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31 MAR 1980		
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Mr. Harding
Mr. Bignall

GOVERNMENT HOUSE,
FALKLAND ISLANDS.

19 March 1980

PR Fearn Esq
South America Dept
FCO

Dear Robin,

A charity but not v. substantial first letter. It is too soon to express considered views on the main issue. But, once crews are agreed for N. Zone we shall want to concentrate Mr. Hunt's mind on his role in support of our objectives.
Grateful now for short brief reply pt.

1. It is three weeks to the day since I arrived in Port Stanley and, although I know that we are now discouraged from writing first impressions (and a good thing too), I thought that you might like to know that I am still in the land of the living.

2. Despite our unfortunate mishaps with the Islander, I have been able to see a bit of the Camp. After one day here Mavis and I were able to get to Hill Cove in West Falklands and Darwin to catch the tail-end of their sports meetings. This gave us the opportunity to meet most of the farm managers who had congregated in these two places for the annual beano. Last week we seized the opportunity of HMS Endurance's visit to sail around the north of the Island and, with the help of her Wasp helicopter, were able to pay an overnight visit to Adrian Monk in San Carlos and spend a morning with Alan Miller in Port San Carlos before returning here. I intend to continue to get out to the Camp whenever I can but the ships are about to leave us for the winter and FIGAS have only one Beaver currently flying, so my opportunities of travelling (except by Landrover) are now somewhat curtailed.

3. In the light of the Flight Safety Report about the recent accident, I have had no alternative but to ground the Islander until certain recommendations about landing strips and flight

/safety



safety have been implemented.

4. There have been no repercussions following the death of a Falkland Islander after a drunken brawl with a Chilean, but I have no doubt that the Islanders will wish to see justice done.

5. I shall be holding my first Executive Council meeting towards the end of this month or early next, followed by a joint Council meeting to select two members to represent the Falkland Islands at Mr Ridley's proposed talks with the Argentines. I have no idea at present whom they will select but I gather that they do want to be represented.

6. Despite some silly agitation locally about the LADE house, the majority of Councillors seem prepared to go ahead with the lease. I understand that an Argentine Air Force Lawyer is due in today to discuss the terms with the Chief Secretary. According to their resident representative, he will be proposing an additional clause to the lease, which we shall obviously need to look at carefully.

7. As to whether the Councillors accurately represent the views of the Islanders, and what the Argentines really think about the Falkland Islands, these are early days yet and I do not venture an opinion. The Councillors I have met seem to know the way their constituents think even if their own views are not always in sympathy. Argentine tourists come over in increasing numbers and seem to be struck by the difference and "Britishness" of Port Stanley (they rarely seem to go much beyond the town). The new Vice-Comodoro here said he volunteered for the post because it is so quiet and peaceful

/and



and his children have much more freedom here than on the mainland.

8. I have been around most of the Government Departments and inspected the ODA's development projects. The point that strikes one immediately, whether in town or in Camp, is the shortage of people, and not only working men but men, women and children of all ages. The biggest crowd I have seen was at a Stanley v Endurance football match, when half the spectators were RN or Marines and the total was less than one would normally see at a village cricket match in England. When it comes to the working force, the shortage is even more striking. The Chief Secretary runs the "Secretariat" with one secretary whom he shares with the Deputy Chief Secretary, one girl in the registry and a part-time messenger. The construction gang on the Darwin road consists of 7 men, including the foreman. The only private building contractor has three men and one of those must be getting on for 70. Two of the crew of the "Forrest" are Cape Horners laying up in Port Stanley awaiting spare parts for their yachts. Virtually anybody can walk in here and get a job on the same day. It is the same story wherever one goes: Government Departments, commercial firms and farms are all understaffed. Government Departments would collapse completely without OSAS officers. Of significance is that many of these OSAS officers, and particularly the younger ones, have extended their contracts and some seem happy to stay indefinitely. I am sure that there must be others in the UK who would settle happily here if they knew more about the Falkland Islands and if there was accommodation here for them. I realise that what I am saying is not new and that the twin problem of accommodation and population has been and will certainly be with us for a long time, but I mention it because

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it is the most prominent fact that strikes the newcomer - that and the sunshine, clarity and purity of the air. I can understand now why a Bradford wool-dealer can pick out Falkland Islands wool blindfold from the rest.

9. Which brings me to the Grasslands Trials Unit and the Green Patch Scheme. I am impressed with Dr Ferguson, the new head of the GTU and I commend him to you when he comes to the UK in June to report to the Advisory Committee. Like my predecessor, I attach great importance to the work of the GTU, even though the benefits are essentially long-term. I award the leases to the 6 lucky farmers in the Green Patch Scheme next week. This again is a most promising development although we shall have to give it several years before we can pronounce on its success.

10. In the meantime, my immediate worry is the budget and how we are to balance it when the recurrent costs of the projects that we have been given by ODA are likely to amount to at least 8% of recurrent revenue. Robin Benbow's idea of using the considerable funds in the Government Savings Bank to invest in worthwhile development in the Islands has a lot of merit and we await your and the Bank of England's comments on his report with interest.

Yours ever,

Rex.

R M Hunt

cc: R Gozney
BUENOS AIRES