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THE HOUSE OF COMMONS
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The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

CITY OF BRISTOL (PORTISHEAD DOCKS) BILL

[LORDS] (By ORDER)

Read a Second time, and committed.

BRITISH RAILWAYS (No. 4) BILL (By Order)

BRITISH WATERWAYS BILL [Lords] (By Order)

CROSSRAIL BILL (By Order)

EAST COAST MAIN LINE (SAFETY) BILL (By Order)

GREATER MANCHESTER (LIGHT RAPID TRANSIT SYSTEM) BILL [Lords]

LONDON UNDERGROUND (GREEN PARK) BILL
(By Order)

Orders for Second Reading read.

To be read a Second time on Thursday 29 October.

BANK OF CREDIT AND COMMERCE INTERNATIONAL
Ordered.

That there be laid before this House a Return of the Report of Lord Justice Bingham's inquiry into the supervision of the Bank of Credit and Commerce International (excluding the appendices to the Report).
—[Mr. Nicholas Baker.]

Oral Answers to Questions

HOME DEPARTMENT

Crime

2. **Mr. David Martin:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what new initiatives police forces are being encouraged to take to meet public concern about car crime, street crime and vandalism.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Charles Wardle): Police are playing a full part in car crime prevention year, the development of the safer cities programme and community-based initiatives designed to tackle local street crime.

Mr. Martin: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's reply. Will he assure me that he is fully aware of the deep public concern about lawlessness on the streets and of the continuing need for a visible and effective police presence in combating it? Can he give specific examples of action taken and proposed to be taken by Hampshire police to help meet these concerns, which are shared by me and many other residents of Portsmouth?

Mr. Wardle: I entirely understand the public concern that my hon. Friend describes. Hampshire police have taken a special unit to Portsmouth to run a vigorous campaign against street crime and drug-related crime. In the first six months of this year they achieved 167 arrests. They are also involved in the sold secure scheme and the secure car parks project, and with local schools they are fighting vandalism with the ACE detection scheme—A for accident prevention, C for crime prevention and E for environmental awareness.

Mr. Winnick: Is it not unfortunate, to say the least, that at a time of increasing crime we have the added worry of the latest terrorist outrages in London and elsewhere? Should it not be made clear by the entire House that no matter how much terrorism is perpetrated on the mainland and in Northern Ireland the people of Britain will not be intimidated by terror and the terrorists' campaign will certainly not succeed?

Mr. Wardle: I entirely share the hon. Gentleman's sentiments. I am sure that the whole House deplores the activities of the terrorists.

Mr. Patrick Thompson: Is my hon. Friend aware of the strong support given by Norfolk police to the Crimestoppers initiative which is funded nationally by the Community Action Trust? Will the Government reaffirm their support for the initiative and encourage chief constables to provide further publicity and support for that good way of fighting crime?

Mr. Wardle: Yes, indeed; the Government adopt a comprehensive approach against crime—not only increased spending but strengthened powers for the courts, more neighbourhood watch schemes, more youth crime prevention panels. It is a partnership against crime involving the police, local authorities, voluntary agencies, business and the whole community.

Mr. Michael: Will the Minister accept that what people want is policemen on the street with the time to deal with the community and with crime? Does he acknowledge that the rising crime of recent years has left the police overstretched and looking for more support from the Government?

Mr. Wardle: What people want is that crime should be tackled most effectively by the police. It is worth bearing in mind that while crime has been increasing steadily throughout the western world, in the United Kingdom there is far less risk of crimes of violence, although car crime has been on the increase. The hon. Gentleman will wish to recall that there are 16,000 more uniformed police officers than in 1979, and 12,500 more civilian staff working for the police.

3. **Mrs. Angela Knight:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what support car crime prevention year has received from car manufacturers.

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. Michael Jack): Many car manufacturers have responded very positively to the message of car crime prevention year by contributing or promising support worth more than £3 million; in addition, many more new cars are now being fitted with security systems as standard equipment.

Mrs. Knight: I thank my hon. Friend for that reply, but is he aware that most thefts from cars take place when the cars are not locked properly or the windows have been left open? What further measures will the Government take to highlight that problem so as to ensure that individuals take more care of and responsibility for their cars?

Mr. Jack: My hon. Friend will be aware that we have spent £5 million on car crime prevention year to raise awareness of the precise points that she has raised. The surveys that we have undertaken to see whether that awareness has registered with the public reveal a great appreciation of those issues. In addition, we have tackled the problem of theft from cars and of cars from car parks through our new secured car parks initiative. I am pleased to tell the House that the first awards for that initiative have already been made.

Mr. Corbett: I speak as someone with first-hand experience of car crime having had one nicked on the way to a crime prevention conference during the general election campaign. Although I welcome the better interest that manufacturers now take in this problem, will the Minister try to persuade them to make it standard in every model now produced that the aerial should be built into the back window and the place where the radio goes is screened? We should try to knock back the temptation to steal because, as the hon. Gentleman is aware, there are people who know their way around security systems.

Mr. Jack: The hon. Gentleman makes some practical points. I hope that he will visit the motor show as he will find that there has been a considerable improvement in the specification of cars on offer. He may find, as I have done through my research, that nearly all new cars—certainly those manufactured in the United Kingdom—have built-in radio protection devices. The hon. Gentleman has raised vital points to which I hope will be noted by manufacturers beyond the walls of the House.

4. **Mr. French:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent representations he has received from the police concerning the fight against crime.

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Kenneth Clarke): I receive regular representations from chief officers and police authorities about a variety of issues relating to crime and policing.

Mr. French: Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that in relation to certain crimes there is a public perception that the police have greater powers than they do? Will he try to take steps to ensure that the public fully understand the extent to which the police can investigate certain crimes and the extent to which they cannot?

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: My hon. Friend makes a valid point. The public make ever increasing demands on the police which often lie somewhat outside the realm of crime detection and crime prevention. There are some limitations on the powers of the police in dealing with crime, but we consistently try to extend those powers which are deficient. Modern aids which flow from the opening of the national criminal intelligence service and the potential introduction of computerised fingerprint matching will greatly improve the ability of the police to obtain more information about crime and to act effectively when investigating it.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: Have the police also told the Secretary of State that in areas such as mine in inner-city Manchester a considerable proportion of crimes of violence against people and property are related to drug offences? I am not trying to score a political point, but is the right hon. and learned Gentleman aware that many people in such areas believe that there is no strategy whatever for dealing with the drug problem? I ask the Home Secretary to give the House some confidence that he views that problem with the seriousness that it demands.

Mr. Clarke: I shall be as helpful as I can as I share some of the hon. Gentleman's thoughts. A great deal is being done in this regard. We have 20 local drug abuse prevention teams and within the schools the National Curriculum Council has encouraged a cross-curricular theme in health education to give more information about drug abuse. Many agencies are involved in helping those who are victims of drug abuse as well as increasing awareness of the dangers. I share the hon. Gentleman's belief that there is a need for a better strategy to pull all those things together and I am looking at the very problem now.

Mr. Riddick: Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that police officers seem to be spending far too much time doing paperwork inside police stations when they should be on the streets fighting crime? In particular, they seem to spend literally hours transcribing taped interviews with suspects. Has my right hon. and learned Friend any plans to tackle that serious problem?

Mr. Clarke: Again, I am sure that my hon. Friend has a valid point. We have to strike the balance between all the necessary safeguards that we introduce to ensure that the criminal justice system works properly and fairly—for example, the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 was a great advance on that front, helping good policing and safeguarding suspects—and ensuring that we do not introduce procedures so elaborate that a great deal of time

is taken up away from the beat and investigative work. Among other things, improvements in the arrangements between police forces and the Crown prosecution service and a better understanding of what paper work and preparation is required are leading to some improvements, so that paper work is kept to the necessary minimum.

Mr. Alton: Pursuing the reply that the Home Secretary gave a few moments ago, does he agree that the easy availability of heroin and Ecstasy is a powerful pressure for crime, especially in our urban and city areas? Does he agree that the sequestration of drug dealers' and pushers' assets is one of the most effective ways to show that drug pushing will not pay? Should not those assets be ploughed back into the communities that have been exploited by drug dealers?

Mr. Clarke: I am grateful to the hon. Member. As a country, we are always looking for ways to prevent criminality and to get to the causes of crime. The spread of drug abuse should be one of our main targets because many crimes are associated with drugs and with offenders who are abusing drugs. I agree with the hon. Gentleman that we must tackle it in every way. Sequestering the proceeds of crime and dealing with the laundering of the proceeds of drug trafficking are important and this week we are introducing a Bill in another place to strengthen further our powers to deal with those matters.

Sir Ivan Lawrence: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that much of the increase in the crime figures is due to increased reporting of crime? In particular, does he agree that many more cases of domestic violence are reported because of the changed attitude of the police, who previously did not want to get involved but who now pursue batterers? They arrest and charge them and ensure that they are brought to justice, which encourages many battered wives to complain to the police.

Mr. Clarke: I agree with my hon. and learned Friend. The figures reflect the worrying trend in crime, of which we are all aware. One must bear in mind that reported crime has been increasing for the past 40 years, but much crime is not reported and apparent increases in incidents arise either from the fact that domestic violence is now taken seriously, or from the fact that more property owners are insured, which tends to lead to variations in the figures. In the near future my hon. Friend the Minister of State will be making an announcement about the British crime survey, and shedding some more light on how we might achieve a more accurate picture of crime and better crime statistics.

Mrs. Ewing: While I welcome the Home Secretary's genuine comments about tackling drug-related offences, can he give a further sign of what he means by looking at that problem very seriously? Has a time scale been laid down by the Government for co-ordination between the various Departments involved—Customs and Excise, the Department of Education, the Scottish Office and a variety of other Departments? Is there a time scale whereby he will lay down a clear strategy, as the issue has consistently been raised with Members of Parliament by representatives of the police, who know that it is one of the greatest threats to society?

Mr. Clarke: I do not have a time scale for producing any statements, but the fact that two Members have shared

my view that we need to tackle an overall strategy and to pull the various agencies together will give added urgency to the work that I have in hand. I hope to come back on that as soon as I can.

Mr. Shersby: Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware of the considerable concern felt by the police about the amount of time taken up transcribing audio-taped interviews? Will he consider extending the excellent trials which have already commenced using video cameras, with a view to using that more modern technique for recording interviews?

Mr. Clarke: Personally, I greatly approve of the introduction of audio recordings of interviews and I am anxious for progress with video recordings. I have seen some of the results of the excellent trials which have been conducted so far. As the courts are not yet equipped to deal with video evidence, however, it is likely that any extension of video recording would still give rise to the need for transcripts. Some progress has been made in editing videos in a way that is acceptable to the Crown prosecution service and useful in the courts. I am sure that one day the courts will be able to see the relevant part of a video interview without any paperwork in between, but that depends as much on technology and on changes in court procedure as it does on progress on our front.

Mr. Blair: We know that a crime is committed every six seconds of every day and that crime has increased by more than 50 per cent. in the past few years. We also know that the Home Office standing conference on crime prevention has not met for almost two years. Is the Home Secretary aware that the country is not looking for complacent statements about the situation getting better when it is getting worse but that the country is looking to him, instead of trying to do the jobs of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs and the President of the Board of Trade, to do his own job as Secretary of State for the Home Department and reduce crime levels?

Mr. Clarke: I welcome the hon. Gentleman to his new post. I am glad to see him visible as shadow Home Secretary. I have no doubt that when he gets into the one job he will take an interest in the wider scene.

Nothing that I said was remotely complacent. I did not deny that there is a problem. I do not deny that we have a rising incidence of criminality, but I point to our record of putting resources and manpower into tackling that problem and of reforming the powers of the courts in an attempt to contain it. We all know that in the modern world most developed countries face the problem. It is my determination to press on with improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the police force and all the time to examine the powers of the courts to ensure that we can increase the protection of the public.

Mr. Knapman: Not all crime occurs in the inner cities. For example, there are far too many incidents of crime in the villages of rural Gloucestershire. Last year the county came out very badly in the allocation procedure. Will my right hon. and learned Friend bear that in mind when reaching any future decisions?

Mr. Clarke: Once a year all our police forces make bids through the Home Office for more resources. Overall, I believe that they have been extremely well treated over the

past 13 years. Generally, law and order has received greater percentage increases in expenditure than almost any other area of public expenditure. Spending on the police service has increased by 74 per cent. in real terms—that is, over and above inflation. I shall await with interest the submissions of Gloucestershire this year. As for bids for manpower, I am heavily steered by the advice of Her Majesty's inspectorate of constabulary.

Urban Crime Fund

5. Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether urban crime fund allocations will continue in 1992-93.

Mr. Jack: At the outset of this scheme, local authorities benefiting from the urban crime fund accepted the funding with the clear knowledge that the money available was for this financial year only. Future spending decisions will be determined once the outcome of the total for public Government expenditure for next year is known.

Mr. Cousins: Does the Minister realise how grimly that answer will be received in parts of the country such as Northumbria, where we all respect what the new chief constable and his force are doing in facing the highest number of reported crime incidents per officer in the country? Only the urban crime fund money has kept the police effectively on the streets this year. Without the promise of that money continuing into next year, we shall not have a credible police presence on our streets in Northumbria. Will the Minister give an assurance that, whether through the urban crime fund or otherwise, money will be found and effective policing will continue?

Mr. Jack: I think that I indicated clearly that matters concerning expenditure by all Government Departments will have to wait until we have the results of the autumn statement. I am disappointed that the hon. Gentleman did not pay more tribute to the work that has been done on Tyneside. I have received an excellent briefing from my hon. Friend the Member for Tynemouth (Mr. Trotter). The hon. Gentleman will also know that my right hon. Friend Lord Ferrers, the Minister of State, visited Tyneside and learnt about the splendid work being done to tackle urban crime, including reducing burglaries, car thefts and criminal damage. I think that that is an excellent record.

Mr. John Greenway: Will my hon. Friend do all that he can to extend the areas for which the urban crime fund is available? In particular, will he bear in mind the position of some of the larger towns which are not even classed as urban areas in the police manpower allocation? York, Harrogate and Scarborough, for example, are regarded as rural areas. That cannot possibly be right.

Mr. Jack: I wish that the gift was in my power to respond to my hon. Friend's question. I must point him in the direction of the Department of the Environment, which determines urban programme areas. I am sure that it will have noted his representations on behalf of the country that he represents. There are many other good ways of tackling crime, such as the safer cities programme, and the lessons that they teach are applicable universally.

Mr. Bermingham: Does the Minister agree that the very existence of the fund and the work that it has done

demonstrates that a concentration of police on the streets cuts down burglary, car theft and so on in urban areas? Having realised that that is a benefit to the community, surely it should have a high bid place in the year ahead because if it is cut off all that will happen is that ghettos will return to ghettos?

Mr. Jack: I must take slight issue with the hon. Gentleman's point because if he looks carefully at the programmes in Merseyside, west Yorkshire and Northumbria he will find that considerable amounts of those resources have not been directed solely at police manpower; much has gone towards promoting excellent community-based activity to resist crime, for example, new forms of street furniture in South Shields to deal with car crime, and the same is true in Merseyside. It is the combined effect of good community policing occasioned by the fund which has brought success.

Welsh Prisoners

6. Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to provide accommodation within Wales for the 800 Welsh prisoners who are currently in prisons outside Wales.

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. Peter Lloyd): Plans for expenditure on new prison building in the next financial year and beyond are still under consideration, but I hope that we shall be able to increase the number of prison places in Wales.

Mr. Ainger: Is the Minister aware that the probation service, in particular, recognises that family links are an important part of rehabilitating prisoners and that his lack of commitment to a regional prison serving south and mid Wales is not acceptable either to those families who currently have to travel great distances to visit prisoners or to the local probation service?

Mr. Lloyd: I agree with the hon. Gentleman's sentiment that prisoners should be housed as near as possible to their home areas so that family links can be maintained. That is important and it is the objective of our policy. However, I completely disagree with him when he says that we are not committed to that because we are, and the 21 new prisons in our prison programme are designed to make that possible. We still have more places to provide in Wales and, as I have already said, I hope that we shall be able to do so.

Ms. Ruddock: Is the Minister aware that the crisis in the prison service in Wales, as in England, will have been heightened this week by the Home Secretary's rejection of his chief inspector's report on prison overcrowding? Why are prison resources being directed at market testing for privatisation rather than at implementing the Woolf recommendations for providing real work and education aimed at prisoner rehabilitation?

Mr. Lloyd: The Home Secretary does not reject the report he comments upon it. The whole process of privatisation of the management of prisons—not the prisons themselves—is to obtain better standards in those prisons. I welcome the hon. Lady to her position. When she has held it a little longer and has read the tender documents for the Wolds, which is in operation, for Blankenhurst, which has been issued, and for Manchester,

which is to be issued shortly, she will see that at present that is the quickest way to obtain prisons with managements which will produce the Woolf standards.

Travellers

7. Mr. Colin Shepherd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what progress he has made with his review of the legislation concerning travellers.

Mr. Charles Wardle: We are discussing with other Government Departments and the Association of Chief Police Officers what changes to the law may be needed to tackle the problems of large gatherings of travellers and ravers.

Mr. Shepherd: Will my hon. Friend keep the pressure on the review as there is considerable anxiety among landowners and tenants that we shall move into the next travelling season without a set of adequate safeguards to protect them? It is felt that section 39 of the Public Order Act 1986 does not give adequate protection. While my hon. Friend is at it, will he also look carefully at the definition of gipsies because the traditional nomadic habit type gipsies fear that travellers will move into their sites and displace them.

Mr. Wardle: I understand my hon. Friend's points. He will be aware that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has expressed unequivocal views about the selfishness and anti-social behaviour of travellers and ravers. Section 39 of the Public Order Act 1986 is being reviewed. Above all, we are seeking practical ways to combat the problem and proposals will be brought forward in due course.

Mr. Bennett: Will the Minister be careful before he and his colleagues commit the Government to confronting travellers? That could be extremely expensive. Would it not be better to provide sufficient local authority caravan sites throughout the country where proper charges are made, so that travellers make a proper contribution to the cost? Rather than confrontation, there should be an effective policy that enables people to pursue their traditional way of life.

Mr. Wardle: The hon. Gentleman's second point is a matter for the Department of the Environment. As he knows, a consultation paper on amending the Caravan Sites Act 1968 is being circulated. As to his first point, police have operational responsibility for enforcement. They make it clear that preventative tactics are their first priority but that when there are huge gatherings, containment is the order of the day.

Mr. Dunn: Is my hon. Friend aware that we on this side of the House take the view that new age travellers are no more than a bunch of unwashed, benefit-grabbing, socialist anarchists who deserve a good slap and a wash? There is a problem with bunches of travellers who continuously return to green belt sites in urban areas, causing massive destruction and upsetting local people. Will my hon. Friend undertake to liaise with the Department of the Environment on that vexed issue?

Mr. Wardle: My hon. Friend expresses his views vividly and forcefully. He will be aware of the initiatives taken by the Department of Social Security, and I emphasise that

section 39 of the Public Order Act 1986 is being reviewed by the Home Office, and that proposals will be brought forward after further consultation.

Everton Football Supporters

8. Mr. Loyden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department pursuant to his answer of 18 June, *Official Report*, column 645, how many people gave evidence on behalf of the Everton football supporters arising out of their arrest and conviction.

Mr. Jack: Following the conviction of the Everton football supporters, eight persons made statements to the police during the course of enquiries in 1989. In addition, statements from eight other persons have been considered during the course of our reviews of this case.

Mr. Loyden: The Minister is aware of the strong representations made by hon. Members on both sides of the House, and since then further information from eye witnesses to the incident has been collated. It seems to those hon. Members who met the Minister that there has clearly been a miscarriage of justice. Will he look again at the evidence, to see whether he too becomes convinced that that is so.

Mr. Jack: I congratulate the hon. Gentleman and other hon. Members on their assiduousness in continuing to make representations on an issue that I know is of sensitivity to them and to the persons whom they represent. However, all the further evidence and statements submitted to the Home Office have been meticulously studied. The hon. Gentleman knows that the case has already been before the Court of Appeal, which did not agree with those who feel that the convictions were unsafe. The criteria for any miscarriage of justice is the provision of new information not previously considered by the courts. So far, no such new evidence has been forthcoming. It is still open to those who feel aggrieved to submit a complaint to the Police Complaints Authority. They have not yet done so, if such action elicited new facts, I would of course consider the case again.

Mr. Barry Porter: I join the hon. Member for Liverpool, Garston (Mr. Loyden) in asking the Home Office to consider again not only the quantity but quality of the evidence that has become available. I do not blame the present Minister with responsibility for the matter for the reply that he has just given—but some difficulty arose in the form of a general election, which allowed the previous incumbent of his office to avoid making a decision. The quantity and quality of available evidence does not leave the matter in doubt but shows beyond peradventure that the convicted Everton people are innocent. What more do we need to do? Look again.

Mr. Jack: What more we need is new information. All cases involving miscarriages of justice are examined meticulously by the Home Office, but I must remind the hon. Gentleman of the basic criterion: for any case to be reopened, we must have new evidence that has not been considered by the courts before. The answer that I have just given the hon. Member for Liverpool, Garston (Mr. Loyden) will provide a way forward, if that way forward is chosen.

Electoral Registration

9. **Mr. Rooker:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement outlining his Department's contribution to an improvement in the accuracy of the electoral registration process for autumn 1992.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We have run a nationwide advertising campaign again this year, with a budget of £617,000, designed to encourage people to complete and return their electoral registration forms. We continue to commission annual research into the working methods of electoral registration officers, and we provide updated guidance to assist them in compiling accurate registers.

Mr. Rooker: Bearing in mind the fact that that sum does not represent an extra amount, and bearing in mind the fortune that the Government have spent on delivering indescribable rubbish about the council tax to every household in the country, cannot the Home Office take its responsibilities more seriously? Its own research—which, as the Minister has said, it commissions regularly—identifies under-registration among unemployed people, inner-city dwellers, tenants of private landlords and tenants of multi-occupied properties. Why will the Home Office not take special action to ensure that under-registration ceases among that element of the population? If it does not take such action, on the basis of known evidence and research, there are those who will make the allegation that the Government have deliberately encouraged under-registration in certain areas in order to rig the parliamentary boundaries later.

Mr. Lloyd: Setting aside the adjectives used by the hon. Gentleman and the sentiments that he has expressed, I agree with his objective. That is why, when consulting local authorities and political parties after the election and reviewing the processes that it had involved, we set up a joint committee to examine five issues, one of which is electoral registration. The examination will take into account the particular circumstances mentioned by the hon. Gentleman, and I hope that it will provide the hard evidence, and the suggestions for change, for which he has asked.

Mr. Allen: Now that the general election is over, will the Minister admit to the House that one of the biggest acts of gerrymandering perpetrated in the past 13 or 14 years was the introduction of the poll tax, given the effect that it had on the electoral register? Will he now ensure that local authorities have enough money to put all the people concerned back on to the electoral register?

While he is at it—in the light of the election that is currently under way on the other side of the water—will the Minister examine the system of same-day registration that operates in a number of American states, enabling the people to vote there and then if they wish? Only if he does that will Opposition Members and people outside begin to take seriously the idea that he wants everyone in the country to enjoy the franchise.

Mr. Lloyd: The hon. Gentleman may be right in suggesting that some people did not register in order to avoid paying the community charge, and that others had to do so. He should also take into account, however, the fact that many electoral registration officers used the community charge lists to extend, improve and fill out the

lists that they had. The community charge could work both ways in that regard. As for the question of rolling registrations, the sub-committee that I mentioned earlier will be examining it carefully.

Sunday Trading

10. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent representations he has received about Sunday trading.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Since my reply on 18 June to a similar question from my hon. Friend, we had received—up to 21 October—some 4,433 further written representations broadly in favour of greater Sunday trading, and 190 against.

Mr. Marshall: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that the present law is indefensible and illogical? Does he also agree that a law that is frequently broken and rarely enforced brings the whole rule of law into disrepute, and that early action must be taken to curb this nonsense?

Mr. Clarke: I agree with my hon. Friend. The Shops Act 1950 is not supported by any member of any wing of opinion in this country, from the most Sabbatarian to the most libertarian, and no one believes that the Act has got it right. At present, we do not even know whether it is valid law: we are waiting for a ruling from the European Court, which will come some time later in the year. We have already said that we will bring the matter back before the House, and I hope shortly to make a fuller statement to the House explaining exactly what process we intend eventually to suggest to resolve the matter.

Mr. Ray Powell: The Government have had six years since 1986 to introduce legislation to tidy up the Shops Act 1950. Surely it is high time that we had an Act that applied in particular to the large, Tory-backed retailers who trade illegally on Sunday and who, as a result, close down a lot of small shops. It is high time that the Government took action to ensure that they comply with the law. The Home Secretary boasts continually of the importance of law and order. Why, therefore, does he not ensure that the provisions of the Shop Act 1950 are implemented by his Tory friends—five big retailers who continually open illegally on Sunday?

Mr. Clarke: The Conservative Government gave the House ample opportunity to resolve this matter in the mid-1980s. We published the Auld committee report which was approved by a majority of hon. Members. We brought forward a Bill to reform the law but unfortunately a majority of hon. Members, including the hon. Gentleman, voted against it and made it impossible for the Bill to proceed to its Committee stage, where we might have been able to thrash this matter out and resolve it. I hope that as soon as the Government have sufficient parliamentary time to adopt a similar procedure people will not flatly turn it down so that we are left with the Shops Act 1950, which satisfies absolutely nobody, it seems to me, in the current climate.

Mr. Paice: Is not it the case that effectively we do not have any law on Sunday trading and that therefore we are deregulated? Those who are concerned about deregulation should realise that what they see is what they will get: that the current pattern would probably not be extended and

that if sufficient worker protection provisions were attached to the legislation it would receive widespread support?

Mr. Clarke: My hon. Friend makes a valid point. There has never been any legislation on this matter in Scotland, so one can see there what happens on the ground. The current position has been fairly described by my hon. Friend as one where nobody knows what the law is, so no law at all is being applied. We see on the ground, therefore, what emerges in those circumstances. That will, no doubt, help to inform the debate when the Government are able to bring this matter before the House.

Crime

11. Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what discussions he has had since 1 June on the subject of crime in London; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jack: My right hon. and learned Friend has met the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis on four occasions since becoming Home Secretary, and I have had discussions with the Inner London probation service and Lewisham Safer Cities. We continue to tackle crime by providing strong support to the police, giving the courts the powers they need, and fostering a growing range of partnership initiatives aimed at preventing crime.

Mr. Hughes: As the Member for Parliament for the London borough where crime has risen every month for two years, where we have the second highest level of recorded crime in every category and the seventh highest unemployment figures in the country, did the Minister and the Home Secretary hear from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that his view is that there is a direct link between rising unemployment and rising crime? Given that it appears from this morning's "Today" programme that the Home Secretary is now in the economics team of Cabinet Ministers, can we have a clear understanding that to deal with rising crime in Britain the best remedy is to reduce unemployment? Can that be a commitment from all Government Ministers?

Mr. Jack: The hon. Gentleman may have a little weekend reading to do. I commend to him a piece of Home Office research by Dr. Simon Field which refutes the assertion that underlies, I believe, the hon. Gentleman's belief that individual unemployment is directly related to individual wrongdoing. If the hon. Gentleman had been a fly on the wall during the discussions between the Minister and the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis he would have heard of the excellent work that is going on in Southwark on burglary, of the extension of operation Bumblebee, of the car crime initiative Delta, and the sector policing developments, all of which are tackling crime in his constituency.

Mr. Bowis: Would my hon. Friend like to suggest to the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) that he could do worse than visit Battersea police station with my hon. Friend to see the sector policing that has been in operation for some time there and the results, which have led to a lower rate of crime, increased enforcement rates and a much better relationship between the community and the local police force?

Mr. Jack: I am glad that my hon. Friend made that point. If the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) had looked at the crime figures for London, he would know how effective the police are being. The increase in crime rates in the capital is below the national average and sector policing is making its contribution to that important development.

Mrs. Roche: Is the Minister aware of alarming reports that cuts in police overtime in London have resulted in a dramatic reduction, by one third, of cases coming before some criminal courts in London?

Mr. Jack: Some people regard all reports that emanate from the police as dramatic. What I regard as dramatic is that there are 6,000 more police officers in London than in 1979.

Primary-Purpose Rule

12. Mr. Chisholm: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action he proposes to take with regard to the primary-purpose rule.

Mr. Wardle: I have no plans to amend the primary-purpose rule.

Mr. Chisholm: The primary-purpose rule has always been unjust, arbitrary and morally indefensible. As Europe has finally made a nonsense of it, will the Minister undertake to scrap it unconditionally—and not with the proviso that couples must stay together for a further four years at threat of deportation? That would be an outrageous attack on the rights of women who are treated intolerably by their husbands.

Mr. Wardle: I can only assume that the hon. Member is referring to the Surinder Singh case, which is still sub judice but which did not involve the primary-purpose rule. It has never been suggested that Mr. Singh's marriage was contracted with the primary purpose of seeking admission to the United Kingdom.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. Mr. Moate: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 22 October.

The Prime Minister (Mr. John Major): This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Mr. Moate: Will my right hon. Friend join me in welcoming the fact that interest rates are significantly down and that car production figures and even retail sales figures are up? In welcoming the Government's renewed commitment to economic growth and job creation, may I ask my right hon. Friend to tell the House more about his strategy for recovery—[*Interruption.*] The Opposition are not interested in recovery—in particular, ways of stimulating new capital investment projects, especially private and public sector joint-funded projects such as the important new Swale project in my constituency?

The Prime Minister: I had the opportunity of learning about the Swale project when I visited my hon. Friend's constituency some months ago. I think that everyone will welcome the drop in interest rates and the other economic developments that were mentioned by my hon. Friend. When it is safe to make further reductions without imperilling our inflationary objectives, it would certainly be the Government's intention to do so. There is no doubt in any part of the House that across Europe and beyond Europe economic circumstances have darkened and have become more difficult. That circumstance needs to be taken into account in our policy and in the policies of other countries as well. That means that in the months ahead there will be some difficult decisions. There will be tough decisions to be taken in the public expenditure round. It means that we must restrain expenditure where we can, but it also means that we must look with particular care at those elements of expenditure that have an employment and particularly growth potential, which my right hon. Friend the Chancellor will do. We shall certainly look more carefully at ensuring that we seek to get the private sector working more effectively to assist in capital projects, which I believe the whole House will welcome.

Q2. Mr. Heppell: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 22 October.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer that I gave a few moments ago.

Mr. Heppell: Will the Prime Minister give a guarantee that the 10 pits that have been given a 90-day reprieve will be allowed to continue to mine coal during that period? The men want to work. Will he allow them to work?

The Prime Minister: No, I cannot give a guarantee that during the 90-day period coaling will continue in those 10 pits. It is necessary, and it will be the case that those pits will be in a condition to resume coaling. If at the end of that period it is determined that that is the decision, they shall do so. But during that period, I can give no guarantee that there will be coaling.

Mr. Kynoch: Will my right hon. Friend join me in welcoming the tough new rules for GCSE examinations, which will ensure continuing pressure to improve and to achieve higher standards under this Government?

The Prime Minister: I most certainly will. The requirement to seek higher standards is felt by every pupil, and it is a demand sought by every teacher and every parent. It will certainly be the Government's policy to bring that about.

Mr. Hume: As the Member who represents the constituency with the highest unemployment, I ask the Prime Minister to tell the House whether the reports of the Government's intention to reduce contribution-based unemployment benefit are correct? Does he not believe that the Government would be better employed in applying their mind to reducing unemployment rather than to reducing unemployment benefit?

The Prime Minister: As I said to the House a moment ago, it is certainly our intention to pursue a strategy that will bring recovery, and with it growth, jobs and prosperity—I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will welcome that. It is essential that that moves right to the centre of thinking in each and every aspect of Government policy in the

circumstances that now apply in this country, throughout western Europe and beyond. As I stated clearly a few moments ago, that is the Government's intention.

Sir Jim Spicer: In this statement on Tuesday my right hon. Friend stressed the crucial importance of an early completion of the GATT round. Now it seems that the talks have broken down. Can my right hon. Friend give us any idea why that happened, and will he do all that he can to get them started again?

The Prime Minister: I can certainly answer my hon. Friend's second question in the affirmative. This morning I saw the reported comments of the French Foreign Minister that there will be no serious GATT discussions for several months. Let me make it absolutely clear to the House that I could not disagree more strongly with that view. It is not shared by the British Government as holder of the presidency of the Community, nor by the Commissioner, nor by the majority of member states, which last week at Birmingham authorised the Commission to negotiate for a GATT settlement by the end of this year.

Over the past two weeks the narrowing of the gap between the Community and the United States has been very welcome. That gap can be bridged. What is needed is for both sides to stay at the negotiating table, and I shall do all that I can to bring that about.

Mr. John Smith: Given the daily changes in policy which we have all observed this week, what does the Prime Minister have in mind for his next U-turn?

The Prime Minister: I have to say to the right hon. and learned Gentleman that I think that that question falls rather below the level of events. It was his U-turn on tax policy which helped to lose Labour the election. It sank his predecessor, but the right hon. and learned Gentleman did not resign—he was made the leader.

Mr. Smith: Does not the Prime Minister realise that following the British Chambers of Commerce report which says that lack of confidence in the Government is causing many of our difficulties, confidence in him is drastically declining among the people of this country? They are not impressed by a Government blown about by events, and which has one simple rule—"A policy a day keeps Back Benchers at bay."

The Prime Minister: Only a few months ago all the people of this country had the choice to determining in whom they had confidence, and 14.5 million of them chose the Conservative party. That is why—because of the right hon. and learned Gentleman's tax policies, and because of a lack of confidence in his party—the right hon. and learned Gentleman is sitting on the Opposition Benches. That is where he will remain, for at least the next four-and-a-half years.

Mr. Jonathan Evans: Notwithstanding the recent reactions we have heard from China, may I ask my right hon. Friend for his assurance that he will give his unequivocal support to the governor of Hong Kong in his recent announcement, which is good for the people of Hong Kong, good for Britain and entirely in accord with this country's agreement with the Chinese Government?

The Prime Minister: I can most certainly give that assurance. The governor's proposals set out recently in his

speeches in Hong Kong received very wide support among all sorts of opinion in Hong Kong, and very wide support in this House and in public opinion in this country. His aim is to make the Hong Kong Government more effective and more accountable, and to broaden democracy in a way that will survive beyond 1997. That is the right future for Hong Kong, and the governor has the complete and total support of the Government and the whole House in that endeavour.

Q3. Mr. Meale: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 22 October.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Meale: To return to the subject of mining, will the Prime Minister give the House a guarantee that while the review period continues in the coal mining industry, he will place a moratorium on manpower and coal development underground? Without that, it is a meaningless exercise and many pits will face mass redundancies and closures. Yes or no?

The Prime Minister: I think that we have made clear to the hon. Gentleman what happens during the moratorium and the fact that the 21 pits, apart from the 10 where there are special circumstances, will continue in the fashion that was set out clearly yesterday. I cannot and will not give the hon. Gentleman detailed assertions about matters that lie within the day-to-day management responsibility of British Coal.

Mr. Tracey: My right hon. Friend's recent words on growth and sound investment are much to be welcomed. May we, as London Members, urge on my right hon. Friend the cause of the completion of the Jubilee line and the benefits that would flow from it?

The Prime Minister: I know how assiduous my hon. Friend is in the interests of London. I have noted most carefully what he said.

Q4. Mr. Wareing: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 22 October.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Wareing: It has been widely suggested that the Prime Minister, the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the President of the Board of Trade should resign. Will the Prime Minister tell the House what are his qualities and those of his colleagues which could justify their continuance in office?

The Prime Minister: The 14.5 million votes we got in the general election.

Mr. Barry Porter: I had the opportunity this morning of speaking on the electronic telephonic device to Sir Anthony Beaumont-Dark, who had one or two ideas. He seemed to think that it was not a bad idea to reduce interest rates in a gentle sort of fashion, taking into account what the deutschmark is doing, and that we should keep up a reasonable semblance of public expenditure in capital terms. I thought to myself at the time, "That is not a bad idea". Does the Prime Minister agree?

The Prime Minister: I am sure that my hon. Friend will not be at all surprised to know that Sir Anthony has mentioned those matters to me as well.

Q5. Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 22 October.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Jones: When the people of Cheltenham march, should not the Prime Minister ask himself what is going on? Does he not realise that they are angry about the way in which the economy is being run? The Prime Minister and his office say that there has been a change in economic policy; the Treasury says that there has not. Who is telling us the truth?

The Prime Minister: The Government always listen when people make comments of that sort and it was perfectly clear to the House from what I said a few moments ago precisely what objectives the Government have set themselves. Lest there be any doubt in the hon. Gentleman's mind, let me say that there has been no movement away from the inflation objective or from the belief that we need non-inflationary growth. There is no doubt, not even in the hon. Gentleman's mind, that outside this country as well as inside this country, there is a changed economic environment. In that changed economic environment, we have to consider what is in the interests of this country and shape our policies accordingly. That is what we have decided to do. That is the policy that we will continue with.

Mr. Hunter: In the light of the IRA's intensifying campaign of violence in several parts of the United Kingdom, is my right hon. Friend satisfied that sufficient powers and resources are available to those combatting terrorism? Will he make it a priority to give fresh consideration to those matters?

The Prime Minister: We have always given very great priority to the fight against terrorism in Northern Ireland where the security forces face terrorism on a day-to-day basis and on the mainland where, increasingly in recent months, the terrorists have sought to intimidate with bombs. I must make the point to the terrorists again which will carry universal support in the House: they have no chance whatsoever of succeeding—not now, not tomorrow, not ever.

Q6. Mr. Grocott: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 22 October.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Grocott: Does the Prime Minister remember that at the time of the Tory leadership election the reason given for why he beat his two rivals was that he was the one who was the particularly good economist? Will he therefore help the House and tell us whether the Government are pursuing the old economic policy or a new one? Will it be promoted by the old Chancellor or a new one?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman clearly is not listening. He spends too much time reading in the newspapers about what might have been said two years ago.

Business of the House

3.31 pm

Mrs. Margaret Beckett (Derby, South): Will the Leader of the House state the business for next week?

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. Tony Newton): Yes, Madam. The business for next week will be as follows:

MONDAY 26 OCTOBER—Remaining stages of the Bankruptcy (Scotland) Bill

TUESDAY 27 OCTOBER—Timetable motion on and conclusion of remaining stages of the Cardiff Bay Barrage Bill.

Motion to take note of EC Document No. 6132/92 relating to the fifth environmental action programme. Details will be given in the *Official Report*.

WEDNESDAY 28 OCTOBER—Debate on a motion to take note of the outstanding reports of the Public Accounts Committee to which the Government have replied.

THURSDAY 29 OCTOBER—Debate on the White Paper on "New Opportunities for the Railways" on a motion for the Adjournment of the House.

FRIDAY 30 OCTOBER—Debate on sport on a motion for the Adjournment of the House.

MONDAY 2 NOVEMBER—Second Reading of the Asylum and Immigration Appeals Bill.

Madam Speaker, the House will also wish to know that European Standing Committee B will meet on Wednesday 28 October at 10.30 am to consider European Community Document No. 4327/92 relating to cultural goods.

I believe that it would also be of assistance to the House if I announced today some important future business that will shortly come before it. On Wednesday 4 November there will be a debate on a motion relating to the European Communities (Amendment) Bill. On 12 November my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer will make his Autumn Statement to the House. We propose that that will be debated shortly thereafter in Government time.

[Tuesday 27 October

Floor of the House

Relevant European Community Document
6132/92 Community Action on the Environment

Relevant Reports of the European Legislation Committee
HC 79-i (1992-93)

Wednesday 28 October

European Standing Committee B

Relevant European Community Document
4327/92 Protection of National Treasures

Relevant Reports of the European Legislation Committee
HC 79-i (1992-93)
HC 79-vi (1992-93)]

Mrs. Beckett: I thank the Leader of the House for that statement. In the light of the fast deteriorating situation reported from around the world—from Kurdistan, the Ogaden, southern Africa and Sarajevo and the certainty of a huge increase in the loss of life as winter approaches—will the Leader of the House arrange for an early debate so that hon. Members in all parts of the House can express their opposition to cuts in the overseas aid budget before the public expenditure programme is finalised?

As the autumn statement will cover the shape of that programme and should also shed light on whether we have a new economic policy as a No. 10. briefing implies, whether we are seeking a new economic policy as the Prime Minister has been saying, or whether, in the Chancellor's words yesterday, there has in no way been a change of policy, will the Leader of the House ensure that previous practice of a two-day debate—one on the autumn statement and a separate debate on the public expenditure programme—will be followed this year?

Will the Leader of the House further tell us whether there will be a proper early statement on the progress of GATT talks, first, because on Tuesday, at column 323 of *Hansard*, the Prime Minister said that it is not now possible for one member country to scupper those talks and, secondly, to save him from using Prime Minister's Question Time to make such statements?

Finally, I remind the Leader of the House that we are eagerly awaiting publication of the Government's response to the Jopling report. In the meantime, as requested by my predecessor, will he take the earliest possible opportunity to arrange for business to be announced to the House two weeks ahead?

Mr. Newton: On the last point, in one sense I have responded in part to one of the Jopling recommendations by some of the indications that I have given in my statement about business in the next few weeks. I hope that that is regarded as a positive and constructive move.

Mr. John Smith (Monklands, East): More, please.

Mr. Newton: I am urged on ever further by the Leader of the Opposition. In the circumstances I had better be a little cautious, but I hear what he says.

I welcome the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) to her new position and I hope shortly to be able to open discussions through the usual channels on the Jopling issues that she raised in her request today.

On GATT, I note the request that has been made. The hon. Lady will have heard what my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said—and, indeed, the vigour with which he said it—during Prime Minister's Question Time. A debate might be further considered through the usual channels, but in the light of developments following what my right hon. Friend said I certainly cannot make an off-the-cuff commitment to a debate next week.

