



DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT  
2 MARSHAM STREET LONDON SW1P 3EB

01-212 3434

My ref:

Your ref:

①  
a/b  
BT

Rine Hunter

Agree with proposed categories of organizations which would be refused permission to hire the new Conference Centre?

Yes

15 April 1986

Staff

CDP 16/i

I think George Young should suspend a PQ to give the Home Office guidelines which officials will use in dealing with applications - makes it easier to deal with controversial applications.

You will know that we are now receiving applications for bookings for the new Conference Centre which will open in June. The purpose of this letter is to set out the policy which, subject to your agreement and that of other colleagues, I propose to instruct officials to follow in accepting bookings.

N.C.W  
18.  
↓  
Difficult to define

We are all agreed that, subject to the requirement of Government use, the Conference Centre should be used to generate as much income from the private sector as possible by its use for Conferences, etc. I am anxious, therefore, that we should set as few barriers as possible to letting it to those organisations who wish to use it. In particular, I don't think we should refuse to let it for purposes associated with the mainline political parties, or widely accepted political and other pressure groups, even though we might not agree with the opinions or the parties who would occupy the building.

For example, the Conservative Local Government Conference has asked for a booking - they are attracted, not least, by the level of security which the conference centre can offer - and I would propose to accept them; I would do exactly the same if it were the Labour Local Government Conference. Equally, if a major and responsible trade union wished to hold a Conference there, I think we should accept the booking, just as we would for the CBI or a major industrial group.

There are, however, certain organisations to whom I do not think a booking should be given because it could cause the Government embarrassment. I think the categories of bodies falling under this head should be strictly limited, and should be confined to the following:-

- a) Sales and publicity conferences organised on behalf of some very undignified event or goods

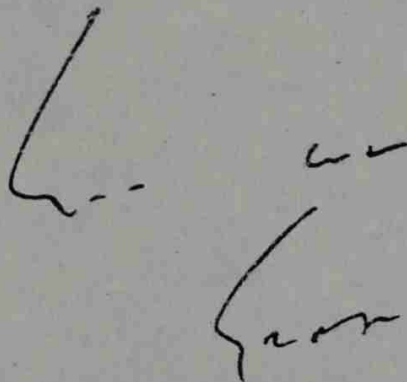


b) Functions which might lead to possible demonstrations or breaches of the peace

c) <sup>Chair</sup> The organisers are associated with a group which the Government has explicitly condemned as being either against national interests (eg the IRA) or incompatible with democratic Government (eg Militant and the National Front)

Before refusing any booking on the grounds that fell within these categories, I would want to consider the decision myself. We would not, of course, have to give any reason for our decisions to the organisers, but I would expect, in any controversial case, to have to answer questions in the House.

I would be grateful if you would let me know if you are content with these arrangements. I am copying this letter to the Prime Minister, the Lord President of the Council, The Home Secretary, the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, the Secretary of State for Defence, the Chief Secretary and Sir Robert Armstrong.



SIR GEORGE YOUNG

RT Hon Sir Geoffrey Howe QC MP

FILE

(60)

DA



CP

10 DOWNING STREET

*From the Private Secretary*

17 April 1986

The Prime Minister has seen a copy of Sir George Young's letter to the Foreign Secretary setting out some guidelines for categories of bodies to whom it would not be appropriate to make available the new Conference Centre.

The Prime Minister agrees with the categories proposed (points a, b and c of the letter). She notes that Sir George Young would consider each decision himself.

I am copying this letter to the Private Secretaries to the Lord President, Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary, Home Secretary, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, Secretary of State for Defence, Chief Secretary and Sir Robert Armstrong.

(Charles Powell)

Neil Mitchell, Esq.,  
Department of the Environment.

CJ