

LOBBY BRIEFING

time: 11.00 date: 6.5.82

PRIME MINISTER'S DAY

The Prime Minister is working in No 10 this morning and will be in the House this afternoon.

Earlier this morning the PM voted in the local government elections at Chelsea Westminster Institute in Castle Lane. Mr Thatcher accompanied her.

At 9.00 am she chaired a meeting of the Group of Ministers concerned with the Falkland Islands: Foreign Sec., Home Sec., Chancellor of the Duchy, CDS and Attorney General.

Mr Nott is in Brussels at the NATO Ministerial meeting.

CABINET

At 10.30am she chaired a meeting of the Cabinet. Parliamentary Affairs, Foreign Affairs, Community Affairs, Public Services Pay. All present including the Attorney General - Mr Nott in Brussels.

QUESTIONS

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

IN THE HOUSE

There are no Statements today.

ANSWERS OF INTEREST

No 94 Written 4.00pm: Mr John Ward to ask the Prime Minister whether she will make a statement on the award of the Civil Service Arbitration Tribunal and the Reports of the Review Bodies on the pay of the Armed Forces, the doctors and dentists and top salaries. (We could not be sure how many of these reports would be dealt with and would not be drawn on which ones might be left out. The Departments concerned will make available the reports in the lobby at 4.00pm and will deal with their own areas).

No 11 Written 4.00pm: Mr Stanley Cohen to ask the Prime Minister if in view of the role adopted by President Reagan in the Falkland Islands problem, she will take steps to cancel the invitation to him to address both Houses of Parliament. (Answer will say No, and thank the President and Mr Haig for their efforts).

No 125 Written 3.30pm: Mr Richard Alexander to ask the S/S Industry what response there has been to date of the Small Firms Investment Scheme. (Answer will say that because of the phenomenal response the full £20m has been taken up).

No 126 Written 3.30pm: Mr Peter Rost to ask the S/S Energy whether he has commissioned a study of the UKAEA. (Answer will herald a study).

ALL PARTY TALKS

We reported that following her talks with Privy Council representatives with the Liberal and SDP parties on the Falkland Islands situation, the PM had had a meeting the previous evening with Mr Powell, the only Privy Councillor representing the Northern Ireland constituencies. A similar meeting had been offered to Donald Stewart of the SNP. We assumed he would want such a meeting. There were no other Privy Councillors representing other parties though we mentioned that the PM had said that she was always available to discuss the issue with Members.

NATO EURO GROUP

We read out the communique from the NATO Euro Group on the subject of the Falkland Islands situation.

FALKLAND ISLANDS

Asked if the meeting of Ministers and/or Cabinet had discussed the alleged Argentine offer of a ceasefire we said that the Group of Ministers would certainly have considered the position over the US/Peruvian proposals on which we had sent our own ideas. Undoubtedly the UN ideas would have been discussed as well and it was reasonable to suppose that we might send our views on those some time in the course of the day. We acknowledged that we were unclear quite what the Argentines were saying - on what was acceptable to them and on what terms.

To lobby suggestions that there was more emphasis on Mr Haig's role as opposed to that of the UN Secretary General we said there were two "balls in the air" and they were not necessarily incompatible. Of course the Peruvian/US ideas were well developed. Ideas had been floated initially and had collapsed under Argentine refusal, and then picked up again. Also, we have the means to communicate through Washington and apparently the Argentines had people in Lima. With time as an ally in diplomacy the opportunity had been taken to revise and develop the ideas so that the two sides could work towards each other. All this notwithstanding we did not encourage great optimism.

Questioned about "no ceasefire without withdrawal" we said of course there must be a commitment to withdrawal. We could not allow the Argentines to consolidate on the Islands in defiance of Resolution 502. Obviously withdrawal would have to be done under some organisation since at present there was a Temporary Exclusion Zone which could only be varied by agreement with the MoD. There would have to be a means of withdrawal and therefore at that point there would have to be a ceasefire. On the question of mutual withdrawal we stressed that we were talking about an Argentine withdrawal under the terms of 502. We would be careful not to place ourselves at a disadvantage. Any mutual and balanced withdrawal from the area should be regarded as a separate issue.

We rejected suggestions that the Government had shifted its ground. People were forgetting who fired the first shot. Nevertheless we had always said we would prefer to negotiate the Argentines off the Islands, and of course we were involved in a negotiation which as always we hoped would lead to a settlement. Any negotiations had to contain elements of compromise but "it takes two to tango". We could not say whether or not the Argentines were in a mood to compromise. One was never sure quite who one was talking to in the junta and how genuinely representative they were. Public opinion in Argentina appeared to be a wholly cultivated plant in the sense that people were not being told the truth about the course of events.

We did not encourage the idea that the Government was advocating bombing the Argentine mainland. We had always hoped to achieve our objectives with the minimum of force and loss of life.

We thought the MoD would be releasing more details on HMS Sheffield casualties today though it was important to protect the families.

On political control we repeated the PM's words and stressed that it must always exist and be seen to exist.

Falkland Islands

Mr. Speaker: Statement, Mr. Secretary Nott.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I will take points of order after the statements.

The Secretary of State for Defence (Mr. John Nott): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a further statement about the Argentine attack on HMS "Sheffield". In the statement I made to the House late last night I provided an outline of the attack on HMS "Sheffield" and of the loss of one of our Sea Harriers and its pilot. The pilot was Lieutenant Nicholas Taylor. His next of kin have been informed, and the whole House will, I know, wish to join me in expressing sorrow and deepest sympathy with his family.

It is entirely right that the House should now have as full an account of the attack on HMS "Sheffield" as I am able to give today. The House will understand why it will be necessary for me to repeat some of the details I provided last night.

At about 3.30 London time yesterday afternoon HMS "Sheffield" was attacked by Argentine Super Etendard aircraft which launched Exocet missiles. HMS "Sheffield" was some 70 miles off the Falklands enforcing the total exclusion zone, together with other elements of the task force. One missile missed the ship; the other hit her amidships. The resulting explosion caused a major fire. Although attempts were made to extinguish the fire for nearly four hours, with the assistance of fire-fighting teams from other ships in the area, it eventually spread out of control. At about 7 pm London time the order was given to abandon ship. Ships of the task force in the area picked up survivors, and the latest information I have is that about 30 men are still missing. A further number sustained injuries, and they are being well cared for under medical supervision. We have no further details of casualties at the present time. The ships are still engaged on operations and I know that the force commander will provide further information just as soon as he is able to do so. All the next of kin of the ship's company are being informed. The thoughts of the whole House are with them at this sad time.

Mr. Denis Healey (Leeds, East): I associate the Opposition with the Secretary of State's tribute to the courage of the Harrier pilot and the crew of HMS "Sheffield" and we extend our sympathy to the families of those who gave their lives in defence of a principle which is regarded by all right hon. and hon. Members as one of great importance.

Is there any truth in reports in the American press and on American television that a major naval engagement is proceeding in the South Atlantic? May I also revert to an issue of great importance for the future that I raised yesterday? I think that the right hon. Gentleman will concede that the Argentines knew the position of our task force yesterday and that, therefore, its position on Sunday when the attack on the Argentine cruiser took place no longer needs to be concealed from the House or the world.

I hope that the right hon. Gentleman will find it possible to give us a better idea of the distance between—[HON. MEMBERS: "Why?"] I will explain why in a moment. I hope that the right hon. Gentleman will give us a better

idea of the distance between the point where the engagement took place and the task force. If he is unable to do so, right hon. and hon. Members and foreign countries are bound to take his silence as implying that the decision to attack the cruiser was taken by the submarine commander without reference to the commander of the task force—perhaps because, as the Secretary of State suggested yesterday, the submarine commander was unable to communicate with the task force commander.

If that were the case, it argues that there is a serious handicap in political control of our forces, at a time when, as the House agrees with the right hon. Gentleman, we must always use minimum force under political control to achieve the diplomatic objective.

Mr. Nott: I appreciate the right hon. Gentleman's opening comment. Many men are missing and have probably died defending principles that the right hon. Gentleman said that he thought were supported by the House. I much appreciate those words.

We have no knowledge of any naval battle going on in the Atlantic at present. I am aware that there have been reports from American sources that one is taking place. I cannot be sure, but we have no reports and I did check on that quite recently. [HON. MEMBERS: "Not sure?"] I am sorry, but it is impossible at a distance of 8,000 miles to require our task force commander to communicate with London repeatedly during the day.

On the question that the right hon. Gentleman asked yesterday about the distance, I see no reason why we should not be able to provide that information within a few days. There is no reason to conceal it. We think that HMS "Sheffield" may have been detected by an Argentine reconnaissance aircraft. We cannot be sure, but we think that that may have been the case and perhaps that was the reason why the attack with Exocet missiles was successful. That underlines the fact that we must not, on any account, put our ships at hazard by giving information prematurely, but I certainly do not want to conceal from the right hon. Gentleman information that can be safely announced.