On the autumn statement, I have already indicated that it would—unusually, as it happens—the Government's intention to provide for a debate very shortly after the statement has been made. Again, I will fall back on the "usual channels" response to what the hon. Lady said about, in effect, a two-day debate. We can have further consideration of that matter.

On overseas aid, I do no more than note the hon. Lady's point, but I observe in return that there will at least be some opportunity for those matters to be raised as the Foreign and Commonwealth Office will answer questions next Wednesday.

Sir Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): In view of the disappointing announcement that the Leader of the House has made about the business for 4 November, will he seriously consider the possible nonsense of wasting a great deal of parliamentary time before we find out whether the people of Denmark want to overturn their decision? Why should we waste parliamentary time when there is so much

to do in Britain and so much to talk about? Why can we not wait until the Danes decide for themselves whether they want to say yes or no?

Mr. Newton: I hope that my hon. Friend will agree, although I know how strongly he feels about these matters, that the Danes have made considerable progress in discussing and indicating how they see the way forward. We think that in the light of that it is now appropriate to invite this House to consider, along the lines that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister indicated earlier in the year, the position of the European Communities (Amendment) Bill.

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): I warmly welcome the advance notice that has been given by the Leader of the House. I hope that that will encourage him to make a full two-week statement in future. It is very welcome to have those two important dates in advance.

I underline the point made by the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) about GATT. It is not just the political circumstances, but the implications for the textile industries and agriculture. It is a changing situation, but we need a debate at the earliest possible time to clarify some of the implications of the potential breakdown of the talks.

Mr. Newton: I well understand, as I am sure that the whole House understands, the importance attached to this matter by all hon. Members, but I do not think that at this stage I can add to what I said to the hon. Lady a moment ago.

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): Will my right hon. Friend find time for a debate on the need for greater freedom in the skies, particularly for air travellers between regional airports in this country and the United States, so that we can get rid of all unnecessary restrictions?

Mr. Newton: My hon. Friend knows very well that the British Government have been pressing that point strongly in various discussions and negotiations in the European Community. I think that useful progress has been made, but I cannot promise an early debate on the matter.

Mr. Nick Ainger (Pembroke): Will the Leader of the House find time in the near future for a debate on yesterday's announcement by the Minister of State for the Armed Forces? It will mean the deaths of many of my constituents, tourists, climbers and seafarers due to the reduction in cover by search and rescue helicopters. It is also of national significance that in the report following that announcement—

Madam Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must simply put a question to the Leader of the House asking if he will change next week's business. That is the point of business questions.

Mr. Newton: I am obviously aware of the announcement to which the hon. Gentleman refers. Contrary to the implication of his remarks, the announcement was made on the basis that it would not significantly affect the Government's ability to provide an appropriate level of cover around the United Kingdom in respect of the issues which concern the hon. Gentleman. As I said to the hon.

Member for Derby, South, there will be an opportunity to raise those matters again at Ministry of Defence questions next Tuesday.

Mr. John Denham (Southampton, Itchen): Will the Leader of the House confirm whether the debate announced earlier on the European Community's environment programme will include a report on the decision reached this week on the import of toxic waste into this country? If it is to include that decision, will the right hon. Gentleman tell the Secretary of State for the Environment that many hon. Members will wish to hear a declaration that this country will use its powers under that agreement to ban the current import into this country of 44,000 tonnes of toxic waste a year, 20,000 tonnes of which comes through the port of Southampton?

Mr. Newton: I would not attempt such a judgment. It is for the Chair to decide what might or might not be in order in the course of that debate, but I will ensure that my right hon. and learned Friend's attention is drawn to the concern that the hon. Gentleman has expressed.

Mr. Roger Knapman (Stroud): My right hon. Friend has suggested that we debate the European Communities (Amendment) Bill on 4 November. Would not 5 November be more appropriate? How can we possibly proceed with the Bill when so much of it relates to monetary union, which is totally impossible at present?

Mr. Newton: My hon. Friend knows very well that the British Government have approached the matter on the basis of the outcome of the negotiations at the turn of last year, which includes—as my right hon. Friend the Chancellor has emphasised a number of times—the firm position that the British Government are in no way committed to a single currency.

Mr. John Bowis (Battersea): As two more of my schools move towards grant-maintained status, will my right hon. Friend bring forward the debate on grant-maintained schools, which may come with a second Bill? I ask the question so that my constituents may know whether the Labour party's policy is that proposed at the last election by the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw), which was broadly supportive of such schools, or the policy now expressed by the Labour party spokeswoman, which is wholly hostile and destructive?

Mr. Newton: I promise my hon. Friend that, although we have not yet published the Education Bill, we are publishing today two major Government Bills. I do not think that he will have to wait too much longer for the Education Bill which will, I think, be widely welcomed throughout the country when it is introduced.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): The Leader of the House will know that the Select Committee on Members' Interests spent hundreds of hours working, and conducting inquiries and discussions which led to our proposal for a new Register of Members' Interests. That should now come before the House as a matter of urgency. Can the Leader of the House give us time for a debate?

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman will recall that shortly before the summer recess I went to some length to provide time for debate on various reports which was interrelated with that subject. I know that the hon.

[Mr. Newton]

Gentleman wished us to go further and I have his request very much in mind, but I cannot give an undertaking on a specific time at present.

Mr. Mark Wolfson (Sevenoaks): Does my right hon. Friend agree that it would be in the Government's own interests to allow at least two days for an economic debate following the autumn statement? It is vital to the country that we clarify exactly where we stand and where we intend to go, and this would surely be the right opportunity to do that.

Mr. Newton: When I start to get requests not only from the usual channels but from some unusual ones as well, I give them even greater weight. I cannot make an absolute commitment, but I have said that we shall give some thought to the request.

Mr. Ken Livingstone (Brent, East): Will the Leader of the House consider a debate centred on early-day motion 589?

[That this House welcomes the decision of the United States Congress to investigate arms sales to Iraq; notes the charges by former Israeli Military Intelligence agent Mr. Ari Ben-Menashe that a Texan-based company owned by Mr. Mark Thatcher was used to move equipment directly from Britain to Iraq, that Mark Thatcher introduced 'Supergun' designer Gerald Bull to South African Military Intelligence General Pieter Van der Westhuizen, who subsequently introduced Mr. Bull to the Iraqi Deputy Chief of Procurement who arranged payment for Mr. Bull's services via Cardoen Industries financial network and that Mark Thatcher introduced Mr. Bull to Mark Thatcher's Chilean associate Carlos Cardoen; notes that Mr. Ben-Menashe also charges that Mark Thatcher sold 48 Chieftain tanks to Chile and proclaimed his admiration for General Pinochet; and, in the light of these charges, hopes the Government will conduct its own investigation to determine the truth of these charges and, if proved true, bring criminal charges against any United Kingdom Government individuals who were aware of these activities.] The motion draws attention to serious allegations by a former Israeli military intelligence officer that a Texas-based company run by Mark Thatcher was instrumental in arranging the sale of the supergun to Iraq, and its funding? In that debate, will the right hon. Gentleman arrange for reports to be laid before the House from the heads of MI5 and MI6 stating whether they briefed the former Prime Minister about the activities of her son?

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman knows that investigation and prosecution in a matter of this kind would require evidence of breaches of United Kingdom controls on arms exports to Iraq and Chile. If he or any other hon. Member has such evidence, he should first make it available to the relevant authorities.

Mr. Roger Moate (Faversham): As my hon. Friend has announced the date for the Maastricht debate, he presumably knows the form of the motion that will be presented to the House. Will it be a substantive motion capable of amendment or a motion for the Adjournment? May I suggest that the latter would be preferable, given the varying circumstances and the almost weekly changes in

relation to this matter? It would be far more sensible to allow all sections of the House to present their views on an Adjournment motion.

Mr. Newton: I note what my hon. Friend says, but I would expect it to be a substantive motion.

Mr. Brian Sedgemore (Hackney, South and Shoreditch): Can the Leader of the House confirm that the Secretary of State for Health will make a statement tomorrow on Professor Bernard Tomlinson's proposal to close some of London's major teaching hospitals? Is he aware that the hospitals have been told that the press will get this document at 8.30 am, that Professor Tomlinson will hold a press conference at 10 am—before the statement is made to the House—and that the hospitals concerned, the pitiful victims of the proposals, will not receive the document until 12.30 pm or even 2 pm? Will the right hon. Gentleman ensure that there are no pre-releases of the document, no press conferences and no press releases until both this House and the hospitals concerned have had a chance to see the papers?

Mr. Newton: The answer to the first part of the hon. Gentleman's question is yes, I can confirm that my right hon. Friend intends to make a statement tomorrow covering the publication of the report and how she proposes to carry forward consideration of it. I shall, of course, undertake to bring the hon. Gentleman's latter observations to her attention.

Mr. John Greenway (Ryedale): Do the Government intend that there should be an opportunity for a debate on the Bingham report, published today? Will they link that debate with a wide-ranging discussion of the future of our banking and financial services industry, on which so much of our economic future depends?

Mr. Newton: It is my intention that, at an appropriate time, there should be a debate on the matter. Perhaps I can reserve judgment on the precise extent and content of such a debate until my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer has made his statement a little later this afternoon.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): There are a number of current scandals: pit closures, sterling and the fact that the House has been away for three months while those crises have been bumbling around. There is, however, another crisis that we should examine. It is outlined in early-day motion 601:

[That this House believes that thousands of people are in desperate circumstances due to massive failures in the operations of the Benefits Agency; and calls for the resignations of the Secretary of State for Social Security and the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State with responsibilities for the Benefits Agency, together with the disbanding of the Benefits Agency and the return of its duties directly to the Department of Social Security where the operations of the benefits system can once more be opened to parliamentary scrutiny.]

The motion refers to the failure of the social security system. The disability living allowance unit is in a state of collapse, and the whole operation of the Benefits Agency is an utter disgrace. People have been cut off from benefits, and despite having to go through a great deal of detail and time wasting they cannot get their benefits back.

May we have a debate on the future of the Secretary of State for Social Security, the future of the Benefits Agency and the problem of our inability to ask questions in the House relating to that agency?

Mr. Newton: On the last point, the hon. Gentleman will know that I announced on Tuesday that chief executives' replies to hon. Members' questions are to be published in the *Official Report*. I hope that that is welcome as it is something that a number of people have pressed for and, frankly, I think that it is a sensible decision.

On the hon. Gentleman's other observations, I am well aware that the introduction of substantially improved extended disability benefits was attended by some difficulty because of the level of demand for them. I am also well aware that those problems were vigorously tackled by the Benefits Agency but I will, of course, draw the hon. Gentleman's remarks to the attention of my right hon. Friend.

Mr. Ian Bruce (South Dorset): Would my right hon. Friend consider having a debate about public expenditure before the autumn statement so that we do not have the unedifying spectacle of hon. Members trying to advise the Chancellor, after the event, what he should have been doing with public expenditure? I have particularly asked that question because I know that £300 million is due to be spent on moving the Procurement Executive to a central location north of Bristol with the loss of thousands of jobs in my constituency and others. It will take 14 years to pay back to the Exchequer the cost of that move. If we could highlight such wasteful uses of public expenditure, we might get somewhere in keeping our economy under control.

Mr. Newton: I am afraid that I cannot promise my hon. Friend a debate of quite the kind that he wishes, but it seems to me that he made effective use of his opportunity today to make a contribution to the debate. I am sure that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor will note what he said.

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): Will the Leader of the House acknowledge the strongest possible case for a debate next week on the crisis in the Scottish fishing industry? He may recall the words of Aneurin Bevan who said that Britain

"is almost made of coal and surrounded by fish." Does he agree that the Scottish fishing communities are currently being treated with the same arrogance and insensitivity that the Government tried to dish out to the English mining communities?

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman would not expect me to accept—nor do I accept—the suggestion that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland or any of his Ministers are treating any part of Scottish industry with arrogance and insensitivity, to repeat his words. I am aware that there are problems, but they are being addressed.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): All my constituents will welcome the fact that the Asylum and Immigration Appeals Bill has been announced for consideration on 2 November. However, could we have a debate next week on the pressures exerted on boroughs such as Ealing, which are near to Heathrow? The pressures are different from those experienced in other constituencies because asylum seekers put great pressure on housing

authorities and social services and we in Ealing already have enormous problems in meeting housing needs and the like.

Mr. Newton: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his welcome for the appearance of the Asylum and Immigration Appeals Bill. I said in my statement earlier that I expect it to have its Second Reading on Monday week, and it would seem entirely appropriate—subject to you, Madam Speaker—for my hon. Friend to seek to make some of those points in the course of that debate.

Mr. Peter L. Pike (Burnley): Does the Leader of the House agree that it is totally wrong that Ministers are increasingly referring letters from hon. Members on policy issues to the chief executives of agencies, who cannot respond on those policy issues? As this is such a fundamental change affecting the rights of hon. Members' on both sides of the House, could we have a debate on the issues involved to ensure that procedures are correctly followed and policy issues are dealt with by the Ministers responsible for them?

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman will know that the basis of the current arrangement is that matters are referred to the chief executives when they concern, essentially, the delivery of the services with which they are charged. Therefore, if the hon. Gentleman has particular examples where he believes that what should have properly been treated as a matter of policy has been passed to chief executives, I should like to bring them to the attention of my right hon. Friends or other hon. Friends concerned.

Mr. Christopher Gill (Ludlow): In the light of the Prime Minister's remarks at the Conservative party conference in Brighton, does my right hon. Friend have it in mind to allow the House to debate the subject of regulatory overkill, which threatens the competitive position of so many sections of British industry with absolutely no perceptible benefit to the customer?

Mr. Newton: I am not sure that I can promise an early debate on those matters, but my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister made clear in his remarks on economic policy earlier in the week that continued attention to what is called the deregulation initiative is part and parcel of our approach to seeking to build growth on the basis of low inflation.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Does the Leader of the House accept that if he allows the Jopling proposals to sink out of sight it would be widely accepted on both sides of the House? Can he give time for a debate next week, or at the earliest opportunity, on the Home Office statement of the decision not to grant Derek Bentley a posthumous pardon? Many people consider that there was an outrageous injustice in the first place and it has been compounded by the Home Secretary turning a blind eye to the evidence submitted which justifies such a pardon for the innocent Derek Bentley. As the statement was made when the House was not sitting and no Member had the chance to question the Minister, surely we should have time for a debate.

Mr. Newton: On the issue of Jopling, I shall not attempt to add to what I told the hon. Member for Derby, South, I will leave her to discuss with the hon. Gentleman the variation in their attitudes to that matter. On the latter question, I ought to say that, knowing my right hon. and

[*Mr. Newton*]

learned Friend the Home Secretary as I do, I cannot accept the description that the hon. Gentleman gave of the long and careful consideration which I know that he gave to the Bentley case. I cannot promise an early opportunity for a debate on that.

Mr. Walter Sweeney (Vale of Glamorgan): Does my right hon. Friend accept that the majority of people in this country do not want to become European citizens and do not want a common defence policy or a single currency, that they will regard it as an irrelevance to debate Maastricht on 4 November, and that they will feel that we are fiddling while Rome burns?

Mr. Newton: I advert to what I said earlier about the British Government's clear opposition to the notion of a federal Europe, and the absence of any commitment on the single currency having been agreed at Maastricht. My hon. Friend will be well aware of those points. I do not think that the people of this country will regard as irrelevant further consideration of the relationship between this country and others in the Community in circumstances in which it is overwhelmingly accepted that our future lies in the Community and that our trade with it, and influence in it, are matters of crucial British interest—not French or German interest, but British interest.

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): Before next Wednesday's Public Accounts Committee debate, will the right hon. Gentleman tell the House or have one of his colleagues tell us whether it is correct that, at a time of impending public expenditure cuts, it is proposed to spend £2 million to £3 million on the refurbishment of Old Palace yard, from which hon. Members of this House and their secretaries are to be evicted, to provide accommodation for four ex-Prime Ministers who are in another place, three of whom have expressed no interest in such accommodation, which means that that money is being spent to provide accommodation for the Prime Minister in exile—the noble Lady, Baroness Thatcher?

Mr. Newton: The right hon. Gentleman will be aware that there have been discussions between the two Houses, which have resulted in an agreement that the Lords would give up the third floor of 7 Milbank in exchange for the transfer back to them of 6 and 7 Old Palace yard. It is recognised that no such change could be made without inconvenience, but the relevant Committees of both Houses—in the case of this House, that is the Accommodation and Works Committee—have accepted that that change has major benefits for all concerned.

Mr. Derek Enwright (Hemsworth): The Leader of the House will be interested to hear that I had a long telephone conversation this morning with a card-carrying Conservative, who informed me that the way in which the budgets of the 10 condemned pits have been shown as making a loss was false accountancy. He has clear proof of that. Will the Leader of the House therefore provide time next week for us to consider that matter urgently, after a statement by his right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade, so that we can assure ourselves that those 10 pits work at a considerable profit?

Mr. Newton: It might surprise the hon. Gentleman a little if I were to promise another debate next week of the sort that we had yesterday.

Mr. Enright: No, it would not.

Mr. Newton: Even if it would not surprise the hon. Gentleman, I can assure him that I am not planning to give him such an assurance. It would seem that the statutory 90-day period on which we have embarked provides an opportunity for him and others to raise the point that he has made.

Mr. Greville Janner (Leicester, West): May I press the Leader of the House to allow time for a statement on overseas aid as a matter of urgency? Is he aware that the hon. Member for Bury, South (Mr. Sumberg) and I have recently returned from a visit to Lithuania and Latvia? Apart from the misery of a pilgrimage to mass graves, we now know just how cold those countries are, how poor they are, and how difficult it will be for them to preserve their democracies in a winter of probable cold and hunger. Does the right hon. Gentleman appreciate the importance of providing time now for the Government to give an undertaking not to reduce aid to such countries so that the Government will not have to say, after those countries have returned to misery and extremism, "We should have helped them more"?

Mr. Newton: I note what the hon. and learned Gentleman says and I appreciate the reason why he felt it right to raise the issue again. I cannot add to what I said earlier to his Front Bench colleague, the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett).

Mr. Richard Shepherd (Aldridge-Brownhills): As it would appear that it is genuinely the Government's intention to continue with the legislation of the Queen as a citizen of the union of Europe, perhaps we could have a debate on the constitutional consequences of the sovereign authority of this country being the Queen in Parliament and the effects on that of the Queen now being reduced to the status of citizen?

Mr. Newton: As my hon. Friend will know, I do not accept the interpretation that he places on these matters. There will be an opportunity to make those points when we have the debate to which I have referred.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): Is the Leader of the House aware that there will be widespread dismay that the Government are reintroducing asylum legislation and extending it to abolish rights of appeal against immigration decisions? Does he understand that many will suspect that that legislation is being brought forward to divert and distract public attention from the Government's disarray and economic incompetence?

Will the right hon. Gentleman make the necessary arrangements for the members of the Standing Committee—I hope to be one of them—to be able to make visits, including visits to Heathrow, to see the disgraceful conditions in which those fleeing war and ethnic cleansing in Bosnia are treated, and enable those with professional expertise and experience in these matters to present evidence direct to the Committee?

Mr. Newton: I think that the hon. Gentleman will find that, rather than taking the attitude that he has suggested, the country will regard the Government's proposals as

entirely in line with our long-standing commitment to firm but fair control of immigration and related matters. That is the purpose of the Bill, and that is what I believe it will secure. As for the rest of the hon. Gentleman's observations, they, too, are matters that he might legitimately raise if he is fortunate enough to catch your eye, Madam Deputy Speaker, during the debate that will take place in 10 days' time.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Is it not clear from the replies of the Leader of the House to his hon. Friends about the debate on Maastricht that the Government do not intend to assess the opinion of the House but to force a majority vote—no doubt the same way as yesterday—by means of arm twisting? Are the Government generally, and especially the right hon. Gentleman, aware that since the summer recess there has undoubtedly been a substantial increase in the number of people who are opposed to Maastricht? In my opinion an overwhelming majority of the British people—this could be tested by a referendum—do not want the treaty. Why are the Government going ahead, particularly at a time of acute economic crisis?

Mr. Newton: My assessment is rather different. I believe that it has become much clearer during the past three months that there is widespread support around Europe for the approach that the Government adopted to negotiations on Maastricht and the emphasis that we placed on developments through co-operation between Governments rather than centralised Community institutions and through the key concept of subsidiarity.

Several Hon. Members *rose*—

Madam Speaker: We now move on to the statement from the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

BCCI (Bingham Report)

4.4 pm

The Chancellor of the Exchequer (Mr. Norman Lamont): The collapse of the Bank of Credit and Commerce International was a severe blow to many thousands of depositors all over the world. It was the result of a fraud unparalleled both in scale and cunning. Many hon. Members have seen the problems that it has caused and is still causing to businesses and individuals alike.

It was against that background that I decided, with the Governor of the Bank of England, to ask Lord Justice Bingham to carry out a full and rigorous inquiry into the conduct of the authorities that supervised BCCI.

Lord Justice Bingham had access to all the material that he needed from the Government and the Bank. Nothing was withheld. Much of the evidence was confidential and the inquiry was held in private to avoid any prejudice to criminal proceedings and to encourage witnesses to give evidence.

Since receiving the report, I have had to weigh carefully the public interest in maintaining that confidentiality against the public interest in disclosure. After taking legal advice, I have concluded that the balance lies firmly in favour of publishing Lord Justice Bingham's report unamended and in full but without the supporting appendices.

Once hon. Members have had the opportunity to digest the report, there will be a debate in Government time in the House on the matter.

Lord Justice Bingham's terms of reference were:

"To enquire into the supervision of BCCI under the Banking Acts: to consider whether the action taken by all the United Kingdom authorities was appropriate and timely; and to make recommendations."

Accordingly, Lord Justice Bingham's report does not attempt to describe the full story of BCCI's activities, nor does it seek to judge how overseas authorities, the directors of the companies, or the auditors, carried out their duties. What the report does provide is a clear and thorough account of the role of every official United Kingdom authority which had any involvement in the affairs of BCCI.

Lord Justice Bingham concluded that the conduct of Treasury Ministers and officials was not in his view "open to criticism in any respect".

However, the main focus of the report is banking supervision. With the Banking Acts of 1979 and 1987, Parliament placed that responsibility on the Bank of England. So the bulk of the report deals with the way the Bank discharged its responsibilities from 1972, when BCCI opened its first branch in London, to its closure last year. It may be helpful to the House if I summarise briefly the report's main conclusions.

First, I should make it clear that the closure of BCCI was instigated by the Bank after it had received a report last June from the auditors which revealed the largest fraud in banking history. Responsibility for that fraud and the consequent losses rests squarely with those criminals who devised and carried it out. They are being pursued by the authorities in a number of countries.

Secondly, BCCI's opaque structure was established before there was a statutory system of banking supervision in this country. The report accepts that a bank established today

[Mr. Norman Lamont]

"could scarcely hope to assume the form it did or last so long".

But Lord Justice Bingham is critical of a number of judgments made by the Bank over the years. He argues that the Bank was slow to impose on BCCI an appropriate supervisory regime, and concludes that the Bank continued for too long to rely on the Luxembourg authorities to play the leading role.

Next, the report concludes that communication between supervisors, auditors, and shareholders was not as good as it should have been. The Bank did not grasp the scale of the fraud that the majority shareholders and auditors had uncovered until it received Price Waterhouse's report in June last year. The report came as a surprise to the Bank, but Lord Justice Bingham argues that it should not have done.

He concludes that it would not have come as a surprise had Price Waterhouse more plainly and comprehensively brought the various elements of the fraud to the notice of the Bank as they emerged, or had the majority shareholders made a full and timely disclosure of all the facts known to them. But Lord Justice Bingham also concludes that the Bank itself should have been more alive to the significance of those messages it did receive and that it should have pursued the leads it was given more vigorously.

Turning to the summer of 1991, he concludes that the Bank's action in closing BCCI was an appropriate course of action, as it was its decision not to give effective advance notice to the majority shareholders. In his view, all the options were unattractive and the Bank had to act on its judgment of what was in the interests of depositors.

In the last 18 months, some wild allegations have been made—both in this country and abroad—about the Bank's role in the affair. Lord Justice Bingham's report shows that there was no duplicity or bad faith; that the Bank was party to no conspiracy or cover-up.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): It is a whitewash and a cover up.

Mr. Lamont: The hon. Gentleman is mistaken. Those allegations were made.

None the less, Lord Justice Bingham concludes that mistakes were made and that in certain respects the Bank's supervision was deficient. That is a matter of very serious concern and I am determined that all the lessons from this case should be learnt.

It is to the key question of how to make the supervisory system more effective in the future that Lord Justice Bingham turns in the final chapter of his report.

He does not call for any radical recasting either of United Kingdom legislation or of the international framework developed by the G10 group of countries. Nor does he find any substantial flaws in the new regime for banks within the European Community that comes into effect next year. He believes that the Bank of England's traditional supervisory techniques have generally served the community well, and he does not recommend any change in its responsibility for supervision. None the less, he makes a number of recommendations for strengthening our current arrangements. The Government and the Bank accept them all.

First, we must ensure transparency of structure. Lord Justice Bingham says that the most important lesson of the affair is that

"banking group structures which deny supervisors a clear view of how business is conducted should be outlawed."

To put the position in the United Kingdom beyond doubt, I will introduce legislation to give the Bank explicit powers to refuse or to revoke authorisation of banks whose supervision is obstructed by a complex structure or by undue secrecy in the financial centres in which they operate.

In Europe, I will urge our Community partners to agree that similar powers should be taken by all banking supervisors, and we will press for the adoption of similar standards more widely.

Next, we need better communication and co-operation between supervisors internationally. Few substantial banks now operate only in one country, or even on one continent. It is vital that all the supervisors concerned with a single group should communicate openly, co-ordinate their efforts, and impose similar standards.

The latest Basle concordat is an important step forward, as is the European Community consolidated supervision directive, but we need to go further in strengthening the arrangements for exchange of information internationally. We will ask our European partners to look again at the confidentiality provisions of the banking directives, to ensure that they do not impede the exchange of information between supervisors and other authorities.

We will also propose a system for reviewing supervisory standards within the Community and more widely.

But it is not just a matter of co-operating internationally. An increasing number of banks form parts of wider financial conglomerates. Fraud is by no means confined to banks, so we must also ensure that all the different authorities at home that are responsible for deterring, investigating, and prosecuting fraud co-operate to the greatest effect. I am therefore establishing new machinery within the United Kingdom to strengthen communications and co-operation between supervisors and all the other relevant authorities.

Fourth, BCCI has emphasised how vital it is that auditors should speak plainly and freely to the Bank. Hitherto, their duties have been laid down in professional guidance. Lord Justice Bingham has concluded—as, indeed, did the Treasury Select Committee—that it would be better for the duty to be statutory. I accept that conclusion. I have decided that a similar approach would be appropriate for financial services and building societies, and the President of the Board of Trade considers that it should also be extended to insurance companies. The necessary consultation with the professional auditing bodies and others on the formulation of such a duty and its enforcement will be taken forward urgently.

Finally, Lord Justice Bingham concludes that it would be a mistake to respond to BCCI by intensifying supervision of all banks. The overriding need is to ensure that the supervisors' attention is concentrated on suspect banks, and that, where appropriate, vigorous action is taken. The Governor and I take very seriously the criticisms that have been made of the Bank; so the Governor is announcing today important organisational changes and a strengthening of his supervisory team. A special investigations unit and a legal unit are being set up. As recommended by the Select Committee, the Bank's capacity for on-site examination is being strengthened.

Greater use will also be made of the Board of Banking Supervision, which brings outside expertise to bear on the Bank's work, and training for supervisors is being enhanced.

An effective system of banking supervision is essential to any advanced economy. It cannot eliminate risk, but it can make bank failures less likely and frauds more difficult. In that way it sustains the confidence on which sound banking, and the economy more generally, depend. BCCI was not typical in any respect, but its failure has caused great damage and distress. It was important to review the United Kingdom authorities' role in the affair dispassionately and thoroughly.

I am sure that the House will join me in thanking Lord Justice Bingham for producing a masterly account of a complex subject. He has not hesitated to make criticisms where he considers them appropriate, but he has been constructive in his recommendations for the future.

The Government are determined to learn all the lessons from this unhappy affair. As I have said, we accept all the Bingham report's recommendations, and we intend to pursue them vigorously.

Mr. Gordon Brown (Dunfermline, East): We are dealing with the biggest banking fraud in history. Because of criminal activity, thousands of hard-pressed depositors lost millions of pounds and were left stranded; £78 million was lost to local authorities alone; and there was also the human cost—14,000 people worldwide lost their jobs. Lord Justice Bingham has concluded that the supervisory approach of the regulatory authorities was deficient. He has also said that they failed to take strong and resolute action, and that they did not pursue the truth about BCCI with the rigour that BCCI's market reputation justified.

Given all that, will the Chancellor answer the central question of this affair: who is going to accept responsibility for the regulatory mistakes and misjudgments that Lord Bingham has uncovered?

Is it not the case that BCCI, approved and authorised by the Bank of England, was involved not just for months but for years in fraud, the laundering of money, bribery connected with terrorism, arms trafficking and income tax evasion? Is it not the case that the Bank of England knew in 1988 of the charge of laundering billions of pounds of drugs money; knew in March 1990 that terrorists held bank accounts in the United Kingdom at BCCI; knew from Price Waterhouse in April 1990 that statements and transactions by the bank were "either false or deceitful"; knew in October 1990 of detailed inappropriate transactions, including hundreds of millions of pounds of insider loans, and prima facie evidence of fraudulent documentation; and knew also that the minimum criteria for authorisation were being breached under schedule 3 to the Banking Act 1987? Yet the bank continued to be allowed to trade right up until July 1991.

Does the Chancellor agree that, after being advised that there were serious irregularities worthy of further investigation in 1988, 1989 and 1990, the Governor of the Bank of England's statement in April 1991 that the bank was "in pretty good shape" was something of a misjudgment, as was the judgment to allow BCCI to remove, by charter plane, the records and evidence of its misdeeds to the middle east, out of the jurisdiction of the United Kingdom authorities?

Given what has been uncovered by Lord Bingham, does the Chancellor consider it right, in the light of this

catalogue of mistakes, that junior officials in the Bank of England should alone shoulder the blame? Will he not confirm that ultimate responsibility in the Bank of England rests with the Governor? Will the Chancellor tell us whether he has asked for the resignation of the Governor of the Bank of England?

When, throughout, the Prime Minister and the Treasury have continually sought to distance themselves from both the Bank of England and their responsibility for the regulation, when the Treasury witnesses and the Chancellor did not tell us, but told Bingham, that there was no need for the Treasury to be informed, yet when Bingham reports in paragraph 2.513:

"I would find this view more persuasive if the Bank had chosen to tell the Treasury nothing about BCCI . . . But it was not the line which the Bank took", and when Bingham also says:

"Particularly after the Tampa arrest"—that is, three years before the bank was closed—

"BCCI was a fairly regular subject of report" to the Treasury, is not the correct position that, far from the Treasury and the Prime Minister, when Chancellor, being uninformed—as has been claimed—and therefore blameless, the Treasury and its Ministers knew full well that there was a problem but chose to do nothing more? For this the Prime Minister must accept a share of the blame.

Was it right for the Prime Minister to tell the House on 18 January 1990, when so many problems were already obvious, that he was satisfied with the supervision of the bank? Was it right, after being told in April 1990 of drug laundering and in May 1990 of the seriousness of the problems, that he, by his own admission, despite having been put on notice, took no further action in the matter for 16 months, as problems accumulated, until he was told that the bank was to be closed the next day?

Is not the position this: that the Prime Minister and the Treasury say that they relied on the Bank, that the Bank says that it relied on Price Waterhouse, that Price Waterhouse says that it relied on information from BCCI and that, therefore, no one is accepting responsibility for misjudgment and mistakes in regulation? Everyone, as usual, as happens under this Government, is blaming someone else.

In these circumstances, will the Chancellor tell us when he replies why the Prime Minister, who gave the House an undertaking on 22 July 1991 that he would personally publish the report and answer for it has singularly failed to honour that promise by coming to the House today?

Does this sorry episode not show that, while Ministers paid lip service to regulation, their ideological attachment to crude free market dogma meant that effective and tough regulation was never taken sufficiently seriously, with the result that the Bank of England's so-called "light hand" made it a soft touch for a crooked bank? Are we not paying a heavy price for the free-for-all of the 1980s which denied regulation its proper place in the management of our financial institutions?

Will the Chancellor now tell us that he will hold a full debate on the report and on the Bingham recommendations? Will he explain which sections of the appendices have been deleted and whether any of the deletions refer to the Government and the Bank of England's role in this affair? I welcome the fact that auditors will be obliged to report fraud, something that we have been urging upon this Government for some time.

[Mr. Gordon Brown]

Will the Chancellor tell us what new arrangements he will propose to review the compensation scheme, whether he will consider putting it on the same footing as institutions regulated by the Securities and Investments Board and whether he will speed up compensation for the many small businesses that went out of business and for the individuals who entrusted their life savings to BCCI, in the belief that the Bank of England would protect their interests, as did the local authorities which relied upon the Bank of England's approval and which would have been penalised, surcharged, or debarred from office if they had been guilty of the regulatory failures, now the responsibility of the Bank of England? Will he therefore reform the approved list for local authorities borrowing from banks?

As this is the latest in a series of failures in the Government's free-for-all approach to the regulation and management of the economy, for which others are again apparently shouldering the blame and paying the price, is not it time for a separate wholesale review and overhaul of the regulation of banks and our financial institutions, and will the Chancellor agree to the proposal for an inquiry now?

Mr. Lamont: I answered some of the hon. Gentleman's questions in my statement. I said that we shall provide a debate in Government time. I further said that we fully accept the recommendations of the report. I appreciate that the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) has had only a couple of hours to glance at the conclusions.

Mr. Gordon Brown indicated dissent.

Mr. Lamont: It is the first conclusion. The conclusion of the report is that Lord Justice Bingham does not recommend a radical recasting of the legal structure of banking supervision. Our conclusion, therefore, is that it would not be appropriate to take such action. I have explained that we accept every one of his recommendations, that we are strengthening the legislation, where necessary, to ensure more co-operation between supervisors internationally and within the United Kingdom and that we are implementing what Lord Justice Bingham says is the single most important lesson of the affair—that where a bank's structure is opaque and difficult to supervise, the authorities should be able to refuse it authorisation. I have made it clear that we accept that.

The hon. Member for Dunfermline, East mentioned the appendices. I have published the report in full. I explained to the hon. Gentleman that I have had to bear in mind the risk of prejudicing prosecutions and the fact that much evidence and information is given confidentially to ensure the supervision of banks. I have accepted legal advice on that point. I am sure that, when the hon. Gentleman has time to read the report, he will see that it is an extremely full and detailed examination of the role of supervisors, of the bank and of the Government.

The hon. Member for Dunfermline, East seemed not to be aware that Parliament has quite unequivocally laid down that responsibility for the supervision of banks lies with the Bank of England. Lord Justice Bingham says that he believes that that is right and that it should continue. Obviously, the Bank of England accepts responsibility for the supervision of individual banks: that is its job.

The hon. Member for Dunfermline, East has been extremely critical of the Governor. It is true that the report makes some telling criticisms of the supervision of the bank over many years, but I point out that it existed in 73 countries, had 400 branches and \$20 billion-worth of deposits. It goes right back to the early 1970s. When the Bank of England took the lead and closed it down, it was still operating in 60 countries. It was still operating in New York and California.

The hon. Member for Dunfermline, East referred to the Tampa prosecutions, money laundering and the drug incidents. But even after those, the bank continued to be allowed to operate in the United States because the view taken there, as here, was that this had been something confined to local management. That was the view taken at the time.

The hon. Member for Dunfermline, East should recognise that Lord Justice Bingham says that the Bank of England's general approach to supervision has served the country well, and he commends the supervision of the United Kingdom branch. However, as the hon. Gentleman has rightly emphasised, the report makes some strong and telling criticisms of what happened at particular moments of time, when information was made available on which, at it turned out, wrong judgments were made.

Surely the key point is the recommendation of the report. Lord Justice Bingham has said what he thinks ought to be done, and we have wholly accepted that those are the appropriate responses. I do not believe that it would be right to call for the resignation of the Governor of the Bank of England.

The hon. Gentleman made some legitimate points, which did not greatly surprise me, but what he said about my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister fell below the level of events, and astonished me. It was absolutely disgraceful. The report makes it quite clear that the conduct of Treasury Ministers, including the Prime Minister, is not open to criticism in any respect. The hon. Gentleman has attempted to resurrect the allegations made by the former Leader of the Opposition, who in July 1991 said:

"It . . . is a matter of regret that 200,000 people continued to trade with the BCCI . . . when . . . the then Chancellor of the Exchequer"—

he was referring to my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister—

"knew about serious irregularities in that bank, but did nothing to warn anyone."—[*Official Report*, 23 July 1991; Vol. 195, c. 1028-9.]

The hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) has repeated those allegations.

Lord Justice Bingham makes it clear that the Prime Minister read the report over the weekend of 29 and 30 June, and that that was the first that my right hon. Friend had heard of the fraud, either as Prime Minister or in his previous office as Chancellor of the Exchequer. The hon. Member for Dunfermline, East and his party should withdraw their disgraceful allegations.

Several Hon. Members rose—

Madam Speaker: Order. The House will understand that I cannot allow this to develop into a debate, which I fear it may be likely to do. The Chancellor of the Exchequer has made a statement, and I am looking for short questions and short answers. I have to keep in mind

and safeguard the remainder of the day's business. I hope that I shall have the co-operation of all hon. Members on those matters.

Mr. John Watts (Slough): I welcome my right hon. Friend's decision to publish the report in full and to implement all its recommendations. In view of the importance of the transparency of structure, which is central to Bingham's recommendations and to those made by the Treasury Select Committee in the previous Parliament, will my right hon. Friend tell the House how quickly he intends to introduce legislation to strengthen the Bank of England's power to refuse or revoke authorisation where the structure of a bank is designed to make supervision difficult?

In view of the European dimension, will my right hon. Friend make it a priority of the British presidency to ensure that similar legislation is enacted throughout the European Community, so that we do not face the prospect of a bank inadequately regulated in another Community country, such as Luxembourg, being able to operate here under the passporting procedures?

Mr. Lamont: My hon. Friend has put his finger on what Lord Justice Bingham says is the most important issue arising from the affair—that we should be able to supervise banks which have opaque structures. We shall introduce legislation to deal with that as quickly as we can. Some such measures have already been enacted under European legislation but have not yet come into force. The second consolidated supervision directive, which comes into operation next year, will help greatly.

My hon. Friend's second point was made in the context of the European Community, but it also applies more widely. The standards of supervision everywhere should reach the same high level—and we intend to pursue that goal through the supplement to the Basle concordat. We also intend to press for machinery within the EC to ensure that that is precisely what happens. That is most important and, as my hon. Friend said, it will become especially so when the passport system comes into existence.

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): Is it not clear that at least some of those who suffered misery and ruin as a result of the fraud would not have done so if the banking supervision side of the Bank of England had not been slow, irresolute, dilatory, incompetent and naive, and if it had not had, as the report says, "a deep-rooted reluctance to believe ill of BCCI"?

Does the Chancellor remember that the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee suggested that, if the Bank of England had failed in its supervisory duties, there would be a case for compensation, and that he said that, if the conclusion was that blame applied to the authorities, the Government's view of compensation would have to be reconsidered? Is it now being reconsidered?

Mr. Lamont: The report does make criticisms, as I have acknowledged, of particular incidents and of particular individuals. The right hon. Gentleman quotes a sentence relating to a particular official in the Bank of England. We already have a system of compensation through the bank deposit protection scheme. Through the scheme, £50 million has been paid out to almost 9,000 people. Up to £85 million could be paid out under the scheme.

I have, of course, considered the matter, but I do not believe that we should have a system of 100 per cent. compensation. That carries great dangers, as the experience in the United States demonstrates.

Mr. Terence L. Higgins (Worthing): The Chancellor will be aware that the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee report went wider than Bingham and, after deep investigation into the matter, made a number of recommendations. Can my right hon. Friend confirm that he proposes to accept all the main recommendations of the Select Committee as well as those of Bingham, although Bingham duplicates some of them?

As the main danger now is that, as a result of the second banking directive and, perhaps, the Uruguay round, our market will now be opened up far more widely than it was, is it not essential to have someone to regulate the regulators? Do we not especially need some arrangement whereby not only the G10 countries and the European countries but all countries are covered? Will my right hon. Friend bear that point in mind ahead of the debate?

Mr. Lamont: We have published today our response to the Select Committee, and our reply goes a long way towards meeting its recommendations. There is an overlap between some of the Committee's recommendations and some of the recommendations in Lord Justice Bingham's report.

I agree with my right hon. Friend's second point. It is extremely important that we have a proper regime for the supervisors—the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Slough (Mr. Watts). The matter goes wider than the European Community and wider than the G10 countries, because there are many offshore financial centres which may branch out into other countries. That is why we have said that we will take legislative action to ensure that we are capable of supervising banks if their structure is impenetrable and opaque.

Another point, which was made in the Select Committee's report, is that we should have the right—not necessarily the obligation—to insist on incorporation for non-European Community countries' banks rather than branches simply being established.

Mr. Keith Vaz (Leicester, East): The Chancellor may not know that one of the largest single depositors in BCCI lives in Kingston, Surrey, in his constituency.

Will the Chancellor stand by the statement he made to the House on 19 July 1991 at column 722, when he said that, if blame or negligence attached to the Bank of England, he would consider the case for compensation in exactly the same way as the compensation given to those who suffered in the Barlow Clowes affair?

Paragraphs 2.480 and 2.484 are scathing attacks on the credibility of the Governor of the Bank of England. Taken with the report of Senator Kerry, the credibility of the Governor of the Bank of England is no more. It is not a question of calling for his resignation. I believe that he should apologise to the victims of BCCI for what has happened, and that the Chancellor should sack him.

