



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

1
16/11/52

Dear John,

Your answers to Question
Number 10 to Ron Leighton,
to the supplementaries, and
the Prime Minister's reply to
me on Fort Austin are
astounding.

Do you and the Prime
Minister seriously suggest that
the 16,500 (?) ton RFA Fort
Austin was sent to the
South Atlantic as a routine
operation to supply HMS



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

Endurance. (3500 tons)

You should not insult
us by supposing that
the House of Commons is
so stupid as to believe
that.

The fact is, as you
know, and as the National
Union of Seamen have submitted
documentary evidence to the
Funnell Committee, that



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

to the anger of the
crew of the Fort Austin
who believed they were
going home to Britain.
BFA "Fort Austin" was
diverted to the South
Atlantic on 28th/29th
March. The decision
to change course to
the South Atlantic, and
not to return to Britain
came in the form of
an order from London.

HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

So why do you and
the Prime Minister try
to pretend otherwise to
the House of Commons?

In your answer to
my supplementary question,
you said "Of course"
Ministers knew about it.

Since Fort Austin was
carrying supplies for
HMS "Conqueror", and

HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

Since Fort Austin, either
then and/or later carried
Junk round and/or real modern
weapons, it would have
been shocking if Ministers
did not know of this
most important decision
to divert ships.

If, as you indicated
Ministers were fully aware
to the decision to send
major ships to the South



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

Atlantic, why did Ministers
not inform the Prime
Minister of such a
crucial set of decisions?
Or did they? No
Theater did not answer
the question I put
to her.

If you and other
Ministers did indeed
tell the Prime Minister,
what is the explanation



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

of the Prime Minister's
reply in this exchange,
on Tuesday
which I enclose?

How could the
Prime Minister use the
phrase "out of the
blue" in relation to
Wednesday 31st March?

HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

When I went before
the Franks Committee
on 22nd October, Lord
Franks said that
he would be interested
in any additional
information I felt
I ought to give.
Therefore, I am sending
a copy of this letter
to Lord Franks.

Yours sincerely
The Secretary