

LOBBY BRIEFING

time: 11.00 date: 14.5.82

PRIME MINISTER'S DAY

The Prime Minister is working at No 10 this morning..

At 10.00am she chaired a meeting of the Group of Ministers concerned with the Falklands (Foreign Sec., Home Sec., Defence Sec., Chancellor of the Duchy and the Attorney General) ending 11.15am.

This afternoon she will travel to Perth where she will address the Scottish Conference Party Rally at 7.00pm and attend the Conference dinner at 9.00pm.

PUBLICATIONS

At 12.00 noon, 14th Annual Report of the Countryside Commission for Scotland (CFRs yesterday).

IN THE HOUSE

There are no statements today.

ANSWERS OF INTEREST

No 94 Written: Mr Tim Eggar to ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether a decision has been made about the procurement of replacement computers for the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Centre, Swansea. (Answer will announce that the order will be put out to open tender).

PRIME MINISTER'S WEEKEND

We expect the Prime Minister's speech tonight at the Conservative Party Conference in Perth to concentrate on the Falklands situation and on the economy with particular reference to Scotland, but we had no draft text.

On Saturday morning, she will prepare for the Anglo-French Council and leave Perth at lunchtime. At Edinburgh RAF there will be a 2.00pm photocall when she meets the French Prime Minister, travelling on to Bute House and at 7.00pm will hold talks with M. Mauroy on the Falklands; bilateral industrial co-operation; European Community; international issues; at 8.00pm she will attend the Franco-British Council reception before the dinner, (Press arrangements include rota press table and audiofeed to press centre at Caledonian Hotel) with speeches after 10.00pm.

After dinner the PM will return to Chequers where she will spend Sunday.

FALKLANDS

We said that this morning's meeting of Ministers dealt substantially with diplomatic plans.

We brought the lobby up to date on the UN negotiations. A wide gap remains on a number of very important issues; Argentina is still adhering to very hard positions in some areas, but the UK is refusing to be drawn on them, on the chances of success, or on the length of time which the negotiations will take.

We denied any split on strategy in handling the negotiations; it was inevitable that there should be discussions. There are no differences between Ministers on ceasefire and withdrawal. The UK must be convinced that they are fully getting off the Islands. Sig de Cueller has admitted that negotiations are at a crucial stage and we should not build up our own hopes.

We told them the Argentines were not in the business of having a negotiation on sovereignty, they have not changed their position, despite their public relations effort to win world opinion.

We would lack credibility if negotiations were extended too long.

We said there had to be political control over any 'invasion' orders to the Task Force, which at the same time should have a degree of operational control.

We did not expect MoD to make any announcement before noon though there was a need to give further details soon on the damaged battleship, and confirmed that Mr McDonald was on 3 day's leave.

Questioned about the need to review the operations of MoD press officers, we pointed out that Neville Taylor was now in charge of their operation and were satisfied that the arrangement will improve and will receive Mr Nott's support. We said that the criticism directed at the press officers was unfair, they could only be as effective as bureaucratic and military mechanisms allow.

The Falkland crisis demonstrates a need to improve the contact between press officers and the military and bureaucraties.

We said that news presentation was hindered by the long distance and the Task Force having to concentrate on operations. There seemed to be no understanding between both sides of each others interests.

EC BUDGET

We denied that Ministers would meet today to discuss the Thorn/Tindermans proposals, but reminded the lobby that the present temporary arrangement could be reviewed for another year, but this remains very much a second best option.

SW

Mr. Biffen: At Question Time, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister asserted most robustly her commitment and that of the Government to the concept of free media. There is no need for a debate in the House to confirm something that is felt in all quarters.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): As the judges are to get salary increases of more than 18 per cent. and as top civil servants are to get increases of more than 14 per cent., and as it is accepted that many of them have benefitted from the tax changes in the past three years under this Government while the nurses have been adversely affected by those taxes and have been awarded only 6.4 per cent., will the right hon. Gentleman arrange for the Secretary of State for Social Services to make a statement next week, giving the nurses an increase that is at least in line with the rate of inflation, as measured by the Government's taxes and prices index? Will he accept that our request is not borne of bitterness or envy, but of a sense of fairness?

Mr. Biffen: The hon. Gentleman has made such a lengthy speech that I hope he will accept, out of a sense of fairness, that there will not be a statement.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered.

