

PRIME MINISTER'S ENGAGEMENTS:

A meeting of Ministers was held at 1015 at which the following were present: Prime Minister, Sir Keith Joseph, John Nott, Sir Geoffrey Howe, Jim Prior and David Howell.

Cabinet met at 1100: all present.

After answering Questions this afternoon, the PM will remain in the House for the Business Statement and for the statement by the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

This evening the PM will attend a banquet given by President Soeharto of Indonesia at Claridges.

PRESS NOTICES:

Reappointments of Sir David Stephens as Chairman and the Rev Harry Stapleton as a member of the Redundant Churches Fund - further background available if required.

~~MINISTERIAL~~ ANSWERS OF INTEREST

Mr Leadbitter (Q 108) "To ask the Prime Minister if she will make a statement on recent evidence, concerning the action of an individual, whose name has been supplied to her, in relation to the security of the United Kingdom". We told the Lobby that there will be a substantial Answer in which they would be interested. We refused to be drawn at all on whether the Answer would give names.

The Answer would be made at 1600 and we undertook to let the Lobby have 100 copies of it at that time in the Lower Press Gallery to help those with imminent deadlines.

We pointed out that Mr Leadbitter's Question was Priority Written rather than Ordinary Written and that it had therefore to be answered today. It was, of course, the Member of Parliament who decided whether to make his Question Priority Written or Ordinary Written.

For the Lobby's guidance, we pointed out that the timing of the Answer to this PQ was determined by its "Priority" status and was not in any way an attempt to "knock-off" the economic story.

STATEMENT BY THE CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER:

We confirmed that the announcement on minimum lending rate would be made at the traditional time - 1230 - today. The Chancellor's statement this afternoon would run for about 5 minutes.

Asked whether the statement was likely to go further than monetary policy and cover subjects appropriate to, say, a mini-Budget, we said that it would be confined to monetary policy. For example, an announcement on the rate support grant could be expected as planned at 1145 on 16 November. Announcement of cash limits for the nationalised industries could also be expected tomorrow.

The Chancellor's statement today would not include short-term forecasts but correspondents could expect something on this next week.

Correspondents could assume that Cabinet this morning would have had a brief report on the fact that the Chancellor would be making a statement this afternoon.

The 1015 meeting of Ministers today had nothing to do with the Chancellor's statement.

- 2 -

RHODESIA

A Plenary Session at Lancaster House had taken place from 0900-1010 this morning and as of 1100 no further Plenary Sessions were planned today. Asked if the Conference would be successful, we said that we were still hopeful.

We did not see the PM being involved in the Rhodesia talks today even if there was a positive step forward. In this context we pointed out that the Conference would not conclude with a satisfactory outcome to the discussions on the transitional arrangements - the three parties still had to negotiate the crucial matter of the arrangements for the cease-fire.

TRANSPORT BILL

We undertook to find out when this would be presented to Parliament.

CA

LOBBY BRIEFING

time:

date:

NOTE OF LOBBY BRIEFING GIVEN BY BERNARD INGHAM AT 5.30 pm, 15 NOVEMBER

ANTHONY BLUNT

Following the Leader's Lobby briefing, Mr Ingham again pointed out that the appointments of persons as KCVO are in the gift of The Queen. We do not know whether the Prime Minister had given any advice to The Queen about Anthony Blunt's appointment at the time it was made. Equally, we did not know whether the Prime Minister's advice had been sought at the time of Anthony Blunt's appointment as Surveyor of The Queen's Pictures in 1952.

Correspondents could take it that The Queen had been given due warning of the reply to be given in the House today. Anthony Blunt's Legal Advisers had also been informed that the statement was to be made a short time in advance. They might assume that this was done yesterday.

We repeated this morning's briefing that the timing of the reply on Anthony Blunt was dictated solely by the fact that there was a Priority Written Question for answer today. There had certainly not been a deliberate attempt by the Government to give this Answer of substance on the same day as a major economic story was running.

We were asked why the Government had not responded earlier, for example in June 1979 when the Attorney General had reviewed the case as mentioned in the Prime Minister's reply. We answered that there had been several developments since then, including articles in journals such as 'Private Eye' and Andrew Boyle's book. As the Leader of the House had said there had been a fair amount of journalistic activity recently which had set in train this chain of events and the Government had responded today to clear the air.

We were asked about the significance of the fact that successive Attorney Generals had reviewed the case in 1972, 1974 and 1979 and pointed out that these reviews had taken place under three different Governments each of whom had looked at the case afresh.

We could not say whether any further follow-up action had been authorised by the Prime Minister over and above today's reply. Equally we could not say whether the subject had been raised at Cabinet this morning - it was not our practice to give details of Cabinet discussions.