On the right hon. Gentleman's final question, I made it clear yesterday that every action by our forces in the South Atlantic is taken within strict political control and authority. The actual decision to launch a torpedo was clearly one taken by the submarine commander, but that decision was taken within very clear rules of engagement that had been settled in London and discussed by the Government. As I made clear yesterday, we regarded the "General Belgrano" as a threat to our forces and we could not conceivably have had any lesser rules of engagement than those which we issued, which were to allow our ships to defend themselves, as a fleet.

Mr. Alan Clark: (Plymouth, Sutton): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the loss of a ship is a dreadful thing for the Royal Navy and that whatever declamations of national purpose and heroism may be made, and with which I fully concur, nothing can make up for the personal, terrible grief and sense of loss of the next of kin? Will he assure the House that wherever it is humanly possible the next of kin will hear of such events before the news is released to the agencies? Would it be possible for an officer to visit the next of kin in every case to assure himself that no immediate personal hardship arises and to explain to the next of kin their entitlement to pensions and other benefits?

Mr. Nott: As my hon. Friend says, it has been a dreadful event. An organisation has been set up to process all casualty information and there are sub-units in naval bases that receive information and inform the next of kin of men of the Royal Navy. Next of kin are normally informed by selected officers from local establishments, preferably by a home visit but by telephone if essential. This is done as quickly as possible after information about casualties has been received from the task force. I entirely agree with my hon. Friend that the procedures are very important and where possible should be done by personal contact.

It would be much appreciated by the Royal Navy and, of course, by the next of kin if those who are involved in this tragic event could be given some privacy by the media in the next few days. [HON. GENTLEMEN: "Hear, hear".] I ask that only because of certain problems which have arisen today.

Mr. David Steel (Roxburgh, Selkirk and Peebles): My colleagues on the Liberal Bench would obviously wish to be associated with the expressions of sympathy from the Government and the official Opposition to the relatives of those lost in this terrible disaster.

Will the right hon. Gentleman accept that this incident, together with the sinking of the Argentine cruiser, gives added urgency to the need to seek an effective diplomatic solution to the dispute? Is it the case that consideration had been given to supplying HMS "Sheffield" with a stretched version of Sea Dart with updated tracker radar, and was that one of the casualties of the defence review?

Mr. Nott: I am most grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for his initial comments about the tragedy. He is right, of course: we want a diplomatic solution. We shall continue to strive for it. My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary will make a statement on that subject in a moment.

The "Sheffield" was armed with Sea Dart missiles of the latest type. The missiles are an area air defence weapon. They can be used, but not very successfully, against incoming missiles of a particular type. They are primarily for engaging incoming aircraft on an area basis. That was the principal defence of the "Sheffield". We do not know why the Sea Dart system did not successfully engage the aircraft. It is possible that the aircraft came in very low under radar cover but there was nothing in the equipment of the ship which differed in any way from the normal complement of weapons on our type 42 destroyers.

Mr. Geoffrey Johnson Smith (East Grinstead): As the battle goes on, more and more of us are concerned about the presentation of what happens. Leaving aside whether the statement last night was necessary, what should be of more immediate concern to my right hon. Friend within his total command is the extent to which we should be briefed in future through television by the Ministry of defence in the way that it has done. I am sure that my right hon. Friend would agree that much of that briefing is for the benefit of the press who are incapable of taking shorthand. Perhaps it might be better to review those arrangements.

Mr. Nott: I am not entirely clear to what my hon. Friend refers. The Ministry of Defence spokesman briefs the press every day when there is an incident. He gives a purely factual account of what has arisen. I think that my

hon. Friend must be referring to all sorts of other briefings which are given by other people. The Ministry of Defence briefing is a purely factual one. It never contains opinions and that is how we wish to keep it.

Several Hon. Members rose—

Mr. Speaker: Order. There is a further statement to follow. I propose to call three more hon. Members from either side on this statement and then move on to the second.

Mr. Martin Flannery (Sheffield, Hillsborough): Is the Secretary of State aware that the disaster to the "Sheffield", a ship which has immense ties with the city of Sheffield, has resulted in a great groundswell of desire, not only in Sheffield but much further afield, for peace negotiations? Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that telegrams have come to Sheffield city council from many factories and to hon. Members representing Sheffield constituencies? Is he further aware that this afternoon in the city there will be an ordinary council meeting at which the leader of the council will move a resolution in which he asks, on behalf of the council, for peace negotiations through the United Nations? Does the right hon. Gentleman not agree that the insistence that no negotiations will take place as long as those troops are on the Falklands is now a brake against the struggle for peace? Is it not time for that to be quashed and for Britain to go to the United Nations to discuss the whole question of a peaceful solution through negotiation?

Mr. Nott: Of course there is a desire for peace—that desire is widespread in the country. It is shared by all my right hon. and hon. Friends. We want to obtain, as soon as we possibly can, a diplomatic settlement to the problem. However, I hope that the right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey) will forgive me if I repeat a very fair and reasonable comment which he made this morning on the BBC "Today" programme.

The right hon. Gentleman said:

"It would not be to Britain's advantage to agree to a ceasefire unless we were clear that we had a negotiating process which would get the Argentines off the islands."

That is the general view of the whole House. It is not shared by every hon. Member, but it is the general view of the House, and I share it.

Mr. Peter Griffiths (Portsmouth, North): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the most appropriate memorial to the brave young men who lost their lives in HMS "Sheffield", the home port of which is in my constituency and whose loss has brought tragedy to the city and to my constituents, would be to carry through the enterprise for which they gave their lives as quickly as possible and with as little further loss of life as may be possible? Does he agree that the quickest way in which that could be done would be for the Argentine Government to agree to remove their troops from the Falkland Islands?

Mr. Nott: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend. As I said yesterday, the way in which the conflict can be ended straight away is for the Argentines to agree to implement resolution 502. If, in the next few days, the Argentines do not challenge our ships and men and do not threaten them, and if they cease entering the total exclusion zone, no casualties can arise. But the way to solve the conflict is for the Argentines to abide by the United Nations resolution.

Mr. Jack Dormand (Easington): In answer to my right hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey), the Secretary of State said that there were difficulties in maintaining communication between the task force and the Government. I fully accept that there must be real difficulties in doing that, but the Secretary of State then went on to say that there was full political control of the decisions of the task force. Some hon. Members are extremely concerned about the way in which the decision was taken on the firing of two torpedoes. Is there not some inconsistency there which requires explanation?

Mr. Nott: I shall give an example to the hon. Gentleman of what I meant. When our ships are engaged in extremely dangerous operations in which they are subject constantly to attack, they frequently—and rightly—impose on themselves radio silence. Unless the ships are maintaining radio silence, their position can be detected. Therefore, there will be periods when, for very good operational reasons, we are not in contact with all our ships. That was the type of example that I was trying to give. The communications with the task force by satellite and by other methods are excellent and are more than sufficient for us to pass political directives and political orders to the commander but sometimes there may be delays for the sort of reason that I have given.

Sir Frederick Burden (Gillingham): While we are pursuing every effort to bring about a diplomatic settlement of the dispute, is it not evident that the Argentines at this moment are determined to deploy all the military strength that they can against our task force? Therefore, should we not recognise that fact and no longer talk about using minimum force against an enemy who is prepared to deploy his greatest strength against us but use our strength as cleverly as possible to bring the dispute to an end and bring the Argentines to the diplomatic table?

Mr. Nott: When we say that we wish to pursue minimum force, that does not mean in any way that we are asking our forces to hold back on the pursuit of their objectives, nor in any way does it suggest that they are not totally free to defend themselves against attack and, when they are threatened, to attack the enemy first. They are not

required to hold back in any way. I agree with my hon. Friend that the aggression started on the Argentines side. Since then they have continuously reinforced the islands, which they are required to leave by resolution 502. Before the "General Belgrano" was sunk—I understand the strong feelings in the House about that incident, which I share—it threatened the security and safety of our men and ships. In that situation it would not have been possible for us to ask our forces to hold back in defending themselves.

Mr. Allen McKay (Penistone): Will the Secretary of State give us some information on political control, which has been exercising the minds of many people outside the House? Will he assure the House and many people outside that political control does not slow down any defensive action that the fleet may take in its task, taking into consideration the fact that HMS "Sheffield" was a type 42 anti-aircraft destroyer, built purely and simply as any anti-aircraft destroyer and the fact that radar picks up the planes many miles before they come into firing range?

Mr. Nott: I can give the hon. Gentleman that total assurance. There is nothing in any directives that we have given which can in any way hazard our ships, which are confronted with a difficult task.

Sir Patrick Wall (Haltemprice): Is not the loss of HMS "Sheffield" a clear indication that we have now reached the missile age? Is my right hon. Friend aware that the only effective defence against sea-skimming missiles is Sea Wolf? Will my right hon. Friend press ahead as a matter of the utmost urgency with lightweight Sea Wolf and see that that weapon system is installed in most of our ships?

