



mt.

Prime Minister

To see, pending next week's meeting to discuss the issue.

HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

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A.S.C. J

11th March 1982 .

David Steel

Thank you for your letter of 9th March about President Reagan's visit. I have delayed my reply whilst consulting my colleagues to confirm that they share my reactions to this.

I cannot agree that the "appropriate time" to consult other Party Leaders was after the invitee had been sounded out. An invitation to address both Houses is a matter for Parliament as a whole and not for the Government. Officials in Washington cannot therefore be landed with sole blame for this public embarrassment of the President, and I hope the lesson has been learned by those responsible for such visits.

Leaving that entirely aside and looking at the proposal on its merits, I would not support the proposal for a Westminster Hall ceremony. This is a rare honour, and I do not think it appropriate for a head of state - even though an ally - so newly in office.

To avoid further awkwardness, and the risk of a boycott of any such ceremony (thus detracting from its very purpose and nature), I believe the right course is for the Government to invite the President to address a meeting of Members in the Royal Gallery.

insincerely,

David Steel

The Rt. Hon. Mrs. Margaret Thatcher, M.P.,
The Prime Minister,
10 Downing Street.