

*In Russell*



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DEFENCE COMMITTEE

Press Notice No 11  
of Session 1985-86

The following statement was agreed by the Members of the Defence Committee at their meeting this afternoon.

With regard to the question of the attendance of witnesses before the Committee, we note that at Question Time in the House this afternoon the Prime Minister, in response to a question from Mr St John-Stevas, said "I shall of course be in touch with the Committee". We are therefore awaiting further developments.

We are also awaiting the production and correction by witnesses of the full transcript of this morning's evidence from officials from the Department of Trade and Industry.

In view of misapprehensions that appear to have arisen concerning the scope and nature of the Defence Committee's current inquiry, we wish to clarify the position by drawing attention to the opening statement by the Chairman of the Committee, Sir Humphrey Atkins, at the first public evidence session of the inquiry on 21 January.

X | The Chairman said: " We need to know what implications for the defence of the United Kingdom, and its cost, there may be in the options for the future of Westland plc. Two great Departments of State are primarily involved. If the Committee considers the defence interests of this country have not been fully taken into account we shall wish to explore how such decisions affecting defence are taken, and how decisions were taken in this particular case."

X | We wish also to draw attention to the statement on page 687 of the current edition of Erskine May's Parliamentary Practice that "The interpretation of the order of reference of a select committee is a matter for the committee".

30 January 1986.