That, at this day's sitting, proceedings on any Private Business, set down for consideration, at Seven o'clock by direction of the Chairman of Ways and Means, shall, instead of being considered at that hour, be considered at the conclusion of proceedings on the Motion in the name of the Prime Minister for the adjournment of the House, and, notwithstanding the provisions of Standing Order No. 1 (Sittings of the House), may be proceeded with, though opposed, for three hours after being entered upon.—[*Mr. Brooke.*]

Falkland Islands

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—[*Mr. Brooke.*]

Mr. Speaker: In an attempt at fairness, I propose to call only those Back Benchers who are on the list of those who were unable to catch my eye during the previous four debates. That does not apply to Privy Councillors—[*HON. MEMBERS:* "Oh."] I hope that they will exercise the necessary self-discipline.

Mr. Arthur Lewis (Newham, North-West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. May I thank you for my partial success?

Mr. Speaker: I am very glad to have one satisfied customer.

3.46 pm

The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Francis Pym): Over the past two days, the Opposition have put a number of requests to us about the Falkland Islands. Those which seemed to put in question the responsibility of the Government to govern were firmly answered by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister in her reply to the Leader of the Opposition on Tuesday, and again today. The right hon. Gentleman knows very well that her replies were entirely in accordance with our parliamentary practice and procedure, and I have nothing more to say about that.

The request for a debate was in a different category. Although this is the fifth debate on the Falklands crisis since the beginning of April, we have willingly agreed. The Government have throughout the crisis taken every opportunity to keep the House informed of developments; and, although on this occasion there is not very much new that I can report, I welcome this further opportunity for debate on the very important issues that are involved. I say that despite the fact that the negotiations now in progress in New York are in an important and delicate phase.

I would also like to put on record the Government's gratitude, and my personal thanks, both for the support and co-operation that we have received from the House and for the resolute support that the British people have given us. This has been vital to the maintenance of our resolute stand.

The Government's position has remained clear and consistent throughout. Our objectives and our strategy are unchanging. We have of course adapted our tactics in the light of the evolving diplomatic and military circumstances. As the House knows, we have moved through different stages of negotiations: the first with Mr. Haig in London and in Washington; then in reacting to the ideas first launched by the President of Peru and subsequently developed in discussion by him with the United States; and now the talks with the Secretary-General of the United Nations. Through all those stages and throughout this procedure we have shown a careful balance of firmness on the essential principles, tempered by the necessary measure of readiness to negotiate on issues where negotiation is possible. However, in all this negotiation our determination has never wavered—our determination and resolve to end Argentina's illegal occupation and to uphold the rights of the Falkland Islanders.

The House has been most tolerant and understanding about our inability to disclose our detailed position at any

Rest not
copied – no
annotations

10 pm

Mr. Speaker: Order. I shall let the Minister finish his sentence. I cannot quite see the clock for the moment.

Mr. Nott: The search for a diplomatic solution continues as relentlessly as before. Equally relentless is the military pressure that we have applied and shall continue to apply until we have a solution that is acceptable to the House.

It being Ten o'clock, the motion for the Adjournment of the House lapsed, without Question put.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Keighley): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. May I ask you to consider ensuring that any future debate on the Falkland Islands continues until 11 o'clock? The Minister was hard pressed to finish his speech.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Various right hon. and hon. Members are standing while I am taking a point of order.

Mr. Cryer: You, Mr. Speaker, very courteously allowed the Minister to finish, although strictly he should have been brought to a halt at 10 o'clock. Bearing in mind the pressure to take part in such debates—I know that several hon. Members who wished to speak were unable to do so—would it not be prudent to extend any future debate on this subject until 11 o'clock?

Mr. Speaker: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman's point will have been noted by those who have it in their power to decide the length of the debate.

[Continued in column 1035]

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 13 May 1982

DEFENCE

Falkland Islands

Mr. Buck asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether it is intended to call out any United Kingdom reservists in connection with the situation in the Falkland Islands.

Mr. Nott: It is not expected that any large-scale call out of Reserves will be needed, but, to provide adequate numbers of personnel with special skills and recent experience to man the additional warships that are being brought forward from refit, and to provide additional naval personnel required on the merchant ships requisitioned from trade, it may soon become necessary to start a selective call out for service of a small number of specialists from the Royal Naval and Royal Marine reservists. This is likely to be confined to members of the special class of the Royal Fleet Reserve—that is, ratings and Royal Marine other ranks who have left full-time service during the last 12 months—and a small number of senior ratings who have recently left the Navy on immediate pension—the latter class would be required mainly for instructional duties in order to release regulars for other tasks.

