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Prime Minister

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

Worth reading - you could
be tackled about it in the
House.

25 February 1983

A.S.C. 1/3

W.R.

This could come up in questions.

Dear John, Thompson MB

A.S.C. 1/3

Falkland Islands: Article in 'Daily Express'
by Eldon Griffiths

You may have seen the article by Eldon Griffiths in today's 'Daily Express' criticising ODA's role in carrying out necessary work in the Falkland Islands. Mr Griffiths showed this to both Timothy Raison and Cranley Onslow before publication; but did not take any account of their comments before going into print. Mr Raison, who is in the Islands at the moment, may wish to comment further on his return, including publicly, but in the meantime it may be helpful to let you have a few comments.

As a general comment, it is a little unfair to compare decision-making in time of war with that of normal circumstances. During an armed conflict, decision-making is necessarily and rightly accelerated. But in the subsequent peace we are bound to be careful to consult interdepartmentally to a greater extent and at every stage to bear in mind our accountability to the British taxpayer. On issues of greater detail:

(i) Administration

To say that 'hundreds of civil servants and technical advisers have arrived' is absurd. Apart from about 35 people recruited and sent out by ODA at the request of the Civil Commissioner, nine administrative and technical officials from the FCO have visited the Falklands.

(ii) Housing

The houses were ordered at the earliest possible moment after the cessation of hostilities. The delay in erecting them (so far four shells have gone up) was largely due to the inability of the Falkland Islands Public Works Department to finish the foundations in good time. Some supplies for the Public Works Department (and the military) have not been landed because of congestion in the port. Military supplies are given precedence.

/Roads



(iii) Roads

It is military traffic since the war which has been largely responsible for the rapid disintegration of the Stanley/Airport road, and for the state of the streets of the capital itself. Little was done to draw attention to the damage which was being caused in the roads until an ODA official visited the Islands in December and recommended urgent action. So far over £5 million has been made available for repair. ODA have already provided £2.5 million for the roads in Port Stanley and MOD have now accepted responsibility for funding the emergency work on the Airport road. The final sharing of these costs between MOD and ODA will be negotiated later. A team from the chosen contractor, Fairclough, is already in the Islands, and will carry out both tasks.

(iv) Planning for Economic Development/

Rehabilitation

The Government moved quickly. No time was lost in identifying the first task of rehabilitation. In July, £10 million was allocated for the immediate requirements under this programme. A further £5 million was allocated in December.

Lord Shackleton's report was published in September. on 8 December, Mr Pym announced the Government's decisions, in the shape of a programme for economic development to cost some £31 million over six years. Feasibility studies are essential in appropriate cases if money is to be spent wisely.

(v) Falklands Islands Development Agency (FIDA)

The decision to establish the Falkland Islands Development Agency was part of Mr Pym's statement on 8 December. The Falkland Islands Attorney General (recruited by the ODA) have submitted a draft bill creating a FIDA to the Executive Council, and the Civil Commissioner proposes to take it through all its stages in the Islands' Legislative Council in the second or third week of March. There has been no 'interdepartmental confusion and wrangling'. It is unlikely that FIDA will be responsible for spending a very large proportion of the £31 million since the contracts for the larger civil works e.g. the jetty, can only sensibly be let in the UK.

/Chief Executive



(vi) Chief Executive

The post of Chief Executive is linked with the establishment of the Falkland Islands Development Agency. His relationship with the Falkland Islands Government is still under discussion with the Civil Commissioner. It was considered vital to start the work of development as soon as possible and certainly before the full bureaucratic machinery of FIDA could become operational. For some months already therefore a Development Officer has been in the Islands, working in close co-operation with the Chief Secretary and others involved with the development programme. The work of the Grasslands Trial Unit has been resumed. Proposals on the development of a Falkland Islands fishery from British and international firms are being actively considered both in Port Stanley and in London.

The small Falklands Islands administration on the spot has for obvious reasons been under considerable strain since the repossession of the Islands. We are discussing with the Civil Commissioner how best to strengthen it to cope with all the demands on it, including the requests for necessary information which come from here.

Yours ever
John Holmes

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Private Secretary

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2 March 1983

FALKLAND ISLANDS

The Prime Minister has noted the contents of your letter of 25 February about the article in the Daily Express by Mr. Eldon Griffiths.

A. J. COLES

John Holmes, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.