look at, is the use of the Palace by Departments of State. The Lord Chancellor's Department occupies 22 rooms in the other place, and if those rooms were not used by that Department they would become available for the Lords. Over time, we have used accommodation in the other place, and there may be benefits for us if consideration were given to the problem



whether some of the members of the Lord Chancellor's staff could not be better housed elsewhere, outside the House.

The provision of phase 1 is for 180 rooms altogether — about 90 rooms for Members and 90 for their secretaries. We should recognise that while this will be a popular addition to the available accommodation, even when the renovations have been completed, we shall still be a long way off decent accommodation for all hon. Members. Even when we reach the sunlit uplands of a single room for every Member of Parliament, and a facility nearby for his or her secretary, our standard of facilities will still be behind that enjoyed by legislatures in almost every other nation in the western world. Tonight, we are taking a small step towards acceptable standards of provision, and I hope that the House will give it its support.

12.33 am

**The Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Sir George Young):** I agree with the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) that this has been a debate of unusually high quality, from which a high degree of consensus has emerged. It is a sign of your personal interest in this matter, Mr. Speaker, that you have sat throughout the debate in your Chair. I wonder how quickly the hon. Member for Blackburn will be served tomorrow at lunch time when he takes his place in the Members' Dining Room after what he said about the Refreshment Department.

I shall deal with the points made in the debate, and I begin with those made by the hon. Member for Blaydon (Mr. McWilliam). Both he and his colleague, the hon. Member for Blackburn, asked about the funding of the project. The Lord Privy Seal explained that the total cost would be about £23 million. Of that sum, some £16 million is new money either from the Treasury or the Department of the Environment. Some £7 million is from the Palace Vote, spread over about six years. At present the Palace Vote is about £10 million a year. The ability to respond to new demands will be fairly restricted while Bridge street is being developed, but happily there is no backlog of serious work in the Palace. Some schemes may have to be slowed down, and others postponed, but we can cope with the essential requirements of the Palace while the site is being developed.

**Mr. McWilliam:** The Select Committee report stated that the effect of the proposal would be noticeable to hon. Members. What will be noticeable to hon. Members?

**Sir George Young:** I do not know at this stage. Some of the expenditure about which the hon. Gentleman was worried will be consequential expenditure when some offices have moved out. That will happen towards the end of the period, and we have taken no public expenditure decisions on it. I hope that we can cope with any demands.

**Mr. Cormack:** Can my hon. Friend confirm that this scheme will not interfere with the necessary restoration of the Palace, because there has been some disquiet about that?

**Sir George Young:** If my hon. Friend is talking about the restoration of the stone, I am determined that that programme should proceed, so far as it is within my power, at the present pace. It is a good investment of resources.

I am grateful for what my right hon. Friend the Member for Taunton (Mr. du Cann) said in support of the scheme, and for the generous tributes that he paid to all those associated with the report. I join him in those tributes. My hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack), as one would expect, put the proposals in a historic context. The right hon. Member for Wakefield (Mr. Harrison) reminded us of how much we have lost during the past 18 years because of his enforced silence. My hon. Friend the Member for Hereford (Mr. Shepherd), who does such sterling work on the Library Sub-Committee, added a Library dimension to the debate.

We heard an important note of dissent from my hon. Friend the Member for Canterbury (Mr. Crouch). There is scope for differences of taste, but the Services Committee considered the suggestion that we started from scratch and decided unanimously that we should build on what was there. When my hon. Friend has seen the buildings after they have been restored, rather than as they are now, I hope he will share my view that the Services Committee made the right decision.

**Mr. Crouch:** Does my hon. Friend recollect from the evidence to the Select Committee that Sir Hugh Casson spoke of using a Flymo on the buildings in Parliament street? Admittedly, he was talking about the backs of the buildings, which he thought were horrible, and he wanted to use a vertical Flymo to flatten them. What a chance we have missed for a great architect, Sir Hugh Casson, to start on a virgin site, with all the buildings flattened by his Flymo, and it would have cost no more.

