

PRIME MINISTER'S ENGAGEMENTS

A meeting of Ministers began at 1030. Those present were: Prime Minister, Home Secretary, Lord President of the Council, Chancellor of the Exchequer, SS Environment, SS Energy, SS Defence, Foreign Secretary, SS Industry, SS Employment, SS Trade, Lord Chancellor, Chancellor of the Duchy, SS Wales, Earl Ferrers (MS at MAFF), SS Social Services, Paymaster General, Minister of Transport and Earl of Mansfield (Minister of State Scottish Office), Chief Secretary Treasury, Attorney General.

This afternoon, after Questions, Mrs Thatcher will receive a courtesy call in her room at the Commons from Mr Yitzhak Shamir, the Speaker of the Knesset. This is the first day of a four day visit to Britain by Mr Shamir who is the guest of Speaker George Thomas.

At 1615 in Downing Street the Prime Minister will have tea with Their Majesties King Tupou IV and Queen Mata'ahao of Tonga who are on a private visit to Europe.

STATEMENTS

Norman St John Stevas on Commons catering.

PNQ's RUNNING

David Winnick (Walsall N) to ask the Lord Privy Seal if he will now make a statement on the latest position in the talks on the future of Zimbabwe-Rhodesia.

EEC: BUDGET

The Prime Minister had made it clear at Dublin and since that, although there was not much room for manoeuvre, she was prepared to approach the question of our contribution in a spirit of compromise and she hoped our EEC partners would do the same. It would be damaging to everyone in the Community to come back to the problem year after year: we wanted a lasting settlement.

We reminded the Lobby that the Prime Minister would see Mr Van Agt, the Dutch Prime Minister, on Thursday to talk about NATO and EEC matters. There would obviously be many other bilateral/multilateral meetings at official level before the next Council.

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This morning's Lobby was repeated.

RHODESIA

Asked how long we thought it would take to complete the negotiations, we pointed to Lord Carrington's statement last night that he hoped the Patriotic Front would accept the cease-fire proposals and that the details could be completed by the end of this week. Nobody had the power to veto these negotiations.

E COMMITTEE

The meeting took a variety of subjects this morning which did not include Civil Service cuts, Rhodesia, public expenditure, the Local Government Bill or the consequences of the discussion at Dublin about our EEC Budget contribution.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT BILL

At a meeting between the Leader of the House, the Chief Whip and their opposite numbers on the Opposition Front Bench last night, the Government had agreed to consider a formal request from the Opposition about the passage of this Bill through the House. This did not imply that the Government would accept any changes, only that they were willing to consider points made by the Opposition.

BUSINESS IN THE HOUSE

Statement on Civil Service manpower cuts would be made on Thursday followed by a press conference. We still expected the Industrial Relations Legislation to be published on Friday. It was also possible that there would be a statement on Rhodesia this week.