Mr. Nott: I share my hon. Friend's concern about the development in missiles. As he knows, we have made the radar tracker for the lightweight Sea Wolf a major priority in our programme. I agree with my hon. Friend. One of the factors that perhaps has led to us not having anti-missile missiles as fully on our ships as I should like is that the Soviet Union and its Warsaw Pact allies until recently were not deploying sea-skimming missiles. That is one of the reasons why, in retrospect, we have not moved forward as fast as we should.

Falkland Islands

3.53 pm

The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Francis Pym): My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence has just spoken about military aspects of the situation. I should like to add my own tribute to the courage of the crew of HMS "Sheffield" and of the Harrier pilot and my deep sympathy to the families.

The military losses which have now occurred on both sides in this unhappy conflict emphasise all the more the urgent need to find a diplomatic solution.

The House will wish to know that since my return from the United States on Monday I have remained in the closest possible touch with Mr. Haig. As I reported to the House yesterday, we are working very actively on ideas put to us by Mr. Haig, including some advanced by the President of Peru. Yesterday afternoon, after my statement, I sent a constructive contribution of our own to Mr. Haig. He is taking this fully into account. I shall be in touch with him again later on today.

I want to tell the House that a vital ingredient of the ideas on which we are working is an early ceasefire and the prompt withdrawal of Argentine forces. I can assure the House that we are sparing no efforts in the search for an acceptable solution in line with the principles which we have stated on several occasions.

The points which were put to me in New York by the Secretary-General of the United Nations are also receiving our very careful attention. I have been in touch with Mr. Perez de Cuellar about this since my return from New York and will continue to keep in close contact with him.

There are many points of similarity between the Secretary-General's thinking and the points we are pursuing with Mr. Haig. Indeed, Mr. Perez de Cuellar's helpful ideas seem certain to be reflected in the basis of any solution which we may be able to achieve.

I can assure the House that any obstructionism there may be will not come from our side. Although it is we who have been the victims of aggression, it is also we who are working tirelessly and constructively for a peaceful solution.

Mr. Denis Healey (Leeds, East): I thank the right hon. Gentleman for making the statement. I hope that he will not hesitate to make further statements whenever he has further information to give us. I thank him particularly for his opening words. We all feel that if military escalation continues in the way in which it has done over the last few days, more lives—both Argentine and British—than there are inhabitants on the Falkland Islands could be lost. That underlines the paramount necessity of achieving a diplomatic solution.

The right hon. Gentleman referred to the ideas of the American Secretary of State. Will he confirm reports that the American Secretary of State has asked for a two-day ceasefire so that the diplomatic possibilities can be further explored? If so, what response have Her Majesty's Government given?

I particularly welcome what the right hon. Gentleman said about the United Nations Secretary-General. He was a great deal more forthcoming than yesterday, when he was more forthcoming than last Thursday. I see that the United Nations Secretary-General is reported in today's

edition of *The Times* as saying that the suspension of the peace initiative by Mr. Haig had created a diplomatic vacuum which only the United Nations could fill.

As the right hon. Gentleman will know, that has been the view of Her Majesty's Opposition for some time. I understand that the Argentine Government have already agreed to accept the good offices of the United Nations. I appeal to Her Majesty's Government to do the same. Any doubts that they might have had at one time must have been removed by the Secretary-General's statement yesterday, when he insisted on the full implementation of resolution 502, which requires the Argentine forces to leave the Falkland Islands.

I was particularly glad to hear the Secretary of State for Defence endorse my words this morning that the ceasefire must depend on agreement on a negotiating process which will get the Argentine forces off the islands. That is an important distinction from the demand that has been made occasionally, that the cease fire cannot take place until the Argentine forces have left.

I take this opportunity to ask the right hon. Gentleman again a question that many hon. Members on both sides of the House thought was unsatisfactorily answered by the Minister of State, his hon. Friend the Member for Woking (Mr. Onslow) earlier today. The hon. Gentleman was asked by hon. Members on both sides of the House to give a firm assurance that the British forces now committed to the defence of Belize would not be withdrawn until the threat from Guatemala was seen to be removed. If the right hon. Gentleman could give us that assurance, it would do much to allay the fears that our behaviour may be misinterpreted by the Government of Guatemala in the same way as our behaviour was misinterpreted before the Argentines invaded the Falkland Islands.

Mr. Pym: I thank the right hon. Gentleman for what he said at the beginning of his intervention. I very much appreciate his remarks. I fully realise that we both share the strongest desire to achieve a negotiated settlement, if that can be done.

The right hon. Gentleman referred to the possible suggestions by Mr. Haig for a two-day ceasefire. A ceasefire must be a part of any negotiated settlement that involves a withdrawal. That is an area that is and always has been part of the discussions. I am sure that it is helpful that I am in close touch with the Secretary-General. He has offered his good offices both to the Argentine and to the United Kingdom. I have responded in that sense. The Secretary-General has not put any definite proposals to me, but we have shared our ideas and I am responding to the ideas that he sent recently.

The right hon. Gentleman referred to reports of the suspension of the diplomatic mission by Mr. Haig. There has been no such suspension. Perhaps the right hon. Gentleman was implying that in some way Mr. Haig's efforts had come to an end. That is not so. It is clear that they began a new phase when the Argentine rejected the proposals that had been put forward earlier. I am certain that it is helpful that Mr. Haig's efforts are continuing.

I do not agree that the vacuum to which the right hon. Gentleman referred can only be filled by the United Nations. I am not worried about how the vacuum is filled so long as it is filled. I have told the House all along that I believe that Mr. Haig's efforts are the most hopeful basis for a settlement, but I do not exclude anything else, and certainly not the efforts of the United Nations. That is why

I talked to the Secretary-General personally. He is in touch with both our Government and the Argentine Government. We hope that that will make a contribution. As I said in my statement, the principles and the basis upon which we are all talking have many aspects in common.

We have no plans at present to withdraw our forces from Belize. The right hon. Gentleman can be assured that his worries about the neighbouring States are the prime consideration in the Government's mind relating to what we do in connection with our forces there.

Mr. Healey: The right hon. Gentleman's statement on Belize did not carry matters further forward. I hope that he will reconsider the matter and take the opportunity later to give an explicit assurance, for which many hon. Members on both sides of the House have asked.

It has been widely reported that the United Nations Secretary-General has put forward proposals both to the British and to the Argentine Governments not on a substantive solution of the crisis, but on ways in which negotiations might be carried forward. It is also reported that he has asked the British and Argentine Governments to respond to those proposals today. Will the right hon. Gentleman confirm those reports? Will he assure the House that the Government will take the initiative in responding and will not hide behind the possible refusal of the Argentine Government to respond as was the case with Mr. Haig's earlier proposals?

Mr. Pym: There is no question of our hiding behind anything or waiting for someone else to refuse or reject. There has been no time when I have not been looking constructively for a way forward. I am in close touch with the Secretary-General and I am responding to the outlines about which the right hon. Gentleman spoke. Nevertheless, I still believe that the work that I am doing with Mr. Haig is most likely to produce a result, but no door is closed.

Mr. Healey: In answer to my earlier question, the right hon. Gentleman said that no proposals had been made by the Secretary-General. Now he tells us that proposals have been made. I do not blame him for not disclosing them. The matter requires to be kept under diplomatic privacy, but, if proposals have been made, the Opposition would wish the right hon. Gentleman to make a positive response without delay.

Mr. Pym: No formal proposals have been put to me. They were ideas. I am not sure what words to choose. The Secretary-General is receiving a response from me. I do not know what the Argentine Government are doing. I am in close touch with the Secretary-General and I am responding to him. That is the most helpful reply that I can give. It is the most positive position that I can be in.

Mr. Speaker: Order. At Question Time I gave an undertaking that I would call first the five hon. Members who waited for replies to their questions addressed to the Foreign Secretary.

Mr. Dennis Canavan (West Stirlingshire): How many more lives must be lost before the Government fully realise that there cannot be a purely military solution to the crisis? If the Government are seriously intent on a long-term peaceful solution, why do they not comply with the increasing demands from some Opposition Members, and

demands being made nationally and internationally, for an immediate ceasefire and for the United Nations, not the United States, to act as a mediator?

Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that if that is not done, the crisis is in danger of escalating into a full-scale blood bath, which no one will win, and that Britain will find itself increasingly isolated?

Mr. Pym: Of course, we would like an immediate ceasefire and an immediate withdrawal. The Argentine is under an obligation under resolution 502 to withdraw its forces. At present, however, it shows no sign of doing so. Indeed, the reverse is true. A withdrawal must be established in the first place. That is what we must achieve.

I am working with all the strength that I can muster to find a solution, notwithstanding the fact that we are the victim. We are suffering from the act of aggression. It is the Falkland Islands that have been invaded. There seems to be no desire on the other side—we have seen very little—to come to an agreement. I am doing everything that I can, because, like the hon. Member for West Stirlingshire (Mr. Canavan) and everyone everywhere, I want a settlement. However, the Argentine must withdraw its forces.