Mr. Lamont: I do not accept that. That comment goes beyond what is justified by the report.

I do not accept the findings of Senator Kerry's report. He did not have access to the documents to which Lord

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Justice Bingham had access and he did not take evidence from the Bank of England. I believe that some wild and incorrect allegations were made in that report.

Secondly, the hon. Gentleman seeks to draw an analogy with Barlow Clowes. However, there is a considerable difference.

Mr. Vaz: Has the Chancellor reflected on that?

Mr. Lamont: I have reflected on the point and I am answering the hon. Gentleman. I freely acknowledge and respect the hon. Gentleman's great interest and the great energy that he has shown in pursuing the matter. By the way, I did know that one of the largest depositors lived in my constituency. There are several of them.

It seems to me that there are very significant differences with Barlow Clowes. First, in the Barlow Clowes case, no compensation scheme existed. There is a scheme to protect depositors in banks. Secondly, that was something which was specifically recommended by the Parliamentary Commissioner when he inquired into what had happened with the handling of Barlow Clowes. That was not one of the recommendations of the Bingham report.

Sir Michael Grylls (Surrey, North-West): Since my right hon. Friend referred to the quite disgraceful slur against the honour of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, which was repeated from the Opposition Front Bench this afternoon, has he any knowledge that the Opposition wish to make a statement to the House to apologise for the incorrect slur on my right hon. Friend and clear the matter up once and for all? It is quite wrong for the matter to be left as it is.

Mr. Lamont: I made it clear that the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) surprised me—

Mr. Alistair Darling (Edinburgh, Central): It is in the report.

Mr. Lamont: It is not in the report. The report makes it quite clear that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister did not know of the contents of the section 41 report and the fraud in the United Kingdom until he received a report from me at the end of June. I must tell the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East that, when one has made one scandalous allegation, one should not make another.

Ms. Diane Abbott (Hackney, North and Stoke Newington): The Chancellor will be aware that some people believe that the Bank only moved against BCCI in the end because it was well aware that the New York authorities under Mr. Morgenthau were about to unveil the results of their investigation which would have reflected very badly on the dilatory and incompetent supervision that the Bank had given BCCI. However, with regard to the auditors, this is not the first instance when big City accountants have proved to be unable to recognise fraud when it is being practised under their noses. Hon. Members will recall the Maxwell pension fund and the role that auditors played in that.

It seems that Price Waterhouse had a particular problem in the BCCI affair. On the one hand, it was supposed to be BCCI's auditor, while on the other hand it was earning huge fees from other parts of BCCI as management consultants. Will the Government take a

further look at the role of auditors and perhaps take steps to ensure that auditors are not faced with potential conflicts of interest in future?

Mr. Lamont: On the last point, Lord Justice Bingham considered the issue that the hon. Lady has raised, and he concludes that the so-called conflict of interest is not something that he believes action should be taken upon. However, as I have told the House, we intend to impose a duty on auditors in future to report to the supervisory authorities when they have good reason to believe that fraud is taking place.

The hon. Lady referred to Price Waterhouse, and there is a criticism of Price Waterhouse in the report. However, in fairness to Price Waterhouse, it should also be stressed that on other occasions—for example, in April and October 1992—when the firm had made its audit report to the directors of BCCI, it ensured that some information was passed on to the Bank of England. Lord Justice Bingham concluded that perhaps that could have been done more fully, but a careful reading of the report discloses that on several occasions that is precisely what Price Waterhouse did.

The hon. Lady's first point was that the Bank of England acted only because of what the district attorney in New York was about to reveal. That is not correct. What finally triggered the action of the Bank of England, which Lord Justice Bingham concludes was appropriate, was the Price Waterhouse report. I stress that BCCI continued to operate in New York and California when it was closed by the Bank of England. That ought to be seen in the context of the fact that the bank operated worldwide in 60 countries with 400 branches. I do not believe that it is correct to pin it all on the Bank of England just like that.

Mr. John Townend (Bridlington): Does my right hon. Friend agree that many Conservative Members welcome the immediate response of the Bank of England and would feel that it was in everyone's interest that the Governor should be able to introduce the reforms suggested in the Bingham report? Does he also agree that depositors will always lose money when a bank closes down in such unfortunate circumstances? A difference in the timing only means a difference in who loses their money. Does he also agree that people who deposit money in overseas banks can never expect them to be 100 per cent. risk-free?

Mr. Lamont: I agree with my hon. Friend, but I do not wish to cast slurs on overseas banks in comparison to any other banks. Obviously it is very important that people should take a view about banks with which they deposit money as they should take a view about any financial institution to which they entrust their capital. However, I very much agree with the general thrust of my hon. Friend's comments.

It is important that depositors and savers should have some responsibility. No system of supervision can guarantee safety or eliminate fraud. There will always be a risk of that. We have an example of a gigantic fraud which had gone on for well over a decade and throughout the world. I entirely accept what my hon. Friend said about the need to press ahead with the legislative changes and accept the implementation of the Bingham report.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Does the Chancellor recall that, when this fraud was becoming apparent around 1984-85, some other money in a bank was being

transferred from Luxembourg and various other banks from the National Union of Mineworkers? Somehow or other, they managed to trace that genuine, real money—not fraudulent money—which the NUM was trying to save for the miners. The bankers represented by the Government managed to find that money when they could not find the fraud in BCCI. I find it very strange that there is a gang of people on the Government Front Bench, most of whom come from the belly of the banking establishment, who cannot detect fraud over a period of eight or nine years.

It is very odd that the Government can supervise the 400 local authorities and check every penny they spend, but they cannot supervise or look into massive fraud. I do not think that it is just a question of the boss of the Bank of England resigning—the whole lot on the Treasury Bench should get out of the way.

Mr. Lamont: The hon. Gentleman expressed something like that view yesterday. He thinks that every debate is about the miners. This one is not.

Sir Peter Tapsell (East Lindsey): Before we debate this unhappy subject, will my right hon. Friend give further careful thought to whether he is quite sure that the Bingham recommendation is correct in advising that we should make no change in the institutional method of bank supervision bearing in mind that the Bundesbank does not have responsibility for such supervision? I have held the view for a long time that, with the deregulation of financial institutions and the complete internationalisation of money markets, Bank supervision is an extraordinary difficult task. While I am certainly not one of those who are in favour of making the Bank of England independent, I am very strongly in favour of its prestige being maintained as strongly as possible—

Madam Speaker: Order. We are now getting into an Adjournment debate. I have asked hon. Members to ask questions.

Sir Peter Tapsell: Therefore, may we not continually put the Bank in a position which is likely to recur, that of it being involved in such scandals because of its supervisory role?

Mr. Lamont: I note what my hon. Friend says, although it many countries the central bank has responsibility for supervision. That point has been examined in detail by Lord Justice Bingham. He has come to the conclusion that there is no reason to change the existing arrangements. I have announced that I am accepting those changes that he thinks should be made, but obviously I will reflect on what my hon. Friend, who has very considerable experience of these matters, has said. I note what my hon. Friend says about the Bundesbank, because he was not so friendly about it a few weeks ago.

Mr. Robert Sheldon (Ashton-under-Lyne): The report recommends that attention should be concentrated on suspect banks. That is a very elementary proposition. We must ask why on earth suspect banks were not supervised properly from the beginning—right from 1979. I myself was asking others why the conditions of the Banking Act 1979 were not applied to BCCI. It was a highly disreputable operation and there was great concern about it. The powers to approve and authorise should have been used against that bank right from the beginning. What

concerns me most is that the Bank of England has failed miserably in this matter, and its reputation must concern us all.

Mr. Lamont: Because I have had to reply to some rather extreme points that have been made by the Opposition, I do not wish in any way to deny that very serious criticisms have been made. I do not wish to give that impression.

The right hon. Gentleman asks, “Is it not rather obvious that resources should be concentrated on suspect banks?” The point that Lord Justice Bingham is making is that he feels that there is not a great deal of point in intensifying supervision generally. Supervision has to deal not just with fraud but with matters such as capital adequacy and the resources that shareholders put into banks. He is saying that, when it comes to fraud, there is room for being even more selective and for having machinery that responds more rapidly and more sensitively than has happened in the past to some of the receipt of information that has occurred.

Mrs. Judith Chaplin (Newbury): My right hon. Friend has said that the supervisors should be more flexible and discriminating. What will the Bank of England do to ensure that that happens?

Mr. Lamont: The Bank of England intends to increase the resources devoted to supervision. It also intends—this is the point that I was making to the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon)—to set up a special unit to deal with allegations that are made against particular suspect banks. It is also increasing the staff and setting up a legal unit within the Bank. In addition, it is going to take the initiative in making sure that we have a lead supervisor when banks are spread across several countries. That is one of the key points that come out of the report. It is extremely important to have a lead supervisor in all cases.

Mr. Calum Macdonald (Western Isles): As regards the Chancellor's intention to give the Bank of England the power to revoke or refuse authorisation when the structure of a bank is opaque, does not Lord Bingham, in paragraph 3.1.5, say that it already has that power and that it simply refused to exercise it? Given that that is the case, it is not a lack of power that caused this debacle but a failure to exercise that power. Is not there not a moral obligation on the Chancellor to come forward with a scheme of compensation for all those who have lost money in this disaster?

Mr. Lamont: What Lord Justice Bingham says—[HON. MEMBERS: “Lord Bingham.”]—Lord Bingham, the Master of the Rolls, Sir Thomas Bingham now—is that it is his legal opinion that that power exists but that, if there is any ambiguity, the Government should consider action. We have considered it. We think that there is some ambiguity and that therefore we should take the legislation to make the situation absolutely crystal clear. I hope that that answers the hon. Gentleman's point. I do not think that the conclusion that he drew about compensation follows from what the hon. Gentleman has said.

I deeply regret that so many people have lost as a result of what has happened, but let the House be absolutely clear—I wish hon. Members would just occasionally say it—that responsibility for what has happened lies with the criminals and those who perpetrated the fraud. Not one

[*Mr. Lamont*]

Opposition Member has made that point. They just seek to get whatever miserable political advantage that they can out of the situation.

Mr. David Shaw (Dover): Will my right hon. Friend the Chancellor confirm that what is unusual about this fraud is not that it was massive or that it was international but that it involved the collaboration of a large number of individuals on an international scale? How did that happen in such a way that no authority in the world managed to discover it? Therefore, is it not logical that the British Government should lead in bringing together a number of regulatory authorities in the world so that we will have a better international regulatory system? What will the British Government be doing about that?

Mr. Lamont: My hon. Friend is right, and that is why we propose to take such an initiative within the European Community. That is why we also intend to use the supplement to the Basle concordat to ensure, as I have said, that there is always a lead supervisor.

One of the most powerful points in the report is that for a long time there was no lead supervisor. One of the criticisms that Lord Bingham makes is that the Bank of England was unwilling to assume the role of lead supervisor and relied too long on Luxembourg. We must ensure that there are arrangements that make it absolutely certain that in all cases in future there is a lead supervisor, and we will be doing precisely that.

Mr. Brian Sedgemore (Hackney, South and Shoreditch): Bearing in mind that, years before the Governor of the Bank of England tried to close down BCCI, he had been told that the management was incompetent, that the directors were hopeless, that the accounting methods were so dreadful that one firm of accountants, Ernst and Whinney, had simply given up and that there had been serious fraud in the treasury department of BCCI in 1985 and further serious fraud through Capcom Financial Services, would it not be seemly if the Governor of the Bank of England were to give way to someone else who is better able to enforce not only the decencies and proprieties of public life but the provisions of the Banking Act 1987—or does the Governor stand outside the laws of England?

Mr. Lamont: I have explained why I believe that it is absolutely right that the Governor, while he assumes responsibility for this matter, should remain the Governor, and I have every confidence in him.

The hon. Gentleman makes a point that is made repeatedly by hon. Members, which is that, at various times in a decade and a half, there have been various times when information has entered the public domain of wrongdoing in BCCI in different parts of the world. There were the arrests over the Tampa incident and treasury frauds in 1985. Hon. Members have made that point repeatedly and then asked why then something was not done about it.

What they have omitted to mention, which in fairness should be mentioned, is that, on several occasions in the long history of that bank since 1972, there have been changes in the management and changes in the shareholder. There have been attempts to reconstruct the bank. On each occasion, the Bank of England faced with

the dilemma of either closing it down or attempting remedial action and reconstruction. It attempted that reconstruction of the bank on several occasions, even though we knew—the hon. Gentleman knew; everybody knew—that there had been some wrongdoing in the bank in different parts of the world.

The fact that things went wrong in this case should be placed against the fact that, in the past five years, there have been about 34 occasions on which the Bank has actually succeeded in reconstructing banks or bringing about remedial action, which has saved depositors and worked to the advantage of everybody. That was the motive of the Bank of England. It is very easily condemned with the advantage of hindsight.

Mr. Tim Renton (Mid-Sussex): It was obviously right to publish Lord Bingham's report, and I congratulate and respect my right hon. Friend on his frankness and openness in doing so. Clearly, the supervision of the Bank of England has been lax, but does my right hon. Friend not agree that the difficulty for the central supervisory authority where there is an international bank with what he described as an opaque structure is for the central bank to know the precise moment at which it is right to step in and close branches? If that step is taken too early, for whatever reason, it can lead to far greater loss for creditors and depositors than would otherwise be the case. I noticed in Beirut last week that BCCI was still operating freely and openly because the authorities, depositors and creditors did not wish to close it.

Mr. Lamont: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend, especially for his opening remarks. He makes a powerful point, which is similar to that which I made about the dilemma facing the bank. It has been well illustrated that Opposition Members have, at various times, criticised the Bank either for closing BCCI or for not closing it—they have made both criticisms together.

Mr. Alistair Darling (Edinburgh, Central): Will the Chancellor address himself to paragraph 2.512 and the following paragraph of the report dealing with responsibility of both the Treasury and the Bank? Does he accept that no Opposition Member or anybody else is suggesting that the Prime Minister knew of the alleged fraud until very near the time when the bank closed. No one is impugning his conduct or that of any other Minister. The point that Lord Bingham is making is that the Bank, the Treasury and its Ministers knew for a considerable time before the bank was closed that there was a problem. Does the Chancellor not accept that the responsibility of the Treasury and its Ministers is an important matter for both this case and the future, and for the issue of compensation? Many people think that it is high time that those who take decisions stand up and accept responsibility when things go wrong.

Mr. Lamont: The report clearly says that the conduct of Treasury Ministers

"is not in my view open to criticism in any respect."

The hon. Gentleman says that nobody is alleging that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister knew about the fraud until a very late date, but that is not what the former Leader of the Opposition, the right hon. Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock) said on 23 July 1991, when he repeatedly accused my right hon. Friend of covering up and knowing about the position. The right hon. Gentleman said:

"The Prime Minister has already misled the House once today by saying that he referred to the irregularities, when it is in the recall of this House that he did not say a word . . . Despite what he knew as Chancellor of the Exchequer, he did nothing to warn innocent people of the trap into which they were moving and of a bank that was near bankruptcy,"—*[Official Report, 23 July 1991; Vol. 195, c. 1029.]*
My right hon. Friend knew nothing about that, and the report makes that crystal clear.

Several Hon. Members *rose*—

Madam Speaker: Order. We must now move on. I have given the matter quite a long run, and Ministers have already made it clear that we are to have a debate on it.

Points of Order

Mr. John Cummings (Easington): On the point of order, Madam Speaker. Some 14 hours after last night's vote on the coal industry, 900 miners at Vane Tempest colliery were informed that the colliery would cease production on Friday. Those 900 men were sacked last week, were reinstated this week and are to be mothballed next week. Like the President of the Board of Trade, those 900 men do not know whether they are coming or going.

Should we not invite the President of the Board of Trade back to the Chamber now to explain in unequivocal terms precisely what his intentions are for Vane Tempest colliery, which is inextricably linked with Easington colliery because of shared pumping costs? It is important that the matter should be clarified as quickly as possible.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Further to that point of order, Madam Speaker. The President of the Board of Trade gave assurances yesterday—repeated by the Secretary of State for Wales late last night—that the 10 pits would be treated to the same degree of consultation as the other 21. It seems incredible that consultation on the fate of the 900 men at Vane Tempest could have taken place within 14 hours.

In view of the confidence trick played on those hon. Members who were intending to vote with the Opposition, the President of the Board of Trade should be brought here to give a statement to make it clear that British Coal should not be allowed to get away with sacking 900 men at Vane Tempest.

Madam Speaker: As both hon. Members are aware, those are not points of order with which the Chair can deal. I have received no information from the Government that they wish to make a further statement on the issue.

BILLS PRESENTED

HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Secretary Howard, supported by Mr. Chancellor of the Exchequer, Mr. Secretary Heseltine, Mr. Secretary MacGregor, Mr. Secretary Hunt, Mr. Secretary Lang, Sir George Young, Mr. John Redwood and Mr. Tony Baldry presented a Bill to confer rights to collective enfranchisement and lease renewal on tenants of flats; to extend the right to enfranchisement of tenants of houses; to make provision for auditing the management, by landlords or other persons, of residential property and for the approval of codes of practice relating thereto; to amend Part III of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1987; to confer jurisdiction on leasehold valuation tribunals as respects Crown land; to amend Parts II, IV and V of the Housing Act 1985, Schedule 2 to the Housing Associations Act 1985, Parts I and III and section 248 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987 and Schedule 4 to the Local Government and Housing Act 1989; to alter the basis of certain contributions by the Secretary of State under section 569 of the Housing Act 1985; to establish and confer functions on a body to replace the English Industrial Estates Corporation and to be known as the Urban Regeneration Agency; to provide for the designation of certain urban and other areas and to make provision as to the effect of such designation; to amend section 98 of the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980 and section 27 of the Housing and Planning Act 1986; to make further provision with respect to urban development corporations and urban development areas;

and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time tomorrow and to be printed [Bill 67].

ASYLUM AND IMMIGRATION APPEALS

Mr. Secretary Clarke, support by Mr. Secretary Hurd, Mr. Secretary Howard, Mr. Secretary Hunt, Mr. Secretary Lilley, Mr. Secretary Lang, Secretary Sir Patrick Mayhew and Mr. Charles Wardle presented a Bill to make provision about persons who claim asylum in the United Kingdom and their dependants; to restrict certain rights of appeal under the Immigration Act 1971; and to extend the provisions of the Immigration (Carriers' Liability) Act 1987 to transit passengers: And the same was read the First time and ordered to be read a Second time tomorrow and to be printed [Bill 69].

The Health of the Nation

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—[Mr. Nicholas Baker.]

5.7 pm

The Secretary of State for Health (Mrs. Virginia Bottomley): This is the first opportunity that the House has had to debate health in detail since the general election. I want to begin with the significance to the national health service—and to the health of the nation—of the outcome of that election.

Before even that, however, it is a pleasant duty to welcome the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett) to his place on the Opposition Front Bench. With community care much on our minds, I am sure that the House will benefit from the experience of local government that he will bring to our debates. If there is one regret about the hon. Gentleman's appointment, it is that our deliberations will in future be without the often unique insights of his predecessor. We remember the predictions of the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook). He predicted that the targets under the GP contract were "so heroic" that no GP would ever reach them.

Madam Speaker: Order. I am sorry to interrupt the right hon. Lady. It was remiss of me not to say at the outset that I have had so many requests from hon. Members wishing to speak today in this debate that I have had to limit speeches to 10 minutes between 7 pm and 9 pm. I am sorry to have interrupted the right hon. Lady, but I thought that the House should be told of the depth of interest in the debate right away.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I am delighted to hear that there is such an interest in this debate. I was only worried that you, Madam Speaker, were going to try to confine my remarks to 10 minutes, which would have been difficult.

I was referring nostalgically to the predecessor of the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside who predicted that the targets were "so heroic" that no GP would ever reach them. He once likened the idea of an NHS trust to a "bicycle with a flat tyre" that would never get anywhere. He predicted that the true test of the trusts would be whether they treated more patients. The GPs are meeting and beating the targets. NHS trusts have become an unstoppable movement, and they are treating more patients. Among the hon. Member's more famous sayings was that the general election would be a referendum on the future of the NHS. I do not think that he predicted the right outcome in that case either.

However, the hon. Member was correct in one important way. The general election was crucial to the future of the national health service. The Labour party fought the election with a socialist plan to turn the clock back 40 years—to the days of central planning, command systems of control, when the Minister was expected to know whenever a bedpan was dropped in a ward. Anyone who knows anything about running a £36 billion organisation knows that such ideas just will not wash. While such policies were being hastily dismantled in Leningrad and Leipzig, they were all the rage in Livingston.

Had it won the general election, the Labour party would presumably be putting those ideas into practice now. One can imagine the resulting chaos and vandalism.

My hon. Friends will be only too aware that 156 trusts would be told to stop innovating on behalf of patients and report to Whitehall immediately. More than 3,000 GP fund holders would have had their budgets snatched away; they would have had no more power to pioneer for patients, and all the efforts of their staff and all the progress, hard work and achievements of reform would have been dumped in a dash for socialism.

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): The Secretary of State will be aware that the trusts are anxious that they should not be responsible to her—they do not like that idea. If there are increasing numbers of trusts and if they continue to use taxpayers' money, will she be kind enough to tell us to whom they should be responsible?

Mrs. Bottomley: The trusts are unequivocally accountable to me, as Secretary of State, and there are effective mechanisms for monitoring their work. They have been singularly successful, they have treated many more patients and they have provided an excellent working environment for their staff—they have achieved much in the NHS, and I am sure that the rest of the service could learn from their record. The hon. Lady's remarks are a sign of what the trusts might have had to face in the miserable event of the Labour party winning the general election.

It is a very different NHS under this Government—it is a good service and an improving service. The Conservative victory in the general election has given new confidence and a reinforced sense of direction. The consensus grows day by day that the health reforms are the right answer to a series of management problems that have built up over 40 years.

Two weeks ago, I announced a further 128 trusts, and more are waiting in the wings. Family doctors are queueing to take control over their own budgets. Health authorities are discovering the immense potential of their new role as commissioners and purchasers of health care. The GP contract is delivering better health care and better health, and public confidence in the health service is growing—[*Laughter.*] The hon. Member for Brightside may laugh. I wonder whether he knows about the recent survey that showed that 95 per cent. of the patients who had used his local NHS trust were satisfied with the service that they received.

The true significance of these achievements was well summed up recently by the *British Medical Journal*. Referring to the Government's three White Papers, "Promoting Better Health", "Working for Patients", and "The Health of the Nation", it said:

"Taken together, the White Papers are unusual because they represent a continuum in Government policy . . . as a conceptual feat it can rarely have been equalled in the realm of public administration".

Mr. Hugh Bayley (York): During the summer I was asked to intervene by one of my constituents whose mother was about to be discharged from a Bristol hospital. Her daughter was told that she could not be discharged until she and her daughter had paid a fee of £600 to Avon ambulance trust. Is that the type of outcome that the right hon. Lady intended when she created trusts? Did she expect me, as a Member of Parliament, to have to phone half a dozen health administrators in Bristol to explain to them that it would be more costly if my constituent

blocked a bed in her hospital than if the NHS paid for her ambulance transport to the nursing home to which she was going?

Mrs. Bottomley: Had the hon. Gentleman wanted a serious answer to his question, he would have been in touch with my office with the details. I have consistently and unequivocally been committed to an NHS available to all and free at the point of delivery. The hon. Gentleman can easily give me the details and I will look into the case immediately. I should very much like to know what lies behind the circumstances that he has described. [*Interruption.*]

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. The Secretary of State is doing her best to answer, and I do not expect a whole lot of seated interventions.

Mr. Bernie Grant (Tottenham): Will the right hon. Lady give way?

Mrs. Bottomley: Certainly.

Mr. Grant: I was pleased to hear the Secretary of State say that the NHS trusts are directly responsible to her and that mechanisms have been set up to monitor their progress. Can she tell me, a poor working Member of Parliament who is not quite au fait with bureaucracy, whom I should go to if a mistake has been made in the tendering procedure between the health authority and the trust? Who can rectify that?

Mrs. Bottomley: I should like to know more of the details, but the system is clear. The district health authority places a contract with the NHS trust in which it specifies the quality and nature of the service to be delivered. That never happened in the past. It was never possible to place such contracts or to identify improvements needed in the quality of care that the health authority sought. In the first instance, the hon. Gentleman should therefore go to the district health authority.

It is also clear who has responsibility in the NHS trust. The position of trust chairman has clarified the structure in a new way. It is therefore easier to know what is being provided, what standards are being adhered to and what plans there are for the future.

Mr. Richard Burden (Birmingham, Northfield): I want to raise a matter that the right hon. Lady knows about. She says that trusts are accountable to her, as Secretary of State. Are regional health authorities also so accountable? If so, why are she and her Department colluding in the suppression of a report commissioned by the West Midlands regional health authority into the causes of a multi-million pound cash crisis in South Birmingham health authority which is threatening to close two hospitals, to transfer services from a third hospital, to cut community services by about £300,000 and to cut services for the mentally ill by about £200,000? If she believes that public confidence in the trust is so high, why will she not publish this report?

Mrs. Bottomley: Like so many other Labour Members, the hon. Gentleman is trying to denigrate the achievements of the NHS in his area. That is an insult to all the people who work in the NHS. The hon. Gentleman may be aware that I have asked the deputy chairman of the policy board, Sir Roy Griffiths, to advise on some of the systems of the West Midlands and to report to me.

[Mrs. Bottomley]

The establishment of the trusts, the fact that health authorities can assess health needs, and the placing of contracts mean that we are in a position to develop a health strategy that we would not have been able to develop without the reforms. As purchasers, health authorities can now respond strategically to the health needs of the populations they serve. Through their contracts with hospitals and other providers, they can write prevention firmly into the structure of the NHS. The GP contract, another key element of the reforms opposed by the Labour party, made health promotion a priority. Among other things, it made a real success of our childhood immunisation programme. The 90 per cent. targets have been exceeded, setting us on course for the 95 per cent. target set out in the White Paper.

When I used to work in the health service when the Labour party was in power, figures of this sort would have been inconceivable and unattainable. Building on an already sound base, the White Paper has set a new target for childhood immunisation—95 per cent. coverage by 1995. I am pleased to be able to report that one NHS region, East Anglia, has already reached that level for all seven immunisations. Three other regions, Oxford, South Western and Wessex, have reached 95 per cent. for all diseases except whooping cough. At the end of last month, we announced that the new HIB vaccine against childhood meningitis has been added to the routine immunisation programme.

Thanks to these changes, which the general election secured, we can now lift our sights about the structural issues which have preoccupied the national health service for over 40 years. Never have we been in a better position to secure the most important founding goal of the national health service: better health for the people of our country.

Mr. Brian Sedgemore (Hackney, South and Shoreditch): The right hon. Lady said that we have got over the structural difficulties now. She also said that we should not denigrate the health service—we should pay tribute to its work. Would she care to pay tribute to the work of St. Bartholomew's, St. Thomas's, Charing Cross, Middlesex and University College London, and then tell the House why she is making a statement tomorrow suggesting that four of them be closed?

Mrs. Bottomley: I have read with some interest the correspondence between the hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch (Mr. Sedgemore) and the person I had taken to be the Opposition spokesman on this matter. I am interested to know who it is who speaks most accurately for the situation in London.

Mr. Sedgemore: Will the right hon. Lady pay tribute to those hospitals?

Mrs. Bottomley: I pay a warm tribute to much of the excellence achieved by the health service in London. However, no one who has even half focused on the situation in London could fail to know that for many years we have over-dominated by institutions and under-provided for in terms of community services. The need for the reform of the health service in London is supported by the British Medical Association, the nurses organisations and virtually every even half-enlightened Member of Parliament, as well as by the public.

I should like to remind the House, if I have not already done so, that the Labour party opposed every turn and every measure that has made better health a realistic goal. While we were working through the logical progression towards better health, the Labour party shouted, "Go back" at every point. This debate would not have taken place if the Opposition had had their way. The purpose of the Opposition is to exploit the NHS for their party-political aims. The public are heartily sick of them using the health service as a political battering ram.

The new mood is to lose politics and to gain health. The White Paper "The Health of the Nation" has been a handsome investment to that end. The Labour party should come clean and acknowledge that. That White Paper and the strategy it sets out received a warm and enthusiastic welcome. The World Health Organisation described it as a model for other countries to follow. The *British Medical Journal* said that it was "a huge step forward for Britain's health policy".

A distinguished former president of the Royal College of Physicians called it a "mighty initiative". Those remarks illustrate how the strategy has captured both the hearts and the minds of everyone concerned with health.

No one should underestimate the significance of the White Paper. It has provided the first ever coherent strategy in this country for securing real improvements in health and the first ever national targets for reducing death and disability. It is the first time that we have ever had a Cabinet committee concerned with health. Most important of all, the White Paper has made us one of the first countries to specify action to achieve those targets. Most other strategies simply set targets, but our White Paper is not just an index of destinations; it is the road map as well.

One hundred years ago the average life expectancy was 44 years. Today I am pleased to tell my hon. Friend the Member for Broxbourne (Mrs. Roe) that it is 73 years for men and 79 for women. The step-change a century ago was achieved not by doctors, pharmacists or physicians, but by plumbers. Clean water and better sanitation revolutionised our health prospects. If we want to see a further step-change in the fight against disability and disease today, it will be achieved by prevention and by the strategy that we have set out in the White Paper.

The five priority areas, the 25 national targets and the action to meet them are of direct relevance to everyone and every group in this country. The areas on which we have focused are the ones where the public want action.

Mr. Anthony Coombs (Wyre Forest): One item of public health that is not included in those key areas is asthma. My right hon. Friend is aware that I have raised this matter on a number of occasions and she will know that 2.5 million people and 700,000 young people suffer from asthma. It is one of the few preventable diseases for which mortality rates are increasing.

Some work has been done at East Birmingham hospital on the relationship between the increased incidence of asthma and environmental pollution, in particular the effects of greenhouse gases and the depletion of the ozone layer. Can my right hon. Friend tell me whether the Medical Research Council might be persuaded to study the important relationship between environmental pollution and the incidence of that disease?

Mrs. Bottomley: I welcome my hon. Friend's comments on this important problem, which affects a great number

of people. Our health strategy must be informed by research and by the ability to specify a target that can be delivered effectively. Asthma is one of those areas where we hope to be able to set a target. A great deal of work is under way through chronic disease management and with GPs. The director of research and development at the NHS has set asthma as a priority area. He will conduct research, much of it with the MRC, to see whether it will be possible to set a target in precisely the area that my hon. Friend has requested.

Ms. Tessa Jowell (Dulwich): Will the Secretary of State give way?

Mrs. Bottomley: I have given way to many Opposition Members and I should like to proceed and perhaps be more even-handed with some of my hon. Friends.

Targets provide a stimulus for action. They give a yardstick against which we can measure progress and they are an end point at which to aim. They are challenging targets—achievable but tough. Our job now is to see that they are achieved, but we must harness that great reservoir of good will that the White Paper has generated. We must use it so that health promotion becomes a cause to unite us all. Given the incentives and the right information, people will take action, individually or collectively, to improve their own health.

Some people say that it is no business of a Government to dictate how people run their lives. I believe in individual freedom as deeply as those who make that argument. I believe in the freedom to avoid the dangers of excessive alcohol consumption. I believe in the freedom to avoid needless accidents. I believe in the freedom to avoid the causes and consequences of mental illness, but the process must be one of encouragement and education, not coercion. There are some steps that we simply cannot take.

I reject, for example, a coercive approach to immunisation or to those who are HIV positive. That is a dangerous path wholly inimical to the positive and co-operative approach set out in the White Paper. There is an enormous willingness and readiness among individuals to take action to help themselves to a healthier life. We must work with that grain.

The Government's chief medical officer recently said:

"Increasingly, lifestyle is seen to be a factor of great importance in improving health. Cigarette smoking, excessive alcohol consumption and drug misuse are three areas of particular concern".

He went on to emphasise the importance of individual responsibility for health.

Individual responsibility is as important as individual freedom. The individual has a responsibility to his family and to the community. The Government have a duty to educate, encourage and inform. Today, I cannot talk separately about each of the areas in the White Paper, especially in view of the 10-minute rule and the fact that so many hon. Members want to participate in the debate. They are all important, but I should like to identify a number of them.

Earlier I mentioned the impact of mental illness and the toll that it takes. My previous training and work made me particularly conscious of the dreadful impact that that all too often forgotten disease can have on individuals and their families. Mental illness is as common as heart disease and three times as common as cancer. It represents a vast cost to our health service and our economy and it is a tragic cost to individuals and their families. By making

mental health one of the key target areas in the White Paper we have sent a strong signal that we are taking it seriously.

Mrs. Alice Mahon (Halifax): The right hon. Lady will know that, in January, I introduced a Bill about health benefits and making them available to people who receive means-tested benefits. Many people with mental illness live in the community, but they are only able to do so because they have access to the kind of drugs that control their illness. Will the right hon. Lady tell us whether she has considered making the prescriptions for those people free if they are in receipt of any means-tested benefit? Why is there no mention of that in the White Paper? A review of health benefits was set up so long ago that I have almost forgotten when that happened. When will the findings of that review be produced?

Mrs. Bottomley: On prescription charges, a mere one item in five carries a charge. When the Opposition were in power it was a much higher figure, as the hon. Lady will be well aware. There has been great progress in the percentage of prescriptions without a charge. There are benefits—no pensioner and no one on a low income pays the prescription charge. I hope that I can come back to the hon. Member for Halifax (Mrs. Mahon) at a later date about the timing of the review that she mentioned—[HON. MEMBERS: "Answer."] I have answered the hon. Lady clearly. It is free for pensioners and for those on low incomes and only one item in five carries a charge. To me, that is a convincing case.

By making mental health one of the key target areas of the White Paper we have sent a strong signal that it is vital. One of the other challenges facing us is the newest—that of HIV and AIDS. It is a disease for which there is no known cure. Our response must rest on prevention. Our record of response is second to none. It continues to be a model for others, acclaimed both here and abroad.

Our early recognition of the problems, and the actions which followed, may in part explain why we have a lower incidence of AIDS in our population compared to some other parts of the world, including many European countries.

The inclusion of HIV, AIDS and sexual health as a priority area in the health strategy provides a framework for Government, for the health service, for local authorities and the voluntary sector, to develop policies and services to sustain that achievement.

Mr. Jerry Hayes (Harlow): In the light of my right hon. Friend's encouraging remarks, will she ignore some of the hysterical comments in the tabloid newspapers and warn young heterosexual people that they are still at risk? Will she continue her excellent campaign of informing people, because many young heterosexuals are dying through ignorance?

Mrs. Bottomley: I thank my hon. Friend for reinforcing the argument so effectively. HIV and AIDS is a disease for which there is no known cure and young people need to know the fatal facts of HIV infection. Above all, they need to know about the high-risk behaviours likely to lead to such infection. We need to continue to develop services for people with HIV, which are rooted in the mainstream of health care.

Smoking remains one of the biggest single causes of preventable disease and premature death in this country.

[Mrs. Bottomley]

Action to reduce smoking is central to achieving targets in two of the five key areas in the White Paper and we are determined to build on a record of solid achievement. The United Kingdom's record in reducing smoking in recent years is, after the Netherlands, the best in Europe. There has been a fall in smoking from 45 to 30 per cent. Our target is to be the best and to reduce it to 20 per cent.

Like us, the Dutch—who also have a good record—maintain voluntary controls over tobacco advertising. Like us, they are opposed to an EC directive on advertising. We regard that as unnecessary interference from Brussels and unnecessary to the completion of the single market.

I should be more impressed by the arguments if any of the countries urging us to go further on advertising had a record on reducing smoking which was as good as ours. Those who grow tobacco—and many do, with handsome subsidies to the tune of £1 billion under the common agricultural policy—have little to tell us. The majority of those who grow their own tobacco apparently support an advertising ban. I am also reluctant to take lessons on the subject from those countries with nationalised tobacco industries. They all support a ban on advertising. It does not take a great deal to detect the mixed motivation in that.

Mr. David Martin (Portsmouth, South): Does my right hon. Friend think there are any inconsistencies, as I do, in the treatment of smoking and drinking as regards advertising? When one thinks of the number of passive deaths caused by drinking, and of the deaths and injuries to children and others on the roads, which must equate with the passive effects of smoking, why do not people press as strongly to ban drink advertising when they are so keen to ban tobacco advertising?

Mrs. Bottomley: As ever, my hon. Friend has identified an excellent issue. People who believe in banning advertising see it as the beginning of a slippery slope towards a ban on advertising all sorts of items and an ever-growing inhibition on commercial freedom of speech. My hon. Friend is right. We should create the climate of opinion which we achieved so successfully with drinking and driving, when we made it unacceptable. My commitment and crusade is to ensure that young people take smoking as seriously as they take the dangers of drinking and driving. That success was not achieved through an advertising ban or random breath tests, but by changing the culture and reinforcing the seriousness of the message—and in no small measure by the excellent work of my noble Friend, the former Member for Wallasey, Lady Chalker, and of the splendid hon. Member for Eltham (Mr. Bottomley).

On price, I wish that no European country sold cigarettes as cheaply as 41p a packet. Spain supports a ban on advertising, but its cigarettes are one sixth the price that they are here. We shall bring pressure to bear on our neighbours to rectify those deficiencies. That seems to be an area where they should be looking to the lead that we have shown in reducing smoking, and not the other way round.

My predecessor commissioned a study into the impact of advertising on tobacco consumption. I am pleased to inform the House that I have asked for its publication to be speeded up. It will be published next Thursday.

The Health Select Committee is conducting an important investigation into tobacco advertising. I am sure that the House will agree that that is the right time and place to discuss those complex issues in the detail that they demand. I pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Broxbourne and to the members of the Committee for tackling that important subject.

There is no doubt that tobacco advertising can affect consumption or attitudes towards consumption. That is why we maintain one of the most advanced, long-standing, comprehensive and effective systems of voluntary controls over tobacco advertising in Europe. That is why the White Paper undertakes to keep that position under review. I shall tell the Select Committee next week how we can honour that commitment.

Of course, I am aware of the public health arguments. But there are others as well. I know that arguments about freedom mean nothing to the Opposition, but I remind the house that proper consideration has to be given to the principle of commercial freedom of speech, as I told my hon. Friend the Member for Portsmouth, South (Mr. Martin).

We have to proceed cautiously. What we do must be justified in terms of further substantial reductions in smoking, in the context of the existing, tough controls, and weighed against the impact of other measures, such as a further increase in price. Frankly, it is the Labour party's position which is illogical and inconsistent and the reason is that it owes far more to public politics than to public health.

The public health issue is how to achieve the tough targets for reducing smoking that we have set out in the White Paper. We need to tackle that issue—it is the end and not the means—with a sense of proportion and judgment that are wholly lacking from the Labour party's knee-jerk analysis of the problem.

Meeting and beating those targets will require even more dramatic reductions in smoking than we have achieved in recent years. But they will be met and beaten and the White Paper has set out the way forward.

The strategy must involve better public education. I have drawn to the attention of the House a recent survey carried out by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys in 1990 among secondary school children, which showed that children whose parents both smoked were two and a half times as likely to be regular smokers as those where neither parent smoked.

I have already mentioned price. The evidence is that a 10 per cent. price increase can lead to a 3 to 6 per cent. fall in tobacco consumption. Even the Labour party may be interested to know that the real retail price of tobacco has risen by 43 per cent. It may be less anxious to recognise that between 1974 and 1979 the price increased by under 1 per cent. in real terms. For the first time ever, we have given the commitment at least to maintain the real level of taxes on tobacco products. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer is in no doubt—the House should be in no doubt—that price is a central factor in affecting smoking behaviour.

I turn to another issue that has been mentioned in mutterings by Labour Members. It is said that we have overlooked health variations. Those who make that

assertion either have not read the White Paper or have not grasped the significance of the cross-government approach that it sets out.

Every country has variations in health. Some may be associated with low incomes, but, in contrast some, like breast cancer, can be linked to increasing affluence. Let us be clear. Since the Government came to power, the health of the whole population has improved. Infant mortality, for example, has now fallen to its lowest ever level. Last year, fewer women died in childbirth than in any previous year. There have been dramatic and welcome reductions across every social class. Similarly, life expectancy has increased across the board. In certain areas—for example, general practitioner deprivation payments, which, as they are part of the new contract, the knee-jerk party, the Labour party, inevitably opposed vehemently—we have taken specific action to improve access to health care and health in the most deprived areas. The White Paper specifically calls for action to address variations in each of the priority areas. We must ensure that the rest do as well as the best.

Locally and nationally, we shall identify the variations that occur in particular health problems in order to concentrate efforts on those at particular risk. Different strategies will be appropriate for different groups. The chief medical officer's recent report highlighted some of the special patterns of health that are experienced particularly by black and ethnic minority communities, such as coronary heart disease, hypertension and mental illness for different groups. Our strategy explicitly states:

"the needs of people from black and ethnic groups must be considered."

I have asked my noble Friend the Under-Secretary of State to take special responsibility for following up these particular health issues. She will be holding regular meetings with different groups to ensure that we plan for and analyse what more needs to be done.

Mr. Toby Jessel (Twickenham): Before my right hon. Friend leaves the subject of priority or key areas, I wish to thank her and my hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, West (Mr. Sackville), the Under-Secretary of State, for the great interest that they have been taking in back pain, which has been identified in the White Paper as one of the next five strongest candidates for key area status. Back pain is a scourge for millions of our fellow citizens and it must be given high priority.

Mrs. Bottomley: My hon. Friend, as in all subjects that he captures, is a vigorous and robust champion of this topic. I am pleased that the clinical standards advisory group is to undertake a study into back pain. I hope that as a result of that work and other work that is under way it will be possible to set a specific target and programme of action so that back pain is an area in which we can make progress.

