

LOBBY BRIEFING

time: 11.00 date: 21.5.82

HOME MINISTER'S DAY

The Prime Minister is working in No 10 most of this morning.

MEETING OF MINISTERS

At 9.30am she chaired a Meeting of Ministers. [OD: The Luxembourg Compromise and next steps on the Budget.] Home Sec., Lord Chancellor, Chancellor of the Exchequer, Foreign Sec., Lord President, Lord Privy Seal, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, S/S Trade, Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries, S/S Industry, Attorney General, S/S N.Ireland, Chief Sec., (Sir Michael Butler, UKREP Brussels also present.

MEETING OF MINISTERS - FALKLANDS

This was followed at 10.30am by a Meeting of the group of Ministers concerned with the Falklands situation - Foreign Sec., Home Sec., Chancellor of the Duchy, Attorney General, S/S Defence, CDS.

At approximately 11.30am the Prime Minister will depart from No 10 for constituency engagements - contact Derek Howe for details.

The PM will continue her constituency engagements this evening and will then, on present plans, depart for Chequers for the weekend.

WHITE PAPER LIST

Distributed.

IN THE HOUSE

There are no Statements today.

ANSWERS OF INTEREST

No 2 Written 12 noon: Mr Christopher Murphy to ask the PM what representations she has received from members of the public about HMG's policy on the Falkland Islands. (Answer will indicate about 4,5000 letters in each of the last seven weeks very heavily in favour of Government policy)

No 102 Written 12 noon: Mr Sydney Chapman to ask S/S Education what announcement the University Grants Committee has made to universities about grants for 1982-83. (Answer will announce grants for this year and provisional grants for following years).

FALKLANDS

We read the lobby the UNSG's letter to the Prime Minister of the Security Council (UKMIS New York Telno 810).

As Mr Pym said yesterday we were still open to any diplomatic approaches. But much depended on the Argentine position; we needed to see firm evidence of Argentine movement.

The Peruvian initiative was not detailed. It was a series of steps and procedural ideas. It did not put forward new proposals. It had been passed to our Ambassador and would be considered by Ministers this morning. We would be sending our response in due course.

We had no information about any Security Council debate although that might be the next step. We saw no need for a debate; UNR 502 was already there.

It was broadly correct that the Task Force Commander would be continuing a campaign of attack and attrition on Argentine positions. This was a continuation of the intensification and tightening of the screw. MoD would be briefing later this morning on military developments.

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The position on bombing the mainland had not changed. We were not ruling out any options although we did not know of any plans at present.

We did not regard last night's vote as a free gift to the Argentines. The House had been very supportive. There were no plans for any statements or debates over the weekend.

EUROPEAN COMMUNITY

The lobby could assume this morning's meeting was on the Community. We would retain our tough posture and determination on the Mandate. We were determined to have the Luxembourg compromise reinstated. The meeting probably did not take final decisions on our attitude.

Sanctions on Argentina were a quite separate matter from the Mandate and agricultural price fixing. The problems some countries had with sanctions were not related to the Mandate or CAP.

INFLATION

The lobby should look for single figures.

IK

Petrol (Lead Content)

Mr. Trotter asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has reviewed the health risks associated with lead in petrol; and if he has studied the views of the British Medical Association and those expressed at the CLEAR symposium on such risks.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I have now had an opportunity to study the British Medical Association's evidence to the Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution. It is a balanced document reaching similar conclusions to those reached a year ago by the Government following publication of the report of the DHSS working party on lead and health, chaired by Professor Patrick Lawther. I welcome it as reinforcing the Government's view of the need for a series of measures based on the recommendations of that report. We announced a programme in May last year and nothing in this report reduces our confidence in the desirability of that programme.

I understand that in the course of a careful summing up of the recent CLEAR symposium, Professor Michael Rutter, who was a member of the working party, expressed the personal view that it would be prudent to remove lead entirely from petrol. He, however, acknowledged the uncertainty of the medical evidence on the effects of very low levels of lead in the body. We have all along taken the view that, although the evidence is uncertain, action is necessary to reduce people's exposure to lead derived

from petrol. We have sought the quickest and most practicable means of doing this. It is our aim to reduce the limit from 0.4g per litre to 0.15g per litre by the end of 1985. This will reduce by about two-thirds lead emissions from cars some 10 years earlier than any other practicable method—including going lead free.

The BMA report makes it plain that petrol is only one of a number of sources of lead in the environment, and I understand that Professor Rutter stressed this. The Government agree on the importance of these other sources, including lead contaminated food and tap water, industrial emissions, lead-based paint, and special exposure such as employment in a trade using lead and we are taking steps to reduce lead in the environment along the lines announced a year ago.

Falkland Islands (Requisitional Vessels)

Mr. John Townend asked the Minister for Trade if he will make a statement on compensation payable to the crews of trawlers requisitioned for the Falkland operation.

Mr. Sproat [*pursuant to the reply, 26 April 1982, c. 177*]: I am glad to say that it has been agreed that payments to seamen covered by National Maritime Board agreements and to trawlermen who have been put ashore as a result of the charter or requisition of ships to support the Falklands task force shall be a proper claim which the Government will meet. This agreement is for three months in the first instance, and subject to review thereafter.