

# LOBBY BRIEFING

time: 11.00 date: 27.4.82

## PRIME MINISTER'S DAY

The Prime Minister is working in No 10 most of the day.

The PM chaired a meeting this morning of the Falklands group of Ministers. (9.00-10.15am).

## QUESTIONS

This afternoon at 3.15pm the PM will be in the House for Questions.

## PUBLICATIONS

Government's Reply to the Select Committee's Report on the Commission for Racial Equality (3.30pm - CFRs 11.00am).

Report of the Gaming Board for Great Britain 1981. (Wed 2.30pm. CFRs today 2.30pm).

## IN THE HOUSE

### STATEMENT

At 3.30pm Mr Lamont will make a Statement about the Government's future support for British Shipbuilders.

### ANSWERS OF INTEREST

No 94 Written 4.00pm: Mr Sydney Chapman to ask S/S Environment if in view of the advice he received from the Building and Civil Engineering Committee of the Economic Development Council he is now in a position to announce his decision on the future status of the Building Research Establishment. (Answer will indicate that BRE will remain with DoE and not be privatised).

No 109 Written ? : Mr Albert McQuarrie to ask MAFF whether he will make a statement about the financial affairs of the Sea Fish Industry Authority. (Answer will introduce a new grants system to meet 100% of reasonable costs for the construction and improvement of fishing vessels. Limit of £200,000. Subject to Parliamentary approval. Not new money - to be found from savings elsewhere).

No 110 Written: Mr Robert Atkins to ask S/S Defence whether he has postponed the issue of civilian redundancies at Chatham and Portsmouth and if he will make a statement. (Answer will clarify the position - Portsmouth redundancies have been delayed, but not those at Chatham as reported).

### FALKLANDS

In response to questions we said that contrary to Argentine claims about casualties in South Georgia there had certainly been no British casualties reported. We could not say how the prisoners would be returned to Argentina but we thought there would be no great delay and they would probably go via another country. We did not anticipate any requests for political asylum among them but as usual any requests would be considered.

On questions concerning reports of a British landing on the Falkland Islands themselves we would not be drawn since this was an operational matter.

On the question of continued negotiations we said that there were signs of soft pedaling in the OAS with Mr Haig clearly giving them signals. Argentina may have decided that they would not get sanctions through the OAS. It also appeared that Mr Costa Mendez was "treading water" on a meeting with Mr Haig. Nevertheless Mr Haig's mission was still in play but Mr Haig had made it clear, as had the Prime Minister in her Panorama interview, that if negotiations did not succeed then the US would be on the side of Britain.

On the PM's interview we agreed that some of the points were new in a public sense but were not new in any other sense. On the specific question of the veto we emphasised that it had been made clear all along that the wishes of the Islanders would weigh heavily with the Government. Their right to self determination was central to the issue. But we had never been pushed into giving anyone a veto. On other points we relied on the text of the interview itself.

We had no evidence that the military build up of the Argentines on the Falklands was continuing, but there was a defensive zone around the task force and it had always been made clear that an air exclusion zone was an option.

Asked about the PM's confidence that neither the Soviet Union nor any other country would get directly involved we pointed out that the Soviet Union and Argentina were strange bedfellows apart from the denial of human rights, repression and prison camps. Clearly the Soviet Union had an interest in food suppliers and always tried to stir things up in these situations.

On the specific question of US sanctions we said we had always hoped and accepted that they would join others in applying sanctions if the negotiations failed, though not necessarily the same sanctions as the EC countries. It may be in our interests if they applied others.

We agreed it was possible that Mr Haig would return to Argentina and though we would not be drawn on specific details acknowledged that time was now a key factor as the PM had clearly indicated.

#### CABINET

In response to questions we said that Cabinet had been re-arranged from today to tomorrow because of Mr Pym's early departure for the EC Foreign Ministers' meeting in Luxembourg.

HC