

Parliament

PRIME MINISTER

Parliamentary Affairs

The Social Security (No. 2) Bill has successfully completed its committee stage in the House of Lords this week, but the Government majority was alarmingly small on several occasions. There were three divisions which resulted in majorities of 5, 7 and 9 respectively. I understand from Lord Soames' Office that there were no Government backsliders: it was simply a matter of a well organised Opposition turnout and a Government response which was only just good enough. It is, of course, Ascot Week.

I am rather more worried by the private advice from Lord Soames' Office that they think we might lose one or two divisions, perhaps on important issues, in the Lords between now and the Summer Recess, simply because of the difficulty of getting Government supporters out in sufficient numbers.

In these circumstances, it might be worthwhile for you to invite the Lord President to report on the current position in the Lords and his own views on the prospects facing Government legislation in the next few weeks.

MJ5

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