

Prime Minister 181

PRIME MINISTER

Yes - but we must NOT give the impression that the bonus may risk

Andrew Bennett's question (Page 4) is near the bottom of the order paper and your answer will go written. Agree a written reply?

LM 29/4

PQ BY MR ANDREW BENNETT MP ON 1983 CHRISTMAS BONUS

Mr Bennett's question to you for answer on Thursday May 5 points to a problem we have in the next few weeks. I was proposing, with your agreement, to announce the amount of the bonus in early May, as we need to do if we are to be sure that pensioners will get their money in time.

The background is this. We legislated in 1979 to give the pensioners a statutory right to the bonus. The only question to be settled each year is the amount of the bonus. Up to now this has been announced as part of the uprating package at the time of the Budget, and arrangements for paying it could proceed from mid-May in the normal way.

But this year the uprating announcement will not be until June, and if we leave the bonus announcement until then some pensioners will not get this money in time, because the bonus sticker which is attached to the Christmas week counterfoil will not be in some of the six-monthly order books spanning Christmas which are prepared for issue in May.

I propose that the amount of the bonus should be £10, as in the past. We considered in last year's PES round whether to increase it but concluded that this was not a high priority. The Opposition have promised at least £20, and the only reason for delaying an announcement would be to avoid difficulties in the run-up to an Election. My view, however, is that delay would give us the worst of both worlds: in not announcing the £10 and in not making arrangements in time to ensure that pensioners got their bonus by Christmas. Pensioners with order books spanning Christmas will realise in June that they have not received their bonus stickers and will make enquiries to our embarrassment.

FOR.

I should like therefore to announce the £10 bonus before 16 May, and I would propose then that you should give a holding reply on Thursday.

I am copying this minute to the Chancellor of the Exchequer and Sir Robert Armstrong.



29 April 1983

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COMMUNICATIONS
SECTION
LONDON

- *†54 Mr Ronald Leighton (Newham North East): To ask the Prime Minister, if she will list her official engagements for 5th May.
- *†56 Mr A. J. Beith (Berwick upon Tweed): To ask the Prime Minister, if she will list her official engagements for 5th May.
- *†58 Mr Lawrence Cunliffe (Leigh): To ask the Prime Minister, if she will list her official engagements for 5th May.
- *†59 Mr Robert Adley (Christchurch and Lymington): ~~To ask the Prime Minister, if she will list her official engagements for 5th May.~~ wd 22.4.83
- *†61 Mr Andrew Bennett (Stockport North): To ask the Prime Minister, when she expects a decision to be announced as to the level of Christmas bonus to be paid to pensioners in 1983.
- *†63 Mr Alfred Dubs (Wandsworth, Battersea South): ~~To ask the Prime Minister, if she will list her official engagements for 5th May.~~ wd 22.4.83
- *†64 Mr Toby Jessel (Twickenham): To ask the Prime Minister, if she will list her official engagements for 5th May.
- *†66 Mr David Alton (Liverpool, Edge Hill): To ask the Prime Minister, if she will list her official engagements for 5th May.
- *†67 Mr Dennis Canavan (West Stirlingshire): ~~To ask the Prime Minister, what are her official engagements for 5th May.~~ wd 22.4.83
- *†69 Mr Geraint Howells (Cardigan): To ask the Prime Minister, if she will list her official engagements for 5th May.
- *†70 Mr Clement Freud (Isle of Ely): To ask the Prime Minister, if she will list her official engagements for 5th May.
- *†72 Mr Jack Ashley (Stoke on Trent South): To ask the Prime Minister, if she will list her official engagements for 5th May.
- SDP *†74 Mr Simon Hughes (Southwark, Bermondsey): To ask the Prime Minister, if she will list her official engagements for 5th May.
- *†75 Mr David Winnick (Walsall North): To ask the Prime Minister, if she will list her official engagements for 5th May.
- *†76 Mr George Foulkes (South Ayrshire): ~~To ask the Prime Minister, if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 5th May.~~ wd 28.4.83
- *†77 Mr Allan Roberts (Bootle): To ask the Prime Minister, if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 5th May.
- *†79 Mr Tim Eggar (Enfield North): ~~To ask the Prime Minister, if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 5th May.~~ wd 27.4.83
- *†81 Mr Colin Shepherd (Hereford): To ask the Prime Minister, if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 5th May.
- *†82 Mr Tim Sainsbury (Hove): To ask the Prime Minister, if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 5th May.

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- *118 Mrs Helen McElhone (Glasgow, Queen's Park): To ask the Prime Minister, if she will list her official engagements for 5th May.
- *119 Mr John Townend (Bridlington): To ask the Prime Minister, if she will list her official engagements for 5th May.
- *120 Mr Richard Needham (Chippenham): To ask the Prime Minister, if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 5th May.
- *121 Mr John Hunt (Bromley, Ravensbourne): To ask the Prime Minister, if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 5th May.
- *122 Mr Robin Squire (Havering, Hornchurch): To ask the Prime Minister, what are her official engagements for Thursday 5th May.
- SN *123 Mr Gordon Wilson (Dundee East): To ask the Prime Minister, if she will list her official engagements for 5th May.
- *124 Mr A. E. P. Duffy (Sheffield, Attercliffe): To ask the Prime Minister, if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 5th May.
- *125 Mr Tim Brinton (Gravesend): To ask the Prime Minister, if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 5th May.

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SECRET

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10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

3 May 1983

1983 Christmas Bonus

The Prime Minister was grateful for your Secretary of State's minute of 29 April about the PQ for answer on Thursday 5 May by Mr. Andrew Bennett MP.

B/S
The Prime Minister agrees a holding reply on Thursday 5 May, and to your Secretary of State announcing the bonus before 16 May as he proposes. The Prime Minister has commented that we must be careful not to give the impression that the bonus may rise above £10.

I am sending copies of this letter to John Kerr (HM Treasury) and Richard Hatfield (Cabinet Office).

M. C. SCHOLAR

Steve Godber, Esq.,
Department of Health and Social Security.

Sgr

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