Mr. Michael Nuebert (Romford): Is it not clear that although the 8,000 miles between Britain and the Falkland Islands gave time for negotiations, the indivisibility of sovereignty allowed little scope for such negotiations? Just as the worsening weather in the South Atlantic was undoubtedly a factor in the timing of the Argentine invasion, so the prolonging of negotiations indefinitely without the withdrawal of Argentine troops consolidates Argentine aggression. In those circumstances, does my right hon. Friend agree that the most effective negotiating weapon that is available to us is likely to be the legitimate exercise of force?

Mr. Pym: I note carefully what my hon. Friend has said. I should infinitely prefer as I am sure would the House, that the Argentine troops left the islands under a peaceful umbrella rather than have to be driven out by force. If we can possibly achieve that, I believe that everyone will be immensely relieved. We do not know whether that can be done, but I shall leave no stone unturned in an attempt to achieve it.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Keighley): Will the right hon. Gentleman confirm that resolution 502 does not give carte blanche to the Government for any military action, but calls for the cessation of hostilities and the negotiation of a peaceful resolution to the dispute? Do not the Government recognise that escalation of military activity could result in the deaths of Falkland Islanders—the very people we claim to be defending? Does the right hon. Gentleman not realise that, as military action goes on, the Government seems to look less and less for a diplomatic settlement and more and more for a military one in what seems to many people to be a tragic and misguided escapade?

Mr. Pym: That is not true. The resolution also calls for a withdrawal. That is the part that the hon. Gentleman did not mention. I think constantly of the islanders. They are suffering at the moment under the heel of the invader, whom they did not want and did not invite and who intends to impose upon them a way of life and Government that

[Mr. Pym]

they do not want. It is in their defence that we have taken the steps that we have. Of course they are suffering. Any invaded country suffers. There are too many invaded countries in the world at the moment. We have the islanders very much in mind. It is to their rescue that we have devoted all our efforts for which we have received the support from our friends all around the world.

Mr. Jonathan Aitken (Thanet, East): I warmly welcome my right hon. Friend's constructive communications with the Secretary-General of the United Nations. Does he agree that there still remain formidable problems in communicating with the Argentine junta as its leaders have so far shown themselves to speak with divided, contradictory and, at times incoherent voices? In those circumstances, will my right hon. Friend be exceedingly cautious about negotiating terms for a ceasefire or anything else until the Argentine has shown, by its deeds, that it is withdrawing its troops from the Falklands?

Mr. Pym: Yes, I shall show appropriate caution. I shall also show appropriate enthusiasm. There is no doubt that it is exceedingly difficult to negotiate with the Argentine, as the construction of the Government there is such that sometimes the decision of the President or of the Foreign Secretary is easily overthrown—sometimes in the middle of the night. It is not easy to negotiate with them. Nevertheless, I shall continue to bear in mind, as I believe I have all along, the factors to which my hon. Friend referred.

Mr. D. A. Trippier (Rossendale): In view of the events of the past few days, is it correct to assume that the former initiatives that were taken by Mr. Haig are now interlinked with those pursued by the Peruvians?

Mr. Pym: The proposals that were produced by the United States a week or 10 days ago but which were turned down by the Argentines are now over. Since then, a number of Governments have produced ideas. The ideas on which we are now working are a combination of United States proposals and proposals from the President of Peru. It is a mixture.

Several Hon. Members *rose*—

Mr. Speaker: Order. I propose to call three more hon. Members from each side and then to move on.

Dr. David Owen (Plymouth, Devonport): Is the Foreign Secretary aware that we strongly support his insistence on linking any early ceasefire with the prompt withdrawal of Argentine forces, no doubt with phased withdrawal of British forces from the Southern Atlantic as well?

Will the right hon. Gentleman give a little more detail about the activities of the Peruvian Government? Is there any chance of the Peruvians actually putting down proposals rather than going into a formal Security Council debate?

Does the right hon. Gentleman recognise that many people in the world now expect some clear indication of the British Government's long-term position? Will he come forward with a positive welcome for the concept of trusteeship councils?

Mr. Pym: I am grateful for the right hon. Gentleman's first remark.

Some proposals that originated entirely in Peru have now been, as it were, absorbed in the other negotiations designed and thought up by the United States. I have made a constructive contribution to the latest suggestions, and I hope that out of them will come a proposition with some chance of success. I cannot say more than that at this stage. The United States Secretary of State is in close touch with Peru. I think that working in that way, through them and their friends of the Argentines, may be a good way to negotiate with the Argentines.

As to the long term, Her Majesty's Government have an open mind about what might be the ultimate solution. The United Nations trusteeship concept is most certainly one of the possibilities and may eventually prove to be a highly suitable one. Whether it will match the needs of the situation later, I do not know, but I would not exclude anything. I think that I can give a reasonably positive response to the right hon. Gentleman on that, but that is in no way to prejudice the matter. It is certainly among the concepts that can be considered.

Mr. Norman St. John-Stevans (Chelmsford): Will my right hon. Friend reiterate from the Dispatch Box that it was in support of our diplomacy that the overwhelming majority in the House supported the dispatch of the task force to the South Atlantic and that that resolution still holds good? I congratulate my right hon. Friend and wish him well in his efforts to secure a diplomatic solution to the crisis, as that is what the overwhelming majority of people want—not an escalation of violence.

Mr. Pym: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for what he said. The strategy must be seen as a comprehensive goal. The diplomatic activity, the economic pressure, the task force and the military pressure are all part of the same process of bringing pressure to bear on the Argentines to secure, one hopes by peaceful means, the withdrawal that everybody wants.

Mr. Donald Stewart (Western Isles): I should like to associate my hon. Friend the Member for Dundee, East (Mr. Wilson) and myself with the expressions of sympathy for those who lost their lives in the recent action.

Does the Foreign Secretary accept that the dispatch of the task force, combined with diplomacy, which was wholly justified, seems to have come to an end as a police action, and that the next stage must be negotiation or all-out war? In those circumstances, and in view of what he said in answer to an earlier question about the eventual settlement of the dispute, will the right hon. Gentleman confirm that he will continue to press for negotiation and a ceasefire concurrently with the removal of Argentine troops from the Falkland Islands?

Mr. Pym: I am grateful for what the right hon. Gentleman has said. I assure him that I shall certainly continue those efforts. As for the long term, that should be negotiated and discussed around the table with the parties involved and others in whatever forum is thought best at the time. My immediate concern—and I believe it is the immediate concern of the House—is how to reach a position in which such negotiations are possible. That requires withdrawal and a ceasefire. It requires peace again. However difficult it may be, I am doing everything possible to try to achieve that.

Sir Frederic Bennett (Torbay): In view of all the remarks about principles today, will my right hon. Friend

reclarify for the benefit of all of us the principles which, in his view and ours, morally justify our intervention? I understand them to be, first, the self-determination of the people of the Falkland Islands and, secondly, that in this day and age acts of unprovoked aggression shall not succeed. The two are linked, but they are not necessarily the same. I say that in view of the remarks of the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, who compared the number of casualties with the number of Falkland Islanders. That may have relevance to the first principle, but it has none at all to whether in this day and age acts of unprovoked aggression shall be allowed to succeed.

Mr. Pym: We are in business to prevent a military dictatorship and an undemocratic Government from imposing on a smaller country, by aggression and invasion, a type of government that the people of the smaller country do not want. The principles that moved Members of the House are set out in the United Nations Charter in the principles of democratic rights and so forth. I think that people throughout the world understand very well what this is all about.

During my recent visit to the United States, I went out of my way to emphasise time and again that this was not just a British problem but one in which many other countries had an interest, particularly the democracies and the small countries, many of which are fearful enough already. If we could achieve success in this case, one hopes by peaceful means, I believe that the world would heave a sigh of relief and that, for the ensuing few years at least, it would be a more peaceful, stable and less fearful place in which to live.

Several Hon. Members rose—

Mr. Speaker: Order. It has become clear to me that, to be fair to the larger parties as well as to the minority parties, I shall have to call two more hon. Members than I had intended from each side to enable me to achieve a balance.

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): Is there now any prospect that, with the help of the United Nations Secretary-General and perhaps the Peruvian Government, the real holders of power in the Argentine junta may be brought into the deliberations, as Mr. Costa Mendez clearly had his authority to negotiate a settlement cut from under his feet at a crucial moment?

Mr. Pym: I am not in a position to answer that question competently, but the signs are that the junta makes up its own mind with the generals and admirals and anyone else it cares to consult. I can only hope that a positive answer will be forthcoming if we can reach a situation in which proposals can be put to the Argentines.

Mr. Ian Lloyd (Havant and Waterloo): The House and the country clearly wish my right hon. Friend well in any negotiations that he thinks it worthwhile to undertake and which do not prejudice our fundamental national objectives, but is it not preferable that we should recognise, sooner rather than later, that failing a negotiated settlement, the task force will not be able to achieve its objectives unless the Argentines are not capable of operating missile-carrying aircraft from any runway within striking distance of the carrier fleet?

