

LOBBY BRIEFING

time: 11 AM date: 25.5.82

PRIME MINISTER'S DAY

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

ODSA

At 10.00 am the Prime Minister chaired a meeting of the group of Ministers concerned with the Falklands (Foreign Secretary, Defence Secretary, Home Secretary, Chancellor of the Duchy, CDS, Attorney General).

CABINET

At 11.00 am the Prime Minister chaired a meeting of the Cabinet (Falkland Islands, MP's pay - long term arrangements). Full House expected.

QUESTIONS

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

AUSTRALIAN FOREIGN MINISTER

At 4.15 pm in the House the Prime Minister will receive a courtesy call from the Australian Foreign Minister, Mr Anthony Street. He has been in the UK since Saturday and leaves tonight. He has been with Mr Fraser in the USA and his visit is part of a tour around the capitals of those attending the Versailles summit with the aim of ensuring that the Australian view of international economic matters is put across.

SIR HENRY PLUMB

At 5.15 pm in the House the Prime Minister will see Sir Henry Plumb, Leader of the Conservative Group in the European Parliament.

PRESS NOTICE

Appointment of the Reverend David Lloyd Thomas Scott to the Vicarage of Broadheath, Crown East and Rushwick in the Diocese of Worcester. He is currently Priest-in-Charge of Ripple in the same Diocese.

PUBLICATION

The twenty-second Report of The Ancient and Historical Monuments of Argyll Volume 4 - Iona will be published tomorrow. CFRs available today at 11.30 am.

IN THE HOUSE

No statements.

ANSWERS OF INTEREST

In Defence Orals today MoD will probably take the opportunity to indicate that the Defence White Paper will not be published until after the present conflict with Argentina over the Falklands is over.

No 78 Written 3.30 pm: Mr Peter Temple-Morris to ask the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries whether he will extend the scope of the EC milk subsidy scheme for schools in the UK. (Answer will indicate an extension of the scheme to cover flavoured milk.)

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No 50 Written 3.30 pm: Mr Bob Cryer to ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the Chairmanship of the Health and Safety Commission. (Answer will announce the reappointment of Mr Bill Simpson for a further year.)

No 80 Written 3.30 pm: Mr T H H Skeet to ask the Secretary of State for Industry if he will give an assessment of the success of the small engineering firms investment scheme and if he will make a statement about its likely future. (Answer will show that this has been very successful and a further £10m on top of the £20m recently announced is to be allocated, with 28 May as the closing date for applications.)

FALKLANDS

We described today's Ministerial and Cabinet meetings as primarily a stocktaking exercise on both the military and diplomatic front, acknowledging that for the moment concentration on the latter was on the manoeuvring and debating at the United Nations.

We confirmed that MoD had said they had no reports of any damage to the Canberra.

On the World Cup we denied that any "new line" was being taken. The situation was under review but there was a view that said the teams should take part since Britain was not the aggressor and it would perhaps be wrong to penalise our teams. We did not think any parallel with the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the Olympics could be sustained.

We had seen no sign of any doubts being expressed over President Reagan's forthcoming visit to the United Kingdom.

On the question of the Pope's visit, we noted there had been an indication that the visit was now on and we expected further clarification later in the day. The visit was a pastoral one and the Government had made the offer to minimise or eliminate Government participation if that would assist. There had never been much Government participation planned, and we would have to wait and see.

We said there had been no particular increase in dialogue between the Prime Minister and The Queen during the Falklands crisis. The usual Audiences had continued regularly. Naturally the Palace had been kept informed and no doubt there had been increased contact between Private Offices.

We would not be drawn into the Lobby's speculation on various figures as the suggested cost of the Falklands military operation.

We could not contribute to speculation that the Falkland Islands might receive the George Cross.

EC

We would not accept that the Budget deal struck yesterday in the EC constituted a climb down. We thought it a reasonably fair settlement and it was important to look at it over the three years. However the major problem, the reform of the Budget, had been left over and there was now agreement to aim to negotiate a long term commitment by the end of November. We denied that we should have got this deal a week ago. Governments reached agreements when the time was right and anyway we had obtained more units than originally offered.

On the Luxembourg compromise, we drew attention to the special meeting scheduled for 20 June.