

LOBBY BRIEFING

time: 11.00 date: 27.5.82

PRIME MINISTER'S DAY

The Prime Minister is working at No 10 most of the day and will be in the House for questions this afternoon.

At 9.30am she chaired a meeting of the Group of Ministers concerned with the Falklands (Foreign Sec., Defence Sec., Home Sec., Chancellor of the Duchy and the Attorney General and the CSD) ending at 10.35am.

CABINET

At 10.30am the Prime Minister chaired a meeting of the Cabinet. (Falkland Islands, Parliamentary Affairs, Foreign Affairs, Community Affairs). All present except S/S Employment who is in Brussels at the Economic and Social Affairs Committee - Attorney General was present for the first item). Ended at 11.30am.

At 11.30am the Prime Minister will chair a meeting of Ministers. (OD - British policy towards Japan, US proposals to control credit to USSR). Ended at 12.40pm.

At 3.15pm the Prime Minister will be in the House for Questions.

PRESS NOTICES

At 11.00am the Appointment of the Lord in Waiting in succession to the Lord Cullen of Ashbourne.

At 11.00am the British Government's formal acceptance of New Zealand's offer of a naval frigate temporarily to the Royal Navy.

IN THE HOUSE

STATEMENTS

After Business Questions at 3.30pm the S/S Health will make a statement on the NHS dispute.

ANSWERS OF INTEREST

No 166 Written 3.30pm: Mr Gary Waller to ask the S/S Education and Science if he will make a statement about the Rayner scrutiny of the Victoria and Albert Museum and the Science Museum. (Answer will announce publication of the report and the Government's decision on some of the recommendations - copies of press notice and report available at 3.30pm when Mr Channon will give a press conference).

No 171 Written: Mr Keith Wickenden to ask the S/S Industry what arrangements are being made to allow private sector suppliers of subscribers' telephone apparatus to obtain approval for their apparatus to be supplied in competition with British Telecom before it is possible for apparatus to be submitted to the new independent approval authority. (Answer will announce new arrangements).

No 174 Written 4.00pm: Mr David Madel to ask the Prime Minister if she will make a statement about the future of Chevening House. (answer will announce that the Foreign Secretary has accepted nomination as the resident - Press Notice available in the Lobby).

No 176 Written 3.30pm: Mr James Pawsey to ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he will make a statement on the new scheme for encouraging voluntary work by unemployed people as announced by the Prime Minister on 27 July 1981 Official Report col 836. (Answer will announce £8 million voluntary service scheme operated by the MSC).

LOBBY BRIEFING

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time:

date:

FALKLANDS

We non-committally told the Lobby that the Falklands would be taken in due time. Referring to the Conservative Backbench Defence Committee briefing by Mr Nott we said we doubted he would have gone beyond building up a little detail of the land battle. It was quite obvious that we were poised for a thrust towards Port Stanley once our supplies and equipment had been landed.

The bombing raids on Stanley were designed to keep the Argentine troops on their toes (or their bottoms). We read out the early MoD statement today about the Stanley bomb raid and the stories about Uganda being put out by BA.

MATERIEL AID

We said that US had offered us materiel aid and were being very helpful. We would not go beyond that. We confirmed that we were looking after our own interests by keeping a close diplomatic watch on third parties who might be sending weapons to Argentina viz our approach in South Africa and the Israeli Jet held on the airport in New York.

DIPLOMACY

We said we would give the UNSG's questions due consideration. But our position was well known. The Argentines could best use the next 7 days by getting off the Island, if they hadn't been forced off by that time.

We were unaware that the Peruvian president considered himself reactivated. He may have written to London, but many people are. The facts which have to be faced are that the Argentines will be driven off - we shall be troublesome if we have to be.

PARLIAMENT

We said the PM had no plans for any statements either in the House or on radio/tv. We confirmed that there were no plans to recall Parliament during the recess and therefore no plans for a debate.

NAVAL LOSSES

We could not confirm whether the captain of the Atlantic Conveyor was missing and referred the Lobby to MoD. We said we were sure a review of the timing of announcement of losses and casualties was being made by MoD.

JL

Falkland Islands

3.32 pm

The Secretary of State for Defence (Mr. John Nott): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a statement.