Present plans envisage that up to about 300 may be involved in due course. The need for reserve officers is unlikely at present to go beyond a requirement for some medical officers for periods of four to six months. The provisions of the Order in Council made on 27 June 1962 are, however, being extended by a new Order in Council to call out other officers if this becomes necessary. The requirement for Royal Naval and Royal Marine reserves will be reviewed as the situation develops and, where possible, suitable volunteers will be selected. It may also be possible to accept small numbers of suitable volunteers with recent experience in the reserve or regular forces for very short engagements of six months or 1 year in the Royal Navy and Royal Marines. These arrangements are additional to the normal call out of reservists for routine training, which will continue. Parliament will be kept informed as necessary.

ENVIRONMENT

Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977

Mr. Durant asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he will be announcing the outcome of the review of the operation of the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977 in England and Wales.

Mr. Heseltine: The review has now been completed. After full and careful consideration the Government have decided that there should be no amendment of the primary legislation at this stage. However, they recognise the concern which has been expressed about some aspects of

the operation of the Act. They are satisfied that these can largely be met by the following measures which have been, or will be taken:

- (a) To ensure that authorities are clear about the extent of their duties, the ways in which they may fulfil them, and the very wide discretion they have to deal with abuse, the Government intend to tighten the code of guidance. We shall consult those principally concerned about the amendments which will cover more fully such matters as intentional homelessness.
- (b) The problems associated with authorities' responsibilities towards council tenants who become homeless through rent arrears will be alleviated by the proposed new housing benefit scheme which will in most cases cover the full rent and rate liability in respect of the 1.6 million or so tenants in England and Wales in receipt of supplementary benefit. The present powers of benefit officers to make a deduction from supplementary benefit towards past arrears will continue under the new arrangements.
- (c) As far as the financial burden on authorities is concerned, housing management costs arising from housing applications from the homeless which may be debited to an authority's housing revenue account are reckonable for housing subsidy. In addition, net expenditure falling outside the HRA is eligible for rate support grant. On capital account, because the operation of the Act imposes greater cost burdens on some authorities than on others, and in order to reflect more accurately the demands placed on authorities by the homeless, we have agreed with the local authority associations in England a revised homelessness indicator for the 1982-83 HIP allocations.
- (d) A number of measures we have initiated to increase the availability of short-term rented accommodation and of low-cost home-ownership opportunities, as well as our substantially increased expenditure on hostel accommodation, will be of benefit to those who are in non-priority groups for the purposes of the homeless persons legislation including single homeless people. We do not propose to extend the priority groups.
- (e) Recent decisions in the Court of Appeal and the House of Lords have established that there are safeguards in the Act against abuse by those who are intentionally homeless whether they are already in this country or whether they come from abroad. It is therefore important that immigrants should make proper arrangements for their accommodation before they arrive in this country. To stress this we have accordingly revised the texts of leaflets issued by our embassies overseas to prospective immigrants. There have also been changes in the immigration rules since the 1977 Act which have the general effect of making it necessary for those who wish to obtain admission of their dependents to the United Kingdom for settlement to be able to demonstrate that they can accommodate them without recourse to public funds in accommodation that they own or occupy themselves.

In addition to the measures outlined here, we shall continue to monitor the Act's operation.

Airey Houses

Mr. Farr asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to be able to issue further advice on the problem of defects in Airey houses,

Mr. Stanley: My Department has today issued further technical information on structural defects found in Airey houses, and guidance on inspection procedures, on the assessment of the condition and safety of these houses and on possible courses of action.

The advice, which has been prepared by the Building Research Establishment, supplements the guidance which was issued on 14 May last year when the Department advised local authorities to initiate a programme of inspection for their Airey houses.

Automation and New Technology

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Industry (1) whether he is considering any further programmes to encourage manufacturing industry to automate;

(2) if he expects to introduce further steps to encourage industry to invest in new technology and flexible manufacturing in development areas.

Mr. Butcher: The Budget innovation package mentioned a number of further measures which are under consideration including support for flexible manufacturing systems and an extension of the microprocessor application project. Announcements will be made in due course. Such measures would apply to firms throughout the country including the development areas.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many persons have been held by the police in Wales in 1982 under the provisions of the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act.

Mr. Mayhew: The total number of persons detained in Great Britain under the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Acts 1974 and 1976 by police force area is published in table 2 of the quarterly Home Office statistical bulletin, "Statistics on the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1974 and 1976", copies of which are placed in the Library of the House. In the first quarter of 1982, one person was so detained in Wales.

Manley Francis

Mr. Arthur Lewis asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will take the necessary action to ensure that Manley Francis found guilty of several crimes, should be deported on completion of his prison sentence.

Mr. Raison: On present information Manley Francis is not liable for deportation, but further inquiries are being made.

Citizenship (Fees)

Mr. Tilley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the estimated income during the current financial year from fees charged for the acquisition of citizenship by (a) naturalisation and (b) registration.

