

Spoke accordingly to D.F.
ad to H. Seabright.

PRIME MINISTER

'H' COMMITTEE NEXT WEEK

Please p.a.

Dmb
15/

There are three significant items on 'H' Committee's Agenda next week: employed solicitors, on which there is a separate note in the Box; the Armed Forces Bill; and major public inquiries.

The Armed Forces Bill

The contentious point in Mr Heseltine's proposed 1986 Armed Forces Bill is the retention of the death penalty for a small number of uniquely serious Service offences. The Secretary of State believes that the death penalty remains justified for crimes which amount to the military equivalent of treason (for which, of course, the death penalty is still mandatory).

*

Major Public Inquiries

The Secretary of State for the Environment has circulated a lengthy paper about major public inquiries, in response to concern which you expressed some time ago about the length of time which some inquiries are now taking (eg. Sizewell). He concludes that long inquiries are the exception rather than the rule (out of 3000 inquiries each year, only 20-30 last more than a month); that radical alternatives to the inquiry system are not on; but that much could be done to improve current procedures.

Very disappointed

Of course
but this
are
still
ridiculous
long.

'H' Committee will be asked to endorse this analysis, and to decide whether procedural reforms should themselves be the subject of an external review.

Dmb

David Barclay
15 February 1985

I hope they will
not endorse this
analysis. This
a way of getting out
of decisions not