During the past 24 hours there has been a major increase in operational activity in the South Atlantic.

On the Falkland Islands themselves, three successive raids were made from the task force on the Port Stanley airfield. These raids were successful and all our aircraft returned safely. As a result of the action of the ships and aircraft of the task force, the blockade of the remaining Argentine garrison on the Falklands remains effective.

During last night and during the course of yesterday the loading of heavy supplies into the San Carlos area has continued. Five major supply ships left San Carlos during the night having offloaded their cargoes. The force ashore is fully established with sufficient supplies to carry out its tasks for an extended period, but the build-up will continue, and 5 Brigade is on its way.

Two war ships, including HMS "Coventry", were based to the north, outside the opening of Falkland Sound, to provide early warning of air attack and to provide an air defence screen for the supply ships unloading in San Carlos water.

At approximately 1.30 pm London time an aircraft, probably on a reconnaissance mission, was detected by HMS "Coventry" and was shot down using her Sea Dart missile system. This was followed later in the afternoon by separate attacks by four Argentine Sky Hawks, which were shot down by HMS "Coventry's" Sea Dart, and by Sea Cat and Rapier missiles. This brings the total number of Argentine fixed-wing aircraft destroyed to over 50.

At approximately 7.30 London time a further raid of Sky Hawks approached HMS "Coventry". She was hit by several bombs and suffered severe damage. She later capsized. Initial casualty figures are that 20 members of her crew died in the attack, about 20 were injured and the remainder of her crew of some 280 are safe on board other ships of the task force.

After this attack on HMS "Coventry", at about 8.30, "Atlantic Conveyor", a Merchant Navy ship protected by escorts and employed in the resupply task, was attacked by two Super Etendard aircraft which fired Exocet missiles. She was hit and set on fire. She was loaded with supplies for British forces on the Falkland Islands. She had no Harriers embarked. In this attack, four of those on board "Atlantic Conveyor" were killed and a small number were injured. The remainder of those 170 who were on board are now safe on other ships.

Yesterday's losses were tragic both for the Royal Navy and the Merchant Marine. The House will join with me in expressing our admiration and gratitude for the bravery and dedication of all concerned. Our thoughts are with the families of the men at this tragic time.

I should like, Mr. Speaker, to make a general comment on the conduct of operations to recover the Falklands so far.

During the past seven weeks the Royal Navy has assembled, organised and despatched over 100 ships, involving over 25,000 men and women, 8,000 miles away to the other end of the world. The task force has recaptured South Georgia and successfully accomplished a hazardous amphibious landing of around 5,000 men without a single fatal land casualty. The morale of our forces is high. By any

historical standard, this will be seen to have been one of the most remarkable logistic and military achievements of recent times.

In planning this operation substantial attrition of our ships, aircraft and equipment was both anticipated and expected. In spite of the loss of four naval warships, the task force has more escort vessels today than a week ago. Ten more destroyers and frigates have joined the force in the past two days. Attrition of our Harrier force has been much less than we had assessed and it has achieved complete dominance in air combat and land attack. Otherwise, in spite of massive movements of merchant ships in and out of hostile waters, the "Atlantic Conveyor" is the first supply ship that we have lost.

When a setback occurs, there is always a danger that it brings in train undue pessimism about the future, just as success sometimes creates needless euphoria. Neither is justified at the present time.

Our force on the ground are now poised to begin their thrust upon Port Stanley; behind them are another 3,000 men of 5 Brigade, whilst reinforcements and resupply are virtually denied to the Argentine garrison on the island. Generally the military objective to repossess the Falkland Islands has gone forward exactly as we planned it. We have had losses and there may be more on land and sea, but the people of the Falkland Islands can be assured that our resolve is undiminished. We intend to free them from occupation and to restore their democratic rights.

Mr. John Silkin (Deptford): The loss of HMS "Coventry" and the supply ship "Atlantic Conveyor" comes as grievous and disturbing news, and the Opposition would like to join the Government in sending our deepest condolences to the families of those who have died or been injured in this occurrence.

With regard to the questions put to the right hon. Gentleman yesterday, we are very glad that he announced, in addition to the existence of the pension rights for the naval personnel, the enhanced levels of compensation for death and injury for those serving in our Merchant Navy.

