

CCB  
STUPPRIME MINISTERRICHMOND YARD

I have seen the memorandum on Richmond Yard circulated by Sir Robert Armstrong. As you know at the moment Sir Kenneth Stowe is away from the office and I would therefore like to emphasise my view of the importance of this decision.

There is no question over the five years that I have headed the DHSS that our position at the Elephant & Castle has been a grave drawback. The essential point is really this: the DHSS is the busiest of all Departments in parliamentary terms. It is very rare for a week to go by without the Department being involved in a parliamentary debate or statement. This week for example we have one debate and three Ministerial statements. This places considerable additional travelling pressures on Ministers and officials and involves them in constant to-ing and fro-ing between the Elephant and Castle and the House of Commons.

In addition, a running whip in the House of Commons means that business has to be transferred lock stock and barrel to the House. The whips have always been extremely understanding but it is obviously difficult to have all five Commons Ministers absent at the Elephant & Castle at the same time. The only way round this is to hold meetings at the House which means them taking place either in my room on the Cabinet floor or in a spare committee room. This can be difficult and indeed is not very secure. Frankly it is no way to seek to transact important Government business.

However the DHSS is organised, there is clearly going to have to be movement by the civil servants working for it from one office to another. There is no way they can be housed in one office. However, it would be possible to have a Ministerial and Headquarters unit based at Richmond Yard with easy access to Westminster and working on the bell.

I do hope that these views can be taken into account.

I am copying this minute to Sir Robert Armstrong.

17th June 1986



N.F.

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GOVT. BIDS: Renovation of Westminster: A2

11.11.00

