

PRIME MINISTER

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Saudi Arabia situation

Jack Warden, Daily Express, telephoned me late this evening to say that he had been given an interesting insight into the Saudis' diplomatic move against us.

He said that his informant had told him that someone hostile to the IBA, well-known in broadcasting and anti-Zionist, had drawn a particular part of the IBA Act 1973 to the attention of the Saudis.

I have not been able to look at the Act but Jack Warden tells me that the loose interpretation of Section 8, Sub-section 7, paragraph E of the 1973 Act gives the Government power to cause items to be broadcast.

The Saudis have apparently been encouraged or chosen to interpret this as the power to stop anything being broadcast which they consider to be against the national interest. This being so, the Government has not done enough to disassociate itself from the offending programme by, for example, having requested the IBA to put out a statement before the "Death of a Princess" programme saying that the Government did not agree with it and that it was contrary to the national interest.

B.I.

23 April 1980