There is only one question that I propose to ask the right hon. Gentleman at this moment, since this is not the time to go into details. The House and the nation want to see this matter concluded at the speediest possible pace, with the fewest possible casualties. Will the right hon. Gentleman and the Government give us their undertaking that every door—military, financial and diplomatic—will remain open to achieve that result?

Mr. Nott: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for what he has said. In reply to his only question, I can give him a complete assurance.

Mr. David Steel (Roxburgh, Selkirk and Peebles): We in the Liberal Party wish to join the Government and the official Opposition in expressing our distress at the loss of lives and our profound sympathy with the relatives of those killed in the course of their duty on behalf of this country. We also join in the Secretary of State's mood of congratulation to the task force on its remarkable achievement so far. Were any helicopters lost on the "Atlantic Conveyor"?

Mr. Nott: I decided that it would be unwise to give details of what was contained in the "Atlantic Conveyor". It was full of supplies for the task force, and it would not be in its interests to give details of what she contained. I have announced that there were no Harriers on board.

Rest not
copied – no
annotations

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Biffen): I beg to move, That Mr. Andrew Faulds be suspended from the service of the House.

Mr. Cryer: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Speaker: Order. There can be no point of order until I have put the Question.

Mr. Cryer: It is a debatable motion.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have not proposed the Question yet. The Question is, That Mr. Andrew Faulds be suspended from the service of the House.

Mr. Cryer: It is a debatable motion.

Mr. Speaker: It is not debatable.

Question put:

The House divided: Ayes 277, Noes 27.

Division 172

4.05 pm

AYES

Adley, Robert
Alton, David
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Tom
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Rt Hon H. (S'thorne)
Atkins, Robert (Preston N)
Atkinson, David (B'm'th, E)
Baker, Nicholas (NDorset)
Barnett, Rt Hon Joel (H'wd)
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bennett, Sir Frederic (T'bay)
Benyon, Thomas (A'don)
Best, Keith
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Blaker, Peter
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter (W'wich W)
Bowden, Andrew
Bradley, Tom
Braine, Sir Bernard
Brinton, Tim
Brittan, Rt. Hon. Leon
Brocklebank-Fowler, C.
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brotherton, Michael
Brown, Michael (Brigg & Sc'n)
Bryan, Sir Paul
Buchanan-Smith, Rt. Hon. A.
Buck, Antony
Budgen, Nick
Burden, Sir Frederick
Butcher, John
Carlisle, Kenneth (Lincoln)
Chapman, Sydney
Churchill, W. S.
Clark, Hon A. (Plym'th, S'n)
Clark, Sir W. (Croydon S)
Clarke, Kenneth (Fushcliffe)
Clegg, Sir Walter
Cocks, Rt Hon M. (B'stol S)
Colvin, Michael
Cope, John
Cormack, Patrick
Corrie, John
Costain, Sir Albert
Cranborne, Viscount
Crawshaw, Richard
Crouch, David
Cunningham, G. (Islington S)
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil (L'li)
Davies, Clinton (Hackney C)
Dean, Paul (North Somerset)

Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dover, Denshore
du Cann, Rt Hon Edward
Dunn, James A.
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Eden, Rt Hon Sir John
Eggar, Tim
Ellis, Tom (Wrexham)
Emery, Sir Peter
English, Michael
Fairgrieve, Sir Russell
Faith, Mrs Sheila
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Finsberg, Geoffrey
Fookes, Miss Janet
Ford, Ben
Forman, Nigel
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Marcus
Fraser, Rt Hon Sir Hugh
Fraser, Peter (South Angus)
Freud, Clement
Fry, Peter
Gardiner, George (Reigate)
Gardner, Edward (S'fyde)
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodhew, Sir Victor
Goodlad, Alastair
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Gray, Hamish
Greenway, Harry
Griffiths, E. (B'y St. Edm'ds)
Griffiths, Peter Ports'm'th N)
Grimond, Rt Hon J.
Grist, Ian
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, John Selwyn
Hamilton, Hon A.
Hamilton, Michael (Salisbury)
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, John
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Haselhurst, Alan
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Hayhoe, Barney
Heath, Rt Hon Edward
Henderson, Barry
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert

Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Holland, Philip (Carlton)
Horam, John
Hordern, Peter
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Rt Hon D. (G'ld'd)
Howell, Ralph (N' Norfolk)
Howells, Geraint
Hunt, David (Wirral)
Hunt, John (Ravensbourne)
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irving, Charles (Cheltenham)
Jay, Rt Hon Douglas
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Jenkins, Rt Hon Roy (Hillhead)
John, Brynmor
Johnson Smith, Geoffrey
Johnston, Russell (Inverness)
Jones, Rt Hon Alec (Rh'dda)
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Joseph, Rt Hon Sir Keith
Kaberry, Sir Donald
Kelllett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Kilfedder, James A.
Kimball, Sir Marcus
Kitson, Sir Timothy
Knight, Mrs Jill
Knox, David
Lamont, Norman
Lang, Ian
Langford-Holt, Sir John
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John
Lester, Jim (Beeston)
Lewis, Kenneth (Rutland)
Lloyd, Ian (Havant & W'loo)
Lloyd, Peter (Fareham)
Lothouse, Geoffrey
Loveridge, John
Lyell, Nicholas
Lyons, Edward (Brad' d'W)
Mabon, Rt Hon Dr J. Dickson
McCrindle, Robert
McCusker, H.
MacGregor, John
MacKay, John (Argyll)
Macmillan, Rt Hon M.
McNair-Wilson, M. (N'bury)
McNair-Wilson, P. (New F'st)
McNally, Thomas
Madel, David
Major, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Antony
Marshall, Dr Edmund (Goole)
Marshall, Michael (Arundel)
Marten, Rt Hon Neil
Maude, Rt Hon Sir Angus
Mawby, Ray
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hysben, Robin
Mellor, David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Miller, Hal (B'grove)
Mills, Peter (West Devon)
Mitchell, R. C. (Soton Itchen)
Moate, Roger
Molyneux, James
Monro, Sir Hector
Morris, Rt Hon J. (Aberavon)
Morris, M. (N'hampton S)
Morrison, Hon C. (Devises)
Mudd, David
Murphy, Christopher
Myles, David
Neale, Gerrard

Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Nott, Rt Hon John
O'Halloran, Michael
Onslow, Cranley
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Page, John (Harrow, West)
Page, Richard (SW Herts)
Palmer, Arthur
Parker, John
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Pawsey, James
Peyton, Rt Hon John
Pitt, William Henry
Pollock, Alexander
Porter, Barry
Powell, Rt Hon J.E. (S Down)
Prentice, Rt Hon Reg
Proctor, K. Harvey
Pym, Rt Hon Francis
Rathbone, Tim
Rees-Davies, W. R.
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Rifkind, Malcolm
Roberts, M. (Cardiff NW)
Rodgers, Rt Hon William
Rost, Peter
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
St. John-Stevens, Rt Hon N.
Sandelson, Neville
Shaw, Michael (Scarborough)
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Shelton, William (Streatham)
Shepherd, Richard
Sims, Roger
Skeet, T. H. H.
Speed, Keith
Spence, John
Spicer, Jim (West Dorset)
Spicer, Michael (S Worcs)
Squire, Robin
Stainton, Keith
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, John
Steel, Rt Hon David
Steen, Anthony
Stewart, A. (E Renfrewshire)
Stewart, Rt Hon D. (W Isles)
Stradling, Thomas J.
Tapsell, Peter
Taylor, Teddy (S'end E)
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thatcher, Rt Hon Mrs M.
Thompson, Donald
Thorne, Neil (Ilford South)
Townend, John (Bridlington)
Townsend, Cyril D. (B'heath)
Trippier, David
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Viggers, Peter
Wainwright, R. (Colne V)
Wakeham, John
Walker, Rt Hon P. (W'cester)
Waller, Gary
Walters, Dennis
Warren, Kenneth
Watson, John
Wellbeloved, James
Wells, John (Maidstone)
Whitelaw, Rt Hon William
Whitney, Raymond
Wickenden, Keith
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willey, Rt Hon Frederick

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 26 May 1982

PRIME MINISTER

Crown Agents

Mr. Anthony Grant asked the Prime Minister whether she will make a statement on the report of the tribunal of inquiry on the Crown Agents.

