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DAS
16 June 1997.

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Anthony Andrew, DAS-LP
Murray Elder
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ACCOMMODATION ASPECTS OF A SCOTTISH PARLIAMENT

1. We met the Secretary of State in Victoria Quay on Friday 13 June to discuss accommodation options for a Scottish Parliament; also present were John Gibbons, Mark Batho, Paul Grice, Barbara Doig and Wendy Alexander.
2. We discussed the options summarised in my minute of 12 June. The Secretary of State indicated that option 4 (construction of debating chamber only next to the Victoria Quay building; MSPs offices etc to be accommodated in Victoria Quay) could be discounted on the grounds that it seemed unlikely to be cost-effective. As regards option 2 (construction of a debating chamber within St Andrew's House, possibly in the internal courtyard) the Secretary of State considered that space for a debating chamber would be very constrained and it would be difficult to use space in the rest of the building efficiently. Furthermore the Parliament would have no visible presence, being literally out of sight behind the walls of St Andrew's House. It was important that the people of Scotland could see and recognise where parliamentary business was conducted, and that there should be good public access to parliamentary debates etc; option 2 did not appear to fulfil these policy criteria and could therefore be discarded also.
3. Discussion then turned to option 1 (debating chamber in the old Royal High School; MSPs offices etc in St Andrew's House) and option 3 (a new building). The Secretary of State had been shown round the Old Royal High School building on 30 May. He had been struck by the rather cramped debating chamber, with limited room for members of the public and difficult access. He observed that requiring MSPs to work between 2 buildings separated by a main road was unlikely to be conducive to efficient business. Nevertheless, the old Royal High School had long been associated with the proposed Scottish Parliament and was widely recognised by members of the public as the planned location. This option could not