That leads me to the next theme that I wish to identify, which is action within the NHS. Back pain and the way in which it affects nurses are matters with which we are all familiar. The NHS must lead by example. As an organisation of 1 million people, it needs to be a model employer in being a health employer. Recently we launched a health at work in the NHS initiative to ensure that sensible drinking, healthy eating and smoke-free policies are carried forward within the organisation. We

hope that that will be an example to other employers and that they will take sensible and responsible steps to encourage well-being within the work force.

Dr. Tony Wright (Cannock and Burntwood): In this context it is interesting to look round the Palace of Westminster to see what this particular employer is doing. Anyone who visits the eating places, meeting places and bars will find that there is no effective non-smoking policy. I know that we are supposed to favour the politics of smoke-filled rooms, but it seems that the Mother of Parliaments has become the ashtray of the nation. Would the right hon. Lady like to comment on that?

Mrs. Bottomley: I think that the hon. Gentleman has made an excellent point. I suggest that he develops an alliance with my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie). Of all those who have been Ministers in the Department in which I work, I think that my hon. Friend did the most to ensure that all reasonable steps were taken by managements to become "healthy" employers. I look forward to hearing from the hon. Gentleman, together with my hon. Friend, about the progress that they have been able to make in this area.

Dr. Wright *rose*—

Mrs. Bottomley: Much as I enjoy interventions from Opposition Members, I do not think that I should take a second intervention from individual Members. If the Opposition initiate a debate on health in their own name, it may be possible to take further some of these issues.

We have a responsibility to thank those who work in the NHS to provide a healthy workplace, but more important is the health care that the NHS gives and the priority that it places on prevention. That is what will make the strategy work. It is our goal to provide the highest-quality health services, and it is an issue which we have taken forward in the patients charter. The Government's health strategy is more than the words of the White Paper. It is alive and is happening now because of the work of family doctors, and nurses and all who work with and for the health service.

This has been described as the most significant development in public health since the founding of the NHS. The targets that we have set are challenging, but they are realistic and can be reached. Prevention saves lives and money and it can never start at too early an age. Good progress has already been made since the White Paper was published. The House may wish to know that I have today placed in the Vote Office copies of a summary of the progress to date. We are already achieving action, for two reasons. That is, first, because of the commitment of the health service, its staff and many others working in the health field, as it were, beyond the NHS to make the strategy work. Secondly, it springs from the Government's determination to make it work and the clear lead that has been shown.

No Government in our history have been so determined to improve the health of the nation. The health of the nation has captured the high ground of health. The Labour party wanted to turn the clock back, but we have turned it forward. The health strategy is truly a great leap ahead. In 1948, better health was the good and honest intention. In 1992, we are at last turning that intention into

[Mrs. Bottomley]

action. The health of the nation strategy has made a vital contribution to that transformation and it deserves the warmest support of the House.

5.48 pm

Mr. David Blunkett (Sheffield, Brightside): First, I pay tribute to all those who have argued for and contributed to "The Health of the Nation". I believe that over the years people throughout the country from health authorities, family health service authorities, the academic world and elsewhere have persuaded and cajoled the Government to take action. Today we have a golden opportunity to remove the smokescreen of benign and cherub-like innocence from the Secretary of State and to test the philosophies and values of the two main political parties.

On what does the Secretary of State insist? The answer is a debate without a Division. That is the new commitment and the new health service. That is the vigour and enthusiasm that we shall get from the right hon. Lady. We have a debate on a motion for the Adjournment of the House, a motion which cannot be amended or voted upon—what a staggering indication of the right hon. Lady's new commitment and on her confidence in her policies.

The health of the nation is not safe in Tory hands, and nor is much else. The health of our industry and our economy is not safe in their hands. Yet the health of our people and the health of our economy are intrinsically linked. The greater the fairness and equity in the distribution of wealth and the provision of public services, the greater the equality in health and, interestingly, the greater becomes the health of the economy as well.

Japan is an example of that, as was Britain during the war. In 1970 the Japanese had a distribution of wealth much the same as we have today. They have improved dramatically on the gap between the rich and the poor, and the health of their nation has improved in sequence with that.

The work of academics such as Alesina and Rodrik—they are professors in Washington, not ex-commissars from eastern Europe—shows that greater equality of income brings not only improved national health but also improved economic growth. In 24 democracies that they studied, they found that a 0.3 per cent. growth rate increase was achieved when a 10 per cent. reduction was obtained in the income of the top 20 per cent. of earners and distributed to the rest of the population.

Yet in Britain such discussions have been suppressed. The first Black report in the early 1980s had to be photocopied because the Government would not publish it. The latest edition published by Penguin provides plenty of ammunition to show why the Government have always shied away from a full debate on the original findings of scandalous decline and deterioration—which have worsened, not improved, in recent years.

Dr. Liam Fox (Woodspring): As the hon. Gentleman has pointed out that this is a debate without a vote, will he comment on the fact that during the entire Queen's Speech at the beginning of this Session of Parliament, an agenda chosen by the Opposition, he did not choose to debate health at all? Perhaps that is an indication of the Opposition's priorities.

Mr. Blunkett: I shall certainly take responsibility from here on in about when we press for debates on health and for ensuring that we vote on motions on health at every opportunity, but the hon. Gentleman cannot divert me so easily from the substance of what is, after all, the health of the nation: equality and provision, the way we distribute our resources, and the prevention of ill health.

The Secretary of State talked about improvements in infant mortality. In five regions of Britain, infant mortality worsened last year. That is a fact. The truth of the matter is that while in the nation as a whole some people have done a great deal better, and have done better out of health promotion clinics, many others have done worse. The health divide has worsened in the thirteen and a half years of Conservative Government, and it is still worsening.

There is no strategy for the health of the nation. The word strategy is mentioned on the cover of the White Paper, but there is no co-ordinated approach to the needs of the British people. Here we have a White Paper which purports to deal with the nation's ills but does not mention poverty once; nor does it mention inequality, and nor did the Secretary of State.

The Secretary of State waffled on about trusts and GP fund holding, about how wonderful the new NHS was and how tremendously it has improved. My hon. Friend the Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch (Mr. Sedgemore) rightly asked the Secretary of State why, in that case, we are to receive a statement tomorrow about how badly the health service in London is run and what she intends to do about it.

The White Paper mentions unemployment—but only once, in the section entitled "Healthy homes", which says:

"Good housing is important to good health, although the interdependence between factors such as occupational class, income, unemployment, housing and lifestyle makes it difficult to assess why health effects are specifically attributable to it."

Then—this would be funny if it was not so serious—the White Paper says:

"The Government's objective is to ensure that decent housing is within the reach of all families."

Perhaps someone should tell that to the Secretary of State's husband, the hon. Member for Eltham (Mr. Bottomley), who slept on the steps of Greenwich town hall earlier this week to draw attention to homelessness. Perhaps he should have a word with a Cabinet Minister. Perhaps the new approach could be explained to him. Perhaps he could be told that the Government really do have an intention on this, even though they believe that it is muddled up with other inconveniences such as social class, unemployment and inequality.

The existence of the White Paper should be applauded. It has taken long enough to arrive, and it is at least some recognition that, even if the Secretary of State did not spend all that much time on it, the British people are willing to debate the real health causes and ill health causes in Britain—the integration of economic and social action which she did not mention. There is no real understanding of the targets of the World Health Organisation set out in 1978. In fact, the Secretary of State did not refer to them—equality between nations, regions and socio-economic groups.

The Secretary of State mentioned that there was a Cabinet Committee, where I understand that she has a little local difficulty with one of her predecessors who had a finger in everything and a voice on the radio about everyone else's Department except his own. Whenever she

tries to move a policy on, apparently he blocks it. What does that Cabinet Committee do? Did it consider the pit closures? Did it meet to consider the impact of unemployment? What did the Secretary of State have to say at the Cabinet meeting? Perhaps she will tell us whether it met to consider the redundancies at the pits and in the rest of Britain. I will give way to her so that she can tell the House what it had to say. If the Secretary of State is not willing to get up and tell us, perhaps she would just nod if the Cabinet Committee did consider the pit closures. No, she is not nodding—the Secretary of State is comatose. Is there a doctor in the House?

Mr. Michael Trend (Windsor and Maidenhead): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Blunkett: I do not know whether the hon. Gentleman has any medical expertise, but I am happy to give way to him.

Mr. Trend: Is the hon. Gentleman suggesting that working down mines is good for one's health?

Mr. Blunkett: What I am saying is that losing one's job certainly is not.

The Secretary of State may care to comment on the following:

"There are well documented effects of unemployment and poverty on health. These effects are particularly clear in the areas of psychological and mental health but there are also less clearly researched links with increased mortality and morbidity from physical illness.

The large-scale loss of jobs in Rotherham (2,000 directly involved in the pits which are closing and many more in associated businesses) will affect the incidence of mental health with higher rates of depression, anxiety and, probably, suicides."

It goes on to say:

"It is particularly inappropriate that all this will happen at a time when we are attempting to implement the Government's 'Health of the Nation' report".

That was not a comment from a Labour supporter, a miner's wife or a Labour Member of Parliament. It was Anthony Baker, the Conservative-appointed chairman of Rotherham district health authority writing to his local Members of Parliament, the man who replaced the previous Labour chairman, Vernon Thorns in the wide sweep of Government hegemony in appointments throughout the health service—jobs for the girls and the boys.

The Government have no understanding of the link between the responsibility of the individual, which we accept, and that of the wider community and nation. There is no acknowledgement of it by the Chancellor, the Secretary of State for the Environment, or the Secretary of State for Employment, who have as big a part to play in the nation's good health as the Secretary of State for Health has. The Government's attempt to take the politics out of health has failed, despite the efforts of the Secretary of State's friends in the media. The health service is one of the most highly political elements in our democracy, and the inter-relationship between one Department and another and one decision and another becomes daily more apparent.

Mrs. Dunwoody: Does my hon. Friend agree that the Government's hypocrisy goes even further? The Secretary of State talks about the need to minimise low back pain among nurses but fails to mention the Government's lack

of provision of the right equipment, which would overcome that problem far quicker than any leaflet or lecture.

Mr. Blunkett: I could not agree more.

What is to happen in the autumn statement on 12 November? Will the Cabinet Committee or the Cabinet itself acknowledge that the nation's health will depend on the resources allocated to—or rather, cut from—housing, transport, local government, and education? What will the Secretary of State, a former worker for the Child Poverty Action Group, say about income support and family credit to the Secretary of State for Social Security, who not only has the job of cutting and cutting again the benefits paid to those who can least afford to lose them but has moved away from the policy of ensuring that people are supported and helped to fend for themselves, to which the Secretary of State referred in answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) when the White Paper was first introduced to the House.

Mr. Nigel Evans (Ribble Valley): Will my hon. Friend take this opportunity to tell the House that record sums of money are now being spent on the national health service?

Mr. Blunkett: I am certainly not the hon. Gentleman's "hon. Friend" and I will not give way on any such statistic. I am clear that the opposite is true in respect of the income of the poor. The number living on less than half national average earnings doubled in the 1980s.

Mr. Evans: What about the national health service?

Mr. Blunkett: People survive on the national health service. It is all about good health, affording a decent diet, heating homes, and otherwise living decently. It is about the environment, being able to afford to use transport, and enjoying a decent education. One in five of our children live in poverty—twice as many as in 1978.

The Secretary of State smiles beguilingly, revealing a sparkling set of white teeth untouched by the accelerating collapse of NHS dental practice.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I have remained unprovoked until now, but if the hon. Gentleman would like to visit my NHS dentist, I shall be glad to take him.—[HON. MEMBERS: "Apologise."]

Mr. Blunkett: I should be delighted to accompany the Secretary of State anywhere—to her dentist or not. However, I never said that she had withdrawn from using an NHS dental practice. If the right hon. Lady will read *Hansard*, she will find that I suggested only that NHS dental practice is collapsing. The consequential threat to preventive health is something of which we are all aware, and we receive letters on that topic day in and day out.

The Secretary of State's predecessor, the right hon. and learned Member for Rushcliffe (Mr. Clarke), in a press release dated 9 October 1990, gave a clear indication that the report was to be about NHS changes. It is strange that the right hon. Lady indicated at the beginning of her speech that it is NHS changes that matter, not the nation's health.

It is 50 years since the Beveridge report was published. The key principles on which the health of the nation should be judged that that report set out included the elimination of want and idleness. That was seen as a prerequisite in creating the kind of society that post-war

[Mr. Blunkett]

Britain came to take for granted. Unfortunately, that sensible and civilised society has started to disintegrate under us, as it did in the pre-war years.

At least the Green Paper recorded the target of a 25 per cent. reduction in inequalities before the year 2000, but the White Paper does not. Unlike Australia's integrated and comprehensive approach to health, Britain is making a belated stab at achieving targets—14 years after the World Health Organisation's declaration, 12 years after the United States introduced targets, and seven years after the European regional initiative.

In a statement on 8 July, the Secretary of State said:

"To be respected, however, targets have to be tough. To be credible, they have to be realistic. It would be folly to set a target so out of reach that we would never get there, or one which is simply an extrapolation of existing trends."—[*Official Report*, 8 July 1992; Vol. 211, c. 336.]

In truth, the bulk of the White Paper's targets are little more than figures suggested by existing trends. Where they are not, they will be unattainable because of Government policies. Government action will make the tough targets unachievable—and where the targets are easy, the Government will have to do nothing to achieve them.

The target of a 15 per cent. reduction in breast cancer deaths by the year 2000 is welcome, but it applies only to a target group of 50 to 64-year-olds, who are subject to screening. Women below 50, who account for 20 per cent. of the incidence of breast cancer, are also crucial in treating a preventable death-inducing illness.

The Government's targets and the analysis of Government statements by the Comptroller and Auditor General in his report last year are contradictory. He stated:

"The Department of Health do not expect significant changes in the death rates until around the year 2000, because of the time it takes for these cancers to develop."

I was unaware of that, and I will be grateful if the Secretary of State or the Minister who winds up will explain why the advice given to the Comptroller and Auditor General was different.

This country's record of treating breast cancer is so poor that immediate action is vital. Ours is the worst death rate, as a proportion of the population, in the world. Comparative figures for survival in the five-year period following diagnosis show it to be staggeringly bad. In the United Kingdom, only 58 per cent. survive, but the figure is 68 per cent. in Norway, 72 per cent. in the United States, and 73 per cent. in France. In the case of prostate cancer, the United Kingdom survival rate is only 36 per cent., compared with 52 per cent. in Norway and 65 per cent. in the United States. I do not apologise for giving those figures because it is crucial to identify not only targets but causes. What will be done about that state of affairs?

In the case of heart disease, we know that smoking is a critical factor. It is no good saying, "Ban alcohol advertising; it is just as dangerous." That showed a degree of ignorance that I found appalling. The Secretary of State confirmed that she would publish the Smee report next Thursday. Can she, or her Minister of State, also confirm that—rather than being speeded up—the report was sent back for rewriting, so that it would contain a lower, more acceptable figure than the 8 per cent. drop in smoking that, according to the original report, would be achieved by a tobacco advertising ban? Opposition Members want to hear no more of this nonsense about reports being

"speeded up" when, in fact, they have been sent back to be rewritten. [Interruption.] The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health has just made a cheap remark about my speech being sent back for rewriting. He is welcome to examine what the Secretary of State said about the White Paper and about improving health, and what I have said: I have tried to address the issues in hand, rather than coming out with irrelevancies.

I understand that the Government are to take a more long-term look at HIV, AIDS and what is increasingly being called "sexual health", and to decide how the current position can be improved. What about ring fencing the existing funding, which I understand is to be re-integrated into the general health service budget? What about the special grants to provide advisory teachers, which are being cut and, in some cases, removed altogether? What use are targets relating to teenage pregnancies if family planning is being cut and teaching in schools jeopardised? What part has the national curriculum to play? Why are the Government concentrating on science rather than humanities? What action is being taken to prevent the rundown of schools provision through the local management of schools initiative, and the appointment of governing bodies which do not give a high priority to such provision?

What about health education, and teaching about love and relationships? Why is the school nursing service being cut, and why is pregnancy advice being reduced? The abortion statistics relating to under-16s are appalling. The statistics for Britain in general are appalling—in Camberwell district, 38 per cent. of all known conceptions are aborted, while in Britain as a whole the proportion is one in five. That scandal would be avoidable if we were willing to invest in proper education and advice. What is needed is a combination of the individual responsibility to which the Secretary of State rightly referred with our responsibility as a nation to invest to ensure that change takes place.

The same is true of accident prevention. The targets are a long way short of the current rate at which the number of accidents is falling. If the Secretary of State set tough targets, she would have to acknowledge the relationship between socio-economic factors and the incidence of accidents. Children in social class 5 are six times as likely to be burned or knocked down as those in social class 1. The reason is self-evident: those who live in overcrowded conditions in slums or high-rise flats, or are forced to suffer the congestion and fumes of the inner city, are clearly in a less advantageous position than those in social class 1. The study of the civil service that is currently being undertaken did not need a great deal of money to prove that the health of clerks is worse than that of people at and above under-secretary level. No one needs to be a genius to know that living in squalid conditions worsens health.

Mrs. Bottomley: I have degrees from Essex university and the London School of Economics. I have worked for the Child Poverty Action Group, and I have lived with the defeatist talk that we are hearing from the hon. Gentleman. Of course he is right to say that there is an association between health and all the factors that he has mentioned. That is why such health variations are part and parcel of the health of the nation strategy, and that is why the Cabinet Committee is so important, involving Ministers from the various Departments.

What the hon. Gentleman has failed to identify is how, in the context of many adverse social, economic and employment factors, we can reach out and provide a decent health service. That is what the GP contract did, what the immunisation targets have done, what the cervical cancer screening services have done and what the deprivation payments have done. That is what we seek to do, rather than adopting a defeatist attitude to the delivery of health care. We must ask how we can ensure that the health service reaches ever higher targets in areas of great social difficulty.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I remind the House—and that includes the Secretary of State—that interventions, by their nature, should be short.

Mr. Blunkett: I am delighted to find that the Secretary of State is, after all, traumatised rather than comatose.

The truth is that a Secretary of State whose White Paper does not once mention poverty or inequality, and mentions unemployment only in passing—dismissing it as part of the section dealing with housing—cannot give Opposition Members any lectures about the university that she attended or the studies that she undertook. Deprivation and inequality in incomes are worsening the ill health of those at the bottom of the pile.

Let me take on the Secretary of State in regard to the subject of mental health, on which she has a well-deserved reputation. The section on mental health in the White Paper mentions suicide. The incidence of suicide is twice as high among unemployed men as it is among those in work, and premature deaths are one third higher. The Secretary of State can give me no lectures about her belief in equality or fairness.

What, then, would Labour do? Economic action is vital. We need greater equality, full employment and a new commitment to decent housing, adequate public transport and good education. Unlike the Conservative party, we are committed to health promotion and to primary health care in its widest sense. We are committed to investing in community care, so that we can support people at home rather than in private residential institutions.

We are committed to investing in our communities—investing in integrated community and hospital services, and in the reintegration of purchasing to ensure that coherent priorities are met. We are committed to unified district health authorities and family health service authorities; to abolishing GP fund holding, which has distorted purchasing priorities; to supporting and expanding the healthy cities initiative, which the Secretary of State did not mention; and to linking economic and social policies for the real health of the nation. We are committed to the development of GP contracts which actually deal with ill health where it matters most—rather than health promotion clinics to make more middle-class people even healthier in south-west Surrey—and to directing resources towards improving the mortality rate.

In the past year, 42,000 people would not have died if social class 5 had been able to enjoy the income, conditions and well being enjoyed by social class 1. It is not just a matter of politics; it is a matter of life and death for 42,000 people a year, 3,000 of them children.

We need a strategy for health, with a clear inter-departmental approach to the health of the nation. We need policies which are in the interest of the people, not in the interest of those who pay the Tory party. I refer, of

course, to the state of Virginia, and what a state it is: the state from which the most predominantly used tobacco in Britain is obtained. A well-known brand is called Golden Virginia. We would ban tobacco advertising and introduce clear warnings. We would protect people from passive smoking and act against those subsidised European tobacco growers to whom the Secretary of State referred. Tobacco is the biggest killer in this country apart from poverty. That is why we would act against it. That is why 800 doctors put their money into and their names to the advertisement in *The Independent* today. That is why the Secretary of State should not have pre-empted the publication and recommendations of the Smee report by dismissing them before they even appeared.

We shall put the health of the nation first. We shall put people before party. We shall be willing to put our policies to the vote.

6.20 pm

Mrs. Marion Roe (Broxbourne): I am grateful for this opportunity to speak in the first health debate of this parliamentary Session—the first since I became Chairman of the Select Committee on Health. I am very proud and privileged to serve on such an important Committee. It has awesome responsibilities, as all who are involved in health care know so well. We shall certainly look forward to welcoming next week my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to give evidence to our inquiry into tobacco advertising.

I pay tribute to my predecessor and to former members of the Committee who steered it so ably for 15 months. I am particularly grateful to the last Chairman. As part of his legacy, he has left me an excellent and acclaimed report on maternity services, about which I shall say more later.

Unlike the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett), I pay tribute to the Secretary of State for bringing forward publication of the White Paper “The Health of the Nation”. There can be little controversy about the essence of the policy: to make people more aware of the need to be healthy.

When the hon. Member for Brightside complains about the Government’s policies concerning poor housing and homelessness and their effect on health, I remind him, first, of the enormous sums of money that are being poured into the estate action programmes to revitalise derelict housing estates and, secondly, of the fact that the Labour party bitterly opposed housing action trusts, the purpose of which was to bring back into use thousands of empty homes, owned by Labour-controlled councils, that are in disrepair through neglect and bad management. So much for the Labour party’s concern over homelessness.

The Select Committee on Health will shortly start an inquiry into NHS dental services, an inquiry which I hope the hon. Member for Brightside welcomes.

It is entirely sensible that the Government should concern themselves not just with being able to cope with ill health, and all that that brings with it, but with doing all that they can to prevent the onset of illness. Ill health is a tragedy, in terms not just of the waste of a country’s resources but of the human cost—a matter of much greater concern to us all. It leads to the loss of the breadwinner, the awfulness of seeing a child suffer and the strain of long-term nursing or of coping with a relative who is severely disabled. All these things can bring with them untold human misery.

[Mrs. Marion Roe]

It is good to see the Government taking the initiative and, once again, being pro-active rather than reactive. The health service reforms, for which successive Conservative Governments are responsible, are shaping a health service that is better able to meet the huge demands upon it. That is a subject for the nation's gratitude and pride. Millions more patients are receiving the treatment they require, and millions more are being treated for ailments that even 10 years ago could not be treated. Let us, however, be in no doubt that demand and public expectation will continue to put heavy pressure on our health services. That is why I welcome this initiative.

It is important that those of us who can do something to protect ourselves against ill health should do so, in order that the people who need treatment can receive it as quickly as possible. As a Conservative, I put great store by the responsibility of individuals to look after their own health, but that responsibility must be grounded in informed choice and a sharing of common objectives. We cannot legislate to stop people drinking, smoking, or even having sex, but we can and should inform them of the consequences of their actions.

Moreover, I believe that greater understanding of what is good and bad for us will lead to greater willingness of people to work together. For example, it is a pity that, when a family adopts a healthy diet at home, there is little encouragement, in schools or the staff canteen, for people to eat sensibly. Therefore, I am pleased that the White Paper places emphasis on health alliances between different agencies, groups and organisations. I hope that the Government will ensure that they all work together to produce common and easily understandable messages.

I congratulate the Government also on moving the health debate forward. As we have heard, much has been achieved already. Anybody who has seen a child with whooping cough or struck down with measles knows how sensible it is for children to be immunised. Similarly, any woman who has been saved from the horrors of cancer by timely screening is aware of the value of preventive medicine.

It is right that the goalposts should be widened, new targets set and our sights raised higher. While I applaud the Government on publishing the White Paper, I am concerned that the impetus that led to its publication should not be lost. When I read the White Paper, I was struck by the myriad of good intentions. It speaks of targets to be attained, by means of strategies and schemes to be developed, of reports to be made and of action groups to be set up.

A great deal of activity is promised. Although a Cabinet Committee will oversee the implementation of the overall strategy—which I welcome as a positive sign of the Government's commitment, as well as their promise of periodic reports—would the Secretary of State contemplate issuing an annual report so that achievements could be recognised and unsatisfactory trends acted upon quickly? Such a report could be on the same lines as the chief medical officer's annual report on the state of public health. This one, however should concentrate on the specific key areas and targets mentioned in the White Paper.

The White Paper contains many matters of enormous interest. My Committee will look at them, in particular at

those which relate to pregnancy and childbirth. The Select Committee on Health has done an exceptional amount of hard work on the maternity services and has produced a report that has been well received by the Government and professionals alike. The importance of good maternity services for the welfare of the mother and the well-being of the child cannot be emphasised enough. That is at the centre of the Committee's report. It places emphasis on the provision of continuity of care for the mother throughout pregnancy and childbirth.

There are many other recommendations, most of which are designed to promote the health care of both mother and baby so as to avoid complications or unnecessary illness—aims that are entirely compatible with those in the White Paper. Some of the recommendations, especially those at local level, are being acted on and others are being studied. At the last count, three committees were considering the different points that the Select Committee had raised. Midwives and I hope that the committees will report as soon as possible, so that the Select Committee's recommendations can be acted on quickly.

I should like to take the debate on maternity services and the welfare of the mother one step further. Few people are aware that as many as 10 per cent. of all recently delivered women develop post-natal depression. In some cases, depression may be so severe that women need out-patient psychiatric help, and many need drug therapy. In view of its common occurrence, it is surprising that so little attention is given to it. Many books on pregnancy and childbirth hardly mention it, if at all, and it is not usually discussed in ante-natal classes.

Many mothers who are at risk could be picked up. Mothers who are most at risk are those who have had a history of mental illness or a tendency to it within the family, those who have experienced fertility problems and who experienced a difficult birth with their child—who may have experienced a lot of intervention—or those who experienced the trauma of a child being taken into special care.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State rightly pinpointed tackling mental illness as one of her key tasks. Mental illness is a double curse, because it is so destructive of a person's confidence and of his or her ability to help themselves. In that context, post-natal depression is doubly vindictive, because a mother becomes frightened for herself and particularly frightened about her ability to look after her baby. More could be done to recognise the dangers of this affliction; I urge my right hon. Friend to consider this matter as appropriate for inclusion in the overall objective of reducing the incidence of ill health caused by mental illness.

6.32 pm

Mrs. Alice Mahon (Halifax): I congratulate my hon. Friends the Members for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett) and for Bristol, South (Ms. Primarolo) on their elevation to the Front Bench. We have a new team, who I think will do a first-class job for the party. I was impressed by the opening remarks of my hon. Friend the Member for Brightside.

I should declare my education. I did a degree at Bradford university and spent 11 years working in the national health service, which may explain the different approach of myself and the Secretary of State. The White Paper is an attractive publication, and if I were giving the

Government marks out of 10 on how it looks they would be reasonably high. If I were giving marks for its content, they would be fairly low, because it is fairly lightweight and skirts around many of the issues that we believe to be important.

What is not included in the document is vital to the health of the nation. My hon. Friend the Member for Brightside mentioned Beveridge. Fifty years ago, in 1942, when Beveridge drew up the famous plan that gave birth to the national health service, he outlined what he saw as the five giant evils of the day—want, disease, ignorance, squalor and idleness. The NHS was to be part of the attack on those evils, particularly on disease. However, he made it clear in his report that they were all linked. He knew that one could not attack disease without attacking how people spent their lives, what they ate, how they were educated and how they fed, housed and clothed themselves.

On publication day in 1942, a mile-long queue formed outside the Government bookshop in central London and around 70,000 copies were sold within hours. Three weeks after publication, a Gallup poll found that 19 out of 20 adults had heard of the Beveridge report and that most approved of its recommendations. It touched the heart of the nation, which awoke to the content of the report like a slumbering giant. People stirred and voted for a Labour Government, who introduced the national health service, and we should never forget that.

We are witnessing a similar phenomenon today with the Government's callous and inhumane treatment of the miners. Yesterday, we saw the Government's hatred of anything collectivist or anything to do with communities. The Government should be fearful of the mood that is abroad, which we witnessed yesterday. Since they announced the pit closures, we have seen what I, as an old trade unionist, would call a massive failure to agree between the people of this country and the Government. The British people will put the national interest first, whereas the Government will put first their idol—the market.

The report is a wasted opportunity. How can any document on the health of the nation fail to address such issues as poverty, low income, bad housing, homelessness and unemployment? Page 26 of the document mentions "healthy cities, healthy schools, healthy hospitals, healthy workplaces and healthy homes",

but fails to offer any solution to the housing crisis, so it is worth nothing. It does not acknowledge that the housing crisis is the worst since after the war. Halifax is not the poorest town in the country by any means, but almost 7,000 people are waiting to be housed by the council. An average of 100 families are made homeless every week, and young people sleep rough or on somebody's settee.

The White Paper could have begun research into homelessness to find out exactly how many people are suffering from it, but it chose not to do so. It could have considered the inner cities and how many unemployed people experience bad health because of the stress of unemployment. It could have undertaken research into the inadequacy of the benefit system.

Mr. Nigel Evans: Does the hon. Member agree that the greatest number of empty council houses are under the control of Labour authorities as opposed to Conservative authorities?

Mrs. Mahon: I absolutely disagree with that. The statistics support my argument, but I do not want to go into them.

Page 28 of the White Paper says that the

"Government will continue to pursue its policy to promote choice and quality in housing, having regard to health and other benefits."

Those are empty words; the White Paper offers absolutely no help. If the Government want to help, the Minister and her colleagues could contact their friends in the Department of the Environment and ask why they will not allow councils to spend their capital receipts on building affordable housing to enable people to move out of squalor and into decent homes. Why did not health Ministers object to the enactment of the Housing Act 1988, the new rules of which made tenants so insecure and caused much more stress? Why do they not do something about what is happening to housing associations, which were to plan for special-needs categories such as elderly people? Housing associations now have to find the money to repair and maintain their properties, whereas previously they received grants. That repair and maintenance bill is being met by tenants and pensioners, who can ill afford it.

Report after report has highlighted the state of our crumbling schools. The White Paper talks about our schools being healthy places. Health Ministers should get in touch with the Department for Education and also ask the Prime Minister what he will do to tackle the backlog of maintenance in some of our schools.

The Government poll tax cap the poorest councils in the country, so they can do nothing about housing.

What upsets me most about the document is the way in which it refers to nutrition and to advising people to make healthy alliances between different agencies, without ever mentioning schools meals, which have played an important role in the nutrition of children, especially children from poor families in this country for nearly 100 years.

In 1906 an Act of Parliament enabled councils to raise money on the rates to provide school meals, and the Education Act 1944 made it compulsory for every local authority to provide a school meal for any child whose parents so wished. Children's health is clearly related to the food that they eat, yet the schools meals service had been under constant attack from the Government since 1979.

The Black report, to which my hon. Friend the Member for Brightside has already referred, valued schools meals so highly that it recommended that they be provided free, yet in the same year the former Prime Minister, now Lady Thatcher, abolished local authorities' obligation to provide meals, except for children entitled to free school meals—yet she was the one who talked about letting children grow tall. Unfortunately, she meant only those children whose parents had healthy bank balance. Since the Education Act 1980, schools dinners are no longer required to meet nutritional standards. The Secretary of State should at least have included that fact in her document.

In 1988, 400,000 children lost their entitlement to free school meals following changes to the Social Security Act, and compulsory competitive tendering threatens the very existence of that valuable, indeed vital, service.

As a member of the Select Committee on Health, I tried to get the Committee to recommend that school meals should be provided for all children at an affordable price

[Mrs. Mahon]

or free for people on very low incomes, and that national nutritional guidelines should be restored. That was when we drew up the report on pre-conceptual care, which preceded the maternity services report. The first of those reports emphasised the need for a healthy diet, so that healthy parents would produce healthy children. That seemed like common sense; it did not seem revolutionary, but something which we should all encourage.

Alas, another golden opportunity was missed, because Conservative Members have voting habits which in our opinion harm the health of the nation time and again.

Another key area identified in the report is that of HIV infection, sexual health and drug abuse, especially involving young children. The report's treatment of that area is light weight. Why are the Government not funding the health education co-ordinators' post from March 1993? Health education co-ordinators have been praised by everyone including Her Majesty's inspectorate from the Department for Education. They do a valuable job to combat a scourge which we all deplore—young people getting involved with drugs. Yet the Government will not fund them. Clearly councils cannot afford to do so. If the Secretary of State really believes that she can attain her targets and reduce such abuse she must rethink the approach to that problem.

The White Paper identifies mental illness as a problem. In an earlier intervention, I tried to question the Secretary of State about prescriptions and health benefits. If people with a mental illness live in the community and are hard up they still have to pay for their prescriptions—many people in benefits have to do so. Often those prescriptions are not renewed, the person regresses and ends up back in hospital. It is a false economy not to ensure that such people get their medication.

The Secretary of State should be able to answer a question from a Back Bencher about whether the review on health benefits is anywhere near complete.

I am conscious of the time, so I shall make only a couple more points. The Select Committee's report on maternity services expressed horror that the DSS could not comment with authority on the adequacy of income support rates for providing a balanced diet for pregnant women because the research was not available—some members of the Committee had already known that, but some had not. Any document that does not deal with that problem has singularly failed in its duty to pregnant women. The omission is disgraceful.

We concluded, too, that there should be no discrimination in benefits for pregnant women. Why should women under 25 get less in benefits than older women? There is nothing in the document to support the recommendation in the Select Committee's excellent report.

I understand that today the Government launched their Winter Warmth telephone line, which is intended to do something about elderly people and fuel poverty. Any elderly or sick person who believes that he or she will receive help with fuel bills or insulation costs will be bitterly disappointed. The scheme, like the document before us, is a candy-floss scheme, pretty on the outside, but with little substance inside. I should like the Secretary of State to go back to the drawing board and bring back to the House a report that really attempts to slay the five

giant evils identified by Beveridge. Goodness knows, there have been enough victims of Conservative health policies over the past 13 years to make that a priority.

6.45 pm

Mr. Sebastian Coe (Falmouth and Camborne): I am grateful to have the opportunity to address the House this evening. Hon. Members may recall that the last time I was due to deliver my maiden speech an altogether different delivery overtook me—the birth of my daughter, a week before the House rose for the summer recess. I link that comment with my great thanks to Epsom general hospital for what they did not only that evening, but throughout the week that my wife spent there.

First, I must pay tribute to my predecessor for his deep commitment and personal involvement with the Falmouth and Camborne constituency, with whose stewardship I am both privileged and proud to have been entrusted for the foreseeable future. I pay tribute to his predecessors, too—from both sides of the House—who ably served my constituents during the long and proud history of the Falmouth and Camborne division. I also thank the people of my constituency for giving me the opportunity to serve their interests in this place.

The Falmouth and Camborne constituency is unique and vibrant and so are its people. They come from a breed that has long learnt to eke out a difficult living against hostile elements—at sea, on land, or under the ground. It was in view of the rich and strong tradition of tin mining, and because of the generations of miners who sought their livelihood in that industry, that my decision on the vote last night was so marginal. I greatly welcome the review of the mining industry announced by the Government.

Since the loss of the tin mining industry, my constituency has never fully recovered either as a community or as an economic area. That may change now, and we have to encourage a level of industry and other economic activity which I hope will continue. Certainly this constituency's current Member of Parliament will press at every available opportunity the needs, desires and hopes of his constituents.

As an apprentice and a newcomer to the team, I thank many hon. Members for the support and guidance that I have received in the past few months—and, of course, I offer my thanks for the invaluable advice that is always available from the Whips Office.

In my previous life, I had advice, and guidance usually given after the event, from coaches, from team managers and from trainers. Sport has never been noted for its 20/20 foresight.

There is, a far more important and serious issue that I wish to address today. The nation's health and fitness is an issue in which effective advice and guidance can literally be a life saver. The single most important factor in the future success of the United Kingdom, either as an economic or as a cultural force, is the health and well-being of its citizens. The provision of an effective and efficient national health service, free to all, is fundamental to the future prosperity of this country. No hon. Members here today would dissent from that view.

What we can argue about is the way in which the service is delivered and resourced, and what its priorities should be. The Government have unequivocally pledged the continuation and development of a national health service

free at the point of delivery. That overriding principle must for ever be upheld and constantly repeated. It is the one non-negotiable, fundamental principle in my book.

The aim must be to continue to improve a free national health service, but a free national health service does not preclude the demolition of a number of apparently sacred cows, nor does it preclude the re-ordering of priorities within the system, provided of course, that that re-ordering is based on solid reasoning, produces tangible benefits for patients and other users, and is fully explained to national health service employees and users alike.

Those who believe that the structure and organisation of the national health service should remain inviolate in the face of medical advances and demographic changes, the sole requirement being simply more funding, do not reside in the real world, nor do they have any genuine regard for the effective use of public finance or resources.

The national health service is Europe's single largest employer, with more than 1 million people and a budget of more than £36 billion, in itself an increase in real terms of 48 per cent. since 1978-79. Those figures are impressive, but as politicians we must recognise that they are Monopoly figures, literally too large for many people to grasp.

In truth, we must also realise that £36 billion matters not a jot when a person's sole concern is whether there is an ambulance, a doctor, a waiting room, a surgery, a hospital bed or a nurse immediately available when needed. As over the years the national health service has come to be perceived as available on demand, such concern is understandable.

Of course the reforms were overdue and hugely welcome, but within them there are still a few issues which need teasing out. One crucial issue, which I believe receives far too little attention and resourcing, is health promotion and education. The best way to help the national health service is to ensure that people do not become ill in the first place. While we go about our duties in the House next week, 455 people will die from coronary heart disease. As we go about our duties in this place next year, 40 million days will be lost through that disease. When we link that to the simple statistic that £2 billion-worth of production will also be lost, we know that those statistics should lie heavily on every Government departmental desk.

The deaths and losses will not be spread evenly throughout the country. The poorest sections of our community in the inner cities and the rural areas will shoulder more than their fair share of that burden. For towns such as Redruth and Camborne, which are an amalgam of the two, that burden will be noticeable.

The real crime of the figures is that they are preventable because the causes are preventable. We have heard about some of those causes today: being overweight, too little exercise, high blood pressure, high cholesterol levels and smoking. Yet while the national health service will spend £500 million next year on the treatment of coronary heart disease, it will spend barely one fiftieth of that on prevention of the same disease.

Tobacco, alcohol and confectionery manufacturers will spend about £700 million next year on advertising their wares—20 times the budget currently going into health education. Strikingly, the Government will also take £12 billion in excise duty and tax from alcohol and tobacco. I find those figures difficult to reconcile, just as I continue to find the sponsorship of sport by tobacco companies irreconcilable.

It is abundantly clear that there must be more resources and that a higher priority must be given to health education, properly targeted at the section of the population who are most in need. There have been a few tentative though welcome bites at that particular cherry. The White Paper "The Health of the Nation", places health promotion high on the agenda with preventive campaigns targeting particular diseases, such as breast cancer, cervical cancer and AIDS, and unhealthy practices such as drug abuse. That is welcome, as are the significant role and efforts of the voluntary sector and the whole raft of charities operating in this arena.

One issue which must be addressed is the complete separateness of health promotion, and sport and recreational departments at national and local level. There is a wide recognition in the White Paper that moderate and careful exercise is a crucial ingredient in every individual's good health and wellbeing, yet the public fund two organisations—the Health Education Authority and the Sports Council—with their attendant administrations broadly to undertake health and fitness promotion. I had the unique experience of serving on the boards of both organisations. It is clear that they will have to work far more closely together to avoid the inevitable waste of precious resources and the duplication of time, effort and funding. Their co-operation with the Department of Health in the national fitness survey is welcome, as is the Department's inclusion of the physical activity policy development group, which is a further welcome move along that road.

Part of the work of the group is to consider the feasibility of setting targets in physical activity and how they might be achieved. However, I find it a little disconcerting that in the 20 years since the inception of the Sports Council and in the 10 or so years since the inception of the Health Education Authority's predecessor, the Health Education Council, we are only now turning to physical activity targets and the prioritisation. At the end of the day we cannot force people to adopt active, healthy living patterns. What we can and should do is to ensure that as wide a range of information, advice and guidance is freely and readily available to everyone. The final choice will be for the individual, but that choice must be an informed one.

Several hon. Members rose—

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order. No fewer than 20 hon. Members wish to catch my eye during the debate. It would appear that some of them may be unsuccessful. It would be helpful if hon. Members would bear that in mind and be as brief as possible.

6.59 pm

Ms. Liz Lynne (Rochdale): I pay tribute to the hon. Member for Falmouth and Camborne (Mr. Coe) on his excellent maiden speech.

The White Paper states that there are significant variations in ill health in England and other countries. Why are there variations? What will the Government do to rectify them? I have concluded that the health of the nation depends on the wealth of the nation. There are areas of England which are obviously less prosperous than others. Some members of the Government at last seem to be

[Ms. Liz Lynne]

admitting that wealth is a factor in health. We need more job opportunities and better housing. Those two factors alone have an enormous impact on health.

I am glad that the Government have at last recognised that. However, instead of simply recognising it, they should act. They should be providing more jobs, not fewer. The Government should announce today that they will allow councils to spend the money raised from selling council houses so that people can have decent, healthy homes in which to live. If one lives in rundown, damp housing, one is more likely to suffer from bronchial conditions. Everyone knows that poor income and poor health education lead to poor diet, which in turn leads to heart disease, diabetes and so on.

The Government have raised many hopes with their White Paper, in the same way that they raised many expectations when they originally announced their community care reforms. The White Paper states that it is "important to maintain the quality of care and support provided for chronically sick people, elderly people, mentally ill and handicapped people."

However, many people who work in community care doubt whether, come April 1993, those good sentiments will become a reality. Similarly, there are fears that all the fine words in the White Paper are just that and have no substance.

