

Ref. A086/3014

MR WICKS

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Richmond Yard

Thank you for your minute of <sup>WITH NLW</sup> 22 October.

2. I have asked the Property Services Agency, in consultation with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, to prepare a full assessment of the plans for the old Home Office building together with evidence justifying them on cost and other grounds.
3. As to the information about prospective changes in the disposition of Government Departments in Whitehall, the Prime Minister has, as you will remember approved the setting up of a Sub-Committee on the allocation of accommodation in inner London, which would meet under her chairmanship or that of the Lord President. This Sub-Committee will keep under review the allocation of accommodation to Government Departments in the Whitehall and Westminster area. As a first step in this process the PSA have produced a situation report, which describes the present disposition of Government Departments in the area, the likely changes in the availability of buildings, and the requirements which they have under consideration. I shall be discussing this with official colleagues shortly, and the review will then be reported to the Ministerial Sub-Committee by the end of the year. This will enable Ministers to consider whether present planning is on the right lines, and in particular whether the PSA has got its priorities right for the movement into buildings in this area of headquarters Departments (like DHSS) which are at present outside it.
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4. The other wider point raised during the course of the discussions about Richmond Yard is the question of dispersal. The Minister of State, Privy Council Office, has been invited to reconsider the question whether there should be a further programme of dispersals from central Government Departments in London to the regions, in order to contribute to the relief of regional unemployment. An initial response from Mr Luce is expected to reach the Prime Minister by the end of this month.

5. I am sending copies of this minute to the Private Secretaries to the Lord President, Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary, Chief Secretary, Treasury, Secretary of State for the Environment, Secretary of State for Education and Science, Secretary of State for Social Services, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and the Chief Whip.

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ROBERT ARMSTRONG

23 October 1986