Mr. Raison: The income during the current financial year is expected to be about £4.4 million from fees for naturalisation and discretionary registration, and about £2.5 million from fees for other registrations—mainly entitlements.

Prison Building Programme

Dr. Summerskill asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many extra prison officers will be required to staff the new prison places referred to in his answer of 4 February to the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, North-East (Mrs. Short), *Official Report*, 4 February, c. 168.

Mr. Mayhew: The precise staffing requirements of new establishments are determined only after examination of the circumstances of the establishment concerned, including discussions with its management and senior staff, as part of the commissioning process before it is taken into use. Although it is therefore not possible at this stage to indicate the numbers of staff required to meet the needs of all the planned developments, it is estimated that the new accommodation due to come into use between 1982-83 and 1984-85 will require 550 staff in the prison officer class; this includes 91 officers who will be required to staff existing accommodation for 565 inmates which is being refurbished.

London Taxis

Mr. Lawrence asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what consideration he has given to the use of destination boards by London taxis; and with what result.

Mr. Raison: As part of my right hon. Friend's review of controls over taxis and private hire cars throughout England and Wales he has been studying possible schemes whereby taxis could display destination boards, but we are not yet in a position to put forward any proposals.
Police Manpower

Mr. Chapman asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the current strength of (a) the police forces in England and Wales, and (b) the Metropolitan Police; and what were the comparative figures for three years previously.

Mr. Mayhew: The information requested is as follows:

	Police Strength	
	31 March 1982	31 March 1979
England and Wales	119,973	111,133
Metropolitan Police	25,429	22,214

Surveillance Devices

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department on how many occasions in the last two years surveillance devices have been operated in the Metropolitan Police district and in Greater Manchester under the bugging code published in February.

Mr. Whitelaw: This information is not available at present. As part of my review of the guidelines I shall consider whether information can be made available about the scale of use of surveillance devices by the police without jeopardising their operational effectiveness.

DEFENCE

Falkland Islands

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brought forward from refit, and to provide additional naval personnel required on the merchant ships requisitioned from trade, it may soon become necessary to start a selective call out for service of a small number of specialists from the Royal Naval and Royal Marine reservists. This is likely to be confined to members of the special class of the Royal Fleet Reserve—that is, ratings and Royal Marine other ranks who have left full-time service during the last 12 months—and a small number of senior ratings who have recently left the Navy on immediate pension—the latter class would be required mainly for instructional duties in order to release regulars for other tasks.

Present plans envisage that up to about 300 may be involved in due course. The need for reserve officers is unlikely at present to go beyond a requirement for some medical officers for periods of four to six months. The provisions of the Order in Council made on 27 June 1962 are, however, being extended by a new Order in Council to call out other officers if this becomes necessary. The requirement for Royal Naval and Royal Marine reserves will be reviewed as the situation develops and, where possible, suitable volunteers will be selected. It may also be possible to accept small numbers of suitable volunteers with recent experience in the reserve or regular forces for very short engagements of six months or 1 year in the Royal Navy and Royal Marines. These arrangements are additional to the normal call out of reservists for routine training, which will continue. Parliament will be kept informed as necessary.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will alter the British Forces Post Office number for the Falklands.

Mr. Wiggin: No.

Requisitioned Vessels

Mr. Prescott asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many civilian vessels have been requisitioned or chartered for support of the task force; and if he will list them by name, port of registration, type of vessel and tonnage.

Mr. Blaker: I listed the ships which the Government have requisitioned for use in the South Atlantic, together with some of the information requested, in answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Chipping Barnet (Mr. Chapman) on 6 May.—[Vol. 23, c. 133-34.] They have the following ports of registration:

London—Uganda, Canberra, Europic Ferry, Baltic Ferry, Nordic Ferry, Wimpy Seahorse and Elk.
 Southampton—Queen Elizabeth 2.
 Liverpool—Atlantic Conveyor, Atlantic Causeway.
 Hull—Norland, Salvageman, Irishman, Yorkshireman, Northella, Farnella, Junella, Cordella, and Pict.
 Aberdeen—Stena Seaspread.

In addition, the Ro-ro ferry St. Edmund has now been requisitioned. Its port of registration is London and its gross registered tonnage is 8,987.

