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Parliament  
J. W. A. H.

MR INGHAM

FALKLAND ISLANDS : DEFENCE COMMITTEE OF INQUIRY

As I told you, the Chief Whip asked me to see Sir Timothy Kitson, the Chairman of the Defence Committee, after he had himself found some difficulty in persuading Sir Timothy that it was not a good idea to seek written and, possibly, oral evidence from No 10 as part of the Committee's inquiry into the handling of public and press information during the Falkland Islands conflict.

I accordingly had a short non-meeting with Sir Timothy Kitson yesterday evening. He said that he understood our reluctance to give evidence to his Committee but the fact was that the memorandum which the Ministry of Defence had already submitted to the Committee referred to No 10's co-ordinating role in the Government's information effort during the Falklands crisis. The Committee's special advisers, including Mr Chapman Pincher and Mr Simon Jenkins, had fastened on to this and were urging the Committee to pursue the part played by No 10.

I told Sir Timothy Kitson that the Prime Minister did not want No 10 to give either written or oral evidence. So far as we had been able to establish, witnesses from No 10 had never appeared before a Select Committee. That was our starting point. On the other hand, I saw the difficulty he was in with the rest of his Committee, given that the Ministry of Defence memorandum referred to No 10's role and that, in any case, it was common knowledge in the media that you had briefed the lobby, in the usual way, throughout the Falklands crisis. Sir Timothy Kitson and I agreed therefore that he would try not to raise the matter at all himself and that he would seek to dissuade those members of his Committee, like Mr Chris Patten, who were showing a clear

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interest in this aspect of the inquiry from pursuing it, but of course he could not guarantee to deliver them, especially the Labour Members of the Committee. I said that I for my part would speak to Sir Frank Cooper, who was due to give evidence the following day to explain the background to him and to ask him to make it clear to the Committee that No 10's role had been no more than the customary briefing of the lobby. I would also ask him to make clear that our so called co-ordinating function consisted for practical purposes of no more than your holding a daily meeting to ensure that you, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Ministry of Defence were all aware of the latest political and military situation before you talked to your respective clients. In short he should try to get over to the Committee that there was nothing unusual in No 10's role.

Sir Timothy Kitson and I agreed that we would see how the Ministry of Defence's evidence went today and then take stock again. In the mean time he would talk to the Clerk to the Committee and explain why there had been no response to the Acting Clerk's letter of 1 July to me.

I spoke this morning to Sir Frank Cooper on the lines of the above. I also told the Chief Whip about the outcome of my meeting with Sir Timothy Kitson.

JKW.

21 July 1982

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