Mr. Pym: Naturally, the military aspects are being considered in great depth, and possible plans are being prepared. That is entirely right, because we have a task

force operating in the South Atlantic. But let us at present concentrate our minds on trying to achieve a peaceful settlement, which is what the House wants.

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras, South): Does the Foreign Secretary agree that there have been serious shortcomings in the conduct of Britain's foreign affairs in that, having set out to build up military pressure and at the same time to seek a diplomatic solution to the problem, the Government found themselves building up military pressure at a time when the Haig initiative had collapsed and the Government had failed to make arrangements at the United Nations or anywhere else for another mediator to be on hand?

Mr. Pym: I can only say to the hon. Gentleman that, without military pressure, there would be no chance whatever of an Argentine withdrawal.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the brave men and women of our Armed Services in the task force are shouldering the burden for the whole world in upholding law and order? Does he realise that the longer negotiations continue, the greater will be the danger to them? Has the Argentine junta or any of its representatives given any indication at all that it is prepared to withdraw from the Falkland Islands in accordance with part of Security Council resolution 502 which, I remind the House, was passed, with much support for us, a month ago?

Mr. Pym: On the latter point, there has been all too little indication so far. On the former point, I do not see our diplomatic efforts as in any way conflicting with what is happening to our task force. The task force has its operating instructions and is doing its job as best it can. That in no way conflicts with the diplomatic efforts that we are making. I hope that that reassures my hon. Friend.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): Is it not now opportune for the United Nations and its members to act under article 41 of the charter and to impose much greater economic sanctions on the Argentine? Unless that is done—and, I hope, subsequently lifted—why should the Argentines now agree to a negotiated settlement?

Mr. Pym: I suppose if they come to the conclusion that it is in their interest. Of course, it would be helpful if the United Nations passed such a resolution, and if that resolution were than carried out, but I doubt whether that would happen.

Mr. Eldon Griffiths (Bury St. Edmunds): As my right hon. Friend appeared to imply that a temporary cessation of hostilities might form part of the current proposals, will he assure us that the British Government will agree to no ceasefire if its only or main effect were to reduce the military pressure on the Argentine and enable the Argentine to consolidate its illegal occupation of the islands?

Mr. Pym: As I said earlier, arrangements for a ceasefire are part and parcel of a withdrawal. I certainly have in mind what my hon. Friend said.

Mr. Healey: I thank the right hon. Gentleman again for the frank way in which he has answered questions, and I hope that he will not hesitate to come back to the House. I thank him, too, for the increasing emphasis that he is placing on the United Nations. I say, once again, that there is a risk that, unless we take an early initiative within the

[Mr. Healey]

United Nations, we may find that our action is pre-empted by representatives in the Security Council whose interests are by no means as benign or well-informed as our own.

Finally, the Opposition will wish to keep under consideration the proper date on which the House should have another debate on the matter. If we reach a view on the matter, I hope that it will be supported by the Government.

Mr. Pym: I thank the right hon. Gentleman for his supportive remarks. The fact that the House of Commons has broadly the same desires can do nothing but help the operations, both diplomatic and military, that are in hand at present. I am not convinced that another initiative by us in the United Nations would help. It is a possible option, but at the moment we have resolution 502, which has to be, but has not yet been, carried out. I have to bear in mind carefully how it is to our best advantage and to the advantage of securing a peaceful settlement to take any further initiative in the United Nations. Nevertheless, I am most grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for what he said.

Business Committees

4.23 pm

Mr. John Roper (Farnworth): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I wish to raise a matter on Standing Order No. 43. I make it clear at the outset that I do not wish to challenge your unfettered freedom to nominate whoever you consider proper to a Business Committee. However, I raise this issue in the light of the nominations that you have made to the Business Committee on the Employment Bill, which appear in the annex to the Votes and Proceedings today. I submit that, in making further nominations to the Business Committee, you might consider the precedents of your appointments to Business Committees in the last Parliament, when you attempted to ensure that the representation on Business Committees reflected the "composition of the House".

I realise the paragraph 2 of Standing Order No. 62, which refers to the "composition of the House" in the appointment of Committees by the Committee of Selection, does not apply directly to Business Committees, but I submit that, in exercising your unfettered discretion in appointing Business Committees, you should consider the representation not only of the Government and of the official Opposition but of the remainder of the House.

It is my understanding that if the conventions followed under Standing Order No. 62 were to be applied by you in making your nominations to a Business Committee of seven Members, as you have done today, there would be representation on such a Committee not merely from the Government and the official Opposition but also from the remainder of the House.

Without in any way wishing to challenge your appointments, I ask you to bear those points in making further nominations to Business Committees.

Mr. Ron Leighton (Newham, North-East): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Is there any logical reason why the Social Democratic Party should have any representation on this Business Committee? I ask that not only because so few of its members have been elected as Social Democrats, but because on Second Reading the Social Democratic Party voted for the Bill and supported the Government. That, at least, is what I think happened. Fifteen Members voted for the Bill, five voted against, and five abstained. The broad mass of the party supported the Government, so what possible right does the party have to a seat on the Business Committee?

Mr. Speaker: I am grateful to the hon. Member for Farnworth (Mr. Roper) for giving me notice of his point of order. There is substance in the hon. Gentleman's contention that a case can be advanced for the smaller parties to be represented on the Business Committee of seven hon. Members. However, I should make it clear that while Standing Order No. 43 places the responsibility of nominating the Business Committee on the Speaker, it has never been the practice of the Chair to invite hon. Members to serve on that Committee, but rather to accept an assurance that the membership proposed to him is agreed both as to names and party composition. I understand that discussions are now proceeding through the usual channels on this matter. There is agreement about minority party representation, but disagreement about which hon. Member should be nominated for the Committee. I shall look into the matter.

Mr. Roper: I am very grateful to you, Mr. Speaker. I hope that you will look into this matter further, to ensure that, as far as possible on Business Committees there is a fair representation of all parts of the House.

Mr. Speaker: I shall do my best, although it is a little late in the present case.

England and Wales

Expenditure at November 1981

October 1980

prices

Polytechnics

Other Major
Establishments

Unit cost £

3,612

1,890

Comparable information for October 1981 is not yet available and it is not possible to identify comparable figures for polytechnics established by October 1970 from the returns available for further education.

"How to Win Sponsors and Influence People"

Mr. Steen asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the cost to public funds of the publication by the Central Office of Information on behalf of his Department of the booklet, "How to Win Sponsors and Influence People"; how many of these booklets have been printed; how they have been distributed; and at what price.

Mr. Channon: 25,000 copies of the booklet "How to Win Sponsors and Influence People" were printed in 1981, at a cost of £9,000. The booklet is intended to assist arts organisations as part of the Government's regional campaign to encourage business sponsorship of the arts. It is available free and some 11,000 copies have been distributed so far, in various ways.

Overseas Students

Mr. Cormack asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he will publish provisional figures of overseas student enrolments in 1981-82.

Mr. Waldegrave: Provisional figures of overseas student enrolments in 1981-82 are given in Statistical Bulletin 7/82, which has been published today. This includes estimates of first-year students by country of origin for selected countries. Copies of this bulletin are available in the libraries of both Houses.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

El Salvador (Elections)

18. Sir William van Straubenzee asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he has yet received the full report of the British Government's observers on recent elections held in El Salvador.

36. Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the election in El Salvador.

Mr. Onslow: A copy of the British observers' report on the elections in El Salvador was placed in the Library of the House on 22 April. It shows an exceptionally high proportion of the eligible electorate voted, demonstrating that the Salvadoran people wish to see their future decided democratically. The report concluded that the results reflected the sentiments of the Salvadoran people and that the conduct of the election was fair.

Indonesia

20. Mr. Newens asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on British relations with Indonesia.

Mr. Rifkind: Our relations with Indonesia are very good. Our aim is to continue to strengthen our links with Indonesia in both economic and political spheres.

Gibraltar

24. Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he plans to meet the Spanish Foreign Minister to discuss the future of Gibraltar.

Mr. Hurd: My right hon. Friend agreed with the Spanish Foreign Minister that they should meet on the 25 June to begin the negotiations, envisaged in the Lisbon statement of April 1980, aimed at overcoming all the differences between Great Britain and Spain over Gibraltar. Direct communications between Spain and Gibraltar will be re-established on the same day in accordance with the Lisbon statement.

Falkland Islands

25. Sir Patrick Wall asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the dispute between the United Kingdom and the Argentine.

26. Mr. Ioan Evans asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the latest situation in the Falkland Islands.

40. Mr. Frank Allaun asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the latest moves to negotiate a peaceful settlement of the Falkland Islands dispute.

38. Mr. Brocklebank-Fowler asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the latest situation in the Falkland Islands; and if he will make a statement.

33. Mr. David Atkinson asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the Falkland Islands.

Mr. Pym: I refer my hon. Friends and the hon. Members to my statement in the House today.