The information requested on chartered ships is as follows:

Type and name	Gross Registered Tonnage	Port of Registration
<i>Tankers</i>		
British Avon	15,540	London
British Dart	15,653	London
British Esk	15,644	London
British Tamar	15,644	London
British Tay	15,650	London
British Trent	15,653	London
British Trest	15,648	London
British Wye	15,649	London
Eburna	19,763	London
Anco Charger	15,568	London
Balder London	19,976	London
Scottish Eagle	32,995	London
Alvega	33,329	London
Fort Toronto	19,982	London
<i>Solid Support Ships</i>		
Lycaon	11,804	Liverpool
Geest Port	7,730	Hamilton, Bermuda
<i>Freighter</i>		
Saxonia	8,547	Glasgow
<i>Container Ship</i>		
Contender Bezzant	11,445	Bermuda
<i>Cable Ship</i>		
Iris	3,874	Southampton

Royal Navy (Pay)

Mr. Prescott asked the Secretary of State for Defence, what is (a) the average total earnings and (b) the average basic pay of an ordinary seaman in the Royal Navy.

Mr. Blaker: The average gross basic pay of an ordinary seaman in the Royal Navy is £4,610 per annum at April 1982 pay rates.

The average taxable earnings of an ordinary seaman at April 1982 pay rates would be in the region of £4,700 per annum.

Task Force Vessels (Foreign Nationals)

Mr. Prescott asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many foreign nationals there are in vessels (a) in the task force and (b) in support of the force; and what proportion are volunteers.

Mr. Blaker: Currently there are some 225 foreign nationals serving in support of the task force as crew members aboard SS "Uganda", all of whom are volunteers. In addition there are some 60 Chinese personnel in Royal Navy ships in the task force providing laundry and similar services, and about 480 Chinese crewmen serving with the Royal Fleet Auxiliaries. These personnel were recruited from Hong Kong although it is not possible in the time available to establish whether they are all citizens of the United Kingdom and Colonies. Those serving with the RFAs are operating under their normal terms of service, and those serving with Royal Navy ships are volunteers.

Meteorological Office

Mr. Eldon Griffiths asked the Secretary of State for Defence what notional contributions are made by Government Departments in support of the Meteorological Office.

Mr. Wiggin: Except for the services provided by the Property Services Agency all Meteorological Office expenditure is borne on Defence Votes. Charges are made for services provided to other Government Departments and public bodies; these are set out in the latest annual report, a copy of which will be found in the Library.

Mr. Eldon Griffiths asked the Secretary of State for Defence what are the financial arrangements for payments to the United States for weather information provided to the Meteorological Office from United States satellites.

Mr. Wiggin: No payment is made for weather information provided to the Meteorological Office from United States satellites. However, the United Kingdom makes a contribution in kind by providing some of the instrumentation in the Polar orbiting satellites.

South Atlantic (Campaign and Gallantry Medals)

Mr. Speed asked the Secretary of State for Defence what consideration he has given to the award of campaign and gallantry medals for service in the South Atlantic; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wiggin: The appropriate way of recognising service in the current operations in the South Atlantic is being considered. Acts of gallantry may be recognised at any time.

Type 42 Destroyer (Design)

Mr. Warren asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give the details and relevant dates of any changes made by his Department to the type 42 destroyer design which have precluded the installation of anti-missile defences.

Mr. Pattie: The type 42 destroyer was designed to give an area air defence capability to the fleet, and it has never been planned to incorporate a close-range anti-missile system into the design of the ship. Its major armament, the Sea Dart missile system, is therefore designed primarily to engage hostile aircraft at long ranges rather than incoming missiles and it has not proved possible to fit both the Sea Dart and Sea Wolf missile systems on the same type 42 ship. However, the type 42 has a passive anti-missile defence system, designed to distract enemy missiles from their target, and its guns have a limited capability against missiles at very short range.

Armed Forces (Health and Safety)

Mr. Robert Atkins asked the Secretary of State for Defence to what extent the Armed Forces are subject to inspection by the Health and Safety Executive.

Mr. Blaker: The Health and Safety at Work etc. Act applies to all work activities except those carried out in domestic premises. Special arrangements have been made with the Health and Safety Executive regarding its activity in the Ministry of Defence and the Services. The broad effect of these arrangements is that whilst the Health and Safety Executive does not inspect operational activities or military training, advice on safety standards is provided where appropriate.

SCOTLAND

Scottish Development Agency

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Scotland to what extent the Scottish Development Agency has responsibilities in connection with airport policy in Scotland.

Mr. Alexander Fletcher: The Scottish Development Agency has no responsibility for airport policy in Scotland but has a general interest in this and other matters affecting economic development.

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has received the report commissioned by the Scottish Development Agency on the lowland Scottish airports; and whether he is proposing to take any steps in consequence of the report.

Mr. Alexander Fletcher: I understand that the agency commissioned in March this year a report on possible future options for the Scottish lowland airports. The agency has not submitted the report nor any proposals based on it to my right hon. Friend.

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether any consultations took place between the Scottish Development Agency and his Department before the agency commissioned a consultants' report on the lowland Scottish airports.

