

Cabinet



file  
cc: B. Lughan

BSP

10 DOWNING STREET

*From the Private Secretary*

20 January 1983

MR. IAN STEWART, M.P.

Thank you for your letter of 20 January.  
We would have no objection to the Chancellor  
writing to 'The Times' as he proposes.

W. F. S. RICKETT

John Kerr, Esq.,  
HM Treasury

WJ



Treasury Chambers, Parliament Street, SW1P 3AG  
01-233 3000

20 January 1983

W F S Rickett Esq  
No 10  
Downing Street  
LONDON SW1

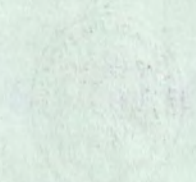
*Dear Willie,*

MR IAN STEWART MP

- .. I enclose a copy of the back-page article on "speechless" MPs in Tuesday's Times. The Chancellor thought its reference to Ian Stewart was unfair; and he is considering sending the
- .. Times, for publication, the attached repost.

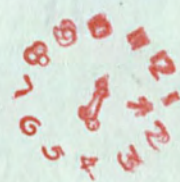
Paragraph 110 of "Questions of Procedure" is clearly relevant. I should be grateful if you could confirm, as soon as possible, that the Prime Minister would have no objection to the despatch of the letter.

*Yours ever,*  
*J O Kerr*  
J O KERR



Library Chamberlain Street SW1P 3JQ  
01-233 3000

COMPACTOR



20 JAN 1983



HOUSE OF COMMONS  
LONDON SW1A 0AA

20 January 1983

The Editor  
The Times  
New Printing House Square  
Grays Inn Road  
LONDON WC1

Sir,

I was dismayed to see your backpage report on Tuesday (18 January), giving pride of place, in your list of "speechless" MPs, to Ian Stewart, now Parliamentary Under Secretary at the Ministry of Defence.

He was until two weeks ago my Parliamentary Private Secretary. By convention a PPS is not expected to take part in proceedings that affect his Minister's department. Treasury interests are involved in almost everything that comes before the House, so that it was understood between Mr Stewart and myself that he was thus precluded from virtually every area of debate. That is the only reason for Mr Stewart's "speechlessness" during the last three and a half years. During the years before 1979 he was a vigorous and effective speaker from the Opposition Front Bench. And during his subsequent years of silence he has been an outstandingly faithful and sagacious PPS.

And throughout all this time he has been a conscientious and respected representative of his constituents in Hitchin. It would be a great injustice - unintended, no doubt - if Mr Stewart's reputation was in any way diminished as a result of your correspondent's careful, but in this case less than fair, report.

GEOFFREY HOWE

## Sealink in talks on cutting ferry

The possibility of Sealink ending its Harwich to Hook of Holland passenger ferry service grew yesterday as Mr Michael Bosworth and Mr Len Merryweather, chairman and managing director of Sealink UK, travelled to Holland to meet representatives of the Dutch Zeeland Steamship Company which shares the service with the British firm.

A senior Sealink executive confirmed that their talks would explore the possibility Sealink ending its 90-year partnership with the Dutch company and withdrawing from the route.

Moves to cut jobs and costs on the loss making route led to a bitter strike at Harwich last year and national disruption to Sealink services at the height of the holiday season.

Yesterday there was a threat of renewed conflict as Sealink claimed that seamen based at Harwich, had refused to back plans to stem a £3m a year loss on the route.

The company claimed that of 450 ballot papers sent out in support of its proposals only 174 were returned. Although 158 of these voted in favour of Sealink's scheme, there was no guarantee that seamen and shore workers who boycotted the ballot would support the planned changes.

At the heart of the dispute is Sealink's plan to shed 130 jobs by replacing the ferry St George and her sister ship St Edmund with a single 14,000-ton Swedish ship.

The seamen's union claims it has already agreed to give up 100 jobs and bring in savings of £350,000 a year on the route. It also claims that at least 155 jobs will be lost under the new plans.

Seamen are due to hold a crisis meeting on board the St George today and officials hinted last night that immediate strike action was a possibility.

## US puts stress on deterrence

Washington (Reuter)—The White House, responding to press reports that the Pentagon is preparing for the possibility of a lengthy atomic war extending into outer space, said yesterday United States Policy was to deter nuclear conflict.

Mr Mort Allin, a White House spokesman, told a press briefing: "our policy is deterrence through strength."