37. Mr. Bidwell asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many of the civilians on the Falkland Islands at the latest date are (a) men, (b) women and (c) children.

Mr. Onslow: At the end of April the civil population of the Falkland Islands was:

Men	- 749 (including 133 boys between ages of 15 and 20)
Women	- 502
Children	- 427 (up to age of 15).

South Lebanon

27. Mr. Archie Hamilton asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether the information available to him indicates the possibility of an invasion of South Lebanon by Israel.

Mr. Hurd: The Israeli Air Force carried out a series of attacks on targets in Lebanon on 21 April. The Government expressed their deep concern about these attacks at the time, as did the 10 members of the European Community in a statement issued on the 25 April. We particularly deplore attacks on areas where civilians are

in the area while Vietnam finds it necessary to maintain substantial numbers of troops in neighbouring countries. At least 50,000 Vietnamese troops have been stationed in Laos for several years. Out of an overall total of about 225,000 refugees in Thailand, 87,000 are from Laos. We maintain diplomatic relations with the Government of Laos, as do a number of Western and ASEAN Countries.

Namibia

Mr. Eldon Griffiths asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will seek to arrange for defence attachés representing the Western contact group that is negotiating with South Africa on the future of Namibia to visit the operational areas on the borders of Angola where South African and SWAPO forces are engaged in hostilities for the purpose of advising himself and the other four Foreign Ministers on the following points that are germane to the proposed ceasefire and United Nations-supervised elections, namely, the military situation, the feasibility of a 50 kilometre demilitarised zone, the security and welfare of the Bushmen people in Western Caprivi as and when South African forces are withdrawn, and any relevant evidence on recent SWAPO clashes with UNITA.

Mr. Onslow: The Five, with the United Nations Secretary-General and his staff, will be dealing with most of these and other questions in the second phase of the Namibia negotiations. For the moment, we do not envisage a visit on the lines suggested, but would not rule one out at a later stage.

Passports

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if the new passport incorporating a machine-readable page will include any personal information other than the holder's name, nationality, and date and place of birth.

Mr. Rifkind: The new passport like the present one, will also include the holder's sex. No other personal information will appear but the holder will continue to have the option of inserting on the back page the particulars of two relatives or friends who could be contacted in the event of accident.

DEFENCE

Argentina

Mr. Frank Allaun asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many Argentine pilots have been trained in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Wiggin: While it is not normally our practice to reveal details of training provided at MOD establishments for overseas countries, Service records going back to 1974 show no evidence that Argentine military personnel have been trained as pilots in MOD establishments.

Jurby Bombing Range

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the radius and location of the offshore Jurby bombing range; whether it has been moved during the last 10 years, and what was its previous location; what

representations he has had regarding the siting of the bombing range; and whether he has had discussions with the Isle of Man authorities regarding its location and the location of low-flying aircraft.

Mr. Wiggin: Jurby Head bombing range is situated off the north-west coast of the Isle of Man. This location which is well known has not been altered in the past 10 years. Negotiations to change the siting of the targets on the range have been in progress with the Isle of Man Government since last year.

Isle of Man (Low-flying Aircraft)

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether any assurances have been given by his Department regarding low flying by aircraft over the Isle of Man.

Mr. Wiggin: Military low flying is forbidden over the land area of the Isle of Man.

Army Training (Canada)

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether Army units are still being sent to Canada for training; at what cost; and whether any consideration was given to the use of the Falkland Islands for this type of training.

Mr. Wiggin: Army units continue to be sent to training areas in Canada. The cost for 1982-83 is estimated to be in the order of £30 million. The Falkland Islands are not suited to the heavy armoured training carried out at Suffield in Canada, and the distance of the Islands from the United Kingdom inhibits their use as an infantry training outlet.

Boarding School Allowances

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Secretary of State for Defence what was the total boarding school allowances paid to members of the Armed Forces for children attending grant-aided and independent schools in Scotland in the latest year.

Mr. Wiggin: I regret that this information cannot be provided without disproportionate effort.

Defence Equipment Programme

Dr. McDonald asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what is the current average cost per job created by the defence equipment programme;

(2) what is the current average cost per job created by the defence equipment programme in (a) ordnance and small arms, including explosives, (b) instrument engineering, (c) radio and electronics, (d) shipbuilding and marine engineering and (e) aerospace equipment.

Mr. Pattie: The primary purpose of the defence equipment programme is to meet the equipment requirements of the Armed Forces; furthermore, increased Government spending does not lead to a permanently lower level of unemployment.

During calendar year 1980, the latest complete year for which figures are available, we estimate that, for the major United Kingdom defence contractors, average sales per employee were as follows:

arms, and in particular refuse requests where we think that the equipment in question could be used to suppress human rights in the country concerned.

Sir Bernard Braine: While I agree that there should be a tightening of controls, if not a ban, on the export of arms to authoritarian regimes, particularly those that threaten their neighbours, will my right hon. Friend give the whole House the assurance that it requires and say that if a small democracy such as Belize is threatened by such a country, we shall stand by it?

Mr. Hurd: I think that my hon. Friend will have heard the comprehensive answers that have already been given.

United Nations (Disarmament Session)

21. **Mr. Chapman** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will report further progress on the preparations for the United Nations special session on disarmament in June.

Mr. Hurd: The final meeting of the preparatory committee for the special session is taking place in New York. The spring session of the Committee on Disarmament in Geneva ended on 21 April and a report of its work will be submitted to the special session. Mr. Frank Judd, the director of Voluntary Service Overseas and a member of the national executive of the United Nations Association, has agreed to accompany the United Kingdom delegation as an independent adviser in liaison with British non-governmental organisations.

Mr. Chapman: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for that information. As he knows that it is the fervent wish of millions of people that the special session should be successful and produce practical measures to bring about multilateral disarmament will he give an assurance that the Prime Minister will lead the discussions, with a view to obtaining international agreement on banning the manufacture, as well as the stockpiling and use, of all chemical weapons?

Mr. Hurd: As my hon. Friend knows, the Prime Minister has said that she intends to lead our delegation at the beginning of the United Nations special session. We have paid great attention to the possibility of making progress on the chemical weapons question and we have tabled proposals—which we hope will be helpful—for dealing with the main obstacle of verification. We hope that all those concerned will look favourably on our proposals so that we can make progress.

Mr. James Lamond: What have the Government done as a result of the agreement reached at the last United Nations special session on disarmament in 1978?

Mr. Hurd: Both the last Government and this Government have tried to take every opportunity to help the negotiations between Governments. They are the only possible basis for progress on arms control and disarmament. The first and second special sessions can encourage, stimulate and spur on, but ultimately agreement is reached only by negotiation between Governments.

Mr. Henderson: Does my right hon. Friend agree that progress towards disarmament will be greatly aided if peace-loving nations are freed from the fear of aggression

by countries that do not believe in democracy and if the United Nations has the ability to insist on the implementation of resolutions, such as resolution 502?

Mr. Hurd: My hon. Friend is absolutely right and I entirely agree with him.

Mr. Norman Atkinson: Why do the Government practice dual standards in such matters? Why do they oppose, as a matter of principle, the proliferation of nuclear, biological or chemical weapons but believe in the proliferation of conventional weapons because they believe in arms sales?

Mr. Hurd: We have answered many questions on conventional arms sales. When friends in the Third world or elsewhere come to us saying that they have established a need for a new piece of equipment, we encourage them to buy British instead of Russian or French. That seems perfectly reasonable. However, we must deal with the tensions and disputes that create the demand for arms.

Argentine Trade Embargo

22. **Mr. Dykes** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he is satisfied with the workings of the European Economic Community ban on Argentine imports to all member States.

Mr. Onslow: Yes, Sir. The solidarity that our Community partners showed so quickly and effectively has been an essential element in the international pressure on Argentina to withdraw from the Falkland Islands. The ban, which affects about a quarter of Argentina's exports, will have a serious impact on Argentina's economy in the absence of an early political settlement.

Mr. Dykes: Is my hon. Friend entirely satisfied that the ban is working fully and effectively in all respects? With 12 days to go before the renewal date, does he anticipate that, unfortunately, it will have to be renewed?

Mr. Onslow: We have no reason to suppose that the ban is not working effectively, although obviously its full effects will be felt only with time. If the situation requires, my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary will ask his colleagues in the Community to renew the ban when he sees them on 8 and 9 May.

Mr. Skinner: Will the Minister confirm that, notwithstanding the initial statement from the Common Market countries, it will be necessary—quite apart from the question of a renewal date—for many of the Common Market countries to pass the appropriate legislation to enforce the ban, as reported in the *communiqué*? Is it not a fact that some of the Common Market countries are very hesitant about enforcing the ban by such legislation?

Mr. Onslow: If we think it necessary to ask the Community countries to take action to implement the ban fully, I hope that they will not hesitate to pass the necessary legislation.