**Sir George Young:** Sir Hugh can use his Flymo for part of the scheme, because the backs of the buildings will be demolished.

Many hon. Members introduced a note of urgency and asked us to make even greater progress than has been planned. Almost every square foot in the existing parliamentary estate that could economically be used has already been taken up, and, given the restraints of the Division Bell, additional accommodation can be found realistically only in the area between Derby gate and Bridge street. This area has been earmarked for parliamentary use for about 20 years. All the buildings on the phase 1 site are now listed and are within a conservation area. They give a human scale to Parliament street in contrast to the dominant Government buildings on the other side of the road. Those factors led Casson Conder to propose that the facades of Parliament street should be retained, with such accommodation behind them as can reasonably be adapted for modern use. Much of the ill-lit and sub-standard accommodation on the Cannon row side would be demolished and replaced by rooms designed for parliamentary use.

The hon. Member for Blaydon asked me about residences. No. 43 and No. 44 Parliament street are two small 18th century houses. Due to their structural limitations it is suggested that they be used as residences for officers of the House. This might enable existing residential space, about which the hon. Member for Blackburn spoke, in the Palace of Westminster to be converted to office use by Members. The Select Committee has asked for confirmation that No. 43 and No. 44 could not be used as offices, and a detailed structural survey will shortly be carried out so that a report can be made on this point.



[Sir George Young]

The specific use of the new building will take account of views expressed in this debate. My hon. Friend the Member for Harrogate (Mr. Banks) drew attention to the need for detail on the work inside. However, the configuration of the site generally, and specific buildings in particular, will influence its use. The site would provide some 180 rooms for office accommodation, which could in turn form 90 Members' sets. My Department was advised, however, in a note from the then chairman of the Accommodation and Administration Sub-Committee last November, that the Sub-Committee's first priority was to provide the maximum possible accommodation for Members as close to the Chamber as possible. That view has been echoed during the debate.

This led the Sub-Committee to examine the position of all those, other than Members, who now occupy space in this House's part of the Palace. But the Sub-Committee did not expect to have any success in removing persons and services from the Palace unless they could be accessibly housed elsewhere. Therefore, access to Parliament street for persons, materials and data will need to be first-class.

The Sub-Committee said that my Department should not assume that all it was looking for in Parliament street was 100 sets for Members. Although it would, of course, be looking for some more Members' accommodation outside the Palace, the provision of more accommodation within the Palace was an even greater priority. The House has endorsed those views.

The next step would be the formation of a working party to translate the views of the House into a clear brief for the design team, the working party comprising representatives of the Services Committee and my Department.

This new block of buildings would be the first purpose-built accommodation for the House since Barry and Pugin

designed this Palace. Bearing in mind the greatly increased pressure of parliamentary business over the last century, the increase in space that this scheme would provide is modest. Its design would provide accommodation up-to-date in its regard for Members' wishes, and the Services Committee will, no doubt, keep in touch with opinion in the House on this point.

We must put this site in the context of a crucial part of the capital city, as one or two hon. Members did. The construction of the international conference centre on the Broad Sanctuary site is bringing into good use a site that has been derelict for far too long. The reconstruction of the Richmond Yard building off Whitehall is now under way. We are refurbishing the old public offices in Whitehall. The restoration work in this Palace constitutes a significant programme of work. The additional scheme that is now proposed would go a long way towards completing improvement in this highly sensitive part of the capital.

I do not believe that hon. Members find the cost of the latest proposals excessive. We would have had to spend some money on these buildings simply to keep them upright during the next few years. Taking all these factors into account, I believe that the proposed scheme offers good value for money and meets the House's needs in the cheapest way.

The hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) said that we are all responsible for having done nothing for so long. I hope that we can at least take the credit for starting to do something to put the problem right.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Resolved,*

That this House agrees with the Select Committee on House of Commons (Services), in their Third Report in the last Session of Parliament, House of Commons Paper No. 269: New Parliamentary Building (Phase 1).