Mr. Alexander Fletcher: No.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q4. Mr. Dover asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 13 May.

Q5. Mr. Christopher Price asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 13 May.

Q6. Mr. Beaumont-Dark asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for 13 May.

Q7. Mr. Skinner asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for 13 May.

Q8. Mr. Race asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 13 May.

Q9. Mr. Alton asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 13 May.

Q10. Mr. Temple-Morris asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 13 May.

Q12. Mr. Cunliffe asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for 13 May.

Q13. Mr. Delwyn Williams asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 13 May.

Q14. Mr. Beith asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 13 May.

Q15. Mr. Brinton asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 13 May.

Q16. Mr. Pitt asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 13 May.

Q17. Mr. Myles asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 13 May.

Q18. Mr. Straw asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for 13 May.

Q19. Mr. Viggers asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 13 May.

Q20. Mr. Stanbrook asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 13 May.

Q22. Mr. Meacher asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for 13 May.

Q23. Mr. Geraint Howells asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 13 May.

Q24. Mr. Neubert asked the Prime Minister whether she will list her official engagements for 13 May.

Q26. Mr. Winnick asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for 13 May.

Q27. Mr. Geoffrey Robinson asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 13 May.

Q28. Mr. Sheerman asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for 13 May.

Q29. Mr. Townend asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for 13 May.

Q30. Mr. Michael Marshall asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for 13 May.

Q31. Mr. Heddle asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 13 May.

Q33. Mr. Gordon Wilson asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 13 May.

Q34. Mr. Donald Stewart asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 13 May.

Q36. Mr. Flannery asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for 13 May.

Q37. Mr. Chapman asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 13 May.

Q39. Mr. Squire asked the Prime Minister what are her official engagements for Thursday 13 May.

Q40. Mr. Allan Roberts asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 13 May.

Q41. Mr. Eggar asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 13 May.

Q42. Mr. Leighton asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for 13 May.

Q43. Mr. Montgomery asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for 13 May.

Q44. Mr. Aitken asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements on Thursday 13 May.

Q45. Mr. Bidwell asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 13 May.

Q46. Mr. Thomas Cox asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 13 May.

Q47. Mr. Alan Clark asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 13 May.

The Prime Minister: This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House I shall be having further meetings later today.

Falkland Islands

Q11. Mr. Peter Bottomley asked the Prime Minister if she will make a statement on the Falkland Islands.

Q32. Mr. Latham asked the Prime Minister if she will make a further statement on the Falkland Islands.

Q35. Mr. Dalyell asked the Prime Minister if she will make a statement on the latest position in relation to the Falkland Islands.

The Prime Minister: My right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs and for Defence will be bringing the House up to date during the debate this afternoon.

Q38. Mr. Dykes asked the Prime Minister if she is satisfied with the co-ordination between Government Departments in helping to settle the Falkland Islands dispute.

The Prime Minister: Yes.

Investment

Q21. Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Prime Minister if she is satisfied with the balance of United Kingdom investment at home and abroad following the abolition of exchange control.

The Prime Minister: I am satisfied that most overseas direct investment complements exports and therefore domestic investment. Portfolio outflows following the abolition of exchange controls will also have helped by keeping the exchange rate lower than it would otherwise have been at a time when it was under considerable upward pressure from oil related factors. Domestic investment has held up well over this period. Investment in plant and machinery in the second half of 1981 was 8 per cent. higher than in the first half of 1979. The Department of Industry's investment intentions survey points to further rises in investment in industry in 1982 and 1983.

Factory Closures

Q25. Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Prime Minister how many hon. Members she has seen on matters relating to factory closures since she last answered oral questions; and how many jobs were expected to be lost in the closures mentioned.

The Prime Minister: I have had no such meetings since 11 May.

Water Rates (Rate Support Grant)

Mr. Wigley asked the Prime Minister for what reasons different parts of the United Kingdom either receive or do not receive support to alleviate domestic water rate bills through the rate support grant.

The Prime Minister: Water services are organised differently in different parts of the United Kingdom. This organisation has a direct bearing on the basis of charging.

For the present the estimate referred to in the reply by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport remains the most recent comprehensive estimate available to the Government.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Beirut

Mr. Marlow asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he has any plans with regard to the staffing of the United Kingdom's embassy in Beirut; and whether any reduction is planned in the scope of its functions.

Mr. Hurd: Because of the security situation in Beirut, we have looked carefully at embassy staff numbers. Our view at present is that only staff necessary to maintain essential functions should remain there. The number may vary with circumstances. The ambassador will remain. Consular services will be maintained, but inevitably at a reduced level. The visa section closed on 7 May. We shall continue to watch the situation in the hope that these measures need be only temporary.