# Ten MPs who left the House speechless



Ian Stewart Hitchin



Raymond Mawby Totnes



Owen Carron Fermanagh, S. Tyrone



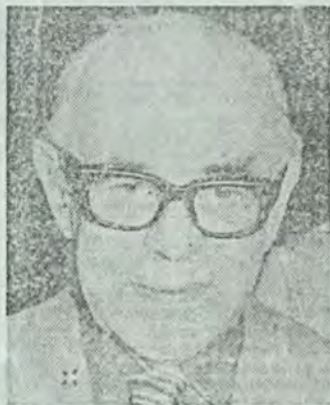
Michael O'Halloran Islington, N.



Frederick Mulley Sheffield, Park



Andrew McMahon Glasgow, Govan



Raymond Fletcher Ilkeston



Jack Dunnett Nottingham, E



Sir Donald Kaberry Leeds, N.W.



John Parker Barking, Dagenham

By Anthony Bevins, Political Correspondent

Ten backbench MPs failed to record one spoken word in the Chamber of the House of Commons in the last session of Parliament, according to the official *Index to the House of Commons Parliamentary Debates*.

Three of those MPs are not mentioned at all in any of the 36 weekly Hansard indices which cover the period from November 4 1981, to October 28, 1982; indicating that they were not only silent, but that they also failed to ask any written Commons questions.

They were: Mr Owen Carron, The Anti-H Block MP for Fermanagh and South Tyrone, elected in a by-election in August, 1981, who has since failed to take his seat in the Commons; Mr Jack Dunnett, Labour, Nottingham, East; and Mr Raymond Fletcher, Labour, Ilkeston.

One former Cabinet Minister, the "Father of the House", and the only backbench MP promoted into the Government in Mrs Thatcher's latest shuffle, are among those who were silent in the Chamber, making no speech or asking any oral questions, during the session ending last October.

The remaining seven were: Sir Donald Kaberry, Conservative, Leeds, North-West, chair-

man of the Industry and Trade Select Committee, who also served as a chairman of standing committees; Mr Andrew McMahon, Labour, Glasgow, Govan, who asked about 100 written questions; Mr Frederick Mulley, Labour, Sheffield, Park, the former Secretary of State for Defence; Mr Raymond Mawby, Conservative, Totnes; Mr Michael O'Halloran, the Social Democrat member for Islington, North; Mr John Parker, Labour, Barking, Dagenham, the 76-year-old "Father of the House" who was first elected to Parliament in 1935 and has represented Dagenham since 1945; and Mr Ian Stewart, Conservative, Hitchin, the Chancellor of the Exchequer's former Parliamentary Under-Secretary at the Ministry of Defence this month. During the session, he is recorded as having asked one written Commons question.

### 100 written questions

A further 12 made no speeches in the Chamber, but the indices record that they did intervene to ask oral questions of ministers.

Those who were speechless in the Chamber include a former Prime Minister, Sir Harold Wilson, and another former Secretary of State for Defence, Mr Roy Mason.

The speechless dozen were: Mr Bernard Conlan, Labour, Gateshead East; Mr Ednyfed Hudson Davies, Social Democrat, Caerphilly; Mr Harold Gourlay, Labour, Kirkcaldy; Mr George Grant, Labour, Morpeth; Sir John Langford-Holt, Conservative, Shrewsbury, who was chairman of the Defence Select Committee until May 20, 1981; Mr Roy Mason, Labour, Barnsley, the former Defence Secretary, who was a member of the Shadow Cabinet until 1981; Mr David Mudd, Conservative, Falmouth and Camborne; Mr Keith Stainton, Conservative, Sudbury and Woodbridge; Mr Peter Tapsell, Conservative, Horcastle; Mr James White, Labour, Glasgow, Pollok, who put down one oral question during the year; Sir Harold Wilson, Labour, Huyton, the only former Prime Minister in the Commons who refrained from making a parliamentary intervention on the Falklands; and Mr William Wilson, Labour, Coventry, South-East.

Mr Mason asked nearly 100 written questions, but his only

recorded oral intervention, in the indices, was a point of order.

There are other MPs who were neither silent nor speechless, they include Mr Bryan Magee, Social Democrat, Waltham Forest, Leyton, made an 8-minute speech and a five-line Hansard intervention on the Films (Distribution) Levy on July 21, 1982; Mr Ralph Bonner Pink, Conservative, Portsmouth, South, a chairman of standing committees, made an 11-minute speech on July 1, 1982, and asked two written questions.

### More signs of neglect

Mr Robert Edwards, Labour, Wolverhampton, South-East, made a 15-minute speech on December 8, 1981, and asked three written questions. Mr Ernest Roberts, Labour, Hackney, North, and Stoke Newington, made a four minute speech on 25 June 1982, and asked a dozen written and oral questions. Mr Alan Fitch, Labour, Wigan, made one 13-minute speech on February 2, 1982 and asked seven written and oral questions.

