

PRIME MINISTER'S ENGAGEMENTS

The Prime Minister would be attending the Memorial Service for Airey Neave this morning and sitting in on some of the Debate on the Queen's Speech this afternoon.

---

ASSISTANT WHIPS

We hoped that the announcement of the remaining Assistant Government Whips in the Commons could be made this afternoon.

PRICE COMMISSION

Asked why the Government's decision to abolish the Price Commission had not been included in the Queen's Speech, we said that the latter had been finalised at Thursday's Cabinet. Subsequently there had been a Ministerial meeting on 14 May which the Lobby could have devised from the attendance was to talk about economic matters, including the Price Commission. The timing of this Ministerial meeting might provide some guidance as to why the announcement about the Price Commission was made in the Prime Minister's Speech.

RHODESIA

It was too early to say how the US Senate vote on Rhodesia last night might have influenced Government thinking here. But we suggested that the Senate vote was not quite as catalytic as at first appeared. Our understanding was that the vote was not binding on the President.

In general, the Senate vote might be broadly helpful to us in the longer term as an indication of thinking of an influential body in the United States, one of our major allies. The Lobby would recall that the Prime Minister had said in yesterday's Debate that she placed great importance on consulting our major allies about the Rhodesian problem and trying to carry them with us in reaching a solution. A disadvantage of the Senate vote, we suggested, was that it might have come a little abruptly and this might make the process of consultation more difficult in the short term.

We discouraged anyone from thinking that the process of consultation to which the Government was committed would end with the Boyd Report and the visit of a senior FCO official to Rhodesia this week. Consultations would continue for some time. It would be wrong to see the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting in August as a deadline by which consultations about Rhodesia would have been completed - it was quite possible that much of the discussion about Rhodesia would take place at this meeting. Asked about possible timing for the publication of Lord Boyd's Report, we pointed out that the Prime Minister had said yesterday that she hoped the Report would be published, but we would expect the Government to want to study the Report in privacy for a few days or maybe even longer, so it would be wrong to think in terms of immediate publication.

DEBATE ON CAPITAL PUNISHMENT

We could not give any guidance on the timing of the Debate promised on hanging. This was a question that might be put to the Leader of the House at Lobby tomorrow.

BILLS

The Government would probably table some bills soon but we could not yet give guidance on which ones they would be.

PUBLIC SECTOR PAY REPORTS

The Government had not yet made a decision on the recommendations in the Doctors and Dentists Review Body Report. The same was true of the Top Salaries Review Report (senior civil servants, judges, generals, nationalized industry chairmen). Lord Boyle's Report on MPs' and Ministers' salaries had not yet been received.

LOBBY, THURSDAY, 17 MAY

We reminded those present that tomorrow's Lobby at 4 p.m. at the House would be attended by the Home Secretary, the Leader of the House and the Paymaster General.

CVA

PRIME MINISTER'S ENGAGEMENTS

This morning's briefing was repeated.

RHODESIA

Again, we repeated this morning's briefing and generally discouraged the Lobby from thinking that there would be a dramatic diplomatic change in policy towards Rhodesia before the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting in Lusaka. The process of consultation on a matter as sensitive as Rhodesia was bound to be extensive and to take some time. [We subsequently informed the Lobby that the Boyd Report had been received at No. 10 and would be seen by the Prime Minister this evening. We also told them after the meeting that Lord Boyd's terms of reference given to him when the Conservative Party was in opposition were to "observe and report back"].

AMBASSADORS TO THE UNITED STATES / UNITED NATIONS

We confirmed our briefing last week that there was unlikely to be any immediate change in either Washington or New York. Both Mr. Jay and Mr. Richard had offered their resignations but they had not yet been accepted by the Government. Meanwhile, they would continue at their posts.

ORDER OF BILLS

It was announced in the House today that at least one bill would be tabled tomorrow, to remove the compulsion on local authorities in England and Wales to make their schools comprehensive.

PRESS NOTICE

Assistant Government Whips in the Commons.

CVA