Mr. Marlow: Since the battles that we are fighting in the south Atlantic are being fought on behalf of all our Community partners and since they accept that, will my hon. Friend ask them whether they are prepared to make a substantial contribution from the Community budget towards fighting everybody's battles? I am sure that they would be only too happy to comply.

Mr. Onslow: I am sure that my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary will note my hon. Friend's views.

Poland

23. Mr. Greenway asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent steps he has taken to persuade the Polish Government to terminate martial law in Poland.

Mr. Rifkind: I refer my hon. Friend to the statement by my right hon. Friend the Member for Spelthorne (Mr. Atkins) on 5 February. These measures were designed to persuade the Polish authorities to lift martial law, release those detained and resume a genuine dialogue with the Church and Solidarity. The demonstrations in Poland over the weekend are further evidence that the continuation of martial law is unacceptable to the Polish people. We are continuing to make our views clear to the Polish authorities whenever appropriate opportunities arise.

Mr. Greenway: May I thank my right hon. Friend for his reply and underline his recognition of the fact that the Polish people showed their distress at the appalling situation imposed on them by the Jaruzelski regime over the weekend? Will the Government continue to do everything possible to make the Polish regime lift martial law and to set the Polish people free once more?

Mr. Rifkind: My hon. Friend is correct. Last week, the Polish Government announced the release of some detainees and some relaxation in the conditions of martial law. However, my hon. Friend and the House will have noticed that only yesterday aspects of martial law were reintroduced, which must be a matter of great concern to the people of Poland and to the West. We shall take every opportunity to impress upon the Polish Government our concern that a genuine dialogue should be reintroduced and that martial law should be removed.

Mr. George Robertson: Will the Minister accept that few of those who saw the television pictures showing the military action taken against the civilian demonstrators in Poland over the weekend were anything other than horrified? Despite the Government's preoccupation with other matters, will they ensure that the views of the British people are fairly reflected and that the Polish Government understand our outrage?

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman is correct. The large number of people who turned out to demonstrate on the streets of Warsaw on May Day showed the strong support that Solidarity retains. Only last week I met the Polish ambassador to the United Kingdom and impressed on him that the British Government saw the removal of martial law, the beginning of a dialogue with the Polish people and the release of all detainees as necessary preconditions to the resumption of full and normal relations between this country and Poland.

Dr. Mawhinney: Is my hon. Friend aware that many, if not all, of those of Polish descent who live in this country are unable to telephone their relatives in Poland? Will he make representations to the Polish Government to have the telephone link re-established?

Mr. Rifkind: We shall certainly do all in our power to enable those in the United Kingdom who wish to maintain contact with friends or relatives in Poland to do so. My hon. Friend will know that the matter is ultimately within the control of the Polish authorities.

EUROPEAN COMMUNITY

Common Foreign Policy

43. Mr. Knox asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on progress towards a common European Economic Community foreign policy.

45. Mr. Hicks asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on progress towards a common European Economic Community foreign policy.

Mr. Hurd: In the London report on political co-operation agreed in October 1981 during our Presidency, Foreign Ministers of the Ten reaffirmed and strengthened their commitment to consultations on foreign policy questions and agreed on measures to improve the speed and efficiency of political co-operation. The swift and effective action by our partners following the invasion of the Falkland Islands by Argentina is a striking demonstration of the solidarity which co-operation in foreign policy has made possible and which is an important pressure on Argentina to withdraw from the Falkland Islands.

Mr. Knox: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the events of the last few weeks have emphasised the importance and necessity of having a common EEC foreign policy?

Mr. Hurd: Indeed. This is an increasingly important factor in the world, and we are working hard to keep the Ten together.

Mr. Hicks: Do not these developments, not only in the South Atlantic but in the Middle East, emphasise the need for a continuing common foreign policy so that we do not always find ourselves in the situation of having to respond to international developments?

Mr. Hurd: I think that is right. We are working in that direction, and that is why we have strengthened the machinery. However, the machinery is not much good unless there is a continuing political will.

Mr. Christopher Price: What is the policy of the EEC Foreign Ministers towards help, both military and otherwise, for the military dictatorship in Turkey, which invaded a Commonwealth country in respect of which Britain has solemn treaty obligations to protect yet did absolutely nothing whatever about it? If Turkey either harmed the rest of Cyprus or invaded the Greek islands, would Britain go to her aid, in concert with the other EEC countries?

Mr. Hurd: Turkey is a member of the North Atlantic alliance. We are keen that she should remain so and keep in the closest touch with us. Questions about Cyprus are a different matter, but as to internal developments in Turkey, we have noticed with satisfaction the timetable for the return to democracy.

Mr. Jim Spicer: Does my right hon. Friend accept that the quite disgraceful way in which the Irish Government broke ranks with our partners in the Community constitutes a major setback to all our hopes for such a common foreign policy?

Mr. Hurd: The Irish Government joined with the rest of the Ten in the practical measures against Argentina,

which have played a big part in securing support for Britain. We think that the Irish Government made a mistake yesterday and that the line they took could be a hindrance to getting the peaceful settlement that we and they want.

Mr. Heffer: Has the right hon. Gentleman taken note of the statement by Chancellor Schmidt, who has suggested that we should be moving towards a ceasefire? Has he also taken note of today's speech, reported on the tapes, by the Foreign Secretary of Denmark? Do not those, and the views of other countries, clearly indicate that while they are happy to support economic sanctions, they are not prepared to support an all-out conflict that could perhaps get worse and lead Britain into something much more unfavourable?

Mr. Hurd: We understand the concern that our friends express, and share the view that we need to move towards a peaceful settlement. I think they understand that as part of the movement towards a successful settlement, the solidarity of the European Ten is of enormous importance.

Political Co-operation

44. **Sir Anthony Meyer** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether, to achieve increased political co-operation within the European Economic Community, he will propose specific measures to improve consultation and concerting of policies in other than economic matters.

Mr. Hurd: As I have already indicated, the London report on political co-operation, agreed in October 1981, contains a number of measures designed to improve the working of political co-operation. These are being carried out.

We are also discussing a number of proposals for improving co-operation between member States and within the Community in a variety of ways. As my hon. Friend knows, there is also already excellent co-operation in the field of anti-terrorism.

Sir Anthony Meyer: Is it not clear that membership of the Community is the readiest weapon in the hands of the British Government to help them achieve their political objectives? But is it not equally clear that this membership poses a corresponding obligation not to place too great a strain on European Community solidarity and also imposes an obligation upon us to support, when the time comes, the vital national objectives of other members of the Community?

Mr. Hurd: My hon. Friend is right. These obligations lie upon all member States, and we are doing our best to make that clear.

Mr. Pavitt: Is the Minister satisfied that there is sufficient co-ordination between the political advances made in the Community and those of the Council of Europe? During his visit to Strasbourg last week, was the right hon. Gentleman aware of the motion on Turkey put forward by the Socialist Group of 21 countries, and does he take that into consideration in his negotiations on political matters with the Ten?

Mr. Hurd: Yes, we try to keep the two in harmony as far as we can. There was a good discussion on Turkey between Ministers in the Council of Europe last week, in which the Turkish Foreign Minister played a helpful part.

Mr. Bill Walker: When my right hon. Friend discusses co-operation with his Common Market partners, will he remind them that the EEC represents about half of the world's democracies and that what we are doing in the Falklands is defending democracy and the rule of law?

Mr. Hurd: I think that our partners clearly understand that when they act to support us they are not simply doing us a favour but are supporting principles of international law that are extremely important for them as well.

Mr. Hooley: Is the Minister aware that political co-operation among Western European countries is perfectly feasible without the Treaty of Rome and that the United Kingdom's relations with other European countries were happier, more constructive and more productive before we joined the Community than since?

Mr. Hurd: If the hon. Gentleman and his friends believe that, they are living in cloud-cuckoo-land. The fact is that political co-operation has been painfully and slowly constructed on the basis of the Community.

Budget

46. **Mr. Spearing** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement concerning current negotiations within the European Economic Community concerning adjustment of the British contribution to the Community budget.

Mr. Pym: The Foreign Ministers of the Community had a thorough discussion of the budget problem on 27 April and are agreed on the need for an urgent solution. The next discussion of this subject may take place during the meeting already planned for 8 and 9 May. I have been continuing to press for a settlement which will be fair for Britain and fair for the Community too.

Mr. Spearing: Will the right hon. Gentleman give an assurance that Britain will accept nothing less than the existing arrangements, preferably for a period of four rather than three years? In any consideration of political co-operation, is it not important that acceptance of our requirements as fair and just should be the first step to be taken by our so-called partners?

Mr. Pym: It is a pity that the arrangement agreed in 1980 did not endure longer. I should also like to negotiate a longer arrangement this time. I cannot say whether that will be possible, but my predecessor worked for that. Indeed, I have worked for that since taking office and will continue to do so. However, we shall have to see how the discussions go.

Mr. Stokes: In any discussions on the budget or wider aspects will my right hon. Friend remind our EEC partners that after the last war it was British forces that liberated all those countries? We expect their support now that we are trying to liberate British territory.

