

NOTE FOR THE RECORD

WESTLAND: DEFENCE SELECT COMMITTEE

Despite the Chief Whip's reassuring words of last night, Westland was, as might have been expected, discussed at today's meeting of the Committee. Sir Barney Hayhoe and John Wilkinson sided with Labour in saying that they wanted the enquiry reopened. They argued that Sir Leon's remarks potentially created a new situation. Sir Barney Hayhoe spoke pompously of a "matter of principle", "a matter which could not be ignored", and "important implications for Select Committees". Michael Mates said that the Committee could not make a snap decision and asked them to go away and think about it and to refresh their memories of the evidence given in 1986.

Michael Mates has talked to the other Government members who are solid. Mark Lennox-Boyd has spoken to John Wilkinson who is reflecting. The real difficulty is Barney Hayhoe. The Chief Whip is thinking about how best to approach him though he is minded not to do it himself. He is looking for someone who might have some influence e.g. Cranley Onslow, Lord Whitelaw, or Gerry Malone.

The Committee will meet again next Wednesday. They have agreed not to say anything to the press about this, though that is a worthless assurance. It seems that if they do decide to return to this subject the first step would be to write to Leon Brittan to see if he stood by his remarks in the C4 programme. If that happened we would need to make sure that his answer was that he stood by his remarks in 1986.

I am investigating whether select committees can summon EC Commissioners or peers. I suspect there is no formal bar to summoning EC Commissioners though they could only enforce this by a vote of the House as a whole. The position on peers is less clear.

(ANDREW TURNBULL)

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