

PRIME MINISTER

PARLIAMENTARY HANDLING OF REMAINING STAGES OF THE COMMUNITY CHARGE BILL

You should know how the Chief Whip is handling the remaining stages of the Community Charge Bill.

The business managers are under increasing pressure from the Opposition for an extra day, making five in all, for Parliamentary debate for this Bill. The Opposition argue that one of the four days so far allocated to the Bill will be taken up by a debate on Michael Mates' clause. They argue, too, that important clauses have been added to the Bill, notably on lease and lease-back, since Second Reading, all of which merit debate on the floor of the House.

Can we not ask the Opp. to reduce its supply days?

The Chief Whip is likely to agree to an extra day (making five in all). Mr. Ridley is prepared to acquiesce in the business managers' judgment. The business managers believe that if they give this extra day, they will be able to get useful concessions elsewhere in the handling of the legislative programme, notably on the Health and Medicine Bill and on the Finance Bill.

The disadvantage of the extra day is that it will run the debate over a weekend since the fifth day will be Tuesday 26 April (Monday 25 is already taken with other business). This might give the press an opportunity to create mischief over the weekend regarding the vote on Third Reading. But the Chief Whip is not concerned about this. It is helpful that the debate on the Mates clause will be on the first day (Monday 18 April) so that this contentious issue is dealt with at the outset.

N.L.W.

(N. L. WICKS)

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