

LOBBY BRIEFING

time: 11.00 date: 17.1.80

PRIME MINISTER'S ENGAGEMENTS

Cabinet met at 10.00 hrs* all present except Angus Maude MP, Lord Carrington and, of course, Lord Soames. Also attending: Earl Ferrers and Paul Channon, MP.

Mrs Thatcher will be in the House for questions this afternoon and tonight will host a party at Downing Street for lobby journalists. She will be voting in the 22.00 hr division at the end of the debate on steel.

In the House

The order of speakers in the steel debate was:

- 1) Sir Keith Joseph
- 2) John Silkin
- 3) John Cunningham
and winding up
- 4) Adam Butler

Two private notice questions were running, both to the Lord Privy Seal about Chile:-

David Winnick to ask the Lord Privy Seal: (ALLOWED)

If he will now make a statement on the restoration of normal diplomatic relations with Chile.

Bruce George to ask the Lord Privy Seal: (NOT ALLOWED)

If he will make a statement on the proposed exchange of Ambassadors within the next few days between Britain and Chile.

* Finished shortly before 1200 noon.

Steel

There was no question of Sir Keith Joseph's line of non-intervention softening. The reply from Downing Street to Bill Sirs' letter would be going off fairly soon. We were not yet at liberty to say what the reply contained, but for the record would point out that the Prime Minister had not seen Sir Charles Villiers specifically on steel: they had met once, on 9 January, at a meeting of NEDC. We said the lobby could assume there would be a report on the steel situation to this morning's Cabinet.

Afghanistan

Mrs Thatcher has not yet had the benefit of reports from either Lord Carrington or the Privy Seal but she was not softening on the idea of an Olympic boycott - she recognised the substantial effect such action would have. She had noted President Carter's views on the subject. It had to be said that the Government and the Prime Minister realised that they had no actual powers in this area, save that of persuasion.