Southern Thule Island

Mr. Shersby asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if Southern Thule Island in the South Sandwich group of islands, is still occupied by Argentine personnel without the consent of the Government; and, if so, what steps are being taken by the task force to remove them.

Mr. Onslow: The Government have always made it clear that they regard as illegal and unacceptable the continued presence of Argentine personnel on Southern Thule. However, the Government's first priority now is to bring about the removal of Argentine forces from the Falkland Islands.

United Kingdom Dependencies

Mr. Iain Mills asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will publish a list of the most recent visits by (a) Ministers and (b) Officials normally based in the United Kingdom to each dependency; and when is the expected next visit by Ministers or United Kingdom based officials to each dependency.

Mr. Onslow: I have to make the following correction to my reply—[10 May 1982, c. 189]—of most recent visits since the end of 1980:

BRITISH INDIAN OCEAN TERRITORY

(a) Ministers

Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence for the

Royal Navy

December 1980

(b) Officials

FCO Official

February 1982

EMPLOYMENT

Visiting Orchestras (Work Permits)

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many concerts were given in

central London by the Chicago Symphony Orchestra in 1981, and on what dates; and what were his reasons for granting the necessary work permits.

Mr. Waddington: Permission was given for the Chicago Symphony Orchestra to visit this country on two occasions in 1981 to give a total of three concerts in central London—two at the Royal Albert Hall—Promenade Concerts—on 4 and 5 September and one at the Royal Festival Hall on 19 September. Approval was given because it was considered that the criteria against which applications are assessed were adequately satisfied.

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams asked the Secretary of State for Employment if it is currently the practice of the Visiting Orchestras Consultative Association to recommend that the number of concerts to be given by a visiting orchestra in central London should be restricted in number.

Mr. Waddington: Yes.

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams asked the Secretary of State for Employment if it is his policy to restrict the issue of work permits in accordance with the recommendations of the Visiting Orchestras Consultative Association.

Mr. Waddington: I would normally expect to be able to follow the advice of the Visiting Orchestras Consultative Association.

Visiting Orchestras Consultative Association

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish the terms of the current constitution of the Visiting Orchestras Consultative Association; and on what date it was adopted and what changes were made at that time.

Mr. Waddington: Publication of the Visiting Orchestras Consultative Association's constitution is a matter for that association. However, I understand that copies are available to all members of the association and to inquirers with a bona fide interest in visiting orchestras. I also understand that the present constitution came into effect on 1 July 1981 and replaced one dated 1 July 1974. I will send my hon. Friend copies of both constitutions shortly.

Unemployment Statistics

Mr. David Watkins asked the Secretary of State for Employment what were the numbers and percentages of unemployed persons for each travel-to-work area in county Durham at the latest date for which figures are available.

Mr. Alison: The following is the information at 15 April:

	Number registered as unemployed	Percentage rate of unemployment.
Barnard Castle	498	10.9
Central Durham*	9,449	13.7
Consett*	8,098	25.6
Darlington and south-west		
Durham*	11,541	13.9
Peterlee*	4,663	17.1

* Travel-to-work area comprising two or more employment office areas.

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Employment what is the percentage rise in (a)

notes to the tables previously given, those totals should not be taken to represent a total liability to tax consequent upon a given earnings level, since the payments of indirect taxes and rates are only estimates based on typical expenditure patterns at that level.

Mr. Hamilton: Despite that answer, is it not the case that all independent inquiries on this matter have shown that almost every family on average or below average earnings is paying a substantially higher proportion of its income in tax now than at the last General Election? That is a gross betrayal of the election pledge that tax would be reduced for all people at all income levels. Does not today's statement about top salaries demonstrate that the Government are determined to cosset the rich and clobber the poor?

Mr. Ridley: The hon. Gentleman knows full well that what he just said about less well-off families and those receiving benefits is not true. It is certainly not true of pensioners, who do not pay national insurance contributions. The House will have heard my right hon. and learned Friend say that public expenditure has risen in real terms. The consequence of a rise in public expenditure in real terms is a rise in taxation in real terms.

Mr. Marlow: Since the amount of taxation paid by the average family would be substantially reduced if we reduced significantly our contribution to the European budget, and since the war that we are fighting in the south Atlantic is being fought on behalf of all Europeans, will my hon. Friend, as part of the package that we are negotiating with our European partners, insist that we get a contribution towards our task force from Europe? After all, surely everyone would agree that one British sailor under present circumstances is worth 10 French peasants?

Mr. Ridley: My hon. Friend must not make the negotiations even more difficult than they already are.

