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27 June 1983

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TOP SALARIES REVIEW BODY REPORTS ON PARLIAMENTARY PAY AND ALLOWANCES
AND ON SENIOR PUBLIC SERVANTS

.. I attach briefing material on these Reports, which the Treasury have prepared and asked me to send on to you before Prime Minister's Question Time tomorrow.

As regards the Report on Parliamentary Pay and Allowances, I have no comment on the suggested line. However, as you know, the Prime Minister was on the Bench at Business Questions when Mr Jack Dormand MP raised this subject with the Leader of the House. I have attached a copy of the Hansard extract for your convenience.

I am copying this to John Kerr (Treasury) and to Peter Gregson (Cabinet Office).

*Yours ever,
David*

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AND SENIOR PUBLIC SERVANTS

Background Note

These Reports were laid before the House on 12 May and have now been published. In a Written Answer on 12 May, the Prime Minister stated that they would be for consideration after the Election (see attached extract from Hansard). In the case of the Report on Parliamentary pay, she also said that the Government acknowledged the need to consult opinion widely, before the House reached a conclusion on the recommendations. She also said that the proposed increases in respect of Cabinet Ministers were of a magnitude that could not be accepted, and that she trusted that MPs would take a similar view about the recommendations for their own salaries.

Ministers are now actively involved in considering these Reports. But it will be important to avoid committing the Government to bring forward proposals before the Summer Recess. Although they are expected to do so shortly, there are difficult issues of substance and timing involved, especially in respect of Ministers and MPs. (A decision on senior public servants should be easier. But it might be undesirable to announce the outcome on this before decisions had been taken on Parliamentary etc pay.)

Line to Take

The Government are carefully considering both Reports. Proposals on Parliamentary pay and allowances will be brought forward to the House in due course for debate, and a decision announced on the pay of senior public servants. Meanwhile there is nothing to add to what was said on 12 May.

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Pay Review Bodies

Mr. Buck asked the Prime Minister if she will make a statement on the reports of the review bodies on the pay of the armed forces, the doctors and dentists and top salaries.

Mrs. Dunwoody asked the Prime Minister when she intends to announce the decision on the Doctors and Dentists Pay Review Body; and if she will be accepting the recommendations of the board.

The Prime Minister: The reports of the Armed Forces Pay Review Body, the Doctors' and Dentists' Review Body and the Top Salaries Review Body on certain top salary groups and on parliamentary pay and allowances have been laid before the House today and will be published as Command Papers shortly. Copies are now available in the Vote Office. The Government are grateful to the members of the review bodies for these reports and for the time and care which they have put into their preparation.

The report of the Armed Forces Pay Review Body recommends new rates of pay for service men and women applicable from 1 April 1983 which will add 7.2 per cent. to the estimated pay bill for 1983-84.

The Government accept the report, and the necessary steps to implement the new rates of pay, and inform service men of the details of the report, will be taken as soon as possible.

The report of the Doctors' and Dentists' Review Body recommends with effect from 1 April 1983 increases in the pay of doctors and dentists which the review body estimates would add 6 per cent. to the pay bill over and above the costs of implementing in full its recommendations for 1 April 1982; in addition it recommends changes in certain supplementary payments to take account of the hours worked by junior hospital doctors and dentists, which will add a further 1 per cent. to the total pay bill.

The House will recall that since 1981 there has been an abatement of the review body's recommendations for doctors and dentists which now amounts to 2.7 per cent. of the pay bill. The review body has strongly urged that this abatement should now be made good. The Government accept the recommended increases for this year with effect from 1 April 1983. It proposes to make good the abatement with effect from 1 January 1984.

The scales and rates resulting from these decisions will be promulgated as soon as possible.

The two reports from the Top Salaries Review Body, one dealing with the salaries of the higher Civil Service, senior officers in the armed forces and the judiciary, and the other dealing with the salaries of Members of Parliament and of Ministers and other office holders and parliamentary allowances, will be for consideration after the election.

So far as the proposed salaries for Cabinet Ministers are concerned, members of the Cabinet take the view that the increases proposed are of a magnitude which they could not possibly accept, and trust that Members of Parliament will take a similar view about recommendations affecting their own salaries. The Government believe that any decisions which are reached in the new Parliament about resettlement arrangements should apply also to Members of the present Parliament in relation to their present salaries. The Government acknowledge the need to consult opinion widely before the House reaches a conclusion on the recommendations.

HANSARD

(COMMONS)

12 MAY 1983

VOL. 42

COLS. 434-35

Business of the House

3.15 pm

The Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. Biffen): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a short statement about next week's business.