The Prime Minister: The report of the tribunal of inquiry on the Crown Agents has been published today. The Crown Agents were deeply involved in the property and secondary bank failures which took place in 1974-75, with the result that large sums of public money had to be made available to enable them to meet their liabilities.

Following the report of the committee of inquiry under the chairmanship of His Honour Judge Fay, the tribunal was set up in 1978 by the previous Government under the Tribunals of Inquiry (Evidence) Act 1921 to inquire into the extent to which there were lapses from accepted standards of commercial or professional conduct or of public administration in relation to the operations of the Crown Agents as financiers on own account in the years 1967-74.

The tribunal has examined the issues very thoroughly and the Government would like to express their gratitude to the chairman, Mr. Justice Croom-Johnson and to his colleagues Lord Allen of Abbeydale and Sir William Slimmings for all the time and work they have put into examining these events.

The tribunal's report is long and detailed. Five main issues are examined:

- i. The way in which the Crown Agents came to operate as financiers on own account;
- ii. the main transactions which led to the ultimate losses;
- iii. internal control over the own account activities;
- iv. the impact of the financial crisis of 1974 on the Crown Agents;
- v. the part played by Government Departments and the Bank of England in supervising the Crown Agents' activities, and in considering their future status and accountability.

In looking at these issues, the tribunal has identified a number of serious shortcomings that existed at that time, not only in relation to the conduct of individuals, in respect of some of whom lapses or criticisms falling short of lapses were formally specified, but also in relation to the operation of institutions and procedures. The tribunal has drawn some general conclusions about the causes of these shortcomings. Those conclusions are based on the findings on specific issues given in the main body of the report, and need to be considered in that context.

The Government will now study the tribunal's findings in greater detail. They will look closely at the criticisms made, and in particular at those of the institutions and procedures examined by the tribunal, to see whether the changes that have taken place since the events of 1967-74—including the enactment of the Crown Agents Act 1979, which now governs the current operations of the Crown Agents—are sufficient to prevent the risk of repetition, and if not what action now needs to be taken.

The Government will also consider the tribunal's comments on the recommendations of the Royal Commission on tribunals of inquiry on the procedure to be followed in inquiries carried out under the 1921 Act.

PRIME MINISTER

Falkland Islands

Mr. Arthur Lewis asked the Prime Minister, in view of statements made on BBC 1 television news broadcasts on Monday 17 May, if she is satisfied that no statements have been made without ministerial authority to the press or broadcasting media by civil servants about their views on the policy of Her Majesty's Government on the Falkland Islands.

The Prime Minister: Government spokesmen are authorised to speak for Ministers. I am not aware of any reports emanating from Government spokesmen carried on recent BBC television news broadcasts which do not accurately reflect Government policy.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Television Licences

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will seek to introduce legislation to extend to disabled people living in disabled people's homes the same concession regarding broadcasting receiving licences as that already given to old people's homes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Raison: We have no plans to do so. I refer the right hon. Member to the reply I gave to his supplementary question on 20 May 1982.—[Vol. 24, c. 461.]

Mr. Hicks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the conditions that have to be satisfied for a television licence rebate to be made; when these criteria were introduced; if he is satisfied that they are sufficient; and whether he has any proposals to extend the rebate scheme.

Mr. Raison: As I indicated in reply to a question from the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Cunningham)—[Vol. 24, c. 105.]—on 19 May refunds of television licence fees are given only when:

- (a) an unexpired monochrome licence is surrendered on issue of a colour licence;
- (b) a new licence is not needed within 28 days of issue or when a renewal licence is not needed within 28 days of the expiry of the previous licence—application for the refund must be made during the period of the validity of the licence;
- (c) two licences are held but one was obtained in error.

Specific legislative provision relating to refunds was included in the Post Office Act 1961, though refunds in the circumstances set out in (b) and (c) were given before then. Refunds in the circumstances set out in (a) became available following the introduction of the colour television licence in 1968.