Mr. Pym: My hon. Friend's remarks are perfectly true. However, we are grateful to the member States—I have expressed our gratitude to them—for the support that they have given us over the issue that is now causing us so much immediate difficulty. They came to our assistance positively and speedily and that has been very helpful.

Mr. Guy Barnett: Will the right hon. Gentleman give an assurance that the United Kingdom's bargaining position has not been circumscribed by concessions made

House of Commons

Wednesday 5 May 1982

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[Mr. SPEAKER in the Chair]

Oral Answers to Questions

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Falkland Islands

The following questions stood upon the Order Paper:

2. **Mr. Canavan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will make a statement about the situation in the Falkland Islands.

8. **Mr. Cryer:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on negotiations over the Falkland Islands.

9. **Mr. Neubert:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when next he expects to meet Secretary Haig to discuss the Falkland Islands.

10. **Mr. Aitken:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the Falkland Islands situation.

19. **Mr. Trippier:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what has been the progress in negotiations with the Argentines over the Falkland Islands.

Mr. Speaker: Mr. Canavan.

The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Francis Pym): May I ask the hon. Gentleman to await my statement at 3.30 pm? That also applies to questions 8, 9, 10 and 19.

Mr. Speaker: Will those hon. Members whose questions are to be answered await the statement of the Foreign Secretary?

Mr. Cryer: Certainly, to help the House, Mr. Speaker.

Middle East

3. **Mr. Campbell-Savours** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will list those persons and organisations with whom Lord Carrington held discussions in Jerusalem during his recent visit to the Middle East.

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Douglas Hurd): During his visit to Israel from 30 March to 1 April, my right hon. and noble Friend Lord Carrington met the President, Prime Minister, Defence Minister, the Speaker and other members of the Israeli Knesset. Lord Carrington also visited the Weizmann Institute of Science.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Is it not significant that the then Foreign Secretary was prevented by the Israeli authorities from meeting Mayor Shaka of Nablus and Mayor Khalaf of Ramallah? If the noble Lord had met them, does the right hon. Gentleman recognise that he would have found two very civilised representatives of West Bank thinking, not Palestinian terrorism as they are being presented in the Western press? Will he protest to the Israeli Government about the treatment of those two mayors and about the lack of civil rights in the West Bank under Israeli jurisdiction?

Mr. Hurd: The hon. Gentleman is not quite right. The idea was that the Deputy Under-Secretary of State who was with Lord Carrington, Sir John Leahy, should meet a number of West Bank personalities. He could not meet all those whom he wished to meet, but he had useful conversations with two of them.

Mr. Walters: Quite rightly, the attention of the House is concentrated on the Falkland Islands. Does my right hon. Friend agree that the principle of self-determination, which we all uphold, is just as valid when applied to the Palestinians and that there will be a grave danger of war, and certainly no chance of lasting peace, unless that principle is recognised?

Mr. Hurd: I agree with my hon. Friend about the dangers in the Middle East and about self-determination.

Mr. Hooley: Will the Minister convey to Mr. Begin that a Bantu-style arrangement, under which 1¼ million Palestinian Arabs are third-class citizens, is no more acceptable in the Middle East than it is in South Africa?

Mr. Hurd: My noble Friend Lord Carrington went over that ground thoroughly with Mr. Begin. I do not think that there is any doubt about our position.

Mr. Lawrence: Is not the self-determination that we are talking about the self-determination of the Palestinian Arabs, not the self-determination of the Palestinians taking their orders from the PLO in Beirut?

Mr. Hurd: We are talking about the right of the people in the occupied territories to determine their own future—a right which so far has not been granted.

Dictatorships (Government Policy)

4. **Mr. Soley** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will review the policy of Her Majesty's Government towards those Governments which are dictatorships, following the invasion of the Falkland Islands by Argentina.

Mr. Pym: The policy of Her Majesty's Government towards all foreign Governments is kept under constant review.

Mr. Soley: Does the Foreign Secretary accept that it is high time that Britain and the West in general developed foreign policies that demonstrate beyond reasonable doubt that we support democracies and oppose authoritarian dictatorships?

Mr. Pym: At the present time we are showing good evidence of doing just that.

Mr. Wilkinson: In reviewing the Government's policies towards countries which are under dictatorial rule, will the Government address themselves to the problem of

the Eritrean people who are fighting against the armed might of the Ethiopian regime which is backed by the Soviet Union? Will the Government also give assistance to the friendly Government of Somalia next door?

Mr. Pym: I shall consider what my hon. Friend has said about those two countries.

Mr. Alexander W. Lyon: Does the Foreign Secretary accept that his conversion against the dictatorship in the Argentine was a bit late? Does he further accept that when the present troubles are over it might be better if the Foreign Office were to review our relationships—particularly in regard to selling arms—with dictatorships around the world, especially those in Latin America, as the issue has now obviously changed?

Mr. Pym: There are degrees in everything, and it is difficult sometimes to draw a precise dividing line, but I think the House knows to what the hon. Gentleman is referring. I certainly do. Obviously, there may be a review of our relationships with some countries when the present particularly unfortunate incident is over. I shall keep in mind what the hon. Gentleman said.

Mr. Robert Atkins: When my right hon. Friend carries out that review, will he make it clear to all who read any report that emanates from it that Conservative and Labour Governments have sold arms to the Argentine? Will he also make it clear that members of the previous Labour Government were responsible for selling two type 42 frigates and a number of Canberras to the Argentine Republic and that many of them—particularly the right hon. Members for Brisol, South-East (Mr. Benn) and for Lanark (Dame Judith Hart)—were involved in the decision when it was taken.

Mr. Pym: It is fair to say that Conservative and Labour Governments have always kept their policies on the sale of arms under constant review. All applications for the sale of arms are considered on their merits. That policy applied to the previous Labour Government, as it does to the present Government. Sometimes things work out helpfully and at other times they work out otherwise. The subject is constantly under review. Undoubtedly, many countries have supplied arms to the Argentine in the last 10 or 20 years.

Mr. Clinton Davis: Is it not a fact that the Chilean junta is as blood-stained as the Argentinian junta? Why do the Government continue to enjoy friendly relations with the Chilean Government, especially as that Government have not offered a word of apology to the British Government for their assaults upon the freedom of British citizens in Chile?

Mr. Pym: Our policy is to have normal relations with Chile and other countries, consistent with British interests. In so doing, we have left the Chilean Government in no doubt that their record on human rights has given rise to a great deal of concern here.

Latin America (Diplomatic Representation)

5. **Mr. Foulkes** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received regarding the level of United Kingdom diplomatic representation in Latin America.

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Cranley Onslow): None, Sir.

Mr. Foulkes: Should we not learn from recent events that it is important to keep in touch with the views of the people and Governments of the countries in this vast continent? Will the Government reconsider their decision not to have ambassadorial representation in Nicaragua?

Mr. Onslow: We have no plans to change the present arrangement whereby Her Majesty's ambassador in San Jose is accredited to Managua. The ambassador and his staff have made several visits to Nicaragua this year.

Mr. Bill Walker: Does my hon. Friend agree that British representation in Latin American countries in the past has been largely through our trading links and that we have a good record of trading, other than arms trading?

Mr. Onslow: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for what he said. Perhaps I may take this opportunity to pay a tribute—which I hope the whole House will endorse—to the staff of our missions throughout Latin America for the way in which they are carrying out their task in the current difficult circumstances.

Mr. Clinton Davis: I accept and endorse what the Minister has just said about our diplomatic staff. Does the hon. Gentleman agree that there have been dramatically changed circumstances in Latin America, for obvious reasons, since the Government declared their policy with regard to ambassadorial status in Nicaragua in particular? Does he further agree that it is important, in view of those changing circumstances, to have somebody on the spot all the time?

Mr. Onslow: I know that some members of the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs have expressed concern about the subject in the past. If the Committee has specific recommendations to put to me when it completes its report on the visit to the area, I shall be willing to consider them.

Sir Anthony Kershaw: I understand my hon. Friend's reservations about this particular embassy, but will he bear in mind that the annual cost of the embassy in San Jose is rather less than one torpedo?

Mr. Onslow: I am sure that all relevant factors will be borne in mind.

Mr. Spearing: Irrespective of the formal position concerning accreditation, does the Minister agree that it might be possible to have a permanent British presence in some of the smaller capitals at relatively low cost, and so get the advantage of a listening post, which occasional visits cannot give?

Mr. Onslow: If it should seem to be of advantage to set up the kind of minimission that the hon. Gentleman suggests, we shall give favourable consideration to the idea.

Nuclear Disarmament

6. **Mr. Norman Atkinson** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make it his policy to support any meeting between President Reagan and President Brezhnev with a view to assisting nuclear disarmament.

Mr. Pym: Yes, Sir. We support any direct contact between the Heads of the Governments of the two major nuclear Powers which seems likely to promote agreement on balanced and verifiable reductions in nuclear arms levels.