

MR. COLES

*h.a. 10/24*

OUTSTANDING POINTS FOR DECISION

NORTHERN IRELAND

In the light of today's Commons debacle, Ministers re-considered the wisdom of the plans for handling the Northern Ireland Statement/White Paper/Bill on Monday. Ministers were conscious that the group most unhappy about Government proposals on Northern Ireland were by and large those most unhappy about the Falklands.

At the Prime Minister's request, the Home Secretary spoke on the telephone to the Northern Ireland Secretary. The Northern Ireland Secretary readily accepted the Parliamentary problem, and said that he was ready to proceed on whatever basis his colleagues wished on Monday.

Final decisions were not reached. All seemed agreed that the statement and White Paper should go ahead on Monday, but doubts remained as to whether the Bill should be introduced. One alternative would be to contemplate annexing a draft Bill to the White Paper. Another would be to leave the Bill aside until a debate had taken place following publication of the White Paper.

*Action*

You need to try to pin down arrangements in the course of Sunday. The main difficulty will arise if the Prime Minister wants to adopt the draft Bill strategy, because this will require the re-printing of the Bill in a different form. Either of the other options can be handled with no new printing arrangements.

FALKLAND ISLANDS COUNCILLOR

The Falkland Islands office telephoned this morning, to say that the Hon. John Cheek, an elected member of the legislative council, was in the country. He was to be in the House for the debate under the care of Mr. Eric Ogden and Mr. Nigel Fisher. He would be pleased to see the Prime Minister at her convenience.

*Action*

I took delivery of the message and have told the Prime Minister of this. She seems inclined to see him, but I have not had an

/opportunity



opportunity to pin it down nor have I been back to the Falkland Islands Office.

DEBATE

The Opposition have formally requested a debate next week in Government time. They have said that they wish this to be on a Motion for the Adjournment, but that they would reach a final view on this in the course of Monday. Ministers agreed to concede a debate. It cannot now be held on Monday but Ministers have not finally decided between Tuesday and Wednesday. Wednesday is most likely.

The Opposition expect to field Healey and Silkin. Government speakers are undecided. Ministers are clear that two Cabinet Ministers must speak for the Government. Mr. Nott made it clear to colleagues that he would quite understand if they did not wish to put him up again. The Prime Minister said that she felt it necessary for him to tackle the House again. It seems that we need to choose two from the Prime Minister, Nott and Atkins. Final decisions can wait until Monday, but Mr. Nott is keen to know whether he is to speak. If he and the Prime Minister end up as the speakers, his office hope that it will be possible to work more closely together on the speeches than happened in preparation for today. This was not intended as a complaint, but simply a feeling that the speech writing process in the two offices left the Prime Minister and Mr. Nott with slightly different factual information and appreciations of developments, with the result that they were not really working from a consistent base in the House today.

*PM later confirmed that she wants Mr Nott to speak, but remains open-minded about the second speaker. She will wait to consult Pym & Torling on Monday. You shd confirm to MoD that she wants JN to speak.*