We consider that the grounds on which refunds may be made must remain strictly limited if the licensing system is not to become unmanageable, and have no plans to change the present arrangement.

to deal with terrorism, I intend to establish an independent review of the operation of the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1978. It is my intention that the review should take account of the conclusions of Lord Jellicoe's inquiry into the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1976, so far as they affect Northern Ireland, and the timing will reflect this.

TRANSPORT

Radioactive Material (Transportation)

Mr. Pavitt asked the Secretary of State for Transport (1) whether, and with what results, tests have been made of the effect of a rail collision at 50 miles per hour involving flasks carrying nuclear waste;

(2) if he will describe the categories of radioactive material permitted to be transported in flasks by rail; what categories may not be carried; what are the maximum levels of radioactivity permitted in respect of the contents of each flask; and what inspection machinery exists to ensure that safety limits are not exceeded;

(3) what would be the maximum amount of radioactive contamination that could occur if a sealed flask of the kind carried by rail, and containing the maximum permitted amount of nuclear waste were fractured; what would be the maximum area of contamination; and at what levels.

Mr. Eyre: The flasks used to transport irradiated nuclear fuel are designed, tested and certified in accordance with the International Atomic Energy Agency regulations for the safe transport of radioactive materials. The regulatory tests are not intended to simulate any particular accident scenario but to ensure that the flasks would withstand damage of a kind which would result from a very severe accident.

Oil and Gas Storage

Mr. Stephen Ross asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he anticipates being in a position to announce the outcome of the review into the procedures for considering applications to moor floating structures for the storage of gas or oil which he undertook following the recent Solent application; and whether he will circulate a copy of any recommendations and ultimate decisions by the Government to all interested organisations and authorities.

Mr. Eyre: The working party of officials, which my right hon. Friend set up to consider these matters, expects to complete its work within the next few weeks. I will inform the House of the conclusions reached by the Government, and will consider at that stage what wider circulation may be appropriate.

Manchester Airport (Rail Link)

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the latest developments with regard to the proposal for a rail link to Manchester airport.

Mr. Eyre: As my right hon. Friend explained recently in a letter to the right hon. Member, we understand that the Railways Board is considering the promotion of a Private Bill and the preparation of investment proposals for a rail link to Manchester airport.

London Transport

Mr. Adley asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he is holding discussions on the future of London Transport; and whether any discussions have taken place with British Railways in this connection.

Mr. Eyre: A number of bodies have pressed upon us their grave dissatisfaction with the state of chaos into which London Transport has been thrown by the GLC's mismanagement and have argued for a range of interesting and radical solutions. As part of our wider investigations to give London's travellers a better deal, there have been continuing discussions with British Rail about the policies for their commuter services under new management arrangements aimed at securing better accountability and value for money.

Select Committee on Transport (Recommendations)

Mr. Booth asked the Secretary of State for Transport which of the recommendations contained in the first report of the Transport Committee 1981-82 he will implement and which of the recommendations he will reject.

Mr. David Howell: The Government have already accepted one of the recommendations of the Transport Committee's supplementary report on HGV and PSV testing: the Transport Bill has been amended to ensure that the choice of an approved testing authority will be subject to the decision of Parliament, by affirmative resolution of both Houses. I have not accepted the Committee's recommendation that the Bill should be amended so that testing could be transferred only to a single authoritative body, but it is in fact my intention to transfer testing to a new independent association set up for that purpose and controlled by Lloyd's Register of Shipping; this is in accordance with one of the main recommendations of the Transport Committee's principal report last summer—fourth report of the Transport Committee, Session 1980-81. I have therefore accepted a great deal of what the Committee has recommended in this area, although my basic policy of transferring testing to the private sector remains unchanged.

DEFENCE

South Atlantic (Broadcasts)

Mr. English asked the Secretary of State for Defence by how much time, if any, the new Ministry of Defence broadcasts in the South Atlantic reduce the time available for British Broadcasting Corporation external services broadcasts.

Mr. Nott: The time available for British broadcasting external service programmes is not affected by the new MOD radio station. I understand, however, that the BBC considers the reception of some of its English language transmissions may be slightly impaired.

Departmental Staff (Research)

Mr. McMahon asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether there has been any increase in the numbers of persons employed in his Department, or the man hours spent by members of his Department, in dealing with nuclear research and arms related research.