The White Paper admits that the success of the strategy will depend on the commitment and skills of the health professionals within the NHS. I hope that the Government will now value and properly reward those professionals who carry so much of the burden of introducing those reforms.

I am pleased that the Government now accept that smoking is an addiction and will encourage people to stop smoking and prevent children from starting. However, I am disappointed that no extra money has been pledged for anti-smoking campaigns. I am appalled that the Government have failed to enforce a tobacco advertising ban, when evidence from New Zealand and Norway shows how effective a ban can be, particularly with children.

As has already been said, more than 700 British scientists and clinicians have paid for an advertisement in today's *Independent* stating that there is now strong evidence that tobacco advertising encourages children to smoke. The Government should listen to those who know. I hope that Hanson and Rothmans, who each gave £100,000 to the Conservative party in the latest year for which figures are available, are not affecting the Government's policies.

According to a Health Education Authority report, one in five people in my constituency die every year as a result of smoking. An estimated 599 residents were admitted to an NHS hospital because they had an illness caused by smoking. Those figures come not from a tinpot organisation, but from a book published by the Health Education Authority. However, the Government have still not banned tobacco advertising. What stupidity, cynicism and short-sightedness.

The White Paper targets four types of cancer for reduction. I welcome the inclusion of breast cancer in that list, but note that the 25 per cent. reduction applies only to

"those invited for screening". The Government concentrate on the 50 to 64 age group. There is no guidance for general practitioners to screen women over the age of 40 in families with a history of breast cancer.

Cancerlink is disappointed that no targets are given for treatment and support. The quality of life of cancer patients has been left out of the White Paper. The inadequacy of resources available for personal and family counselling must be tackled.

With regard to mental health, there is no mention of the fact that there may be a link between mental health, homelessness and redundancy. What sort of health problems have the Government caused the miners and their families over the past few days? The way in which the pit closures were announced was callous in the extreme.

However, more than that, as a consultant psychologist has said, the sudden shock of the announcement of such a speedy and savage cut is equivalent to a sudden bereavement, road accident or terrorist bombing. Some people may never recover from the way in which the announcement was made. However much the Government might change their mind, the immediate shock was real; the stress has been caused and the damage has been done.

The White Paper contains no specific targets for the reduction in the incidence of mental illness or for the promotion of mental health. The Alzheimer's Disease Society is especially disappointed that the Government have not set targets. There should be targets for support and accommodation for those leaving long-stay psychiatric hospitals.

The continuing squeeze on local authority budgets and reduced funding for the voluntary sector is completely ignored. Anyone who believes that that is not important should see the number of homeless people sleeping rough in London. People are also sleeping rough in Manchester and every other city in the country. A number of those people suffer from mental illness.

I welcome the fact that accidents feature in the White Paper. However, like the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents, I wonder why non-fatal injuries are excluded. Non-fatal injuries cost a lot more in total than fatal injuries and many injuries lead to medium and long-term disabilities.

Alcohol targets are dealt with under heart disease and accidents. That is disappointing, because alcohol is related to a wide range of medical conditions and deserves its own heading. I would also like the Government to give a commitment on complementary medicine. The full benefits of that type of health care are not yet fully understood.

All in all, I welcome certain aspects of the White Paper—at least it is better than nothing. At last we have some sort of strategy for health, but it does not go far enough. What good are those fine words if the money is not there?

I ask the Minister to make a commitment today that the health budget will not suffer when the public spending cuts are announced and to announce that there will be a real, substantial increase to meet the health needs of the people of this country. Anything less than that commitment makes a mockery of the White Paper.

7.8 pm

Dr. Charles Goodson-Wickes (Wimbledon): It gives me great pleasure to congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Falmouth and Camborne (Mr. Coe) on his maiden

speech. He has shown his dedication, ability and achievements in other fields and I am quite confident that whatever distance he chooses here, he will be as successful. We look forward to hearing more from him. I am aware in particular of his interest in the ghastly problem of the misuse of drugs in sport and we look forward to hearing him pursuing that line as well.

After my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health made her debut in the health conference in Brighton, my wife said to me, "Doesn't she look pretty?" I countered by saying, "Didn't she make a good speech?" I should make it clear to my right hon. Friend, in her temporary absence, that those compliments are not mutually exclusive.

"The Health of the Nation" has been considered very widely in its Green and White forms over the past 16 months. I urge the House to make certain that we maintain the momentum and achieve another target—its implementation by April next year.

Never has the phrase "prevention is better than cure" been more appropriate. I talk, I believe, as the only practising physician or surgeon in the House. I have been involved in preventive medicine for 20 years, in the Army and on behalf of many companies ranging from mining and engineering to the service industries. I was also proud to serve on the medical advisory committee of the Industrial Society. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has more than a passing acquaintance with that society through her father's outstanding leadership of it.

However, there is still widespread ignorance of the issues addressed in the White Paper, not least because the emphasis on medicine, that unique blend of science and art, has historically and naturally concentrated on curing illness. The advent of screening medicine to detect conditions in the early stages and to be able to make a pre-symptomatic diagnosis, linked with advice on how to avoid other afflictions, is a relatively new concept. It has largely been pioneered in this country by the private sector, but the national health service has played an important part. Perhaps we are seeing an acceleration of the trend of having a health service rather than a sickness service, with the ultimate aim being the physical and mental welfare of everyone in this country.

I have often noted over the years that if one says that one is involved in occupational medicine it is a conversation stopper. That branch of medicine, catering as it does for the effects of a job on a patient's health and vice versa, might be an important aspect of the evolution of health care in this country. In France, many—perhaps most—employees, are entitled not only to a pre-employment medical but to a retirement medical and, often, annual medicals which might or might not be funded wholly or partly by the state. The context of a schedule for screening will obviously vary widely in depth and quality, but the legitimacy of various tests is constantly being reassessed. I agree with the hon. Member for Rochdale (Ms. Lynne) that one should re-examine the age limits for breast screening for women.

"The Health of the Nation" also addresses a rather more parochial issue—health in the workplace. We should be doing ourselves a disservice if we did not start to consider our own lifestyle in this place. In my written evidence to the Select Committee on Sittings of the House published in February, I said:

"As a practising physician I have to see colleagues, and in particular Ministers, being forced to live a lifestyle which is

incompatible with their general well-being, and I am convinced these factors militate against their making properly considered decisions. In particular, the necessity for Ministers to come to the House at bizarre times of the night and early morning is indefensible."

The Jopling Committee has also made a recommendation. It is interesting for the House to note the opinion of the 1959 Procedure Committee. I say this in the context of the numbers game that we had to play before last night's Division. The 1959 Procedure Committee stated:

"Members who are seriously ill should never again be required to attend to record their votes".

I very much hope that Madam Speaker will soon organise the conference to address that matter.

Perhaps an agreeable spin-off from the publication tomorrow of the Tomlinson report will be consultants taking redundancy and redeploying their skills in the development of preventive and occupational medicine. Those matters cannot be wholly funded by the NHS, and ample opportunities exist for co-operation between the NHS and the private sector. Only a few weeks ago I attended the opening of a magnetic resonance imaging screening unit in the grounds of Atkinson Morley's hospital in my constituency. That hospital pioneered CAT scanning about 20 years ago. The equipment for that is extremely expensive. It is owned by a private company which has a lease on the area, and Atkinson Morley's hospital provides the patients and the medical, surgical and, most important of all, the radiological back-up.

Such sophisticated equipment obviously costs a great deal of money. Of the 90 units of MRI equipment in this country, about one third are privately owned, one third are owned by charities or by charities in combination with the NHS and one third are owned by the NHS itself. It is the most startling equipment and it will have an exciting future. I recommend that all my colleagues share the fascination of being able to look directly for the first time at organs and structures of the body. It is the most extraordinary thing to come on the scene since I qualified as a doctor, which I suppose marks my age rather than anything else.

On a more basic level, how will we ensure that vital—I mean "vital" in the proper sense of that word—preventive measures are carried out by GPs? The answer clearly lies in the new contract, which was very painfully negotiated, and the advent of the increasingly popular GP fund holders. The House will remember the outcry that we had to face from doctors who, having been trained in an NHS ethos and knowing no other, were initially horrified to have to take more administrative and commercial decisions in their practices. Opposition Members, on wholly outdated ideological grounds, also whipped up discontent and, more important, alarm in the general public about fund holding and NHS trusts. That was done under the entirely false argument that the trusts were "opting out" of the NHS. Only today I visited St. Helier's national health service trust which serves much of my constituency. It is enthusiastically planning targeting for the implementation of "The Health of the Nation" in next year's budget.

I do not know whether it has sunk into Opposition Members' minds that another intellectual conversion has occurred in their party and, incidentally, within the British Medical Association, my trade union, which swayed from militancy to guarded warmth about the proposals, but which is still being mealy-mouthed about them. I wonder whether Opposition Members understand the changes that

[Dr. Charles Goodson-Wickes]

are taking place. I should not have thought so, judging by the speech of the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett). Only a month ago we read in *The Times* that the shadow Health Secretary, in the form of the hon. Member for Brightside, would abandon the Labour party's policy of abolishing NHS trusts and GP fund holding and drop the campaign to restore so-called underfunding in the NHS. I read the article in *The Times* and I heard the hon. Gentleman today. He owes it to the House to clarify his exact position and to say whether he carries the rest of his party with him. GPs running their own budgets will be able to achieve much more at the primary care level and thus take pressures off hospitals and give themselves more clinical satisfaction.

All the admirable proposals in "The Health of the Nation" can be carried out without creating a nanny state. When I have a recalcitrant patient—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Dr. Goodson-Wickes: May I just finish my sentence?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I call Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody.

7.18 pm

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): Targets are all very well if they are realisable and sensible. The fairgrounds of my youth had vast numbers of machines that people were required to hit with an enormous hammer and a bullet then shot up and rang a bell. Very few people managed to do that because the machines were deliberately rigged. The similarities between the rigged bells and the targets of the White Paper seem very clear indeed.

I have strong views on the prevention of ill health. It is something for which I have pleaded for a long time. It is utter hypocrisy to suggest that we need proper health targets and then refuse to make the direct connection between the provision of funds and the provision of services that would allow us to hit those targets. That has probably been the worst con trick that the Government have tried on the British public for many years.

When talking about reducing smoking, one must understand that it is necessary to cut back advertising for smoking, particularly that aimed at young people. The length of time that people smoke is one of its most hazardous and appalling aspects. Some 1,149 people die every year in my constituency; of those, 179 are the result of smoking-related diseases—one in six of the deaths in my constituency. But there is still no clear plan from the Government about what they intend to do. They simply promote a lot of generally cheerful ideas stating that it would be nice if we cut down on smoking.

No matter which target in the document one examines in depth, one comes to the same conclusion: there are many pious hopes. The Government say that it would be wonderful if they could make it much easier for people to receive health education and could reduce the number of teenage pregnancies. However, there has been a consistent chopping of the provision of information to young girls on the need for proper health planning or the sort of service that they can easily receive. The results can be seen in every

hon. Member's surgery when they are asked to provide houses for young people who are often homeless and pregnant. That connection is direct, not accidental.

We can take that argument further. We are told that one of the main targets is the provision of good health care for the elderly. In my constituency we are constantly told that we are lucky and that the reorganisation of trusts has improved health care—it is important to keep repeating this claim. The money keeps running out and the number of beds keeps being cut, but according to the Government my constituents should realise that they are getting a better service. As if those changes are not enough, we even have an ambulance trust created specifically as an independent unit. It has considerable problems related not only to its equipment but to the provision of its services throughout Cheshire and other parts of Merseyside.

We are moving towards what is lightly called community care. There is no better idea than community care, but it is not a cheap option. It must be provided not in the terms suggested by the present trusts—reducing the number of geriatric beds and ring fencing small sums of money that are inadequate to provide alternatives in the community. It must be provided by highly skilled nurses and support in people's homes given by health professionals. That requires a good, constant supply of money, but it is clear that such sums will not be forthcoming.

I asked my local trust what would happen when two of the geriatric hospitals were closed down. I do not pretend that they were adequate, but they provided health care and protection for many of my elderly constituents. When I asked about the closures, I was told that other wards would be made available in the district general hospital—itsself a trust. But the wards to be built in Leighton hospital will not replace the beds lost by the closure of the Barony hospital. It was never intended that the money from the sale of the Barony and Arclid hospitals should be diverted into development moneys for the psychiatric department. There has been a long-standing commitment to build and fund 16 functional mentally ill elderly beds from straightforward development moneys. It is clear that, far from the necessary money being provided, there is to be a severe shortfall in the provision of care for the elderly. There is to be only a partial replacement.

It is also important to understand that the creation of trusts is having a direct effect on the level of nursing care. I have been told by the trust that the quality of service when the elderly health care strategy is complete should not be affected. Almost all the staff being transferred to the newly built nursing homes are being downgraded, although at present they have an oral promise of the retention of existing commitments. That means that the skill mix in those new homes will be considerably less than that provided in the original hospital system.

We now know what happens when a new trust is created. We are told that it is a better way of providing health care, but the administration cost is increased by raising the wages of the tiny number of people at the top while the provision of health care for local people is reduced.

We should also discuss the damaging decisions that the Government are to announce tomorrow about the closure of teaching hospitals in London.

The Minister for Health (Dr. Brian Mawhinney): Before the hon. Lady leaves Crewe, will she express pleasure at the fact that patient activity in Crewe increased by 9 per cent. last year?

Mrs. Dunwoody: I see people being run in and out of the services at great speed. One hon. Member said earlier that his wife had stayed in hospital for a week after having her baby. That is almost unique within medicare services and I hope that it was not a sign that she was suffering from any complications.

The way that people are now wheeled in and out of hospital services like sausages should be enough to cause even this Government to pause. I do not want the Minister to tell me that I should be delighted that patients are going in and out of hospital like people in a revolving door. I care about the quality of care that they receive and how many of them have to return to hospital for further treatment after they have been sent home too soon. I also care very much about what they find when they get home and how much care they receive there. The Minister does not talk about that at all.

In July last year I had what is termed a life-threatening illness and was taken into Barts hospital. I was there for some weeks and it became clear that the large ward on which I was being treated was entirely occupied by patients who came from Hackney, the City of London or the Barbican, where I have a home. Those in the ward were not patients who were not using their local health services.

Whereas I once might have said that there was a good case for dispensing a greater amount of expertise from London into other constituencies, I know that when the present Government shut centres of excellence they are not replaced. The same level of care is not provided outside the capital. All that happens is that those within the London district are deprived of services that are essential to them.

If the wholesale slaughter of the teaching hospitals is allowed to go ahead, there will be no provision for many people in the London region. The Government will not provide equal amounts of cash for Manchester, Liverpool and constituencies such as mine. All that they will do is cheat the population of London. Even the Government should be ashamed of that.

7.27 pm

Mr. David Atkinson (Bournemouth, East): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Falmouth and Camborne (Mr. Coe) on his excellent maiden speech. I pay tribute to his continuing work in health promotion with the Sports Council and the Health Education Authority.

Yesterday I had the pleasure of attending the official opening by the Princess Royal of phase 2 of the new Royal Bournemouth hospital in my constituency. On behalf of my constituents, I wish to thank my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and her predecessors for making that superb new hospital a reality. It was a casualty of the cuts in the hospital building programme during the last Labour Government and was, therefore, long overdue.

The maternity unit in phase two anticipated the recommendation contained in the Select Committee report on maternity service in pioneering the establishment of a midwife-led facility for low-risk women. This has been a satisfactory outcome of the health authority's original intention to centralise all obstetric services at Poole hospital, which might have been convenient for the consultants, but was certainly not convenient for my

constituents or for those of my hon. Friend the Member for Christchurch (Mr. Adley). I record our appreciation of our right hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, West (Mr. Waldegrave), who, as Secretary of State, ordered a re-think last year in response to our appeal to him. That has resulted in an acceptable compromise.

I congratulate the Government on pressing forward with their determination to make ours a healthier nation. Having implemented our strategy for a more efficient national health service, we are right to concentrate more than ever before on how we can avoid the need for health care in the first place. As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has said, tremendous progress has been made in recent years. Although it is right that the Opposition should point out where Britain lags behind, let us also give credit for the fact that we are leading the field in eliminating some of the seemingly incurable diseases of the past. Research is the key, and resources for it must remain adequate.

In the White Paper my right hon. Friend has selected five key areas for targeting: heart disease, cancer, mental illness, AIDS and accidents. These are the five horsemen of the modern apocalypse. Terrible as they all are, they have two things in common—they are mostly avoidable and they are mainly self-imposed. The Government must now build on that message.

A couple of years ago East Dorset community health council undertook "Survey 10,000" to discover consumers' views of health services and health promotion. It concluded that less than half of them were taking steps to improve their health. That is disappointing. The survey also concluded that of those who do seek advice, the majority will act on it. That is more encouraging.

Is there not more that can be done to encourage people to be more aware of their state of health, by means of personal monitoring? I believe that there is. In July, a number of colleagues in the House responded to an invitation from IBM to become better aware of the use of information technology in our lives. Among the exhibits was a community based, touch-screen, public-access, health information system known as HealthPoint. It encourages the public to find out more about their state of health in a hundred different ways—diet, alcohol intake, smoking, AIDS, drug misuse and stress. For example, it can be placed in the waiting areas of hospitals and clinics, libraries, shopping centres, chemists and the workplace. If the Minister for Health is not aware of it, I hope that he will make himself aware of it. It was developed by the university of Glasgow for his colleagues in the Scottish Office.

As the White Paper makes plain, heart disease followed by cancer present the greatest threat of premature death in Britain, not to mention ill health and disability for thousands. As my right hon. Friend said, we can do a great deal about both diseases and their avoidance. She rightly emphasised improved diet, and the growing emphasis on the risks of foodstuffs with lethal additives, sugars, salts and fats, is at last producing a consumer demand for more healthy alternatives, even in junk food like pizzas, burgers and potato crisps. This trend must be encouraged by education in schools, exhortation in campaigns and by clearer and compulsory labelling on foods. I hope that my right hon. Friend will keep up the pressure on our major food producers to find healthy alternatives to the more dangerous preservatives in food—emulsifiers in ice

[Mr. David Atkinson]

creams, for instance. I hope that they will respond even more positively to the clear, established link between saturated fats and heart disease.

Public attitudes and awareness of the need to take better care of one's health have improved in response to campaigns such as "Look after your heart". A recent Allied Dunbar survey showed that even more needs to be done to improve our fitness and to avoid heart disease. I was delighted by my right hon. Friend's initiative this week to promote health at work. The annual absenteeism cost of £5 billion suggests that a properly planned health promotion programme for staff would be incredibly cost-effective.

Many of us will be aware of the excellent organisation Fitness for Industry, run by our hon. Friend the Member for Dorset, West (Sir J. Spicer), who is also responsible for establishing the Westminster gymnasium. Looking around the House this evening I do not see too many colleagues who use the gym, and sad to say there are still many companies not even contemplating how they can convert some under-used or redundant corner of their premises into a fitness area where their employees can work out at lunch time and before and after work. The investment need not be great; a home multigym can cost only £300, a sum which unfortunately cannot be offset against company tax. I ask the Minister to urge the Treasury to make it allowable against tax. He should also urge the Health and Safety Executive to issue guidelines to employers on health at work.

Smoking remains the greatest single preventable cause of premature death in this country. The recent manifesto for action on smoking issued by the Health Education Authority has already been mentioned. Among my constituents, 13.7 per cent., or one in seven, die from smoking; 500 a year are admitted to hospital because of smoking, using 14 beds a day, at an annual cost of £664,000. I am encouraged, however, by the fact that these statistics are the fifth lowest in the country.

I welcome the strategy in the White Paper, especially its emphasis on no-smoking areas in public to combat the effects of passive smoking. Surely Roy Castle's successful treatment for lung cancer will bring home the dangers of smoky pubs and clubs. I remain convinced that the answer still lies in education, not in penal taxation, which does little to discourage the hardened smoking addict, who will make other sacrifices, usually at his family's expense. It would be helpful, however, if my right hon. Friend would confirm once and for all that there is absolute and conclusive evidence that smoking leads to lung cancer, which in turn leads to an agonising and premature death. Health warnings on cigarette packets should state that clearly.

Now that doctors can put smoking as a cause of death on death certificates without having to refer to a coroner, I hope that GPs will not hesitate to use this opportunity to improve the accuracy of statistics on tobacco-related deaths.

The White Paper describes HIV and AIDS as the greatest new threat to health this century. There is no alternative but to continue to promote ever safer sex and to emphasise more strongly than ever that it is anal intercourse that is largely responsible for AIDS. With neither vaccine nor cure in sight, prevention remains the

essential message, and the governing bodies of schools have a heavy responsibility when deciding what additional sex education to provide under the national curriculum for 12 to 14-year-olds. Such education must be appropriate to the schools and must encourage young people—indeed, all of us—to talk more easily about the subject.

I conclude with one of the broader lessons that can be learnt from the alarming report earlier this year about the HIV-positive Birmingham man who infected at least three women and was blamed for having infected a fourth. There are certain conclusions to be drawn from the fact that those reports exposed a lifestyle which he and his friends pursued in their inner urban area—a lifestyle revolving around alcohol, football, videos and sex.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

7.38 pm

Miss Joan Lester (Eccles): I apologise for my voice. It would be wrong to blame it entirely on the fact that I am a victim of passive smoking in the Tea Room, a problem caused by those who are in turn the victims of the tobacco advertising, but my hoarse voice is certainly linked to the smoke there. When one has a cold or a throat infection the atmosphere in the Tea Room is bad for one's health—I just hope that my voice will last out this speech.

I want to concentrate on child health. Although that is referred to in the White Paper, children have been largely overlooked in the promotion of good eating habits and of health in general.

The target of reducing the number of children smoking has been mentioned, but from reading the report it is unclear how the Government will achieve that target without controlling the advertising of cigarettes. Other important issues, however, such as child nutrition, poverty and deprivation have hardly been tackled.

We could all read out our qualifications which entitle us to comment on such matters, as the Secretary of State did, but if we ignore the connection between child health and poverty and between bad housing and child health, we have learnt very little.

One in five of our children now live in poverty. That means that they are subject to great deprivation, as are their parents. Many of them live in bed-and-breakfast accommodation or in poor housing. Ministers' refusal to acknowledge the obvious link between child poverty and poor health is irresponsible and totally unacceptable.

It is self-evident that sub-standard housing leads to ill health. Similarly, families living in poverty will, of necessity, consume the sort of fat and sugar-loaded diet that easily staves off the pangs of hunger, but does nothing to build a healthy body. Anyone who has visited bed-and-breakfast accommodation knows that they offer no facilities for promoting a healthy diet.

The White Paper specifies targets for reducing adult obesity, which I welcome, but it says nothing about that problem in children. The seeds of obesity are sown in childhood. Anyone who has tried to change the pattern of eating established in childhood knows how difficult that is. People brought up in the 1930s filled a blank space with suet puddings, dumplings, cocoa and the like. They now suffer illnesses directly related to that diet.

We know better now, but, as my hon. Friend the Member for Halifax (Mrs. Mahon) has said, it is important to reinstate the nutritional standard of school meals. Many children no longer have a hot lunch and they

have replaced it with sandwiches, sugary snacks or crisps. The school lunch is often the only hot meal available to children and they are now suffering nutritional deprivation—they will suffer illness throughout their adult lives as a result of that.

In the 1950s, graphs were kept of the comparative growth of rich and poor children. In those days children received free orange juice, school milk and proper school meals and the gap between the development of those children narrowed: now it is widening. For years the medical schools of Guy's and St. Thomas's—I hope that they will not be closed down—have carried out a joint study of the height and growth of children, which are strong indicators of health in childhood. The height differences between children in different social groups narrowed in the 1970s, but it grew wider in the 1980s.

Only last month Professor Walter Holland, one of this country's leading experts on community medicine, warned that British children were getting fatter and that a time bomb of obesity and disease was ticking away under them. He pointed out that the increase in children's weight, particularly among girls and children from the poorer economic groups, had not been commensurate with their increase in height. That weight gain is an important indicator of the likely health of those children when they grow up, especially in terms of the greater frequency with which they will suffer from arthritis, diabetes, heart disease and high blood pressure. As the hon. Member for Falmouth and Camborne (Mr. Coe) said in his maiden speech, we need to tackle the need for exercise in childhood. Too many children now go everywhere by car. I do not believe that the White Paper has addressed those warnings.

The Government also have a responsibility to protect children from the advertising of products that are damaging to their health. Earlier this year we debated the issue of tobacco advertising and I drew attention to the Benson and Hedges advert that featured a puffin—a symbol clearly identified by children because of Puffin books. Whatever the tobacco giants may claim, I am firmly convinced that they target under-age smokers. Indeed, they do so in order to replace the 300,000 addicted smokers who die from smoking related diseases every year.

More than 450 youngsters start smoking in the United Kingdom every day and five out of six of them are under the age of 16. The Secretary of State rightly pointed out that the parents of many children who take up smoking are smokers. She implied that if adults stopped smoking, children would do likewise. That is why it is so important that we tackle the advertising of cigarettes, because children whose parents smoke see the attitude in their homes reinforced through advertising. If that were not so those children would be less likely to smoke. Perceived attitudes have never been challenged and that is why the role of advertising is so important.

I am appalled that the former Prime Minister is now promoting tobacco in the third world. That is absolutely disgraceful and she should know better.

Janet Sackman was a young and healthy teenager who was chosen especially years ago to advertise Lucky Strike cigarettes—behind a waterfall, I think. By the age of 17, having been encouraged to smoke, she was hooked on tobacco and she has since developed lung and throat cancer. Who was that advertisement directed at? Not at hon. Members, but at teenagers like Janet. My hon. Friend the Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody)

and I have a high percentage of constituents who are now dying from smoking-related diseases and we know that they were affected by that advertisement. One could cite many other such advertisements. We must recognise the problem caused by tobacco advertising.

Voluntary codes have been mentioned and the Secretary of State said that one cannot force people to do certain things. However, it is important to take issue with another problem connected with advertising—the inadequate controls over misleading advertisements of sugar-loaded foods and confectionery. Those products are often described as energy giving to young children and their parents. If the truth were told, they would be more accurately described as tooth rotting. It is important that the Government take a long, hard look at that issue against the backdrop of reduced dental care for children.

Local authorities are making cuts in school health programmes because of Government restrictions on spending. Our children are deluged with advertising that is often linked with unfortunate preconceptions. They believe that if they eat a particular food they will be able to perform to a particular standard in sports. That is an absolute disgrace.

The school nurse programme is underfunded and under threat. It has been brought to my notice that, in Gloucestershire, parents have received letters giving notice of the discontinuation of annual school dental check-ups. The reason for that decision was improvements in child dental health, but what brought about that improvement? It was the annual dental check-up. Children will now receive four check-ups throughout their school lives between the ages of four and 18. With national health service dentists to become as scarce as coal mines if the Government have their way, more families will find themselves unable to afford private treatment. If adults do not regularly visit the dentist, it is unlikely that their children will get into that habit. School dental check-ups are a vital safety net against the background of disintegrating public health care for our children.

How some of the targets relating to children in the White Paper, welcome though they are, will be reached is a mystery. The commitment to reduce pregnancies among under-16s by at least 50 per cent. by the year 2000 is welcome, but how can that be achieved without taking practical steps to prevent conception in the first place? Special attention must be given to that matter if we are to avoid more teenage pregnancies. The Birth Control Trust, for example, should be given more funding and support if we are to reduce the number of teenage pregnancies.

7.48 pm

Mr. Simon Coombs (Swindon): I join my colleagues in congratulating my hon. Friend the Member for Falmouth and Camborne (Mr. Coe) on his excellent maiden speech. I also congratulate the hon. Member for Eccles (Miss Lestor) on surviving her 10 minutes. I thought that her voice became stronger as she went on, which shows that practice does help. That is an awful warning to all of us, is it not?

The White Paper is a move forward in health promotion, but I want to issue one or two warnings about it. I also disagreed with a couple of things that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said. I welcome the White Paper and all that went before it because they have created the framework for health promotion. It is right to

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pay tribute to the progress that has been made in relation to GP contracts and the improvement in targets in such things as cervical smears and child immunisation. Those are welcome steps in the right direction, but we still have serious problems in this country.

The first problem is coronary heart disease. This week I put a question to a Minister at the Welsh Office, and received the information that in Wales the number of deaths from coronary heart disease had fallen from 345 to 331 per 100,000 in the past 11 years. That is progress, but it is slow, and it is not speedy enough to satisfy those hon. Members who feel strongly about such issues.

In almost 10 years since the publication of the Committee on Medical Aspects of Food Policy report there has been little progress in reducing our population's intake of saturated fats. There has also been too little progress on increasing the amount of fibre in the diet through eating fruit and vegetables. I do not join Opposition Members in saying that it is simply a matter of social class or due to whether people are richer or poorer: it is up to people to make choices, and they can make them irrespective of their income or that of their families.

Another problem is plasma cholesterol. That is often a genetic feature, but we can all do something about it. A 10 per cent. reduction in plasma cholesterol could lead to a 20 per cent. reduction in premature coronary heart disease. There are ways in which cholesterol can be reduced, even by people who may have a genetic tendency towards it. That is of crucial importance. I hope that my hon. Friend will tell us at the end of the debate when the Government intend to respond to the Standing Medical Advisory Committee's proposals on cholesterol testing. The House will be interested to know when we can expect progress in that direction.

Like every other Member who has spoken, I must mention smoking. I am one Conservative Member who feels that we must insist that the European Community does something about the scandalous subsidising of tobacco crops throughout the Community, which is costing its taxpayers £1 billion per year. We must also consider the vexed question of tobacco advertising. Having lost a parent from lung cancer, I feel that we must take any step that will reduce people's tendency to smoke and to reduce the number of passive and active smokers.

Clearly the Government have set a challenging target. Why lose any opportunity to reach those targets? When the Smee report is published next week I am sure that it will show that in countries which have banned all advertising—not merely television advertisements—that has helped to reduce smoking. Let us follow suit and not be too worried by arguments about freedom. It will still be up to people to decide whether they smoke. For heaven's sake, why do we want to encourage them in any way?

On health education, we must deal with nutrition education in schools. That has not been mentioned in the debate so far. I am not happy that the nutritional advice made available through home economics within the national curriculum is sufficient to encourage young people into healthy eating and cooking when they become responsible for families. We must ask the Minister to talk to Ministers at the Department of Education—not merely through a Cabinet Committee—to impress on them the need to ensure that health economics teaching includes

advice on diet and nutrition. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will feel able to respond to that at the end of the debate.

I welcome the healthy schools project, and I hope that it will include some of the suggestions from the school meals campaign. It is not good enough that while some counties, such as mine, make every effort to encourage healthy eating in schools, in others the pizza generation has taken over, almost to the exclusion of everything else. The pizza van waits outside the school gates every lunchtime for its ready victims to come forth. We have to insist on national standards in something as important as school meals.

I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will tell the House when we can expect the Government to propose full nutritional labelling. There has been much consideration and involvement with the European Community on that subject: now we need action. A great deal of progress is being made. It is true to say that industry is now more aware of its responsibilities for the diet of the nation.

The Food and Health Forum—the all-party group in the House which I have the honour to chair—has received presentations from organisations as diverse as the National Farmers Union and the Food and Drink Federation and they all accept that they have responsibilities to improve the nation's diet. That is important and should be encouraged by Members on both sides of the House.

Finally, the targets in the report may not look tough to some hon. Members but they will be hard to achieve because, human nature being what it is, people will resist blandishments, encouragement, education and incentives. There will always be those who say, "We know best" and "My grandmother lived to be 90 and she smoked 40 a day, so I can do it too." They may be right, but that does not alter the fact that everyone who smokes has a greater chance of dying a premature and agonising death. That fact is incontrovertible. We must tell people who have a sweet tooth and who enjoy a rich fatty diet that they are taking risks with their health and that they could avoid those risks if they chose to do so. However, we all know that many of them will choose to ignore whatever advice is given. We must press on, and we must tell the Government that it will not be easy to reach those targets. Too many people will say, "we are immortal—it will never happen to us."

Education will be important. Whether it is provided by the health education authority or by health education units within the health authorities, it is expensive and it will have to be paid for. My hon. Friend will have to deal with the problem of where that money is to come from. We can improve the lifestyle of all the people in this country, if we are prepared to do so, but let us not pretend that the White Paper is anything more than one step along a road which will be difficult and challenging, and which will require sacrifices by everyone in the country, whether they are smokers or those who indulge in the various dietary inadequacies which disfigure our population to far too great an extent.

7.58 pm

Mr. John Hutton (Barrow and Furness): Many Labour Members, including my hon. Friends the Members for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett) and for Eccles (Miss Lestor), have expressed our reservations about a health

promotion strategy that fails to give proper attention to significant factors such as unemployment, economic deprivation and poor housing conditions.

While the Secretary of State for Health has sought to develop a strategy to improve the health of the nation, other policies are being developed by different Government Departments which are having the opposite effect on that strategy. I am thinking of the Government's economic and industrial policies, which are creating an inexorable rise in unemployment, of the Government's employment policies, which are encouraging low and poverty pay, and of their housing policies, which are creating ever-increasing tension and stress in the housing stock, especially in public sector housing.

I do not intend to dwell on that aspect of our reservations about the Government's health strategy, although I must say a little about what is happening in my constituency. In two years Barrow and Furness has lost 8,000 jobs. Every week, when I hold my advice surgeries, I see growing signs of increasing economic deprivation. More and more of my constituents are being forced on to income support and benefit, and I am deeply concerned about what is happening to the health of my constituents. I know that in the coming years there will be many other constituencies throughout the country where the Government's policies will have an effect on the health of many thousands of people.

I wish to concentrate on three issues that arise from the White Paper, which bear on the Government's policies on accident prevention, reducing the incidence rate of cancer and dealing with mental illness.

I ask the Government to consider the role of home safety committees within their strategy on accident prevention. I read the White Paper and I could not find one reference to the committees. I assume that that is an oversight by the Government and not the result of their pathological aversion to anything and everything that is provided by local authorities.

Home safety committees are administered by local councils. They bring together local NHS agencies, emergency services, voluntary organisations and trading standard officers. They do an excellent job and the Government should examine their work carefully with a view to putting it on a statutory basis. In taking that course there would be resource implications for the Government, and perhaps that is why there is no reference to the committees in the White Paper.

Perhaps the Government, and especially the Minister for Health, will have to consult Ministers in other Departments. I hope that the Minister will be able to give us an assurance that he will at least consider my suggestion. Home safety committees, and especially the one in my constituency, are doing an excellent job.

It is important that action is taken across a range of areas to tackle the incidence of cancer. Many of my hon. Friends—I am glad that there are Conservative Members who support the view—believe that the Government cannot continue to avoid taking further measures to prevent tobacco companies advertising their products. Despite what is often said by these companies, their advertising is clearly and blatantly aimed at young people and at recruiting new smokers. That is a disgrace.

I regret that the White Paper takes a rather disingenuous approach to tobacco advertising. As a result, the Government's targets for reducing the incidence of lung cancer and other smoking-related illnesses appear to

be hopelessly optimistic. A ban on advertising should be at the top of the Government's agenda and not wrapped up in the weasel words that are all that we see in the White Paper.

In the treatment of cancer, excellent work is being done by the hospice movement in providing palliative care for those who are dying from the disease. I mention especially the work of St. Mary's hospice in Ulverston in my constituency. It is a small hospice—there are only six beds—but it provides a vital home care service and a drop-in support service. Demand for the services that it provides constantly outstrips availability. The hospice has to rely heavily on voluntary contributions. Its budget is about £500,000, about 83 per cent. of which comes from its own fund-raising efforts. That is a remarkable tribute to the people of Furness and of the south lakes area.

The hospice receives no direct funding from the South Cumbria district health authority but I am glad to say that it benefits from the Government's allocation to regional health authorities. Of course, that funding is not guaranteed beyond this year. I hope that the Government will extend their support to the hospice movement in general and keep under constant review the mechanisms through which health authority funding is distributed to the hospices.

I would like to have seen greater emphasis in another area of the Government's proposals, and that is on a recognition of the value and role of proper bereavement services in promoting the health of the nation. Those who, like myself, have experienced the immense grief that is caused by the death of a child will know how debilitating the sense of loss can be. There can be a real threat to the physical and mental health of those who are mourning the loss of a loved one.

I shall never forget when my second son, Jonathan, died 10 years ago. I was told by caring professionals in the NHS that I was young and that my family and I could look forward to having more children. I was told that, in effect, there was nothing to worry about. That was not the result of callous indifference on the part of the profession. I believe that it was the result of a lack of efficient and proper training. I want the Minister and the Government to recognise that this is an area in which the expertise of the hospice movement can and should be central to developing a national response and strategy. I hope that the Minister will be able this evening to say something about the Government's view of bereavement services as part of their target of improving the mental health of the nation.

As I have said, I hope that the Government will be able to respond to what I have said about the role of home safety committees and bereavement services. I have reason to believe that I should be less than optimistic that they will begin to address the problem of tobacco advertising. Unless they do so, however, their credentials on promoting the health of the nation will be seriously compromised.

8.7 pm

Dr. Liam Fox (Woodspring): I begin by congratulating the Government on bringing forward for the first time a real health strategy. For too long, debates in the House have focused on funding mechanisms and developing the correct mechanisms to achieve better value for money. At last we have started to measure output in our health care system. For too long also, we have measured the quality of

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health provision by what we put into the system. That is rather like the shopper who measures a good day's shopping by the amount of money that has been spent rather than on what has been brought home. The White Paper goes some way at least towards setting real targets in trying to achieve good value for money and the correct outcome in terms of health care.

We must congratulate the Government where credit is due on having the lowest infant mortality rate of all time, the lowest post neo-natal mortality rate, on having brought in the new haemophilus influenza B vaccine and the new typhoid vaccine and, I hope, increasing the take-up of them. These are real improvements in our health care. I wish that sometimes the Labour party would give us, the Government, a little credit when we bring forward real improvements. Constant sniping—pretending that nothing good is happening in the health service—is bad for the entire debate and makes the climate for debate all the more difficult.

I have a particular interest in the primary care sector, because I was a general practitioner until the general election. Most of my hospital training was in the east end—the poorer part of Glasgow. For a short time I worked in Harlesden, in Brent. I was appalled there at the inequality that existed within primary care services. In inner-city London, there were general practitioners with no appointment service and no proper system of record keeping. In some instances, there was no running hot water. At the same time and in the same system, but in another part of the United Kingdom, there were general practitioners who, with the same funding system, were providing plush waiting rooms, an excellent appointment system, health care clinics and preventive measures. Surely that is unacceptable in a publicly funded service.

What do we do? The Government responded by bringing in the general practitioner contract to try, for the first time, to establish a minimum acceptable standard of care. What did we get? The Labour party was up in arms. It told the people that the health service was about to fall apart. The British Medical Association told us that it would not be able to carry out the preventive measures that it had been undertaking until that moment.

I ask the House to look at the record. We have seen a tremendous increase in the take-up of immunisation. Preventive measures have been taken in the form of hypertension, diabetic and asthmatic clinics. These have been provided within the health service, but perhaps there have not been enough of them.

The carrot has worked rather well. It has brought many more services forward than we previously saw. It worries me, however, that general practitioners, especially when there is a high patient turnover, can still make a good and happy living without having to bring in some of the services that are detailed in the contract.

I would be happier if the Government considered carrying something of a stick. Perhaps we could have a general practitioner inspectorate of some sort to focus especially on inner-city practices. We have made tremendous advances, but there are still some places and areas that leave something to be desired.

We shall also have to consider the role of medical education, especially in view of the community care programme. For example, general practitioners do not

have much training in dealing with mentally handicapped people or mental illness. I had six months' training in psychiatry as part of my general practice training, but that was not compulsory.

It is possible to be a general practitioner in Britain with no experience in psychiatry apart from a couple of weeks' training as an undergraduate. We must consider that if we are serious about obtaining the proper treatment for mental illness in order to attain our targets. If we are to deal adequately with potential suicides, we must know how to spot them. If we are to deal adequately with post-natal depression, we must know which patients are vulnerable, and that requires good medical skill.

The most attractive feature of the White Paper is the Government's clear commitment to a multi-departmental approach. It is far too simplistic to say that poverty causes this and homelessness causes that. Public health is multi-factorial. We know that asthma is worsened by too many vehicle emissions. All the evidence points to that. But that is the consequence not of a poor society but of an affluent society with too many motor cars on the roads. Much heart disease is due to people having too sedentary a life style because there is too much transport so that they do not do enough walking. Again, that is a problem of affluence. All I ask is that the House does not take too simplistic a view in dealing with such matters.

Of course poverty is a factor. All epidemiological evidence suggests that there is something in that, but all we hear from the Opposition is poverty, poverty, poverty—la, la, la, always on the one note, never accepting the complexity of the issues. Not once did the Opposition mention that. They are always hitting on the one strand. That does not advance the debate one little bit. It is just boring for Conservative Members.

There is one other problem in how we are to move forward. We know that we will have to work within public spending constraints and we know that medical science will continue to demand ever more. Therefore, irrespective of national wealth, there will be a genuine gap between what we can afford to buy and what medical science can provide. I ask my hon. Friend the Minister tonight to question some of our priorities.

For example, is it ethically justifiable to spend £3,000 a time reversing vasectomies that patients have chosen to have on the NHS when we have a shortage of coronary care beds? Can we spend millions of pounds removing tattoos when we have other priorities in the health service? Those are genuine questions which will have to be addressed.

I am sorry that, largely because Opposition Members take such a simplistic view, those issues have not been aired as they should have been today. I hope that my hon. Friend will consider all of them. The Government are to be commended for a courageous White Paper. It is a welcome start.

8.12 pm

Ms. Angela Eagle (Wallasey): I crave the indulgence of the House at the beginning of my speech as I am suffering from an affliction similar to that of my hon. Friend the Member for Eccles (Miss Lestor). I only hope that my voice lasts as long as hers did.

