

PRIME MINISTER

Parliamentary Affairs

1. Next week's business. As far as we can see this evening, the prospects for getting the business through next week look fairly good. The main problem remaining is the Housing Bill, and in particular the Lords' amendment removing the right to buy old people's housing. There was another fuss about this today, which led to the adjournment of the Lords for half-an-hour. John Stanley was asked in Questions what the Government proposed to do about this Lords' amendment. Gerald Kaufman asked him for a clear answer on the Government's attitude. Mr. Stanley said that the Government would not accept the amendment but would consider pre-emption (ie the right of the local authority to buy the accommodation back within a specified period). His timing was unfortunate, because the Lords were at that moment debating the third reading of the Housing Bill. I am told that there was quite a fuss in the Lords, and it led to a motion to adjourn the sitting of the Lords for half-an-hour being carried. When they resumed, Lord Soames offered an apology on the Government's behalf for what had been said in the Commons and this seems to have mollified the Opposition.

You might like to ask the Secretary of State for the Environment to tell his colleagues what line he proposes to take in the Commons on Tuesday when they consider the Lords' amendment, and the Lord President to comment on the prospects for the Lords accepting any Commons reversal of the amendment in question.

If later in Cabinet it is decided to attempt to overturn the arbitral award on teachers' pay, then of course business for next week will have to be re-opened, since the Commons will need at least half a day to debate that. I suggest, however, that you might defer discussing the consequences of that decision for the business until the Cabinet have discussed the substantive issue.

2. The House of Lords ceiling. You might perhaps ask the Secretary of State for the Environment to tell his colleagues quite how bad the structural trouble in the Lords is. If emergency arrangements are going to have to be made for the State Opening, then perhaps now is the moment to let the whole Cabinet know. The Lord President will no doubt wish to comment.

30 July 1980

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