The Chamber of the House is not the only forum for MPs. There are standing committees,

which vet and amend legislation; there are select committees, which monitor the departmental work of the executive and administration; there is constituency work, which is often carried out in direct correspondence with ministers; not to mention the party political work which may consume much MPs' time.

An MP's failure to put questions to ministers or to make speeches in the Commons Chamber does not mean that he or she is not attending to his constituency or other parliamentary work.

Analysis of Hansard indices gives no indication of an MP's diligence in attending the House for votes or for meetings, parliamentary or otherwise. Neither does it record whether an MP has been too ill to carry out a comprehensive parliamentary workload.

But there are some MPs who see increasing signs that the Chamber is being neglected in spite of the dramatic illustration of its power and influence during the Falklands campaign.

*Index to the House of Commons Parliamentary Debates:* HMSO; for weekly Hansard volumes 1220-1230, 50 pence each; for volumes 1231-1255, 65 pence each.

## Frank Johnson in the Commons Don't shoot - he's only the Home Secretary

Labour members fired a large number of shots at Mr William Whitelaw in a crowded part of London yesterday.

But, amid the ensuing screams and confusion, it became known that they had shot the wrong man. Mr Whitelaw was completely innocent. He was only an ordinary Home Secretary. Moreover, he was as confused and angry as anybody else about the fate that befell Mr Stephen Waldorf in Pembroke Road, west London, at the hands of the police last Friday.

For when Mr Whitelaw arrived to make a statement to the House about the incident he was wearing what we have come to regard as his confused and angry look. He has much experience of wearing it last year. That was the year in which a man was found in the Queen's bedroom - furthermore, a man other than the Duke of Edinburgh. Mr Whitelaw thus became the first Home Secretary to have to make several statements to the House explaining how such a thing could happen, the Home Secretary becoming more confused and angry the more statements he had to make.

This year has started even more disastrously. But Mr Whitelaw seemed determined to be just as dismayed and upset as the Labour Party about what happened last Friday. "Nothing like it must happen again", came his familiar bark.

### Willie-isms to the fore

Those lucid, forceful words came while he was reading from a prepared text. But, answering subsequent questions about the incident, he produced some of those more elliptical, more enigmatic, phrases with which he is associated and which have come to be known as Willie-isms. Thus, answering Mr Roy Hattersley's demand for an investigation other than the one being carried out by the Metropolitan Police themselves, Mr Whitelaw observed: "In the first instance, it must be correct to do what has always happened in the past".

That of course is the intellectual basis of all the more philosophical forms of Conservatism. Burke himself could not have put it better. But one had the impression that Willie was saying the first thing that came into his head. And who could blame him?

He was faced with a mass of devious questions designed less to elicit information about the tragedy than to undermine the police - and by implication himself.

At one stage, Mr Norman Atkinson, the left-wing Member for Tottenham, started firing at random. "A large proportion of the 4,000 cases to which the Home Secretary has referred (cases of police being issued with guns last year) are incidents in which the police broke and entered innocent people's homes during the early hours of the morning and, at gunpoint, threatened the occupants to get out of bed and have their homes searched."

### The long arm of the door keepers

Every London constituency represented by a Labour member had experienced such incidents, Mr Atkinson claimed. "Is it not time the Home Secretary came to the House and said he has the guts to stand up to the police and say: no more gun law from them?"

By now, many Labour members had got the taste for expressions of concern about the police in general. Some seemed to think things would be better if the Metropolitan force were under the control of the GLC: the Livingstone Cops.

Later, when Mr Whitelaw had gone, Mr Frank Allaun, of Salford East, produced further injustice. Some female peace demonstrators in the Central lobby had been handled roughly by the police, he complained, on a point of order. Whereupon, several women in the gallery shouted and were removed by the long arm of the doorkeepers. Several more were removed later in the day.

Let us hope that no home counties Conservative ladies in the gallery were seized by mistake. Mr Whitelaw can be expected to endure no further errors of judgment by law enforcement officers. Miss Jo Richardson, Labour member for Barking, sought an assurance from the Speaker that the detained women were being provided with tea and sandwiches. The Speaker, replying, said it was a serious offence to interrupt the proceedings of the House and no encouragement should be given to do so. So, with the New Year, society's injustices continued.

Let's ARGUE really all!

FRANKS Report OUT.

## Right immig

Ministers of uniting Party in planned d ration rule instead Conservati opposition Commons defeat

## Grom

The US determining and Western would ne warnings Gromyko

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