I was particularly moved by what my hon. Friend the Member for Barrow and Furness (Mr. Hutton) had to say about bereavement. Having suffered the loss of a parent,

I too believe that there are large gaps in the services currently offered in that area, which need addressing urgently.

It is just possible to believe that we have a Government who care about the nation's health. I commend the Government for having a strategy, however inadequate, and for finally deciding to introduce health targets. Any target, even the wrong one, is better than no target at all. That is the faint praise that the Government will get from me tonight.

Leaving aside the alarming omissions of analysis in the White Paper, which render its prescriptions flawed and problematical, and leaving aside the Government's obsession with individualism and their refusal to admit that good health relies on far more than a responsible attitude to one's own health, important though it is, and even forgetting the Government's obsession with market forces as a panacea for all problems—we heard a great deal earlier about the so-called centrally planned socialist method of delivering health care in Britain, which served us well for many years—what we have not heard about is the fundamental problems in delivering health care services according to a market ethos.

They are there in theory, in that the market fails for health care because of externalities, imperfect information and supplier-induced demand. The market fails in neo-classical economic theory and it fails in experience. We need only look at the parlous state of the American health care system, which is the most privatised and market-oriented in the world, to prove the truth of that contention.

Even with those gaps, we might suspend disbelief and give the Government the benefit of the doubt, but the omission of the issue of social inequalities, which has rightly been much commented upon by my hon. Friends, finds them out. There can be no realistic or serious preventive health care strategy without an analysis of social inequality, poverty and its ill effects, unemployment and its ill effects, bad housing and its ill effects and—this will be an increasing issue as the market-oriented reforms come through—access to health care for all and increases in charges which deny access and the ill effects that that can have in a preventive health care setting.

It is not my intention to show any disrespect for the often important work that is being done in that area by the regional health authorities, the family practitioner committees, associations, district health authorities and general practitioners, but they cannot be expected to make a good case and fight ill health with one hand tied behind their back.

How can we take seriously any attempt to improve the nation's health which makes no mention, in 125 extremely glossy pages, of poverty and of the proven links between unemployment and ill health and between bad housing and ill health?

If the World Health Organisation's report was an inspiration to the White Paper, why on earth did it take the Government more than 10 years to get around to introducing the first health targets? The WHO initiative was launched in 1978, and it was not until 1988 that the Secretary of State for Wales introduced the first targets in Britain.

Why, if the WHO was such an inspiration to the White Paper, have the Government ignored the first target of that initiative, which aims to reduce inequalities both within countries and between countries in income and social

provision? Instead of acknowledging that well established connection, the Government seem to have omitted to mention it as often as possible, presumably in the hope that no one would notice. As a fall back position, they have come up with lame excuses for taking no account of it.

When the Green Paper was published, the then Secretary of State, the right hon. Member for Bristol, West (Mr. Waldegrave) said that the Government did not believe that there was any panacea either in terms of a full explanation or a single action which would eradicate the problem of the ill effects of social inequalities. But the Government have, by act of their own policies, made social inequalities worse, and that has exacerbated the problems of ill health in some of those pockets of poverty that those of us who come from constituencies where such poverty exists see in our surgeries day in, day out. The Government have systematically and deliberately lowered, worsened, destroyed social provision for millions of Britain's people, and it is compromising their health and well-being even as we speak.

The Government have created, by design or incompetence—one can take one's pick—mass poverty on a scale not experienced since the 1930s. The Government have created, by design or incompetence, two recessions in 12 years. They have created mass unemployment, and even as we debate they are planning to destroy the jobs of 31,000 miners and 70,000 in the service industries with one more swing of the axe. As Tory recession turns to slump, it is worth remembering that the Government's policies have worsened social inequality. It follows that they could achieve better equality with the right policies, and thereby improve the nation's health.

The correlation between inequality and health is well established. Office of Population and Censuses figures on occupational class and mortality demonstrate a widening gap between the death rates of manual and non-manual workers, with the unemployed doing worse still. In fact, mortality rates are worse among the poor, who also suffer a higher prevalence of long-standing illness. They have shorter lives and suffer poorer health.

Earlier, the Secretary of State quoted the Chief Medical Officer and refused to allow me to intervene, with the valedictory statement of the previous Chief Medical Officer:

"Analysis of the major advances in health which have occurred since Sir John Simon's first report show that these have been more often with improvements in social circumstances than with medical advances. Thus, where people are in a position to exercise greater choice in their housing, environment, employment, leisure activity, and consumption generally, this has tended to be beneficial to their health. By contrast, those not able to exercise greater choice because of low income, lack of education or lack of capacity to take the initiative tend to suffer more ill health."

Research shows that life expectancy is closer correlated to a distribution of income. That was borne out by experience during the second world war, when civilian life expectancy increased two to three times, despite the Luftwaffe and the blitz. One of the features of wartime Britain was that income was rapidly redistributed, and many ate better on rations than they ever dreamed of doing in the recession-ravaged 1930s.

In a recent article in the *British Medical Journal*, Tony Delano wrote that, as Britain had become much less equal, the mortality of men aged between 15 and 45 had once again begun to increase—and that excludes death from

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AIDS. Why is there no Government recognition of those facts, much less any attempt in the White Paper to do anything about them? We have a clue to a real and meaningful preventive health care programme that would deal with fundamental issues, rather than dishonestly tinker around the edges. I plead with the Government to make social inequality a key area and to do something about it.

8.22 pm

Mr. Michael Trend (Windsor and Maidenhead): A better state of health is a laudable objective, and for the national health service to be required to focus as much on that as on health care is all to the good. I commend the good sense that informs the views in "The Health of the Nation", but I want to voice a few concerns that struck me as I read it.

It will be difficult to strike the right balance between that which the Government, and they alone, can do and that which, to quote the introduction by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State,

"other organisations and agencies need to do and, finally, individuals and families themselves must contribute if the strategy is to succeed."

We are all concerned by the prospect of illness. One press commentator recently said that serious illness, and indeed death, are

"regrettable misfortunes that interrupt the optimistic planning of our lives, and so are best avoided."

Quite so. The question is: how to avoid them? One of the White Paper's answers is to evolve an overall strategy with targets to be met.

If I were a doctor and someone came to me suffering from a "strategy", I would advise recourse to a bottle of aspirin. If the patient later returned complaining of "targets", I would put him on Mogadon.

Some may think that I am only trying to make fun of modern buzz words and that I should bravely swallow the prescribed nostrums and retire to bed. That is far from the case.

My concern is that "The Health of the Nation" has a tendency to follow the five-year-plan-school-of-government, beloved by those highly centralised socialist economies that are now so out of fashion. In those cases, they were mainly trying to plan for tractors and other inanimate articles. They had little success. How much more difficult it is to plan for people.

We are not, thank heavens, a highly centralised socialist country, where the whim of the few dictates the fate of the many, but the central dilemma for the Government lies in that area.

Let us imagine for a moment that the suicide rate does not drop by 15 per cent. by the year 2000—or that the rate of conceptions among under-16s is not halved by the year 2000. Who will be to blame? The answer is easy. The poor old Government will cop it, as usual.

On the one hand, the Government have very limited powers to affect the targets that they have chosen—other than those which seem likely to be achieved through momentum already in the figures. On the other hand, the Government have put themselves in a position where they will get the blame if the targets are not met. They cannot win either way, whichever party is in power in the year 2000—and of course it will be the Conservative party.

I would like a much stronger emphasis on the proposition that individuals are free to make their own decisions and that they will often involve moral choices—such as whether or not to bring a child into the world without the benefit of marriage.

The great growth in the number of teenage pregnancies has occurred at a time when sex education has been freely and widely available in schools. We all know that figures can be made to serve many purposes in circumstances such as this, but the present evidence will not allow the proposition that more sex education equals fewer teenage pregnancies. The reasons for such a development lie elsewhere.

What is most needed is a stronger emphasis on the individual and more stress on the limits of the Government and their proper functions. Health education is all-important. Above all, people should be taught to look after themselves, with minimum interference from the state.

I remind the House of Disraeli's great 1872 Manchester speech, when he advanced the motto, "*Sanitas, sanitatum, omnia sanitas*." He, too, was talking about health but his central observation was

"The great object is to be practical."

He was after clean air and water and better drains. Those are practical challenges to which Governments can rise. Legislating for individual behaviour is, however, a very different matter.

Sensible people will behave sensibly about their health, and when they do not they will know that they are not behaving sensibly—and will only persist in a course of action—say, smoking—in full knowledge of their actions. They will accept the responsibility for such action.

The key is to make a nation of sensible people. The House will forgive me if I postpone giving my prescription for achieving that great objective until another time. I will only say that it is not very sensible for the Government to offer some of the hostages to fortune that it has in the overall strategy of the White Paper, with its specific targets.

I do not believe that we must insist that people adopt a certain approved way of living. That was the argument of the theologians of the middle ages—that the Church was so important that people must be "forced to come in." It may well be that health has become the new religion, but the Church has had to face up to the Enlightenment—and health care professionals must also accept that the supreme idea of the freedom of the individual should only be circumscribed if one individual's actions damage the rights of another. It is in this context that I turn to the question of tobacco advertising. Nothing is more important than that people should be allowed to make their own decisions, as far as possible.

Does giving the right to one person to decide whether to smoke one brand of cigarette or another infringe the right of any other person? I think not. In certain cases I would approve of restricting advertising in places or in contexts where the young would be particularly likely to see it. In general, I believe that a ban on tobacco advertising would be an infringement of the rights of the adult individual and the companies that manufacture—however much one might disapprove of it—a legal commodity.

All sides in the debate are asking for what is called nowadays a level playing field. None of them means that.

They all want to see their own position triumph, however bumpy the field may be. That is particularly true when the European element enters into the argument.

Why on earth should tobacco advertising be a matter for the European Community? The issue should be dealt with by national Governments. Here is a clear case of subsidiarity—unless one is one of those people who want to change British policy through the Brussels back door.

What of those European Governments who have banned tobacco advertising, while themselves remaining substantial owners of tobacco industries? That is a bogus position to which no British Government should seek to tie themselves.

Moreover, we have been reminded that, between 1976 and 1986, the incidence of smoking in the United Kingdom fell by 29 per cent.—a reduction second only, in Europe, to that in the Netherlands. As the Secretary of State pointed out, the Netherlands, like the United Kingdom, favours a voluntary system of controls on tobacco advertising.

We have also heard that the United Kingdom has, after Denmark and Ireland, the most expensive cigarettes in Europe; but in Spain, where a total advertising ban is proposed, a packet of 20 cigarettes costs only about 40p. That contrasts with the position in our country, where the price mechanism is fixed strongly against the producers. Britain, furthermore, is one of only five European countries that do not grow the dreaded weed. Those that grow it enjoy subsidies under the common agricultural policy, which I regard as entirely unacceptable.

Where is the sense in it? I ask the question especially of those who support the notion that we should ban tobacco advertising in this country under the aegis of the European Community. It is also worth noting that the four EC countries that have nationalised tobacco industries—together with Greece—have the lowest-priced cigarettes in the Common Market. As the Secretary of State said, it would be ludicrous for Britain to take lessons from other countries whose records on the reduction of smoking leave so much to be desired.

Advocates of the ban on tobacco advertising should not lose sight of the wider issues, such as the freedom of the individual and the commercial freedom of speech of companies in the legitimate pursuit of their business. I hope that my party will resist the siren voices that demand that we turn our backs on the advanced and effective voluntary agreement to restrict advertising that we currently operate. I think that it can be said that the Opposition parties see some blatant partisan advantages in that.

For many years now, Conservatives have argued that we should roll back the limits of the state. We have talked about the nanny state, and about how we wish to be rid of nanny. I share that view, especially because I believe that the only eventual loser in the nanny state is the state itself. Let us be more careful about the ends for which we choose to aim, and let us limit ourselves in the means that we try to deploy. Nanny belongs in the nursery of life, not in the corridors of power.

Having said that, however, I must end by observing that, if we must have a nanny, I can think of none more pleasant or acceptable than the present Secretary of State.

8.32 pm

Mr. John Denham (Southampton, Itchen): The Secretary of State told us of the success—as she put it—of the health service reforms, and advised us to lift our sights above the structural issues in the service; but none of the objectives of the White Paper can be met unless the resources of the health service are spent effectively and the service managed efficiently. I wish to raise a structural issue. I believe that I have every reason to say that money is not being spent effectively and that, both as a cause and as a consequence, management is not efficient.

The day after the House rose for the summer recess, the district auditor published a report on the regional information systems plan, RISP, which was abandoned by Wessex regional health authority in 1990. Between 1982 and 1990, £43 million was spent on the now abandoned computer system. Money was wasted on a vast scale: the exact amount is not known, but the current general manager has estimated the losses at a minimum of £20 million.

That loss is staggering, and the lost opportunity to treat patients or to prevent illness is immense. A BBC South investigation broadcast earlier this evening showed surgeons relying on an Army field hospital at Southampton general hospital because no money was available to repair the roof; yet £20 million has been wasted on a computer system. The district auditor's report revealed mismanagement and suspected malpractice on a massive scale. In 1983, health authority members were told that the scheme would cost £26 million. The officers believed that it would cost £75 million, but did not tell the members because it was apparently deemed politically unacceptable.

In circumstances which are still unexplained, a £21 million contract was awarded to a consortium led by Andersons and involving IBM, although its proposal had originally been ranked fourth in order of merit. The decision was made at an inquorate meeting; members were not told of disagreements among officers; and, according to the district auditor, there was

“an unacceptable conflict of interest, in that one of the tenderers to whom the contract was eventually awarded would appear to have had access to confidential information concerning rival bids”.

I note that there was a member of the IBM board on Wessex regional health authority for much of the 1980s.

At a later stage, £3.3 million was spent on an IBM computer which was not needed. The opportunity to cancel the contract and minimise losses was missed, and the computer sat unused in a Slough warehouse for 18 months. Some Wessex computing functions were transferred to a new company, Wessex Integrated Systems. According to the auditor,

“all the major decisions were taken by a small group of officers (one of whom was intended to become a director of the company) who were in turn reliant upon the advice of the consultants who later benefited from the decision.”

Other computing work was transferred to a company involving AT and T Istel. It is now the subject of police investigations.

Many other failures of management and budgetary control are detailed. For instance, there was over-reliance on consultants—some costing £14,000 per month—and at least £7.7 million being spent on consultancy fees for a project that was subsequently abandoned. There have been conflicts of interest. In one case, an officer advised on

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the appointment of consultants without tender; he then resigned, and came back as a consultant to the firm that had been offered the contract. Later, a consultant seconded from IBM advised against the cancellation of the order for the IBM computer that was not needed.

I have touched on just some of the key problems revealed by the district auditor's report. The RISP disaster is a fully fledged scandal in its own right, but it throws up many more questions. Have such problems been endemic in the national health service? Are proper systems now in place to prevent abuse and mismanagement? Does the NHS ensure that the painful lessons learnt in one place are quickly transmitted to other parts of the service? I believe that the problems have been endemic, and that there is still no evidence of the existence of effective systems of accountability. I believe that the service is still failing to learn the lessons of past disasters.

As a result, not only is money being wasted, but there is a question mark over the information systems on which the Government's own internal market policies depend. There are many other cases of failed projects and poor financial control. A critical audit report is expected any day now on the £2.3 million Healthtrac system in the west midlands. We know that computer systems have been scrapped at Guy's hospital.

It is alarming to note that every major computer failure that has come to light in the health service has done so not because of the strength of the internal audit procedures but because the story has leaked out to the media, and an investigation has subsequently taken place. If magazines such as *Computer Weekly* had not covered such stories, we would not know about them, and we would not know how much money had been wasted. We must ask how many other high-tech skeletons are in the cupboard.

In 1990, the National Audit Office report on managing computer projects in the NHS examined the RISP project, but failed completely to identify the damning evidence now available in the district auditor's reports. The NAO report said that the NHS needed between 4,000 and 5,000 skilled information technology staff to manage its information strategy, but that only 2,000 were in place. As a result, expenditure on consultancy firms was running at £50 million per year. Has there been an improvement? Has there been any monitoring of that objective?

The same report called for the training of 800,000 NHS staff in the use of IT systems. Has that been achieved? The Government promised to publish an information strategy for the NHS in April 1991. As far as the House of Commons Library and the Department of Health have been able to tell me in the past few days, there are still no signs of it, and no signs of the resources that are needed to make such a strategy work.

How much money is being spent on computer hardware and software? According to the *Official Report*, expenditure in England in 1990-91 was £110 million—surely a large proportion of the whole. According to a commercial survey by Romtec, hospitals alone are planning to spend £300 million on hospital information support systems in the coming year. A report by the European Marketing Association puts the figure for all IT expenditure, excluding telecommunications, at £800 million.

Who is right? Do the Government know? According to the *Official Report*, the Government do not collect data on computer expenditure by trust hospitals. The hospital information support systems project was supposed to computerise hospitals at a cost of £2 million to £3 million each. It has turned out to be much more complicated and expensive. Mr. Giorgianni of the computer company HBO is quoted as saying that the Department of Health

"never put a fence around the projects. The concept has grown from a lizard to a dinosaur."

One project, in Nottingham, is costing £8.5 million.

Finally, there is a fundamental question about the IT strategy itself. Confusing mixtures of megaschemes and smaller schemes are being pursued. Nobody has had the courage to enforce standards in information systems across the health service, to ensure that one machine and one system can talk to another machine or another system. It is likely that many millions of pounds have been wasted as a direct result of NHS reforms, as systems developed for a different style of management in the health service have had to be scrapped in order to respond to the new internal market reforms.

Without effective information systems, the internal market certainly cannot work. This is not a technical management issue. It has its roots in the pace of change of ideologically driven reforms. That change has taken place without an attempt having been made to assess the resources needed, to provide them, or to monitor their use effectively. For all their talk of efficiency, the Government have created a climate of irresponsible management, which has been exploited by the computer industry. That should now be investigated. I have today written to the Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee urging him to do just that.

In 1987 Mr. John Garfield, consultant neurosurgeon and chairman of the regional medical advisory committee, wrote to the regional general manager of Wessex regional health authority saying that his committee considered "that the past and projected expenditure on RISP will jeopardise services for direct patient care."

That warning was ignored and £43 million was spent, a large part of which was wasted. If a similar letter were written today by somebody who was concerned about patient care, would it make any difference? Would that person be listened to, any more than were the doctors in Wessex when they warned of a disaster which has led to the pouring of taxpayers' and patients' money down the drain?

8.42 pm

Mr. Nigel Evans (Ribble Valley): I welcome the White Paper. In doing so, I intend to approach the debate from a different angle. I declare an interest as a retailer. I sell foods that we eat and cigarettes that some people—a minority of people in this country—smoke. I have been involved in my family's retail business since I was tall enough and smart enough to operate a till. I got to know how consumers think. The White Paper emphasises health promotion and recognises the fact that the health of the nation is the wealth of the nation—that people are our greatest national asset and should be encouraged to look after themselves.

A gentleman in his eighties told me that, had he known that he was going to live for so long, he would have looked after himself better when he was younger. Is not that ever the case? We expect to live longer now, so we ought to look

at how we can improve the quality of our lives. A key target in the White Paper is the reduction of coronary heart disease and strokes, the single biggest cause of premature deaths in Britain in 1991. Another aim is to reduce obesity, a condition to which some hon. Members would have to plead guilty, although when I say that I am careful not to look at any individual Member. Another good aim is to reduce the energy derived from saturated fatty acids and fat.

Alongside that, however, is the danger that, in providing the information necessary for consumers to make the right choices, the whole issue will be over-simplified—that it will become a question of good foods versus bad foods, when all that is really needed is a balanced diet. A Mars a day helps us to work, rest and play, but 20 Mars a day would probably kill us after a while. We need to strike the right balance. The clear labelling of goods should not be so over-simplified that it is reduced to describing foods as good or bad. All that the consumer needs is more information.

There appear to be many experts giving their advice on certain food products, advice that is contradictory and that ends up confusing the consumer. More education is needed in our schools. School dinners have been mentioned time and time again. I hope that they will receive the attention they deserve. We need to balance our food requirements, not directives that simply state that chips are bad for us and yoghurts are good for us: an excess of either would probably damage us. Schools have to be the key to a healthy future.

The pilot assessment schemes mentioned in the White Paper are essential if we are to monitor the progress that is made. If those schemes work, we shall need to widen them immediately. That goes along with good sports exercise, which was mentioned in the excellent maiden speech by my hon. Friend the Member for Falmouth and Camborne (Mr. Coe). We look forward to hearing from him on many occasions.

The fact that cigarette consumption has declined is to be welcomed. That decline has taken place during the last 13 years of Conservative government, and now accounts for less than 35 per cent. of my turnover, whereas in the 1960s it was nearer to 60 per cent. Cigarettes are a price-sensitive product. Taxation levels have worked. Cigarettes cost 41p in Spain—a ridiculous price. However, as I believe in subsidiarity, I have to say that they must get on with it. If one refers to subsidiarity though, one must also consider the £1 billion subsidy to tobacco growers throughout Europe. That is insane, for it affects each and every one of us.

I do not believe that advertising of tobacco products, in their regulated form, or tobacco sponsorship leads people to smoke. It may lead to some brand switching. I do not think, however, that anybody who watches the Embassy-sponsored snooker championship gets out of his seat at the end of it to go and buy 20 Regal, or that anybody who reads the message from Regal on our billboards—that moron-type character who is leading the Regal advertising campaign—will be enticed to smoke cigarettes. The message underneath the advertisement, that smoking kills, would persuade me not to smoke.

We must adopt a balanced approach. If we do away with the billboard advertisements, we also do away with advertisements that tell people that smoking kills. We want education, not legislation. Retail businesses that rely for their core profit on tobacco products must be few and

far between. I suggest that they should do what we have done—diversify as much as they possibly can away from tobacco products. If the successful trend of the last 13 years under this Conservative Government continues, their profits will be even further reduced.

If we are given full information about the contents of food products, we shall be able to make the right choices as consumers. The right choices will lead to a healthy nation, which we all want to see. The approach adopted in the White Paper will lead to what we want to see.

8.48 pm

Ms. Tessa Jowell (Dulwich): When I held my weekly surgery last Monday I met a lady whose circumstances were typical of those of many of the people who come to see me every week. She came to my surgery with her husband and three children. Both she and her husband are jobless, poor and living in accommodation that is not big enough for them and their family. Two of their children have asthma. The flat is infested with cockroaches, and that morning she had taken a cockroach out of her baby's mouth as she was eating breakfast.

For my constituents, the debate on "The Health of the Nation" must be measured against the extent to which the quality of their lives and the opportunities for their children will be improved. The solutions to the economic and social difficulties facing so many families I represent are way beyond fine tuning aspects of their life style. Their circumstances demand collective and whole-hearted solutions, which only the Government can deliver. The health of the nation will be measured by its results, not by its fine words.

In my constituency, twice as many babies die within the first year of birth as in Tunbridge Wells, which is about 50 miles down the motorway, and three times as many die as in the Prime Minister's constituency of Huntingdon. The reason why perinatal mortality is much higher in my constituency has nothing to do with the quality of the maternity and ante-natal services that are available. King's College hospital has one of the finest neo-natal units in Europe and obstetric services of which we should be very proud; but so many women who are admitted to King's to be delivered come from homes that are damp, they have had inadequate ante-natal care, they are poor and they have not been able to enjoy a good diet in the months leading up to their baby's birth.

Deprivation and perinatal mortality go hand in hand. Of course we must celebrate the fact that huge strides have been made in reducing the average national rates of perinatal mortality, but the national average obscures wide regional variations, and the rate of perinatal mortality in my constituency is still one of the highest in the country. My constituents also experience the high rates of heart disease, lung cancer and sexually transmitted diseases. All are related to poverty and the physical deprivation of the part of Camberwell that I serve.

It is ironic that one of my constituency's most respected and well-used family health clinics was closed a year ago by the health authority, which was required to make savings in preparation for becoming a trust. Until news of its closure became known locally, the Amott road clinic was well known, accessible and a point of access to family planning, contraceptive advice, well woman services and antenatal services, which that deprived population of inner

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London so desperately needed and without which the link between the aspirations of the health of the nation and improvements in the quality of life will never be achieved.

I am pleased to see that attention has been given to the mechanisms by which rhetoric is turned into practical improvements, but we must wait and see whether the device of a Cabinet Committee will be adequate. Some say that housing and income in improving the health of the nation are so important that the lead should lie with the Department of the Environment rather than the Department of Health. Certainly, if the Government do not commit the money to will the ends, this will simply remain a rhetorical exercise, unfulfilled in its promise—certainly to the people I represent.

Like many other hon. Members, I should like to deal briefly with the issue of smoking and the Government's clear responsibility to act in the face of the absolutely unanswerable evidence. It is worth bearing in mind the scale of the smoking epidemic and of the devastation that smoking causes. According to statistical probability, in a roomful of 1,000 smokers, one person will be murdered or will die violently and five or six people will be killed in road traffic accidents, but 300 people will die because of smoking or smoking-related illnesses. The failure to take the most effective possible action in the face of the overwhelming body of medical and scientific evidence is nothing short of negligent.

It is particularly important that we target the need to stop children from smoking. Many of us will have taken part in the launch of the Health Education Authority's profile of smoking throughout the nation—I certainly did. Nine out of 10 young people under the age of 15 have smoked. Smoking is a habit acquired in late childhood, and for two out of three adults becomes established for life. It is very difficult to give up smoking once one has the habit.

It is important that we invest resources in stopping children smoking. I was struck by the remarks of a constituent who told me how his daughter had asked to be taken to buy some sweets "from the smoking shop". The sweetshop's canopy is sponsored by one tobacco firm, and stickers all around the door are sponsored by another. One finds out whether the shop is open or closed by looking at another set of tobacco advertising stickers. A ban on cigarette advertising and tobacco sponsorship of sporting events is undoubtedly one of the most constructive steps that we can take to stop children starting to smoke. For the Government to ban such advertising would probably be the most significant step that they could take towards improving the health of the next generation.

8.58 pm

Ms. Diane Abbott (Hackney, North and Stoke Newington): In the context of the White Paper I should like to speak about the proposals in the Tomlinson report, which will be published tonight, for the wholesale closure of some of our London hospitals. Of course, the targets in the White Paper are not achievable except within the context of general practitioner care and hospital care.

Early in the debate the Secretary of State implied that the proposed closures would have universal support. She may be in for a surprise. Of course there are historical anomalies in the pattern of health provision in London

—generally speaking, we have suffered from low standards of primary and community care—but in truth the proposed closures are the inevitable result of a Government strategy motivated primarily not by the health of the nation but by the need to cap costs.

In the run-up to the general election it was clear that under the new market system introduced by the Government the London teaching hospitals were coming under pressure. Of course, the Government queried not the new market mechanisms but the existence of our teaching hospitals. They were clearly terrified that one of those hospitals would collapse before the election, so they took short-term steps.

There were strong administrative reasons for the Tomlinson report, but I believe that the Government will use it as a device—

Mrs. Bottomley: The hon. Lady does not yet know what the Tomlinson report will say, but she may have read the King's Fund independent report. Does she feel that her remarks are equally relevant to that report?

Ms. Abbott: I shall come to the King's Fund report later in my speech. If I may be allowed to continue, I was saying that the Government will use the Tomlinson report as an excuse to close hospitals and to present an essentially cost-driven strategy as something else.

We are already hearing—we shall hear a lot more in the coming weeks—about London's "redundant" hospitals, and I want to ask whether those hospitals really are surplus to our current requirement. In so doing, I shall indeed refer to the King's Fund report.

It is easy to look at a computer printout and say that we in London have more hospitals per head than any other part of the country. I suspect that a computer printout may be all that the Secretary of State has looked at. I put it to her—thousands of Londoners will be doing the same over the next three months—that those figures are misleading. In London there is the enduring problem that the population is underestimated, both in censuses and in the electoral registers, due to homelessness, shifting population, refugees, immigrants, and so on. At the general election I found that 2,000 members of my electorate had gone missing. In that there is no substantial loss of population in Hackney; those people are simply not accounted for in the official lists and figures.

The Secretary of State and her colleagues in government have refused to accept—and will continue to do so in the debates on the Tomlinson report—that inner London is different from the rest of the country, different even from other inner city areas. We have more elderly people living alone, more one-parent families, more households lacking basic amenities, huge numbers of commuters—1.3 million of them—and huge numbers of homeless people. It would be more helpful if, instead of using mathematical averages, the Government compared like with like. If we compare inner London with other inner city areas—in Birmingham, Wolverhampton, Liverpool and Manchester—we find that, far from having a superabundance of hospital beds, London has fewer beds than inner city districts in those other provincial centres. As a deprived inner city area, London is less well served than the others.

The Secretary of State referred to the King's Fund report. I shall quote from another King's Fund report:

"Our results suggest that there are no more beds in London than one would expect, given the nature of London's health districts."

I hope that the Secretary of State will quote that in the forthcoming debate on the Tomlinson report, rather than using crude figures for beds per head of population.

In the coming months we shall hear about a declining need for London's hospitals. Let the Government tell that to the nurses at Bart's, with their packed wards, and to the GPs in Hackney who know about the huge waiting lists. Bart's is one of my local hospitals, and it is threatened with closure. The Secretary of State and other Tory politicians will be telling us how such hospitals serve a non-existent or vanishing population. Yet Bart's hospital serves almost 250,000 people within a two-mile radius—if we include commuters that rises to almost 500,000 people—and its 24-hour accident and emergency service is always busy. If our hospitals are so redundant, why are there 150,000 people on the waiting lists in London? The problem with the teaching hospitals is not that they provide too many beds but that there is not enough money to fund Londoners being treated in them.

We shall hear that teaching hospitals are too expensive. Their costs have been inflated because they are forced to include the notional value of their sites, although they were paid for hundreds of years ago. General practitioner fund holders and health fund managers outside London increasingly send their patients to local general hospitals instead of to London teaching hospitals. If consumers are to make an informed choice, the Secretary of State should provide more information.

We do not hear enough about outturn figures in the NHS or about the mortality rates of some of the procedures practised in our teaching hospitals and in hospitals outside London. If we had more outturn figures, and if we knew more about mortality rates, we might find that although it is cheaper to do some things in our general hospitals the outturn is not necessarily so good as in some of our top teaching hospitals.

The Minister will tell us about out-dated facilities. At Bart's £66 million has been spent on capital developments in the past five years. We have beautiful new children's wards paid for largely by fund raising. We have some of the most technically advanced operating theatres in Europe. There are valuable specialities at Bart's which will be lost if it is shut. Those specialities include child cancers, respiratory medicine, diabetes and low birth weight research.

There will be an effect on medical training. Bart's has one of the best medical schools in London. In three of the past five years, Bart's students have been top in the final qualifying examinations.

Apart from many misleading ideas about redundant hospitals, empty beds and declining needs, the Secretary of State will tell us about the need to develop primary care and community care in place of hospital care. Let us be realistic. The Secretary of State knows as well as we do that in the context of the current public expenditure round the likelihood of money being available for sufficient primary and community care is nil. If the Secretary of State goes into the three months' consultation on the hospital closures giving airy promises of increased funding of primary care and community care, she will be perpetrating a fraud.

Some have spoken of raising money from the sale of the sites. The Secretary of State must know that many of the big hospital sites in London have been found to be unsaleable.

Bart's is part of a trust with Homerton hospital, which is bang in the middle of my constituency. Despite all its problems, Homerton hospital maintains a high standard of care. If Bart's is shut, the standard of care at Homerton will necessarily drop because Homerton has relied very much on consultants and doctors based at Bart's. Conservative Members shake their heads. I had my baby last year at Homerton hospital. I had the benefit of the care and help of Bart's-based obstetricians, gynaecologists and doctors. Like thousands of ordinary Hackney women and girls, I had access to the finest consultants and doctors one can imagine. If Bart's is shut, Homerton will inevitably decline into a second-rate, inner city hospital.

The employment aspects of shutting our city hospitals are of absolutely no interest to the Secretary of State. Hospitals such as Bart's, St. Thomas' and Guy's employ thousands of local people, especially women. In areas such as Hackney, where industry has gone completely down the drain, the only two major employers left are the local authority and the health authority. The closures suggested by the Tomlinson report will be devastating to the local economy and especially to local women, many of them black or from minority groups.

I have a direct question for the Minister. I am trying to do some research on the contribution that generations of nurses from the Commonwealth have made to the British health service. I wrote to the Minister some months ago asking for help and any information that he had. I know that the Department of Health has information because I spoke to one of its statisticians. I know that it has extensive figures of nurses who came from the Commonwealth in the 1950s and 1960s. I received a letter signed by the Minister saying that he had no information on Commonwealth or black nurses. That is obviously untrue. I will be seeking a meeting with the Minister and I hope that he will be more helpful then. It is an important project. A whole generation of women gave their lives to the health service and I want to document that service.

I seriously ask Conservative Members whether we have not learnt the lessons of the 1980s, especially from what happened with the closure of the long-stay mental facilities outside London. When the proposals came forward to close those long-stay medical facilities, we were told the same things that we are being told about the teaching hospitals. We were told that they were old-fashioned facilities, that medical practice had moved on, that those people should be cared for in the community, and that that was the onward march of progress.

I was a Labour councillor on Tory-controlled Westminster city council in the 1980s. We went to the Government and said, "Unless you provide us with the money, there is no possibility of adequate training and care being provided." The Government ignored us. The long-stay hospitals were shut and we see the results of that on our streets every night. Mentally ill and unhappy people are sleeping on the streets because closures were forced through, allegedly for medical and managerial reasons, but in reality to cut costs.

The Secretary of State for Health and Conservative Members may think that the closure of a whole string of London teaching hospitals will be greeted with universal acclaim. I am afraid that they are wrong. My mother and

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many of my female relatives worked in London hospitals. Like many Londoners, I have a close personal relationship with those hospitals, not just as a customer or patient but in terms of my family and the people I know who have worked in them. We shall not take kindly to the wholesale closure of our hospitals on the basis of misleading arguments about numbers of beds per head of population. We shall not take kindly to the closure of our hospitals on the basis of groundless policies of more money for primary and community care. The proposals in the Tomlinson report for the closure of so many of our teaching hospitals are a disgrace. They do not reflect the reality of health and medical needs in inner London.

In the past 10 days we have seen how much of a battering the reputation of the President of the Board of Trade has taken in respect of his attempts to close 31 pits. That battering will be as nothing to the battering of the reputation of the Secretary of State for Health if she goes ahead with the misbegotten plans to slaughter so many of our great teaching hospitals.

9.11 pm

Mr. Hugh Bayley (York): After a decade and more of a Government wedded to free market principles, I am delighted to see that Adam Smith and the "Wealth of Nations" is giving way to "The Health of the Nation".

I welcome the emphasis in the White Paper on health rather than health care. The last Labour Government were committed to that emphasis. That was one of the reasons why the Black report—one of the first reports on the health of the nation—was commissioned. It is a great shame that that report was buried more than 10 years ago, to resurface in policy terms only at this late stage. I also welcome the emphasis on health outcomes and not just health processes.

Much reference has been made to tobacco advertising. When the Health Education Authority published its book last week on the smoking epidemic in the United Kingdom, it asked me to help with a local launch. At that launch, York health authority asked me to sign a pledge calling on the Government to ban tobacco advertising. In these days when health authorities are under the rule and diktat of the management executive and of Ministers, I should like an assurance from the Minister that he will not retaliate and victimise York health authority by abolishing it.

There was no mention in the Green Paper of health inequalities. In the last few pages of the White Paper, there is reference to "socio-economic groups." It refers not to health inequalities, but to health variations, and states:

"The reasons for these variations are by no means fully understood. They are likely to be the result of a complex interplay of genetic, biological, social, environmental, cultural and behavioural factors."

And so they may be, but could they not also be a result of poor housing, poverty and unemployment? Why is that not in the White Paper?

The process by which key areas have been selected and reduced to the small number in the White Paper is exceptionally unclear. It is not transparent. During the process from Green Paper to White Paper, some key areas such as diabetes, hospital-acquired infection, breast feeding, food safety, health and environment have been excluded—perhaps for good reasons or perhaps for bad

reasons, but there is no clear explanation of those reasons. Before we talk about priorities in selected key areas, we should know what criteria are being used to select them.

Two criteria, in particular, are missing. One is the principle of equity—that health interventions should be based on health needs equally for people with similar health needs. That was spelt out by the Faculty of Public Health Medicine in 1991 as one of the key principles in the World Health Organisation's "health for all" programme, and it should be stated explicitly and form part of the health for all strategy for England.

The second missing criterion is cost effectiveness, which is vital in a health service that is strapped for cash. That it is missing is all the more surprising because on 8 July when the Secretary of State made her statement on the day on which the White Paper was published, in answer to a point that I made she said:

"By concentrating on prevention . . . we can achieve health gain cost-effectively . . . priority will be given to the key areas, chosen because through them we can most effectively improve the health of the nation."

Yet cost effectiveness does not appear in the selection process. The costs issue is extremely important. Also on 8 July, I posed a very straight question when I asked:

"has the Department costed these plans?"—[*Official Report*, 8 July 1992: Vol. 211, c. 351.]

I asked the Secretary of State whether there would be new money to implement them. That question goes to the heart of the issue. If there is no new money, the implementation will either stall or take place only at the expense of cuts in existing health services. The costs are real. During the AIDS campaign, a leaflet was delivered to every door in the country—at a cost, according to the Office of Health Economics, of £20 million. The Centre for Health Economics in my constituency of York and the York Health Economics Consortium estimate that the resources for even a modest—their word—smoking strategy is £20 million to £30 million a year. In its briefing for the debate, the House of Commons Library states:

"Not all aspects of the strategy have significant financial implications but some do."

When we add them all together, the costs will be high—millions for AIDS, millions for smoking, and millions for other priorities in the document. It will cost hundreds of millions altogether. That has to be funded by new money, or serious problems will arise. I ask the Minister to spell out the missing part of the White Paper: what finance will be provided to bring in the new benefits? Will the finance have to come from cuts in other national health services?

9.17 pm

Ms. Dawn Primarolo (Bristol, South): I congratulate the hon. Member for Falmouth and Camborne (Mr. Coe) on his maiden speech. I too am making my maiden from the Dispatch Box this evening. The Opposition entirely agree with the hon. Gentleman's assertion about the value of a national health service. That assertion is beyond dispute. The hon. Gentleman is right to say that we dispute with the party that he represents how the national health service is financed and run. We agree also that the best way to make sure that the national health service is used properly is to stop people being ill in the first place.

I thank my hon. Friends for their support and their excellent contributions covering the very important issues of health care and the health of the nation.

The debate is held in the shadow of the leaked proposals of the Tomlinson report. Those proposals will butcher the health care services in London. The proposals suggest the closure of St. Bartholomew's, Charing Cross, Queen Charlotte's, the royal ear, nose and throat hospital and the tropical diseases hospital. They propose the merger of St. Thomas's and Guy's and the merger of the Middlesex and University College hospitals, as well as cuts at St. Mary's Paddington and sales of part of its site. They suggest the rationalisation of the Royal Brompton and Marsden hospitals, possibly on the Charing Cross site, with a consultation period—this will comfort them—of three months.

What price the health of Londoners who will be affected by those drastic cuts? The Government have an ideological commitment to the market and an ideological obsession that has failed the economy, jobs and industry. That obsession will destroy our national health service. The market is supposed to find the cheapest, most efficient alternatives for consumers. Are those closures what the market will mean to Londoners? The market will find alternatives that maximise profits and the position of shareholders, then make it acceptable to consumers only because there is no alternative.

The market is fragmenting the national health service. It is encouraging competition, commercialisation and the creeping privatisation of care. The Government are preventing the national health service from co-operating, collaborating, and sharing experiences and expertise for the benefit of those who wish to use the services. Market competition is the priority, and strategic planning goes by the board.

There is much evidence to suggest that the market and the Government reforms are making the national health service more expensive. The Department of Health's figures show a tenfold increase in the cost to the national health service of general managers. Salaries increased from £25 million in 1987 to £250 million last year. The Office of Health Economics' figures show that the number of nurses and midwives per thousand of the population is set to drop to its lowest level for 10 years.

At a recent conference, Mr. Evans, the professor of geriatric medicine at Oxford university, said that one fifth of coronary care units have an upper age limit for admission. To refuse treatment on the grounds of age is discrimination. If patients could pay, I am sure that their money would not be refused on the basis of their age.

A hospital described by the Prime Minister as a model of efficiency and consumer service announced ward closures and the cancellation of non-urgent surgery the day after his visit. The 640-bed hospital in Penarth was one of the 36 public service organisations to win the first charter mark award. Hospitals should beware of the charter mark award, as it may herald their closure.

Many targets should be set for improving the health of the nation, but the most important and frequent cause of ill health is poverty and inequality. Florence Nightingale understood the links between poor health and poor housing. In drafting "The Health of the Nation", the Secretary of State has demonstrated that she does not understand the links between ill health and social deprivation. Health should mean a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being, not merely the absence of disease, important though that is. But the policy of "The Health of the Nation" can be summed up

in one phrase: the absence of Government where they are needed and the interference of Government where they are not.

The most glaring absence of Government in current health policy stems from the denial of the link between poverty and ill health. This Government do not believe in society; they see the country as a multitude of individual consumers. This philosophy translated into the health of the nation means that the point is not to change society where bad health is caused but to influence individuals so that they can choose, if they can afford it, a different life style that will improve their health.

Mr. Trend: It will not have escaped the hon. Lady's attention that Conservatives are fed up with hearing the parrot-like cries of "poverty". That is too simplistic a solution to a complicated problem. I will put to her another proposition that she may find too simplistic, but it is a black and white one.

I recently went to Hong Kong, where the housing is cramped, the working conditions are poor, and the health services less extensive than here; where there is greater pollution and humidity; where the people are overcrowded and suffer all the stress of a metropolitan society—yet infant mortality there is lower than ours and life expectancy higher. How does she explain that?