Mr. Straw: The Minister should not mislead the House. Is not the truth that while the burden of taxation for those on average earnings has increased, it has increased even more for those at the poorest levels? In real terms, at today's prices, the income tax bill of a family on half average earnings has increased by £6 a week from £9 to £15. Will the Minister confirm what his deputy secretary, Mr. Peter Middleton, told the Treasury and Civil Service Committee yesterday, which is that the poverty trap is getting worse every year and that, according to the Treasury, action on the poverty trap is a low priority?

Mr. Ridley: The hon. Gentleman is not right on his first point. The figures for those on 75 per cent. of average earnings are 39.15 per cent. and 43.4 per cent. As to his latter point, it is not normal to quote civil servants in the House, but may I make it clear that the reason for the worsening of the poverty trap has been the Government's determination to maintain the real value of the retirement pension and many other benefits.

Exchange Control

13. **Mr. Mitchell** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will now reintroduce exchange control in the light of the latest figures of overseas investment by United Kingdom financial institutions.

Mr. Hayhoe: No, Sir.

Mr. Mitchell: Is the Minister aware that last year pension fund institutions invested £2.3 billion overseas in shares and that last year, for the first time, financial institutions, apart from the banks, bought fewer United Kingdom than foreign ordinary shares? Is he aware that that portfolio investment is in addition to the huge sums of money flowing to investment overseas, which should be invested in this country for jobs? Is not all of that an indication of the degree of confidence that the Government's friends have in the prospect of recovery under the Government?

Mr. Hayhoe: The difference in the figures is not as great as the hon. Gentleman suggests. Portfolio investment overseas was £2.3 billion last year. It was £2.2 billion the year before. Investment in British equities has been at about the same level over that period.

Mr. Eggar: Will my hon. Friend confirm that had exchange control been imposed, the value of sterling would have been considerably higher over the past two years than it has been?

Mr. Hayhoe: After 40 years of control, the relaxation of control must have had the effect of keeping the exchange rate lower at a period when it was generally agreed in all parts of the House that it was advantageous to British industry that it be lower.

Mr. J. Enoch Powell: Will the Minister explain that a net capital outflow is the inevitable concomitant of a surplus on current account?

Mr. Hayhoe: I should have thought that that was a statement of the obvious.

Mr. Cook: Will the Minister confirm that in addition to those portfolio figures, last year direct investment abroad increased by 50 per cent., while investment at home fell? Do not those figures suggest that even the hon. Gentleman's backers in the City have not been convinced by the promises of economic recovery just around the corner, which is offered to the rest of the nation?

Mr. Hayhoe: The vital factor for the British economy, which is shown to have been helped by the figures that were given earlier on the downward trend in inflation, is that we want our industry to be more competitive and to provide the goods and services of the right quality, at the right price and at the right time. In those circumstances more investment will be attracted to home industry.

Falkland Islands

14. **Mr. Neubert** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer to what extent expenditure on the Falkland Islands action is a factor in his latest assessment of the prospects for single figure inflation as an annual rate.

Mr. Brittan: At the time of the Budget we forecast a year-on-year rate of inflation of 9 per cent. by the fourth quarter of 1982. The subsequent Falkland Islands operation has given no grounds for modifying that forecast.

Mr. Neubert: Will my right hon. and learned Friend give the House a renewed assurance that whatever the cost of resecuring and defending our sovereign territory in the Falkland Islands, it will not deflect the Government from their economic strategy? Will my right hon. and learned Friend confirm that with the prospect of single figure

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annotations

Governments have requested an opportunity to question him in relation to crimes against nationals of those countries that allegedly took place in Argentina. For the moment, Commander Astiz has been held on Ascension Island. We shall, of course, comply with the Geneva convention.

Mr. Skinner: He is one of your pals.

Mr. Goodhew: Will my right hon. remind the Leader of the Opposition, and those who think as he does, of the 30 million lives that were lost in the last World War in Europe alone because the democracies refused to accept, recognise and resist the aggressive intentions of one dictatorship? Will my right hon. Friend ensure that such a thing does not happen again?

The Prime Minister: I accept that the effects of Argentine aggression would go far beyond the effect on the

Falklands if it were allowed to continue without us stopping it, reversing it and ensuring that the Argentine forces withdraw from the islands. That is generally realised throughout the House.

Mr. Hooley: Is it the Government's objective to return to the status quo in the Falkland Islands?

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: I hope so.

The Prime Minister: Our objective would be to allow the people of the Falkland Islands their own wishes, to live their own way of life under the Government of their choice.

Mr. Skinner: Paramourty?

The Prime Minister: That is known as self-determination and it is in the United Nations charter.