

B.R.
1
I think that we should try to dispose
of this matter soon: it has been hanging
around for some time now.
JW
D.V.P.L.

PRIME MINISTER (through/CAW)

STATEMENT ON THE SECURITY COMMISSION REPORT

You planned to make an oral statement, announcing the publication a day later of the White Paper summarising the report. The changes in the composition of the Commission were to be announced at the same time. After we forewarned Michael Foot of the plans, the process was postponed because of the Falklands crisis.

As you asked, we have now taken soundings of the Opposition about converting your statement to a written answer. Mr. Foot's office now say that he and his Front Bench colleagues have no objection to this procedure for themselves. But they are very much aware of continuing interest on the backbenches in the subject. This is demonstrated by, for instance, the consistent questioning of the Home Secretary on it. The Opposition Front Bench therefore advise you against the written answer procedure, on the grounds that backbenchers might regard this as a convenient arrangement between Front Benches to minimise questioning. This advice is offered in the knowledge that you will expect the White Paper to be debated in due course.

If we revert to the oral statement idea, we ought to hold it up for at least a couple more weeks. That means further delaying Lord Diplock's retirement, which is the main reason for getting the matter out of the way quickly.

Alternatively, you may think it worth going ahead through a written answer, despite Mr. Foot's advice. The subject has been hanging around now for some weeks. There is no particular reason to think that the time will be more suitable for an oral statement in the near future. Once the White Paper is out, we can then choose a realistic time for a debate. If you were to give a written answer on, say, Wednesday this week, the White Paper could be published at 3.30 on Thursday, and Mr. Biffen could make it clear during Business Questions that day that the Government would find debating time.

Yes
ms
Would you like to go ahead with a written answer, despite Mr. Foot's advice?
M.P.

10 May 1982



10 DOWNING STREET

Cliff ^{Muri} ^{Good.} ^{MS 4 v.}

Tam McLaffrey believes Michael Foot will be quite relaxed about a written answer introducing the white paper, and announcing the changes. He will confirm this view after consulting.

On this basis, I have asked David Wright to consider whether any drafting changes are needed for a composite written reply, probably to be given early next week.

MA
4/
v.



10 DOWNING STREET

Clive Security Commission Statement
Can we now say not before
Tuesday May 4?

MPD
21/11

BF 7/11

MPD