As the House is aware, the debate on the Address in reply to the Gracious Speech will conclude on Wednesday 29 June.

THURSDAY 30 JUNE—There will be a debate on a motion to approve the White Paper on the development of cable systems and services, Cmnd. 8866.

Motion on the Local Loans (Increase of Limit) Order.

FRIDAY 1 JULY—A debate on London, on a motion for the Adjournment of the House.

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): Does the Leader of the House recognise that the support of a quarter of the voters—almost the same as that obtained by the Labour Party—confers a right to a fair hearing and a reasonable share of the debating time available to Opposition parties in the House? When does the Leader of the House propose to set up a Procedure Committee so that this and other procedural matters can be properly considered, and when may we have a debate on an electoral system that allows such a distorted result to emerge from the ballot box?

Mr. Biffen: The hon. Member is aware that the debate on the Queen's Speech is so constructed that a debate about a change in our electoral system would be in order. I would be immensely surprised if it were not a matter of substantial reference during the next few days. As to the wider issue of the Procedure Committee, I take note of the hon. Gentleman's interest.

Sir Paul Bryan (Boothferry): Does the early debate on cable television denote early legislation on the subject?

Mr. Biffen: It will denote a prudent and measured approach to the topic.

Mr. Jack Dormand (Easington): Will the Leader of the House give an assurance that the report of the Top Salaries Review Body on parliamentary pay and allowances will be debated at an early date? Does he agree that there is a need for urgent action on all the matters contained in the report? Will he also bear in mind that the House is becoming a little annoyed about the frequent rejections of proposals made by authoritative bodies, such as the review body, that have considered these matters for a long time and in great detail?

Furthermore, will he remind the Prime Minister that this is primarily a matter for the House of Commons and not for her personal edict?

Mr. Biffen: As to the final point, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister will have heard what the hon. Gentleman said. When the report was published on 12 May, my right hon. Friend stated her belief that there should be widespread consultation on this matter within Parliament before a decision was taken.

I hope to commence those consultations in the near future. The Government wish to resolve this matter as soon as is practical.

Mr. Robert Adley (Christchurch): Has my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House seen early day motion 7,

which has attracted 110 signatures not only from Government Members but from members of the Liberal party and the Democratic Unionist party about postal votes for those on holiday?

[That this House urges Her Majesty's Government immediately to take steps to enable people on holiday to be eligible for postal votes at a General Election.]

Does my right hon. Friend accept that this problem arises after every general election? As time elapses and Governments find reasons for not taking action on this subject, anger arises in our constituents who were unable to vote. They cannot understand that one can vote if one is on business in Birmingham but if one is on holiday in Blackpool or Benidorm it is not possible to vote. Will my right hon. Friend give an assurance that the Government will take early note of the strong feelings on this subject?

Mr. Biffen: The House echoes agreement with my hon. Friend the Member for Christchurch (Mr. Adley). Hon. Members, fresh from the hustings, will understand only too well what he said. This topic has been the subject of a recommendation from the Home Affairs Committee which is now with the Home Office. The House must wait to see what follows from that.

Mr. J. Enoch Powell (South Down): Will the right hon. Gentleman consider inviting you, Mr. Speaker, at an early date to call a conference under your chairmanship to consider the present state of electoral law in the light of some of the experiences of the recent election, particularly concerning the timetable as it affected potential absent voters?

Mr. Biffen: I shall certainly consider that proposition.

Mr. Michael Latham (Rutland and Melton): When Foreign Office Ministers speak in the debate on the Gracious Speech next week, will they make a statement on how the Government intend to honour the commitment in the Gracious Speech regarding Gibraltar, and how they intend to keep its economy going when the dockyard shuts?

Mr. Biffen: I shall ensure that Foreign Office Ministers are informed of that point.

Mr. Andrew Faulds (Warley, East): Since arts matters have been removed to the rarefied atmosphere of the other place, and since arts questions are due to be answered next Monday, who will be dealing in this Chamber with this important subject?

Mr. Biffen: A respected and convincing Minister from the Department of the Environment will deal with those questions.

Viscount Cranborne (South Dorset): Would my right hon. Friend care to cast his mind back to the dying days of the previous Parliament and to certain exchanges between myself, other right hon. and hon. Members and himself about the procedures of this House, with particular reference to the way in which legislation is handled? In the light of those exchanges, will he consider again the re-establishment of the Select Committee on Procedure and institute an early debate on the subject?

Mr. Biffen: I think that my hon. Friend is adding his voice to that of the Liberal Chief Whip, and I suspect, many others. Of course such matters will be considered.

Mr. Donald Coleman (Neath): As the Gracious Speech makes no mention of investment in either the coal

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