Ms. Primarolo: Just as the Government cannot produce an expert to prove that coal is more expensive, so they cannot produce an expert who will deny that there is a link between poverty and ill health.

The strategy of the White Paper could almost be said to run as follows. Now that poverty has been abolished—this fits in with what the hon. Member for Windsor and Maidenhead (Mr. Trend) has said—unemployment cannot be helped and housing problems have been solved, health promotion is just a question of good management.

Mildred Blaxter's recent work has demonstrated that people living on low incomes are exposed to multiple deprivations which put their health at risk. I refer to working conditions, diet, accidents, living conditions, environment and smoking, to name but a few. People with higher incomes, she says, are less likely to be exposed to these multiple risks because they are more likely to be able to afford good housing and a decent diet and to be able to live in a nice environment.

The Government's approach—of encouraging good life style practices only—may help the few people who are better off, but those suffering from the deprivations of low income need a great deal more doing for them. The Government need clear evidence, they say, of what causes ill health, but still the Department of Health will not produce figures on the effect of income deprivation and working conditions on health. So the Government deny the link but will not produce the figures.

Dr. Liam Fox: Surely the hon. Lady is not telling us that the huge increase in immunisations since the introduction of the GP contract—an increase in all types of social area—is not to be welcomed?

Ms. Primarolo: The hon. Gentleman will have to wait till I reach the relevant part of my speech.

Just over a decade ago, we had what could be described as a great debate on the nation's health, or at least we attempted to start it. The then Labour Government, so often quoted by the current Government but fast

[Ms. Primarolo]

disappearing from the memories of many of us because it was all so long ago, commissioned the Black report on health inequalities. I am sure hon. Members will recall that the Conservative Government hushed up the findings of that report as soon as they possibly could because it revealed the incontrovertible link between poverty and ill health. Sir Douglas Black found that deprivation and inequalities in income, wealth, housing and employment added up to thousands of lost years as a result of avoidable disabilities, chronic sickness and premature death.

Black recommended substantial Government intervention to abolish child poverty, to provide children with free school milk and school meals and to improve the housing stock. Countless studies since Black have reaffirmed the causal link between low income and poor health. If one's income is low, one's children are more likely to be stillborn or to die within the first year of life. Parents of those children are also more likely to die young.

Of the 70 major causes of death in women, 54 are more common in women married to men in social classes 4 and 5. The growth of poverty and poor health among pregnant women is causing more babies to be born under weight and vulnerable to illness and death. Infant and perinatal mortality is rising in a number of regions. The former chief medical officer, Sir Donald Acheson, when announcing his annual report last year, merely summarised the weight of that evidence when he remarked:

where people are in a position to exercise greater choice in their housing, environment, employment, leisure activity and consumption generally, this has tended to be beneficial to their health. By contrast, those not able to exercise greater choice because of low income, lack of education or lack of capacity to take the initiative tend to suffer more ill health."

In the period since the Black report, no other country has seen income inequalities widen so sharply as the United Kingdom. In 1979 under 6 million people lived on or below the state poverty line. In 1987, the number had doubled to 12.2 million, which is nothing to be proud of. Wage inequality is wider now than it has been for more than 100 years when the figures were first collected. The bottom 10 per cent. of male manual workers earn only 63 per cent. of average pay, compared with 69 per cent. in 1886.

More families are suffering from the privations of unemployment and more are living in temporary lodgings that are unfit for habitation. That has a direct bearing on the immunisation programme, as do the poverty and nutritional surveys, which show that there is a direct link between poverty and poor diet, which leads to a greater likelihood of ill health. Poor families go hungry because they cannot afford food, or they are forced to buy unhealthy food that gives them more calories for their money. As a result, evidence is emerging of an increase in obesity—I mean obesity.

Mr. Trend: It is an obscenity.

Ms. Primarolo: Yes, the figures are an obscenity, because they prove that low-income children have an increased likelihood of heart disease in their later lives.

Mr. Nigel Evans: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Ms. Primarolo: No, because I must finish by a certain time.

As a result of Government policy, the number of children taking school meals has dropped from 4.9 million to just 2.8 million. One in six secondary school children have no hot evening meal—the majority of those children are from poor backgrounds. Many children go to school without eating breakfast, and the midday meal is the only substantial one of the day for many of them. A whole range of evidence shows that the link between poor diet and health problems associated with growth and development, tooth decay, obesity, anaemia, bowel disorders, heart disease and cancer, yet the Government steadfastly refuse to revitalise school meals to improve the nation's health.

The Government acknowledged the importance of housing in the Green Paper, but it does not appear in "The Health of the Nation". Yet, as a direct result of the Government's policies, 11,000 homeless families are living in so called bed-and-breakfast housing. If one provided suitable family accommodation instead of bed and breakfast, one would tackle head-on a range of health problems which stem directly from that inhuman form of accommodation.

For example, birth weight is the most important determinant of a child's health, yet 25 per cent. of babies born to families in bed-and-breakfast accommodation are of low birth weight. That compares with a 7 per cent. national average. Living in dangerously cramped rooms, often with little or no cooking facilities and no play facilities, for as long as seven years in some cases, bed-and-breakfast children are more prone to sickness and to respiratory illnesses, as well as psychological and emotional health problems.

More generally, as housing repairs dwindle, the lack of local authority funds means that children are living in damp houses and falling victim to the respiratory and bronchial illnesses which go with it. Tuberculosis has increased by 10 per cent. this year.

The Government will not take direct action to alleviate the poverty which causes so much ill health and premature death. They have to get rid of free dental and eye tests. They have increased prescription charges and have used GP contracts to pour health promotion money into better-off areas, instead of dealing with acute health needs. That is not good enough.

The Government have confined themselves to setting targets that their civil servants in Whitehall can measure statistically. As the Government choose the topics for which statistics are developed and collected, it is hardly surprising that the process has enabled them to back winners.

The nation's health is divided by a bankrupt, free-market Government, whose policies beget unemployment, which begets poverty and in turn ill-health, and whose health policy is increasing the same free-market business approach, which gives choice and quality only to those who can afford it and neglects those who cannot. No other area of policy shows more clearly the difference between Labour's philosophy and that of the Government.

Conservative Governments have accelerated the causes of ill health, by widening the gulf between rich and poor and ignoring it in "The Health of the Nation". We would put the eradication of health inequalities at the core of our health promotion strategy, to create a health policy which would be more than the candy floss described by my hon. Friend the Member for Halifax (Mrs. Mahon), more than

merely a series of targets in backing winners, a policy that really tackled ill health—the issue raised by the hon. Member for Falmouth and Cambourne (Mr. Coe). We shall ensure the highest quality of support and treatment, free at the time of need, with the greatest choice and flexibility through the national health service, which has been shown to be the most cost-effective in the world.

The Government choose commercialisation, which inevitably leads to a two-tier system based on ability to pay and the rationing of ever more scarce resources between competing units. “The Health of the Nation” is a missed opportunity. The Government could have tackled the major cause of ill health in our society—the poverty that they have created—and it is a scandal that they have not done so.

9.38 pm

The Minister for Health (Dr. Brian Mawhinney): I begin by welcoming the hon. Member for Bristol, South (Ms. Primarolo) to her new responsibilities. As she knows, I have had mine for a few months longer than she has had hers. However, we are coming to the Dispatch Boxes as comparative newcomers, at least in our present area of responsibility. Before we have too many more debates I think that we shall have to try to find some common ground of language and understanding on what it is that we are to debate. I shall come to that in a moment.

We have had a good debate. A range of views have been expressed, and for the most part in a constructive way. I hope that that will be part of the continuing debate in the months ahead.

If I had believed everything that the hon. Member for Bristol, South said in the context of the policies of a democratic party offering itself to the electorate, that party would not have stood a chance of getting elected. The fact is that the Conservative party was elected. That happened because our policies bear little relationship to the hon. Lady's remarks.

Some of us have reflected on the absence of the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) with nostalgia. Earlier, however, he told the country that the general election was to be a referendum on health. That was his view and the view of the Labour party; it was not our view. The people made their views clear on the health care of the country. The hon. Member for Bristol, South reflected her party's pro-referendum policy; unfortunately for her, the world has moved on since then.

I am sorry that the hon. Lady could not bring herself to welcome, for example, the fact that in the past year 7.2 per cent. more patients have been treated in national health service hospitals than during the previous year. That statistic represents tens of thousands of patients who have benefited from health care. I should have thought that the hon. Lady would welcome that, just as she would welcome the fact that 8.2 per cent. more patients have been treated in Trust hospitals. Unfortunately, she did not do so. I can understand, however, why she did not.

Mr. Bayley: Will the Minister give way?

Dr. Mawhinney: I should prefer to get started before giving way.

The hon. Member for Bristol, South had to follow the lead of the Opposition spokesman, the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett). I was interested to hear what he had to say. I hope that he will accept it in the

spirit in which it is intended if I welcome him to the debate and offer my congratulations to him on assuming his new responsibilities. I must say, however, that he redefined the NHS in terms that I did not begin to recognise. He talked about the responsibilities of virtually every other member of the Cabinet except those of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health. The nation is spending about £100 million a day in the NHS.

I am sure that my right hon. Friend is flattered that the hon. Gentleman thinks that she should be the Secretary of State for the Environment, for Social Services and for Education as well as for Health. The fact is, however, that the NHS and the responsibilities that my right hon. Friend discharges so effectively and to such good effect are the issues that we are debating. I shall take up the point made by the hon. Members for Brightside and for Bristol, South about inequalities later in my reply.

We shall listen carefully to everything that the hon. Member for Brightside says. We shall sift his remarks for information, truth, helpful suggestions and constructive ideas. I must say, however, that we shall listen to him against the background of Sheffield and the National Union of Public Employees. We shall have to draw some conclusions from that.

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Broxbourne (Mrs. Roe) on becoming the Chairman of the Select Committee on Health. I welcome the considerable significance that she attached, as we do, to the importance of developing healthy alliances. She said that she would welcome an annual report on the progress on “The Health of the Nation”. I shall be happy to think about that. I undertake to draw her comments about a maternity report, and especially those about post-natal depression, to the attention of my noble Friend the Under-Secretary of State, who has particular responsibility within the Department for those matters.

I also congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Falmouth and Camborne (Mr. Coe) on his maiden speech. First, I thank him for paying generous tributes to his predecessors from both sides of the House. He will discover that such generosity of spirit is always appreciated by his colleagues. He spoke movingly of his constituency, and rightly, so. Whatever our differences in the House, all of us have an attachment to our constituencies. That is right and proper, and he reflected that in his speech.

We shall, of course, pay particular attention to what my hon. Friend said about the need for the Health Education Authority and the Sports Council to work more closely together. He might even have been suggesting that they go further than that. He has unparalleled experience, not only from his previous activities, glorious as those were, but from having served on both of those authorities. I shall pay careful attention to what he has said.

I am grateful to the hon. Member for York (Mr. Bayley) for his welcome of outcomes. I hope that he will take the opportunity of having a word with his hon. Friend the Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody), who, unfortunately, is not in her place at the moment, because she had her usual rant on the subject and the House will have heard her unwillingness to acknowledge——

Mr. John Evans (St. Helens, North): The Minister would not have said that if my hon. Friend had been here.

Dr. Mawhinney: Yes, I would.

The House will have heard the hon. Lady's unwillingness to acknowledge the fact that 9 per cent. more of her constituents have been treated in the trusts in Crewe.

Mr. Bayley: If the strategy works and the health of the nation improves, will the Minister be celebrating at the Dispatch Box the fact that fewer people will be going to hospital? The fact that more and more people year after year need hospital treatment reflects, in part at least, the point made by my hon. Friends the Members for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett) and for Bristol, South (Ms. Primarolo) that the more people there are who live in poverty and who eat a bad diet, the more people there will be who need their health to be repaired.

Dr. Mawhinney: I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman felt it necessary to make that contribution. I listened carefully to his original speech and with more appreciation than I did to that.

I understand the concern expressed by the hon. Member for Rochdale (Ms. Lynne) about the community care policy. I hope that she will join others on both sides of the House in helping to ensure, through the closer collaboration of health authorities and local authorities, the private sector and general practitioners, that the community care policy is a success, not for the greater glory of the Government, Members of Parliament or local politicians, but for the benefit of the frail elderly for whom it will be an important initiative.

On a personal level, I agree with the hon. Lady that there is probably still more benefit to be derived from expanding and exploring further complementary medicines.

I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth, East (Mr. Atkinson) and welcome his comments on the new hospital that has just been opened in his constituency. I particularly identified with what he had to say, because the Edith Cavell hospital in Peterborough was promised by the last Labour Government and was killed off when the then Chancellor of the Exchequer had to come back from Heathrow to talk to the International Monetary Fund. That hospital was built under this Administration and in that sense my experience is identical to that of my hon. Friend.

I listened to everything that Opposition Members had to say on the health service against the background of the knowledge that for years my constituents were deprived of the hospital care that they should have had and which they needed because the Labour Government incompetently ran the British economy.

The hon. Member for Barrow and Furness (Mr. Hutton) made an important speech and I hope that he will accept it in the spirit in which it is offered when I say that it was also a moving speech. I take his point about the importance of the home safety committees. He will be interested to know that, as part of the implementation of "The Health of the Nation" we are setting up a task force on accidents. I will ensure that the task force's terms of reference include learning from the experience of home safety committees.

The hon. Gentleman's comments, particularly from his own experience, about the need for bereavement counselling are well taken. It is an element in the health service that has developed over the years and is better than

it was, but the hon. Gentleman said that there is room for further improvement—and I would not want this debate to end with the hon. Gentleman thinking that I had not carefully noted that point.

I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Woodspring (Dr. Fox) for his comments. He is able, as a former general practitioner, to help the House understand that the new GP contracts have begun to bring improvements to the standard of GP care throughout the country, though there is more to be done. My hon. Friend was right to emphasise the importance of developing primary care in terms of medical education.

The remarks of the hon. Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington (Ms. Abbott)—and I am sorry that she is not in her place—about the Tomlinson report told us more about the hon. Lady than the report. Although she has not read it, she felt free to condemn it. People will draw their own conclusions when Labour Members—and I regret that the hon. Member for Bristol, South fell into the same trap—display such a knee-jerk reaction. They will not read the arguments, reflect on them, or consult but simply leap to conclusions.

We will read the Tomlinson report. We will listen to anything that people have to say about it, consult, and then reach conclusions. We will not behave as Labour politicians behaved this evening, and leap to conclusions that arise from prejudice and lack of knowledge and understanding, and dismiss out of hand the work of people who spent considerable time producing arguments for us all to consider.

As to tobacco, it is important to understand the difference between an end and the means of achieving that end. My hon. Friend the Member for Broxbourne stressed the importance of people being able to make informed choices in the delivery of health care. I very much agree. Right hon. and hon. Members on both sides of the House made the point that when it comes to life style and health, Governments—like everyone else—must rely on persuasion, education and information in convincing people to change their life style and behaviour. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State made that point strongly at the beginning of the debate, and I make it again equally strongly now.

Mr. Blunkett: Does the Minister agree that the £100 million spent on tobacco advertising not only influences those who already smoke but has a direct impact on the lives and well-being of those who, against their will, are passive smokers? That is a consequence of others being persuaded to buy a product that damages their health. The industry continues to spend a large amount of money inducing smokers to continue damaging their health because that is good for their profits.

Dr. Mawhinney: I believe that smoking damages health, and I imagine that that view is shared in all parts of the House. I believe also that advertising influences behaviour. That is precisely why the Government already have in place restrictions on tobacco advertising.

Like a number of other hon. Members, I have read the advertisement in today's edition of *The Independent*. It is unquestionably true that the advertisement has been signed by a number of very distinguished people. I am not sure that I recognise every fact on which the argument purports to be based, but the statement is clearly important, and we shall reflect on it after the publication

of the Smee report—which, as my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State told the House, will be next week. I look forward with interest to hearing what will no doubt prove a lively discussion about it. Incidentally, everything that the hon. Member for Brightside said about the report in his speech was wrong.

I shall be even more impressed if I open tomorrow's edition of *The Independent* and find another full-page advertisement, signed by all the same people, saying that children both of whose parents smoke have a 15 per cent. likelihood of smoking, that children neither of whose parents smoke have a 6 per cent. likelihood of smoking, and that therefore all those distinguished people want parents to stop smoking so that the prevalence of smoking among children drops by 150 per cent. No one in the House or in the country believes that a ban on advertising would lead to a 150 per cent. reduction in the prevalence of smoking among children; yet that is the statistic given by the OPCS survey.

I look forward to opening Saturday's edition of *The Independent*, and seeing a further advertisement signed by all those distinguished people. I hope that on Saturday they will be saying that a 10 per cent. increase in the price of cigarettes is likely to produce a decrease in smoking prevalence of around 5 per cent., and that they will be encouraging not only the Chancellor of the Exchequer but all our European partners to pay much more attention to price than to some of the other issues that are currently on the agenda.

I look forward to opening *The Independent* on Monday, and seeing yet another full-page advertisement—by the way, I am not receiving a rake-off from the paper for this commercial—in which the same distinguished people ask whether the country is aware that one of the most important influences on children in regard to smoking is peer pressure. If a child has a boyfriend or girlfriend who

smokes, that is one of the best predictors available in all the statistics. Opposition Members run the risk of mixing up the means and the end. We have no difficulty about the end, but a variety of means need to be put in place to achieve that end.

Let me remind the House that, between 1974 and last year, the prevalence of smoking in this country dropped by one third as we pursued a range of policies—none of which, incidentally, included the total ban on advertising that is advocated by Opposition Members. Let me also remind the House what my right hon. Friend said about the position of this country in Europe in terms of smoking reduction. We are determined to use all the means at our disposal to achieve the further reduction specified in "The Health of the Nation".

There are a variety of ways in which the policy will be implemented—not only through the Cabinet Committee to which my right hon. Friend referred, but through working groups, one of which I chair. People from various different walks of life are involved. One of the groups will be chaired by the chief medical officer, whose job will be to monitor and review progress towards achieving the targets; another will be chaired by the chief executive of the management executive, and will be designed to carry forward the policy within the NHS.

Task forces will be set up on nutrition, smoking, accidents, the workplace, physical activities and mental illness. All of them, and many others, will combine to carry forward and put into place the first-ever health strategy for the country, a health strategy that depends on all of us playing our part co-operatively, to the benefit of the health of the nation. I look forward to that being achieved in the years to come.

It being Ten o'clock, the motion for the Adjournment of the House lapsed, without Question put, pursuant to the Standing Order.

European Fighter Aircraft

Motion made, and Question proposed. That this House do now adjourn.—[Mr. Arbuthnot.]

10 pm

Dr. Gavin Strang (Edinburgh, East): I am grateful for the opportunity to raise this topic in the first week of the House's return after the summer recess. No hon. Member doubts the importance of the European fighter aircraft project. It is important from both the military and the industrial point of view. It is also important because of its cost to the public purse.

The design and development of military aircraft is a long process. EFA is no exception. Discussions about a possible European combat aircraft began in the late 1970s. The outline staff target for a future EFA was agreed between the air staffs of France, West Germany, Italy and Spain in 1983. France pulled out in 1985. In April 1988, the British Government announced their decision to embark on the full development of EFA, subject to similar decisions by the three other collaborating countries.

By the end of November 1988, all four countries had signed a memorandum of understanding. The two main EFA development contracts were awarded to two consortia. Both consortia were comprised of one company from each collaborating nation. Euro-fighter was commissioned to develop the airframe and weapons systems. Eurojet was awarded the contract for the development of the engine.

As set out in the memorandum of understanding, the work carried out and subcontracted by each consortium is divided so that Germany and Britain both take 33 per cent. of the work share, Italy 21 per cent. and Spain 13 per cent., each nation then paying for the work done within its borders.

There is all-party agreement on the military requirement for EFA. While the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the Warsaw pact means that nobody now can be anticipating a threat from the eastern bloc, EFA was intended to match the possible threat posed by Russian aircraft. The Mig29 Fulcrum has been exported to Cuba, India, Iraq, Iran, North Korea and Syria. The SU27 Flanker has been sold to China. We have no reason to believe that export contracts with other nations are not being pursued by Russia.

The British people will not forgive the Government if they saddle the RAF with a plane of inferior capability to those of a future enemy. The German Government's proposed EFA Lite would be just such a plane. As it would involve the redesign of the airframe, engine and installed equipment, it is certain that that plane would be militarily inadequate. Furthermore, it is by no means certain that to abandon EFA and embark on this new project would work out cheaper than the completion of EFA. All alternatives to EFA have been found to be more expensive, less capable, or both.

The only plane that is superior in capability will be the United States F22 ATT. It is widely estimated that that would be at least 60 per cent. more expensive than EFA. Furthermore, it is doubtful whether the United States would make the plane available for export, even to Britain.

The chiefs of staff of all four EFA nations reaffirmed the need for EFA in March. The House of Commons Select Committee on Defence concluded that the high levels of reliability, coupled with the ease of maintenance

and testing of EFA, should result in EFA being significantly cheaper to operate. I pay tribute to the report of the Select Committee on Defence, published on 11 March, and quote exactly what it said on page xxx:

"The current indications are, however, that the possible alternative aircraft to EFA would have significantly inferior performance, and yet would offer limited or no savings in cost. The higher levels of reliability, coupled with ease of maintenance and testing of EFA, should result in EFA being significantly cheaper to operate and having higher levels of availability than any alternative aircraft. There is currently no sign of any suitable alternative to EFA which could begin to offer the same level of performance at an acceptable cost, with anything approaching comparable technological benefits."

That is still true, and the House would welcome the Minister's reaffirmation that it is still the view of the Government.

There are obvious benefits from international collaboration in a military project such as EFA—the sharing of the burden of costs and technological co-operation between nations being two such advantages. Operationally, there are tremendous benefits if partners in a conflict are using the same aircraft—for example, common servicing, spares and training. The tragic events in Yugoslavia show that it is not fanciful to contemplate Britain, in alliance with other Western European Union countries, being involved in major peacekeeping activities in central and eastern Europe. We have only to look at the serious economic, social and political difficulties in the former Warsaw pact satellite states and in the former Soviet Union to understand that there may be a very real need for collective military action to prevent ethnic rivalries and territorial disputes from leading to the disintegration of states and civil war.

Control of the air is a key factor in any military conflict. The aim of Governments must be the avoidance of active service for the air force and other services, but long-term decisions on procurement must assume that planes will see real combat. The British Government should now tell our German ally firmly and publicly that we are not prepared to contemplate Royal Air Force pilots going into combat with planes which have a markedly inferior capability to those of the enemy.

The study commissioned by the four defence Ministers in August to consider the feasibility of a plane 30 per cent. cheaper than EFA may suggest worthwhile economies, but everyone knows that the 30 per cent. saving will be obtained only at the cost of much inferior aircraft.

EFA is crucial to British industry. Without it, jobs would be lost in Germany, Italy and Spain, but the consequences for Britain's aerospace industry could be catastrophic. The United Kingdom's aerospace industry is world class, second only in turnover to the United States. Tragically, as a result of the collapse of manufacturing industry in Britain in the early 1980s, the elimination of about 25 per cent. of capacity and the further contraction of industry, more and more of our industrial base is associated with firms which have a military purpose and produce military products. The cancellation of EFA would result in the long-term elimination of some of the most modern engineering facilities in Britain. Almost all the developing technologies that will feature in tomorrow's aerospace business, both civil and military, are part and parcel of the EFA development programme. For example, the only military airborne radar capability that Britain now has is GEC Ferranti, based in Edinburgh. If the ECR 90 radar system—the system for EFA—is not developed

and operated by EFA, that British airborne radar capability will be lost for all time. I am sure that the Minister is conscious of the importance of that radar contract.

GEC Ferranti now operates from plants in Edinburgh, Donibristle in Fife, Boreham Wood, and Milton Keynes. The company estimates that 950 jobs are directly dependent on EFA development work—570 with GEC Ferranti and 335 with sub-contractors.

Ferranti has a tremendous history in airborne radar. It provided the radar for the Lightning aircraft in the 1950s, the Blue Fox radar, which performed well in the Sea Harriers during the Falklands war, and the Blue Vixen for the updated Sea Harrier is accepted by all to be performing well. All the evidence suggests that the ECR90 system which will go into EFA will be a world beater. After that we shall have Radar 2000, which will also be developed.

What I am saying is not unique to GEC Ferranti, but applies to other aspects of the project. We are at the forefront of technological development. If the ECR90 radar system does not go into service, GEC Ferranti will not be able to stay in business. It will not have the profits from that production to develop Radar 2000, and that capability will be lost for good. That will be a tremendous loss to the whole of British industry, not only to my constituents in Edinburgh.

The cancellation of EFA would have serious consequences for three of our most important companies—British Aerospace, GEC and Rolls-Royce. Many of the 34 main United Kingdom suppliers and 60 sub-suppliers are high-tech companies of strategic importance to manufacturing in this country. It has been estimated that 40,000 jobs will be lost in the United Kingdom if EFA is cancelled, but that does not take into account the fact that the supplying firms have a range of other engineering activities which would be put into jeopardy.

The Labour party wants companies heavily dependent on military contracts to diversify into civil production. It is our policy to set up a defence diversification agency to help secure that end. Many of the high-technology engineering teams involved in EFA have the capability to originate civil products which will create jobs and wealth for this country. The cancellation of EFA would lead to the disbandment of the high-technology engineering teams required for alternative products in the future. It is impossible to emphasise too strongly the fact that, especially in view of the state of British industry in the present recession, it would be absolutely devastating if the EFA project were not to go ahead. We can be proud of our aerospace industry. We must nourish and encourage it, and the Government should support it. It may be regrettable that it is still so dependent of EFA, but that is the truth, and not to face up to it would be damaging to this country.

As the Ministers knows, the four Defence Ministers last met in Madrid on 4 August. This is our first opportunity to discuss the outcome of that meeting. Eurofighter was commissioned to identify means by which the plane's production costs could be reduced. From reports in the press, I understand that significant possible cost savings have been identified; up to 20 per cent. has been suggested. I hope that the Minister will be willing to give us further information about that this evening. The air staff of each nation are re-examining their military requirements. Both

studies were due for completion by the end of this month, and were to be considered at the meeting of Defence Ministers in December.

A third decision taken at that meeting, which has not been much publicised, was to impose a moratorium on all future development side contracts. I believe that the Secretary of State referred to the moratorium as symbolic, and I accept that all the main development work is going ahead and that the plane's production will not be significantly slowed down by the decision. But some important contracts have been suspended, and I am sorry to say that some of those should have been placed by GEC Ferranti by now. One significant example is the laser warning system, which will enable the crew to tell whether the plane is being tracked by laser.

It is important that a clear timetable be established for the development of the plane. It is not possible for the companies involved to put their engineering teams on hold. I hope that the Minister will give us an assurance that when the Secretary of State meets his counterparts he will make it clear that they must take practical decisions. It is no use pretending that we can put the decision off indefinitely. There must be a decision on investment for production within the next two or three months. Clearly, the companies cannot afford to maintain the staff unless the development and production programmes go forward.

The fundamental case for EFA is the British military requirement for an agile aircraft with modern radar. Nobody disputes that the RAF will require a new fighter plane by the turn of the century. It, or its variants, could be in service for 30 years or more.

The Government have three choices. First, Britain can go along with the German position, which means building a plane with a much inferior military capability. That could only mean asking our Royal Air Force pilots to operate in the next century with planes much inferior to those in service with the air forces of some third-world countries. As hon. Members know, when we talk about an inferior capability in air combat, we are talking about the survivability of the planes and their pilots. I am sure that no British Government would want to go down in history as having been responsible for equipping the RAF with sub-standard planes.

Secondly, the Government can buy an off-the-shelf new plane, possible from Russia, but more likely from the United States. That would cost many thousands of British jobs and destroy forever our capability in many areas of advanced technology, including airborne radar—not to mention the effect on our balance of trade.

Thirdly, the Government can do what is right for Britain and make it clear to our European partners that Britain is absolutely determined to press ahead with the European fighter aircraft.

10.15 pm

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, East (Dr. Strang), and even more so to the Minister, for allowing me to say a few words from the Opposition Front Bench in this important debate. As my hon. Friend said, Labour party spokesmen have on a number of occasions expressed our support for EFA on the basis that it offers the best capability at the best price to fulfil a vital military role.

[Mr. George Foulkes]

Equally importantly, as my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, East said, the project will safeguard thousands of jobs and will help to preserve a United Kingdom defence and aerospace industry. As a Member of Parliament who represents a mining constituency, I point out that those jobs are just as vital in the areas in which they are situated as the pit jobs are in the coal mining areas, and the loss of those jobs might be just as devastating to the economy of the United Kingdom as the loss of mining jobs.

I am grateful for this brief opportunity to restate the Labour party's support for the project and our desire that the Government's priority now should be to keep this collaborative European venture together.

Like my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, East, we believe that the alternative EFA Lite proposed by the Germans does not fulfil the requirements necessary for the next generation of British fighter aircraft, especially the need to have the ability to take part in United Nations operations and to compete effectively with the Mig 29s and the SU27s which, as my hon. Friend said, are increasingly available to countries around the world which are potential aggressors.

The need for the resolution of the differences between the four co-operating countries in the venture is all the more pressing. As that will be achieved only by a cheaper aircraft, we welcome, as my hon. Friend did, the suggested savings of up to 20 per cent. in cost and we should welcome any further potential savings, whether proposed by the United Kingdom, by Germany or by any of the other partners so long as they do not undermine the original operational capability and concept of EFA. As my hon. Friend said, our pilots must have a plane which is equal to or preferably better than any potential aggressor. We hope that the cost-cutting exercise can open a door to the continuation of a multinational project. We urge the Government to increase the diplomatic and other pressures—perhaps a little bit more diplomatically than Volker Ruhe did; I know that British Defence Ministers are likely to be a little more diplomatic than he is.

Mr. Menzies Campbell (Fife, North-East): Even more than our Ministers?

Mr. Foulkes: Even more than our Ministers. I assure the Minister and all the other Defence Ministers that in those efforts they will have the total support of the Labour Front Bench and of the other Opposition parties.

10.18 pm

The Minister of State for the Armed Forces (Mr. Archie Hamilton): I congratulate the hon. Member for Edinburgh, East (Dr. Strang) on securing this debate and on initiating it this evening. I am also grateful to the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) for the official support from the Opposition for the EFA project.

The interest in and support for the EFA programme of the hon. Member for Edinburgh, East is very much appreciated, as is the presence here tonight of my hon. Friends the Members for Blackpool, North (Mr. Elletson), for Blackpool, South (Mr. Hawkins) for Ribbles Valley (Mr. Evans), for Wyre (Mr. Mans) and for Woodspring

(Dr. Fox). All have constituents who are very much involved in the future of the project and whose livelihoods very much depend on the project going ahead.

I know that the hon. Member for Edinburgh, East has had two meetings, on 25 June and 9 September, with my hon. Friend the Minister of State for Defence Procurement, who regrets that an official visit to Sweden prevents him from being present tonight. The eloquent defence of the EFA which we have heard from the hon. Gentleman underlines the measure of all-party support for it which exists in the House and the country as a whole. This was underlined also in the sixth report of the Defence Select Committee, which concluded:

"there is currently no sign of any suitable alternative to EFA that could begin to offer the same level of performance at an acceptable cost with anything approaching comparable technological benefits".

The German Minister of Defence, to whom reference has been made this evening, has said that the project is too expensive and that an aircraft of this capability is an anachronism in the changed security environment that has followed the demise of the Warsaw pact and other radical changes in eastern Europe. We and the other partners, Italy and Spain, share some of Herr Ruehe's concern about the cost of the project. I will return to this point later, but first I would like to deal with the point about the military need for EFA.

It is true that the international security environment has changed radically since the EFA was originally conceived. The direct threat of a massive attack on NATO previously posed by the Warsaw pact and the Soviet Union has disappeared. That said, we plan that EFA will be in service throughout the first quarter of the next century. The world could be a very different place by 2020. That is why it is important to look at capabilities rather than intentions.

There is considerable and growing instability in areas close to NATO both within and outside Europe. There is ethnic and territorial conflict in eastern Europe and within the former Soviet Union. The middle east remains unpredictable. Despite the collapse of the former monolithic threat, there exist a number of risks to security. The United Kingdom could be involved in joint military action with our allies designated to promote stability or halt aggression.

There are a large number of sophisticated aircraft on the territories of the former Soviet Union. Some of those aircraft have been widely exported. The MIG 29 Fulcrum has been delivered to all former Warsaw pact countries, except Hungary, and to a number of other countries, including Cuba, Iraq, Iran, Syria, North Korea and the former Yugoslavia. The SU 27 Flanker has been sold to China. Improved variants of the SU 27 and the MIG 29 are being developed.

We need to provide an effective defence of the United Kingdom and British forces wherever they may be deployed. Our current air defence aircraft, the Tornado F3, was designed to intercept bombers at long range. It is not a suitable match for such hostile agile fighters as the MIG 29 and the SU 27, let alone future upgrades of those types or more modern aircraft.

We also recognise the need to provide an offensive support and tactical reconnaissance capability. Although they performed well last year in the Gulf, the Jaguars are aging and will become more difficult to support in the

future. The Jaguar is unlikely to survive in combat against modern aircraft much beyond the middle of the next decade.

Thus the RAF has a need for an agile aircraft with a modern radar and a sophisticated electronic warfare suite to enable it to survive. Today's greater emphasis on NATO rapid reaction forces reinforces the case for a multi-role capability. Multi-role aircraft should offer economies in support and operational flexibility. It is not surprising, therefore, that the Defence Select Committee reported in April that there remains a requirement for a technically advanced multi-role aircraft.

As the aircraft that we procure will have to meet the needs of the Royal Air Force for the next 25 years, we must ensure that it is at least as good as the aircraft of any potential adversary that it might be called upon to face during that time. We owe it to our pilots to give them the tools that they need to do their job. An aircraft of broadly EFA's capability is essential to counter potentially hostile aircraft.

In summary therefore it is true that the risk to our security has reduced quantitatively, and that may have a bearing on the number of new aircraft we require. But, in qualitative terms, potentially hostile aircraft are as sophisticated today as was anticipated when EFA was conceived, and we face far greater uncertainty about the direction from which trouble might come.

Of course it is right to review the military requirement. That is why, in August, the Ministers of Defence of the four partner nations asked their military chiefs to conduct a full review of the original requirement and to report whether any relaxations might be possible. The hon. Gentleman referred to that point. We do not yet have that advice. We will take full account of it when we receive it at the end of this month.

Mr. Ruehe is right when he says that EFA is expensive. Indeed, what sparked off the present debate about the project was the fact that the quotations for the production phase which the manufacturers presented last April were higher than expected and judged by all the partner Governments to be unaffordable. When they met last August, the four Ministers of Defence therefore commissioned studies into ways of reducing the cost of the programme.

Those studies have looked at a wide range of options. They started by looking at ways to reduce the cost of the present aircraft through more efficient sharing of the production work between the partner companies, by savings in the logistic support arrangements and by generally sharpening their prices and those of the equipment suppliers.

They then looked at the savings that might be achieved by removing some of the more sophisticated equipments from the aircraft, either replacing them with cheaper alternatives, or perhaps leaving them out initially while keeping open the possibility of fitting them later when funds permit. Lastly, the studies examined seven alternative aircraft designs to establish whether a change of design would actually achieve the cost savings which the German Minister had suggested.

The report on the first of those studies was presented to the four Governments at the end of last week. It is an extremely detailed piece of work, and it will take some time for officials of the four Ministries of Defence to analyse it and to decide which of the many options it offers represents the best way forward for the particular

circumstances of the four partner nations. The four Ministers plan to meet again in December to consider those conclusions and the review of the military requirement.

It is, however, possible to say already that the broad conclusions of the report were that substantial savings of between 12 and 21 per cent. were possible without any changes to the aircraft specification or its military capability. Greater savings are possible by deleting certain equipments, although that will lead to some degradation of performance. In all circumstances, retaining the present airframe and engine combination offers better value for money than changing course in mid-stream to a new design.

The effect of a new design would mean writing-off most of the £5 billion which the four Governments have collectively invested in the development of EFA, and necessitate repeating much of the work already done. In consequence, any new design with an acceptable level of performance would have higher cost than the present EFA programme. Of the seven designs studied, only two could conceivably be marginally cheaper than continuing with the existing airframe and engine. Both would be single-engined aircraft inferior in performance to the present MIG 29 and SU 27. Going down that road would make no sense at all.

It is regrettable that the German Minister is continuing to argue in favour of a re-orientation of the project in favour of a new smaller design when the facts do not support his arguments. We shall seek to convince him that he is wrong and to persuade the German Government that it is in their own best interests, as well as those of the other partners, that Germany should remain in the European fighter aircraft programme. On that point, as it seems not to be generally appreciated, I should make it clear that Germany is still participating in the project, development of EFA is continuing generally according to the originally agreed programme, and we expect the first flight of the aircraft around the end of this year.

The Government not only believe that the operational requirement for EFA remains valid—and that continuing with the present programme is the best way forward but are very conscious of the enormous industrial importance of EFA to the United Kingdom aerospace industry. EFA is the only advanced fixed-wing military combat aircraft under development in the United Kingdom. If the project were to collapse, the design and development teams at British Aerospace, Rolls Royce, GEC and the many other British companies working on the programme would be dispersed. That would probably be the end of military aircraft development in the United Kingdom. One cannot keep aerospace factories idle for up to five years and expect at the end of that time to find a skilled labour force ready and waiting to start work again.

EFA is also pushing at the frontiers of advanced technology. Many of the equipments being developed for EFA will find their way in due course into new civil aircraft, and some of the technology is capable also of being exploited for non-aviation uses. All that potential spin-off would be lost if the project did not proceed.

There are also a large number of jobs dependent on EFA. There are about 9,400 people directly employed on the development of EFA today, and, when the aircraft goes into production, the number will rise to 28,000. Those

[Mr. Archie Hamilton]

jobs directly related to EFA will also sustain a large measure of indirect employment outside the aerospace industry.

For all those reasons, the Government place considerable importance on the continuation of the EFA programme, if possible on a four-nation basis with German participation. If, however, Germany should decide to leave the project, the Government would wish to explore with Italy and Spain the possibility of continuing trilaterally. Neither of the other partners has ruled that out, and the conclusions of the cost reduction study to which I have already referred give grounds for optimism.

The Spanish Minister of Defence, for instance, told the BBC earlier this week, during the NATO Nuclear

Planning Group meeting at Gleneagles, that he believed that, in the light of the substantial savings now available, EFA's prospects looked much better and Spain believed that it had a future.

The motion having been made at Ten o'clock and the debate having continued for half an hour, Madam Speaker adjourned the House without Question put, pursuant to the Standing Order.

Adjourned at half-past Ten o'clock.

CORRIGENDUM

Official Report, 21 October 1992: In column 516, fifth paragraph, the intervention attributed to Mr. Boyce was made by Mr. Kevin Hughes (Doncaster, North).

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 22 October 1992

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Legal Aid

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will state the hourly rates for all types of legal aid over each of the last 20 years and also give the figures in real terms.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The available figures are as follows. Prescribed hourly rates for solicitors undertaking criminal legal aid work in the magistrates courts and the Crown court were introduced in October 1982. The paying authority has the power to allow fees higher than the prescribed hourly rates where these rates would not reflect

the exceptional competence and dispatch with which the work was done, or the exceptional circumstances of the case.

In 1988 standard fees replaced hourly rates for the majority of Crown court criminal work. Prescribed hourly rates were introduced for legal advice and assistance in police stations in 1986 and for matrimonial work in 1988. Non-matrimonial civil work is not covered by prescribed rates.

The duty solicitor scheme providing legal advice and assistance in magistrates' courts is based on an average of the prescribed hourly rates for advocacy and preparation—before April 1992 travelling and waiting—for criminal legal aid work in the magistrates' courts. Since 1989 separate hourly rates have been prescribed for care proceedings, for mental health review tribunal work and for non-care proceedings under the Children Act.

The prescribed hourly rates from 1982-92 for criminal work, for matrimonial work and for legal advice and assistance in police stations are set out in the tables. The tables give basic rates only and do not include London weighting. Each table is followed by a table giving the figures in real terms.

The figures have been uprated to 1992-93 prices using the GDP deflator.

