

LOBBY BRIEFING

time: 1100 date: 15/1/80

PRIME MINISTER'S DAY

A meeting of Ministers began at 1000. Present: Home Secretary, Secretaries of State for Industry, Employment, Environment, Energy, and Scotland, the Minister of Agriculture, Chancellor of the Exchequer, Lord Advocate, Chief Secretary, Lord Chancellor, Solicitor General, Attorney General, Minister of State, Education (Baroness Young), Minister of State, CSD and the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. The Prime Minister will be in the House for Questions this afternoon and will vote at 2200 on a Three Line Whip on the Housing Bill.

One PNQ was running from Peter Emery to ask the Prime Minister whether since leading trade union leaders now on strike have stated clearly that they will continue secondary picketing as long as it is legal to do so she will ensure that legislation is completed within the next two weeks in order to fulfil the pledge on secondary picketing given in the Conservative Manifesto at the last General Election on which she was returned with such an impressive majority to this House.

AFGHANISTAN

There was no doubt that it would be a severe blow to the Soviet Union if a number of countries decided to withdraw from the Games. It would bring home the displeasure of Governments of the Soviet Union's action in Afghanistan. However we stressed that the UK Government could not stop athletes from participating in the Games nor could they get the International Olympic Committee to resite them. We could advise only - the Government's attitude could also influence the climate of public opinion of course.

An indication of concerted action should emerge from the NATO Council meeting today (Afghanistan is the only subject on the agenda). We emphasised that one country acting alone (with the possible exception of the United States) would not be effective. If the United States decided to advise against participation in the Games they would obviously like the support of other countries. We acknowledged that the UK's inclination would be to support the US. We underlined that action on the Olympic Games was only one option - there was a whole raft of ideas including a grain embargo.

/ The Lobby

The Lobby was directed to DOE for detailed guidance on Government financial support for the Games. We understood that the Olympic Committee made an appeal and if this did not raise the required amount the Sports Council would make up the shortfall no Government financial contribution for sending athletes to the Games had been necessary last time.

EMS

There was no change in the Government's present position and ~~the~~ attitude towards the EMS.

WISBECH DISASTER

There would be a written answer today from the Secretary of State for Defence (after 4.00 p.m.).

JL
15 January 1980

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time: 4.00

date: 15.1.80

Morning Lobby was repeated.

PRESS NOTICE

Rev. J. K. McCollough appointed to the Vicarage of Eyres Monsell.

EUROPEAN COMMUNITY BUDGET

We said that the PM's statement in the House that the UK was entering the next round of talks in a spirit of "genuine compromise" was not a new approach or a moving away from the concept of broad balance. At the PM's Press Conference in Dublin she had used this expression but had qualified it by saying that there was little room for manoeuvre.

We had rehearsed the arguments once again on the UK Budgetary contribution. We did not know if there would be a special meeting of the Summit before March. After Dublin we were expecting one in February. However, obviously we would have to await the outcome of the Lord Privy Seal's series of visits to European capitals and of Signor Cossiga's visit to the PM later this month.

AFGHANISTAN - OLYMPIC GAMES

We repeated this morning's points. The UK would obviously like the support of her European partners in any action decided upon. Any action following the NATO Council and Foreign Affairs Council would have to be reported to the Government, either to the Cabinet or to some Cabinet Committee. It was unlikely that there would be anything to say this evening. Lobby might like to check with FCO later. We pointed out that in the normal course of events the Government would like athletes who had trained for many years to participate in the Games and to take as many medals as possible.

IRAN

We said that if a resolution had been obtained from the Security Council the UK would have been better armed for action on economic sanctions. The current position was:

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1. We would take action in concert with our European partners.
2. There were legal difficulties for the UK in implementing any economic sanctions.

STEEL

We said that the PM had said in the House that the unions were capable of speaking for themselves and did not need her to speak for them. She had not said that she would be prepared to meet the unions if they asked.

PUBLIC EXPENDITURE WHITE PAPER

We said that the Public Expenditure White Paper covering revised 80/81 figures and also 81/84 figures would be published sometime in March.

JL