

LOBBY BRIEFING

time: 11.00 date: 25.7.79

PRIME MINISTER'S ENGAGEMENTS

The Prime Minister would be opening the Debate on Southern Africa this afternoon.

RUNNING PNQs

David Winnick to the Chancellor of the Exchequer asking if he will make a statement on further reductions in public expenditure.

ANSWERS OF SUBSTANCE

No. 142 - Janet Fookes to the Secretary of State for Agriculture - animal welfare policy, specifically concerning domestic stock.

There will be a Press Conference at 3 p.m. today at MAFF taken by Peter Walker and Timothy Raison, Minister of State, Home Office, to elaborate on the Government's policy concerning animal welfare.

DISPERSAL

We thought that there might be a statement tomorrow on dispersal. We discouraged the Lobby from attaching any special significance to the fact that dispersal was still being considered by Ministers. It was a complicated subject and had to be related to other aspects of Government policies such as manpower levels in the civil service as a whole, public expenditure, etc.

POST OFFICE

There would not be a statement about the future of the Post Office before the recess. The story in one daily (Mail) today was misleading. The Government had not decided to end monopoly in the letter post. On 2 July Sir Keith Joseph had asked for reports on "possible modifications, their practicality and their implications" regarding the postal service. On Monday, 23 July Sir Keith had told the House that he found the arguments in the Carter Report for splitting the Post Office compelling - "We are moving towards a conclusion in this issue. We are not contemplating the sale of the Post Office".

TAX RELIEF ON MORTGAGES

We pointed out that the Prime Minister had made it clear in the House yesterday that the Government did not intend to abolish the present system of tax relief on mortgages. There were no plans at present to alter the structure of tax relief on mortgages currently in operation.