

LOBBY BRIEFING : LORD PRESIDENT      time: 4.45 PM      date: 13.5.82

BUSINESS

The Lord President said that if there are no significant changes in the Falkland Islands situation, he hoped that by 21 May, the Local Government and Planning (Scotland) Bill, Employment Bill, Civil Justice Bill and Industry Bill will all be referred to the House of Lords. Only the Northern Ireland Bill remained in the programme and he said he had not seen the list of amendments.

FALKLANDS

Asked about the stage of negotiations, the Lord President said he had no evidence that the last stage of the last round of negotiations had been reached nor could he say whether there would be a need for a debate next week; that would depend on the significance of the circumstances; Thursday would be the most likely date for debate.

Asked to comment on the mood of the Conservative Party on the crisis, the Lord President said it was volatile and unpredictable which is not surprising when details of negotiations are quasi secret. He would not agree that the Government was embarrassed by the points raised today. He was conscious of pressure on the Government from the "ultras" but would not comment on whether the Whips had been recently assiduous in seeking out opinion.

Asked about the Government's reliance on cross-section support, the Lord President said it was very important to obtain support from the majority of the Labour Party, who had broadly accepted the Government's objection and techniques. He did not want a repeat of the Party's division during the Suez situation: he was optimistic that support could be held.

The Lord President was not able to give an explanation of apparent discrepancies between the Prime Minister's and Mr Pym's comments on withdrawal in the House today.

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