Criminal legal aid hourly rates (£) 1982-1992

Type of work	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	Year 1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992
(a) magistrates' court proceedings											
Preparation	24.00	25.00	26.00	27.00	28.50	32.50	34.50	36.50	39.25	42.00	43.25
Advocacy	29.00	30.00	32.00	33.00	35.00	40.50	43.00	46.00	49.50	53.00	54.50
Attendance at court where counsel assigned	15.00	16.50	17.00	18.00	19.00	21.50	23.00	24.50	26.25	28.50	29.50
Travelling and waiting	16.00	16.50	17.00	17.00	18.00	19.00	19.50	20.50	22.00	23.50	24.25
(b) Crown Court and Court of Appeal proceedings											
Preparation:											
Senior solicitor	29.00	30.00	30.00	31.00	33.00	38.00	40.00	42.50	46.00	50.00	51.50
Solicitor/legal executive/fee-earner of equivalent experience	23.00	24.00	26.00	27.00	28.50	32.50	34.50	36.50	39.50	42.25	43.50
Articled clerk/fee-earner of equivalent experience	14.00	15.00	17.00	18.00	19.00	21.50	22.50	24.00	26.00	28.00	28.75
Advocacy:											
Senior solicitor	31.00	32.00	32.00	33.00	35.00	40.50	50.00	53.00	57.00	61.00	62.50
Solicitor	27.00	28.00	32.00	33.00	35.00	40.50	43.00	46.00	49.50	53.00	54.50
Attendance at court where counsel assigned:											
Senior solicitor	26.00	26.00	26.00	27.00	28.00	31.00	33.00	35.00	37.50	40.00	41.25
Solicitor/legal executive/fee-earner of equivalent experience	20.00	20.00	20.00	21.00	22.00	24.50	26.00	27.50	29.50	32.00	33.00
Articled clerk/fee-earner of equivalent experience	12.00	12.00	12.00	13.00	14.00	15.50	16.00	17.00	18.25	19.50	20.00
Travelling and waiting:											
Senior solicitor	18.00	18.00	17.00	17.00	18.00	19.00	19.50	20.50	22.00	23.50	24.25
Solicitor/legal executive/fee-earner of equivalent experience	13.00	13.00	17.00	17.00	18.00	19.00	19.50	20.50	22.00	23.50	24.25
Articled clerk/fee-earner of equivalent experience	8.00	8.00	8.00	9.00	9.00	9.50	9.75	10.25	11.00	11.75	12.00

Criminal legal aid hourly rates (£) 1982-1992 expressed at 1992-1993 prices

Type of Work	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	Year 1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992
(a) magistrates' court proceedings											
Preparation	41.87	41.68	41.29	40.63	41.52	44.91	44.46	44.13	43.88	43.78	43.25
Advocacy	50.60	50.02	50.81	49.66	50.99	55.97	55.42	55.62	55.34	55.25	54.50
Attendance at court where counsel assigned	26.17	27.51	27.00	27.09	27.68	29.71	29.64	29.62	29.35	29.71	29.50
Travelling and waiting	27.91	27.51	27.00	25.58	26.23	26.26	25.13	24.79	24.60	24.50	24.25

Type of Work	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	Year 1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992
(b) Crown Court and Court of Appeal proceedings											
Preparation:											
Senior solicitor	50.60	50.02	47.64	46.65	48.08	52.51	51.55	51.39	51.43	52.12	51.50
Solicitor/legal executive/fee-earner of equivalent experience	40.13	40.02	41.29	40.63	41.52	44.91	44.46	44.13	44.16	44.05	43.50
Articled clerk/fee-earner of equivalent experience	24.43	25.01	27.00	27.09	27.68	29.71	29.00	29.02	29.07	29.19	28.75
Advocacy:											
Senior solicitor	54.08	53.36	50.81	49.66	50.99	55.97	64.44	64.08	63.73	63.59	62.50
Solicitor	47.11	46.69	50.81	49.66	50.99	55.97	55.42	55.62	55.34	55.25	54.50
Attendance at court where counsel assigned:											
Senior solicitor	45.36	43.35	41.29	40.63	40.80	42.84	42.53	42.32	41.93	41.70	41.25
Solicitor/legal executive/fee-earner of equivalent experience	34.89	33.35	31.76	31.60	32.05	33.86	33.51	33.25	32.98	33.36	33.00
Articled clerk/fee-earner of equivalent experience	20.94	20.01	19.06	19.56	20.40	21.42	20.62	20.55	20.40	20.33	20.00
Travelling and waiting:											
Senior solicitor	31.40	30.01	27.00	25.58	26.23	26.26	25.13	24.79	24.60	24.50	24.25
Solicitor/legal executive/fee-earner of equivalent experience	22.68	21.68	27.00	25.58	26.23	26.26	25.13	24.79	24.60	24.50	24.25
Articled clerk/fee-earner of equivalent experience	13.96	13.34	12.70	13.54	13.11	13.13	12.57	12.39	12.30	12.25	12.00

*Civil legal aid in matrimonial proceedings hourly rates (£)
in High Court and County Court
1988-1992*

Type of work	1988		1989		1990		1991		1992	
	High Court	County Court	High Court	County Court	High Court	County Court	High Court	County Court	High Court	County Court
Preparation ¹	34.00	30.00	36.00	32.00	39.00	34.50	41.75	37.00	43.00	38.20
Travelling and waiting	25.00	23.00	26.50	24.50	28.50	26.25	30.50	28.00	31.50	28.75
Attending counsel in conference/attendances with counsel at any trial, hearing or appointment	30.00	26.50	31.00	27.00	33.00	29.00	35.50	31.00	36.50	32.00
Attendances without counsel at any trial, hearing or appointment	42.00	38.00	46.00	43.00	50.00	47.00	53.50	50.50	55.00	52.00

¹ Paid for preparation other than writing routine letters, receiving routine letters and routine telephone calls. A rate of plus 50 per cent. is paid for general care and conduct of the proceedings.

Civil legal aid in matrimonial proceedings hourly rates (£) 1988-92 in High Court and County Court expressed at 1992-93 prices

Type of Work	1988		1989		Year 1990		1991		1992	
	High Court	County Court	High Court	County Court	High Court	County Court	High Court	County Court	High Court	County Court
Preparation	43.82	38.66	43.53	38.69	43.61	38.57	43.52	38.57	43.00	38.20
Travelling and waiting	32.22	29.64	32.04	29.62	31.87	29.35	31.80	29.19	31.50	28.75
Attending counsel in conference/attendances with counsel at any trial, hearing or appointment	38.66	34.15	37.48	32.65	36.90	32.42	37.01	32.32	36.50	32.00
Attendances without counsel at any trial, hearing or appointment	54.13	48.97	55.62	51.99	55.90	52.55	55.77	52.65	55.00	52.00

Advice and assistance at police stations hourly rates (£) 1986-1992

Type of work	1986 ¹		1986 ²		Year 1987		1988		1989		1990		1991		1992	
Availability during duty period (standby payment) (maximum)	2.50 (60.00)	2.60 (62.40)	2.85 (68.40)	2.90 (69.60)	2.95 (70.80)	3.15 (75.60)	3.40 (81.60)	3.50 (84.00)								
Advice and assistance:																
duty solicitor unsocial hours			36.00	38.00	43.00	45.00	48.50	52.25	56.00	57.50						
duty solicitor all other hours/own solicitor			27.00	28.50	32.50	34.50	36.50	39.25	42.00	43.50						
Travelling and waiting:																
duty solicitor unsocial hours			36.00	38.00	43.00	45.00	48.50	52.25	56.00	57.50						

Type of work	Year							
	1986 ¹	1986 ²	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992
duty solicitor all other hours	27.00	28.50	32.50	34.50	36.50	39.25	42.00	43.50
own solicitor	17.00	18.00	19.00	19.50	20.50	22.00	23.50	24.25

¹ (January to April)

² (from April)

Advice and assistance at police stations hourly rates (£) 1986-92 expressed at 1992-93 prices

Type of work	Year							
	¹ 1986	² 1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992
Availability during duty period (standby payment)	3.76	3.79	3.94	3.74	3.57	3.52	3.54	3.5
Advice and assistance:								
duty solicitor unsocial hours	54.18	55.37	59.42	57.99	58.64	58.42	58.38	57.5
duty solicitor all other hours/own solicitor	40.63	41.52	44.91	44.46	44.13	43.88	43.78	43.5
Travelling and waiting:								
duty solicitor unsocial hours	54.18	55.37	59.42	57.99	58.42	58.42	58.38	57.5
duty solicitor all other hours	40.63	41.52	44.91	44.46	44.13	43.88	43.78	43.5
own solicitor	25.58	26.23	26.26	25.13	24.79	24.6	24.5	24.25

¹ January to April.

² From April.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what investigations he has made into the numbers and proportions of solicitors' firms that accept legal aid work; and if he will state the findings of such investigations.

Mr. John M. Taylor: No statistics are available on the number of firms of solicitors undertaking legal aid work at any one time. The Legal Aid Board does, however, publish a figure showing the number of offices receiving payment. For the last five years these were as follows:

Year	Number
1987-88	11,617
1988-89	11,558
1989-90	11,455
1990-91	11,125
1991-92	11,060

The Legal Aid Board also publishes statistics which show that although the number of offices receiving payment has fallen, the number of legal aid payments made to solicitors has risen.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what provision he intends to make in the legal aid fee structures for listening to tape recordings of police interviews with suspects.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Listening to tape recordings of police interviews forms part of the preparation of a criminal case, and is remunerated as such under the present arrangements. Under the proposed system of standard fees for solicitors' criminal legal aid work in the magistrates' courts, it is intended that payment for listening to tape recordings should be included in the standard fee, since it forms part of the normal preparation of a case.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what account he has taken of representations made to him by the Law Society concerning the question of fixed fees for legal aid.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Fixed fees have not been proposed. The consultation period on the proposed

standard fee system for solicitors' criminal legal aid work in the magistrates courts is planned to continue until the end of October.

Discussions with the Law Society on standard fees began in July 1991. As a result, the Lord Chancellor has made several changes to his proposals. These include a fee structure based on the amount of work done, rather than hearing time as originally suggested, and allowing waiting time to be claimed separately.

Immigration

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what is the current backlog of appeals for (a) the immigration tribunal and (b) the immigration appeal tribunal in each of the appeal centres.

Mr. John M. Taylor: As of this month 23,000 cases were outstanding before immigration adjudicators and 322 before the immigration appeals tribunal. In order to break down the first figure regionally it is necessary to consider cases listed, cases awaiting instructions from one of the parties and the balance which, alone, is in the control of the administration/judiciary and to employ some apportionment. This approach produces the following figures:

	Numbers
Thanet House	13,730
Birmingham	2,230
Leeds	1,010
Harmonsworth	3,510
Manchester	1,860
Glasgow	660

Legal Advice

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what the rates have been for green form legal advice for each of the last 10 years; and if he will give the figures in real terms.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Before 1989, solicitors' bills for legal advice and assistance were assessed by the Law Society. The hourly guideline rates from 1982 to 1988 were:

Year	Rate	Rate expressed at 1992-93 prices
1982	24.00	41.89
1983	25.00	41.70
1984	26.00	41.31
1985	27.00	40.65
¹ 1986	28.50	41.54
² 1986	30.50	44.46
1987	32.50	44.93
1988	34.50	44.48

¹ April

² October

Equal Opportunities

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what action he has taken and intends to take to increase the proportion of blacks and Asians in the judiciary.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The Lord Chancellor's policy is to appoint to judicial office those best qualified, regardless of sex, ethnic origin, political affiliation or religion. Without prejudice to this overriding principle, the Lord Chancellor has stressed publicly, and will continue to do so, that he would like more black and Asian practitioners who are suitably qualified to be appointed to the judiciary. A major factor has been the lack of such candidates in the legal profession in the relevant age groups. There are now more ethnic minority practitioners within the legal profession who the Lord Chancellor hopes will come forward for consideration. To encourage this, he has made the booklet on the judicial appointments system widely available to ethnic minority practitioners and representative groups. Particular consideration is given to reviewing ethnic minority candidates in the field for particular appointments and ethnic recording arrangements were introduced for applications for judicial appointment made after 1 October 1991. The Lord Chancellor and his officials also have periodical meetings with groups representing the interests of black and Asian practitioners where matters relating to the judicial appointments system are discussed.

Law Centres

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what amount of central Government funding has been given to law centres for each of the last 20 years; and if he will give the figures in real terms.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The information is as follows:

Year	Grant £'000	At 1992-93 prices
1974-75	50	254
1975-76	100	405
1976-77	150	535
1977-78	225	706
1978-79	273	773
1979-80	381	923
1980-81	445	911

Year	Grant £'000	At 1992-93 prices
1981-82	535	1,000
1982-83	583	1,017
1983-84	618	1,030
1984-85	649	1,031
1985-86	675	1,016
1986-87	695	1,013
1987-88	712	984
1988-89	730	941
1989-90	768	929
1990-91	822	919
1991-92	841	877

This Department made no grants to law centres before 1974-75. The figures from then to date are set out in the table. At various times during the past 20 years some law centres have received central Government funding from sources other than the Lord Chancellor's Department. These figures do not include income from the Legal Aid Fund.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Hong Kong

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement in respect of the governor of Hong Kong's emergency meeting held on 25 September, in connection with threats to the colony's marine police officers by Chinese security officials in the colony's waters.

Mr. Goodlad: On 25 September, a Hong Kong fishing vessel was boarded by Chinese security officers within Hong Kong territorial waters. This was a serious incident and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs raised it with the Chinese Foreign Minister on the same day. On 29 September, Chinese officials made clear to the Hong Kong Government that the action of the Chinese officers concerned had been incorrect, and offered apologies for the incident. This response underlines the shared interest of Hong Kong and China in effective cooperation to combat smuggling.

UN Assembly Speech

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will set out in the *Official Report* the main points he made in his speech to the General Assembly of the United Nations in September; and what was the response he received from his counterparts.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The main purpose of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs' speech, a copy of which has been placed in the Library of the House, was to offer a response, on behalf of the European Community and its member states, to the Secretary-General's report "An Agenda for Peace". In the subsequent debate in the general assembly there was widespread agreement that the report was welcome, and that it provided a quarry of ideas to be followed up on a case-by-case basis and in the relevant UN bodies.

Test Ban Talks

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has any plans to discuss with his French counterpart the resumption of multilateral nuclear test ban treaty talks.

Mr. Garel-Jones: We have regular discussions with the French Government on a range of nuclear defence issues, including nuclear testing. We have always accepted a comprehensive test ban as a long-term goal, but we continue to believe that nuclear testing is the best means of ensuring the safety and credibility of our nuclear deterrent.

Immigration

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the current backlog in each of the queues at the following posts (a) Bombay, (b) New Delhi, (c) Islamabad, (d) Karachi, (e) Dhaka, (f) Nairobi and (g) Dar-es-Salaam; and what is the average length of time in each queue from application to interview.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: As at 31 August the number of people waiting for interviews for entry clearance were:

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total
Bombay	0	163	424	205	792
New Delhi	0	297	295	134	726
Islamabad	3	166	52	465	686
Karachi	5	108	34	8	155
Dhaka	350	1,679	212	277	2,518

There are no queues in Nairobi or Dar-el-Salaam.
The estimated waiting times, in months, are:

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Bombay	—	4	9	10
New Delhi	—	3	7	10
Islamabad	3	3	6	10
Karachi	2	2	3	7
Dhaka	3	6	7	9

Yugoslavia

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Walsall, North of 19 October *Official Report*, columns 34-35, on war crimes in former Yugoslavia, if Her Majesty's Government will consider submitting information to the United Nations on the actions of Slobodan Milosevic and Radovan Karadzic in connection with crimes against humanity; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer that I gave to him on 19 October, at columns 34-35.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Clenbuterol

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage whether he will introduce legislation to ban the possession of the drug Clenbuterol for sporting purposes.

Mr. Brooke: The Government have no plans at present to do so.

Sports Sponsorship

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage by what date the pound-for-pound business sports sponsorship incentive scheme announced on 19 December 1991 will be established; how much funding will be allocated to the scheme; over what timescale it will operate; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: The Government remain firmly committed to Sportmatch. I shall soon make an announcement on its launch date and funding. It will be to the benefit of the scheme and all those involved in it if Sportmatch can be launched with a secure future. No time scale has been set for the operation of the scheme. This will depend very largely on its success.

EDUCATION

Grant-maintained Schools

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will give the approximate costs arising in his Department from the direct administration of grant-maintained schools for the year 1992, or 1991-92, and the estimated costs he expects to arise either in 1993, or the financial year 1993-94, stating the actual or expected number of schools in respect of each period.

Mr. Forth: The running costs of staff employed on the direct administration of GM schools and associated policy were £706,000 in 1991-92. Estimated outturn for 1992-93 is £1,450,000. Budgets for 1993-94 have not yet been set. In March 1992 there were 143 GM schools operating. There are currently 278 GM schools operating, with 30 more approved or minded to approve.

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what arrangements he has made for allocating costs of the national fund for in-service training of teachers in grant-maintained schools for the year 1992-93; and what is the approximate expenditure for this purpose which he expects to allocate in the year 1993-94, expressed as an aggregate sum, and as the amount per teacher eligible for such training.

Mr. Forth: In 1992-93 each grant-maintained school is eligible for a special purpose grant (development) allocated at the rate of £42.50 per pupil. Schools are expected to spend at least half of this grant on staff training and development. Grant-maintained schools may also meet such costs out of their annual maintenance grant. Decisions have not yet been taken about special purpose grant (development) allocations for 1993-94.

University Research

Mr. Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what proportion of gross domestic product is devoted to research in universities; and what information he had for the comparative figures in other EC countries.

Mr. Forman: Data in the 1992 annual review of Government-funded research and development indicate that in 1990 0.3 per cent. of United Kingdom GDP was spent on research and development in higher education, compared with 0.4 per cent. in Germany, 0.3 per cent. in France and 0.25 per cent. in Italy.

Mr. Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what proportion of research in British universities is funded by charities; and what information he has on the comparable figures in other European countries.

Mr. Forman: United Kingdom charities provided 22.3 per cent. of the income from research grants and contracts of United Kingdom universities in 1990-91. Comparable information for other countries is not available.

Universities (Clerical Staff)

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what steps he plans to take to ensure comparability in the rates of pay and conditions of work of the clerical staff of universities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forman: The pay of clerical staff employed by the universities is entirely a matter for their employers. The Government have no intention of becoming involved in the negotiating arrangements.

Defence Research

Mr. Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what proportion of Government-funded research in British universities is devoted to defence issues.

Mr. Forman: Data in the 1992 annual review of Government-funded research and development show that in 1990-91 research and development spending by the Ministry of Defence accounted for 6.5 per cent. of all specific Government funding for research and development in higher education institutions.

University Staff Pay

Mr. Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what role the trade unions will have in the operation of new pay structures for university staff at university and college levels.

Mr. Forman: The Government expect employers in higher education to settle their own future negotiating arrangements including any arrangements for trade union involvement.

Non-maintained Special Schools

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what representations he has received from St. Vincents school for blind and partially sighted children in Liverpool in respect of the consultative paper on special educational needs; what his response has been; and if he will make a statement on the future of such non-maintained special schools.

Mr. Forth: I have replied to several Members about the future of non-maintained special schools under our proposed legislation. Schools such as St. Vincent's should continue to offer high-quality special education. Their future is not threatened by our legislative proposals.

Child Care and Nursery Education

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list the relative positions of each member state of the European Community in respect of the provision of child care and nursery education.

Mr. Forth: It is not possible to offer comprehensive comparisons across the European Community but statistical comparisons of educational and group day care provision in a majority of EC states are available for 1987. Figures for participation in public and private sector provision in that year are as follows:

	Percentages ¹			
	Education		Day Care	
	3-4	3-5	3-4	3-5
Belgium	96	97	⁵ —	⁵ —
France	98	99	⁵ —	⁵ —
Germany	56	66	⁵ —	⁵ —
Ireland	30	³ 54	n/a	14
Italy (Estimated)	78	81	⁵ —	⁵ —
Luxembourg (Estimated)	49	65	⁶ n/a	⁶ n/a
Netherlands	51	67	25	417
Spain	53	70	⁵ —	⁵ —
United Kingdom	45	64	241	227

¹ Percentages of population, aged at 1 January.

² Estimated (avoiding double counting with education).

³ For 1985.

⁴ For 1983.

⁵ —nil or negligible.

⁶ n/a not available.

Only the United Kingdom and the Netherlands have compulsory full-time education from the age of five; in the other countries quoted this begins at six.

TRANSPORT

Buses, London

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what surveys or investigations he has made concerning the location, capacity, and management of bus stands in central London after the proposed deregulation and privatisation of its bus services.

Mr. Norris: This is a matter for which the London Bus Executive will be responsible. The Government do not anticipate that deregulation will cause any significant changes in the provision and usage of bus stands. However, this is a point which can be considered further by the Department's consultative forum, whose first meeting I announced on 13 May, as part of its remit to advise on the practical aspects of implementing deregulation in London.

Cannon Street Collision

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he is taking to implement the recommendations in the report on the collision of 8 January 1991 at Cannon Street station that legislation should be introduced making it an offence for railway employees with safety responsibilities to be impaired by the consumption of alcohol or drugs.

Mr. Freeman: The Transport and Works Act, which received Royal Assent on 16 March 1992, contains new comprehensive provisions to deal with drink and drugs offences on the railways. The offences, penalties and police testing powers are similar to those under the Road Traffic Act. The new provisions will come into force on 7 December 1992.

Rail Services

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will request the British Railways Board to report on the practicality of introducing a rail service between Clapham and Willesden junctions on the west London line, calling at appropriate intermediate stations, subsequent on the completion of its electrification.

Mr. Freeman: This is being examined by a working group of officials representing British Railways, London Transport, the Department of Transport, four London boroughs, and the local business community. I expect its report shortly.

Akatsuki Maru

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has received from his Japanese counterpart in regard to safety and security arrangements made for the voyage of the Akatsuki Maru carrier-ship between Japan, La Hague in France and Sellafield transporting plutonium.

Mr. Norris: None.

British Rail Freight

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what fee was agreed by Mercer Management Consulting to advise his Department and British Rail on the sale of British Rail's freight operations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: This information is commercially confidential.

Mr. Lester: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to take external advice on the privatisation of British Rail's freight operations.

Mr. Freeman: The Department of Transport and the British Railways Board have jointly commissioned Mercer Management Consulting to provide detailed advice on structural options for the transfer to the private sector of British Rail's domestic and international freight services, including the rail express systems parcel business. Work on the study commenced on 28 September.

Safety Schemes

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the expected average rate of return from the £31 million transport supplementary grant earmarked for local safety schemes in the financial year 1991-92.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Returns provided by local authorities indicate that the sum earmarked for local safety schemes in the transport supplementary grant settlement for 1991-92 produced an average first year rate of return of 76 per cent., and over the first three years a rate of return of 213 per cent.

ENVIRONMENT

National Rivers Authority

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what estimate he has made of staff changes in each of the National Rivers Authority regions as a result of the proposed environment agency; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: The number and distribution of staff within the environment agency will be matters for its management.

Recycling

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to ensure that the United Kingdom meets its recycling target of 25 per cent. of household waste by 2000.

Mr. Maclean: We are undertaking a wide range of measures to ensure that we reach our recycling target. In particular, we are setting a legislative and economic framework designed to make recycling the preferred choice when it is the best environmental option.

The Environmental Protection Act 1990 introduces the most favourable legal framework for recycling ever provided in this country. To help authorities in England to implement their recycling strategies, we have introduced a programme of supplementary credit approvals. In order to assist industry to overcome technical and market barriers to recycling, the Government provides funding for research and development through the ETIS scheme, operated jointly by my Department and the Department of Trade and Industry, and the DEMOS and EUROENVIRON schemes, administered by the Department of Trade and Industry. We have introduced an economic incentive in the form of recycling credits; my noble Friend, Lord Strathclyde announced on 30 September that the value of credits will double from 1 April 1994.

Ozone-destroying Chemicals

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received concerning the continued production of ozone-destroying chemicals.

Mr. Maclean: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State has received many representations on this issue.

Chlorofluorocarbons

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his estimate of the quantity of (a) chlorofluorocarbons, (b) halons and (c) methyl chloroform produced in (i) 1990-91, (ii) 1991-92 and (iii) proposed for 1992-93.

Mr. Maclean: An estimated 681 kilotonnes of CFCs were produced worldwide in 1991. Figures are not yet available for 1992, but are expected to show a sharp decline. Figures are not available for worldwide production of halons or methyl chloroform.

Montreal Protocol

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what consultation he has undertaken with industry prior to the Montreal protocol renegotiation in Copenhagen from 17 to 25 November.

Mr. Maclean: Officials from this Department and the Department of Trade and Industry meet representatives from the relevant industry sectors on a regular basis to discuss issues related to the Montreal protocol.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what consultation he has undertaken with environmental groups prior to the Montreal protocol renegotiation in Copenhagen from 17 to 25 November.

Mr. Maclean: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State receives many communications from such groups. He met representatives of Greenpeace on 21 September when the Montreal protocol, together with various other environmental issues, was discussed.

Hydrochlorofluorocarbons

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proposals he has for an increase in the production of the use of hydrochlorofluorocarbons as transitional substances.

Mr. Maclean: The United Kingdom Government support the tightest possible limits on the use of HCFCs consistent with achieving the fastest possible elimination of the consumption of CFCs. The details of these controls will be worked out with other Montreal protocol parties in Copenhagen.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement relating to the effect on the environment of continued production of HCFCs and other chemicals.

Mr. Maclean: In the forthcoming revision of the Montreal protocol on substances that deplete the ozone layer we will promote provisions to ensure the HCFCs are used only in those applications where they are the only practicable alternative to use of the much more damaging CFCs. The use of HCFCs instead of CFCs in these applications will be beneficial for the ozone layer.

Radioactive Wastes

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what communications he has had with the Federal German Environment Ministry as regards to the acceptability to Germany of implementing the radiological equivalence plan for the return of radioactive wastes arising from reprocessing as announced to Parliament on 2 May 1986, *Official Report*, column 500.

Mr. Maclean: The question of the substitution of radioactive wastes remains under consideration. The views of the German government on any proposals made by British Nuclear Fuels plc will be a matter to be taken up as appropriate with the German Government by BNFL's customers.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment pursuant to his reply of 14 July, *Official Report*, columns 643-4, if he has now received from the Radioactive Waste Management Advisory Committee its views on the implementation of the radiological equivalence proposals for the return of radioactive wastes after reprocessing.

Mr. Maclean: Yes, and I am considering the Radioactive Waste Management Advisory Committee's report.

Probation Hostels

Mr. David Howell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether planning permission is required for a mainly probation hostel to switch to a mainly bail hostel.

Mr. Baldry: The conversion of a building used mainly as a probation hostel to one used mainly as a bail hostel would probably not require planning permission, unless the building were enlarged or the exterior substantially altered.

Rents

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assumption he proposes to apply in respect of the maximum increase in guidelines rents to take effect from April 1993, under the housing revenue account subsidy determinations.

Mr. Baldry: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State will consult local authorities and other interested organisations in November on the proposed HRA subsidy determinations for 1993-94, including the proposed maximum increase in rent guidelines. His final decisions will be announced in December.

Housing Funds

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give the place, manner or mode in which he has placed restrictions on the expenditure of local authorities on new municipal housing from funds accrued by them from sales of residential premises, together with the statutory basis of such restriction, and the approximate total sums of such funds now available for such building; and if he will make a statement on the policy of Her Majesty's Government concerning the future use of these funds.

Mr. Robin Squire: Under part IV of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989, local authorities may use 25 per cent. of their capital receipts from the sale of council houses, and 50 per cent. of most other receipts, to finance new capital expenditure on any service. They are required to set aside the balance as provision to meet credit liabilities. The total of the amounts set aside under the present capital finance system, including receipts from council house sales, was about £5.5 billion at 31 March 1991. If authorities were allowed to spend a larger proportion of their capital receipts, the net indebtedness would rise and their total of spending by the public sector and the public sector borrowing requirement would be increased. The present system has also enabled a greater proportion of capital receipts to be recycled in the form of new credit approvals to those authorities where needs are greatest. We therefore have no plans to change these arrangements.

Municipal Mutual Insurance

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what discussions and meetings he has had concerning Municipal Mutual Insurance and local government insurance.

Mr. Robin Squire: None.

City Challenge

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much money has so far been awarded under the city challenge programme.

Mr. Robin Squire: Subject to satisfactory performance by pacemakers and the approval of authorities' action

plans for round 2, city challenge expenditure on pacemakers and round 2 winners will be £82.5 million and £150 million per annum respectively for five years. No decisions on future rounds of city challenge have yet been taken.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when the next round of the city challenge awards is to be announced.

Mr. Robin Squire: Twenty local authorities, with their partners, bid successfully in the second round of city challenge and are currently preparing five year action plans for ministerial approval with a view to implementation from April 1993. They have been asked to submit their completed plans by 31 December 1992 and it is intended that approval decisions will be announced in February 1993. A decision about subsequent rounds of city challenge will be made in due course.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much extra Government grant he has determined he will need to provide to compensate for the fact that average house prices are lower than the Government estimated for the council tax valuation.

Mr. Robin Squire: The provision for Government grant each year depends on a large number of factors. These include the Government's view of the appropriate total of revenue spending by local authorities, the estimated amount of non-domestic rates, the implications for local taxes and what the country can afford. Average house prices are not a material consideration, either under the present system or under the forthcoming council tax.

Competitive Tendering

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what studies he has carried out into the costs or savings of compulsory competitive tendering.

Mr. Robin Squire: The Department has commissioned two studies by the Institute of Local Government Studies at the university of Birmingham to evaluate the effects of the competitive tendering provisions in the Local Government Planning and Land Act 1980 and the Local Government Act 1988 on local authorities' direct service organisations. The studies include consideration of the costs and savings.

A report summarising the initial findings of the evaluation of the 1988 Act was published in February 1991. Copies are available in the House Library. I anticipate that final reports for both studies will be published in the new year.

Letchworth Garden City Corporation

Mr. Heald: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has for the long-term future of Letchworth garden city corporation.

Mr. Baldry: The Corporation was established as a statutory body under the Letchworth Garden City Corporation Act 1962 to manage the garden city estate. The Department recently invited the Corporation to consider how best to undertake its functions within the private sector, while retaining the fundamental aims and objectives of the garden city movement.

The corporation has indicated that it intends to place a Bill before Parliament this November to transfer the assets, liabilities and activities of the corporation to a new charitable organisation to be called the Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation. The corporation is currently undertaking a consultation exercise on its proposals.

The Department supports the corporation's proposed way forward.

Poll Tax

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will provide the total and a breakdown of the costs so far of the implementation of the poll tax.

Mr. Robin Squire: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Falkirk, West (Mr. Canavan) on 15 July 1992, *Official Report* column 1132.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the total expenditure so far by his Department on publicising the poll tax and related information.

Mr. Robin Squire: Since enactment, my Department has produced, distributed, and maintained a series of leaflets on the community charge system. At various times advertising was taken to draw the attention of the public to these leaflets and to the availability of community charge benefit and transitional relief and how to claim them. The costs to date are £5,710,500.

Tarmac Construction

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list all funds paid to Tarmac Construction in connection with its takeover of the Property Services Agency; and if he will give a statement of how these sums were arrived at.

Mr. Redwood: No funds have been paid to Tarmac Construction as yet. The amounts to be paid over in connection with Tarmac's purchase of PSA Projects were determined by open competition and will depend on the numbers of staff choosing to transfer on sale with the business, the completion audit and thereafter on the numbers of any redundancies should there be insufficient work in the future to sustain employment levels as planned.

Opencast Coal

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what proposals he has to amend the passage in mineral planning guidance 3 of 1988 on opencast which says that it is in the national interest to maximise coal production;

(2) if he will withdraw mineral planning guidance 3 on opencast and let local councils decide whether they want opencast in their area.

Mr. Baldry: I announced on 15 July that the guidelines will be revised. My Department expects to bring forward a draft for public consultation next year. I hope that the hon. Member will appreciate that I cannot pre-empt what the revised guidelines will say.

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what consideration he will give to the

level of overall coal production in taking the decision on whether an opencast site should be allowed at Baddesley Ensor in Warwickshire;

(2) when he expects to announce his decision on the application for an opencast site at Baddesley Ensor in Warwickshire.

Mr. Baldry: I shall take account of all considerations which are material to the planning decision. The decision will be announced as soon as possible.

Sludge Incinerators

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what planning applications for sludge incinerators are currently being considered by planning authorities in England and Wales; and if he will name those which he has called in for public inquiry.

Mr. Baldry: There is no mechanism whereby the Secretary of State for the Environment or the Secretary of State for Wales are automatically informed of all planning applications for sewerage sludge incinerators, as planning applications are primarily a matter for the local planning authorities. However the Town and Country Planning (Development Plans and Consultation) Directions 1992 require local planning authorities to notify the Secretaries of State of development proposals which would significantly prejudice implementation of a development plan. We are therefore aware of only two applications currently before local planning authorities. These are Thames Water's incinerator proposals at Crossness in the London borough of Bexley and at Beckton in the London borough of Newham. Neither of these applications has been called in. There may be other applications of which we are unaware.

In addition to these current applications, Northumbrian Water and International Technology Europe Ltd. have appealed to the Secretary of State in respect of their incinerator proposals at East Howden in North Tyneside and at Portrath in Stockton-on-Tees; a public inquiry has been held and the Secretary of State is considering the inspector's report.

Local Government

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what studies he has conducted or intends to conduct into the relative costs of two-tier and single-tier structures for local government.

Mr. Robin Squire: The Local Government Commission will assess the costs and benefits of changes to local government structure in the shire counties as it carries out its reviews area by area. In 1984 we estimated that some £100 million long-term savings per annum resulting from staff reductions should follow abolition of the Greater London council and the metropolitan county councils. We later estimated that some 6,300 posts had been saved immediately on abolition.

WALES

Manufacturing Trainees

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many (a) apprenticeships and (b) trainee posts in manufacturing industry were available in Wales in each year from 1979 onwards.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Estimates from the Employment Department's short-term employment surveys are given in the table. Welsh data from this source are available only from 1981 up to 1990 after which this inquiry was discontinued. The labour force survey sample in Wales does not allow for reliable estimates of manufacturing apprentice numbers for Wales, but the 1992 results showed that an estimated 206,000 people of working age across all industries in Wales had received a job-related training in the four weeks prior to the survey compared with a figure of 95,000 in 1984, when this information was first recorded.

<i>Manufacturing industries</i>		
<i>Year</i>	<i>Number of apprentices (thousands)</i>	<i>Number of other trainees (thousands)</i>
1981	6.0	1.9
1982	4.7	1.8
1983	3.6	1.2
1984	3.1	1.4
1985	2.8	0.9
1986	2.3	1.1
1987	2.3	1.4
1988	2.4	1.3
1989	2.2	1.3
1990	2.2	1.7

Source: Short Term Employment Surveys, Employment Department.

Jobs

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give details of all jobs that have transferred from companies in Wales to companies operating in other EC countries in the last four years including dates, company names and totals of jobs lost to Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: This information is not available.

DWR Cymru

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many prosecutions of DWR Cymru have been made since September 1991; and what pollution incidents were involved.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Information regarding prosecutions brought by the National Rivers Authority against pollution incidents occurring in its Welsh region during 1991 is contained in the authority's report "Water Pollution Incidents in 1991" published in September 1992, a copy of which is available in the Library of the House. This is the second report, which is updated annually.

Paediatric Occupational Therapy

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will grant special funds to Clwyd health authority for the establishment of a paediatric occupational therapy service in Clwyd.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Clwyd health authority is required to formulate a local strategy for health jointly with the family health services authority and to use the resources which it has at its disposal for the health care needs of its resident population in accordance with its own locally determined priorities. If it wishes to see a new service offered by service providers in Clwyd, it should explore with those providers and local GP fund holders the viability of developing such a service.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many paediatric occupational therapy services there are in each of the health authorities of Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The requested information is not held centrally.

Myalgic Encephalomyelitis

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what initiatives he is taking concerning the assessment and treatment of myalgic encephalomyelitis.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The Welsh Office, in common with other Government health Departments, accepts myalgic encephalomyelitis—ME—as a debilitating and distressing condition.

The protocol for investment in health gain, pain, discomfort and palliative care, launched by the Department earlier this month, recognises ME as a cause of pain and discomfort, and acknowledges the need for research on the nature and pattern of this illness, and on possible treatments.

The protocol was developed by the Welsh Health Planning Forum mainly to assist health authorities in developing their local strategies for health. ME will, therefore, be considered by all health authorities as they devise individual strategies.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the incidence of myalgic encephalomyelitis in Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Information on the incidence of myalgic encephalomyelitis in Wales is not held centrally.

Assisted Areas

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his estimate of public expenditure in those areas which have assisted area status for each of the years since 1980.

Mr. David Hunt: The information is not available in the form requested. To produce the data in this format would involve disproportionate time and cost.

Orthoptics

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many orthoptic patients were treated outside the Clwyd Health Authority area because of lack of staff or facilities in the past 12 months; and what is his estimate of the figures for the next 12 months.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The requested information is not held centrally.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what initiatives he intends to take to improve waiting time for treatment in orthoptic departments in (a) Clwyd health authority and (b) Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Funding is not made available specifically for improving orthoptic waiting lists as the setting of priorities is a matter for health authorities. However, central funding has been provided which will assist authorities in the reduction of overall waiting times.

A total of £1 million has already been allocated to Welsh health authorities under this year's waiting times initiative: Clwyd received £140,300. Funding is not aimed at specific specialities, but at those people who have been waiting more than two years for non-urgent treatment; 18 months for hip or knee replacement or cataract operations and one month for urgent treatment.

Central funding of £2.1 million has been made available to Welsh health authorities under the treatment centre initiative: provision for Clwyd health authority has been made for 110 cataract operations at the ophthalmic treatment centre in Bangor at a cost of £91,630.

The authority has also received £164,806, from £1.6 million set aside to assist health authorities in developing their day surgery facilities; £12,500 of this allocation is being used to improve the provision of ophthalmic day case facilities.

Housing, Buckley

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will meet representatives of Alyn and Deeside district council to discuss the provision of specific additional funding for the refurbishment of the houses of Terring crescent, Buckley; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: We have no plans to do so. It must be for the district council to decide what priority to give the refurbishment of these homes within the resources available to it.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the number of confirmed cases of bovine spongiform encephalopathy in each county in each month since June.

Mr. Gummer: The information as requested for Great Britain is as follows—some of these confirmed cases will have a date of clinical onset and date of report before 30 May 1992.

County/region	June (30 May- 26 June)	July (27 June- 31 July)	August (1 August- 28 August)	September (29 August- 25 September)	October (26 September- 16 October)
Ireland:					
Avon	68	78	42	62	18
Bedfordshire	7	5	3	5	10
Berkshire	17	23	16	20	4
Buckinghamshire	23	36	19	21	9
Cambridgeshire	7	9	7	7	4
Cheshire	109	215	98	127	118
Cleveland	3	4	0	6	3
Cornwall	285	189	184	126	170

County/region	June (30 May- 26 June)	July (27 June- 31 July)	August (1 August- 28 August)	September (29 August- 25 September)	October (26 September- 16 October)
Cumbria	129	89	97	73	75
Derbyshire	70	97	62	74	29
Devon	410	280	236	162	262
Dorset	252	167	129	137	69
Durham	26	13	8	18	8
Essex	14	22	6	9	10
Gloucestershire	69	65	63	67	26
Hampshire	76	86	56	39	38
Hereford and Worcester	65	55	28	72	32
Hertfordshire	12	17	6	5	15
Humberside	22	7	3	10	6
Isle of Wight	18	14	9	8	18
Kent	43	40	32	18	12
Lancashire	137	115	126	61	87
Leicestershire	56	51	59	65	14
Lincolnshire	20	25	16	17	10
London	3	4	1	1	1
Manchester	3	7	4	1	10
Merseyside	7	4	2	3	0
Norfolk	108	88	59	44	22
Northamptonshire	17	14	28	16	10
Northumberland	31	21	8	24	16
Nottinghamshire	16	32	19	14	1
Oxfordshire	49	52	33	27	22
Shropshire	119	87	63	81	51
Somerset	313	253	186	186	80
Staffordshire	134	85	42	119	74
Suffolk	37	44	35	26	23
Surrey	24	28	21	18	10
Sussex East	47	39	18	35	6
Sussex West	56	53	44	48	21
Tyne and Wear	2	0	0	2	1
Warwickshire	42	35	12	17	14
West Midlands	4	6	1	2	2
Wiltshire	156	179	95	109	91
Yorkshire North	166	134	84	164	80
Yorkshire South	15	13	5	11	9
Yorkshire West	24	13	3	25	8
Wales:					
Clwyd	56	42	33	46	36
Dyfed	218	147	146	152	88
Glamorgan North	2	1	6	4	0
Glamorgan South	6	9	11	10	6
Glamorgan West	5	2	4	5	1
Gwent	20	17	17	14	18
Gwynedd	13	14	14	12	11
Powys	52	62	23	34	28
Scotland:					
Borders	4	5	9	12	5
Central	1	4	1	4	3
Dumfries	45	57	36	47	23
Fife	7	0	4	2	1
Grampian	23	25	22	24	22
Highland	4	1	4	8	4
Lothian	3	1	1	2	2
Orkney	0	1	1	2	2
Shetland	0	0	0	0	0
Strathclyde	28	47	25	38	34
Tayside	8	3	6	15	12
Western Isles	0	0	0	0	0

Bananas

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans he has to consult with his European Community colleagues on the question of future EC banana quotas; what the effects are likely to be for the United Kingdom's trade with Belize; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: The Agriculture Council will discuss the Commission's proposals for a common organisation of the

market in bananas at its next meeting on 26 and 27 October. My right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food has discussed with the Prime Minister of Belize the proposed distinction to be drawn between traditional and non-traditional exports. We shall ensure that discussions in the Community take account of his concerns.

PRIME MINISTER

Single Market

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Prime Minister what measures are outstanding to complete the single market.

The Prime Minister: Of the 282 measures in the Commission's White Paper, "Completing the Internal Market", only 25 have not yet reached at least a common position or political agreement.

Of these, six fall into the agriculture area; five deal with intellectual property; five are related to VAT; four are on company law; two on financial services; two on tax; and one on rights of residence.

India

Mr. Khabra: To ask the Prime Minister if he will place in the Library the latest text of the extradition treaty with India.

The Prime Minister: The extradition treaty between the United Kingdom and India was signed on 23 September 1992 and copies placed in the Libraries of both Houses on that date.

Western Shoshone Indian Land

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Prime Minister what correspondence Her Majesty's Government have received from Chief Raymond Yowell of the Western Shoshone National Council, Nevada, concerning the continued use by the United Kingdom of the Department of Energy nuclear weapons test site on Western Shoshone Indian land.

The Prime Minister: The only correspondence I have received was in October 1991. The British ambassador in Washington replied on my behalf. A copy of Sir Robin Renwick's letter was placed in the Library of the House.

United Nations Day

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Prime Minister what plans Her Majesty's Government have to mark United Nations Day on 24 October.

The Prime Minister: The flag of the United Nations will be flown in Parliament square on 24 October.

Our commitment to the United Nations, as a founder of the organisation and a permanent member of the Security Council, remains as firm as ever. The end of the cold war and successes in, for example, Namibia and Kuwait have given the United Nations new authority. We welcome that and will continue to work for a stronger, more effective United Nations which can meet the challenges of the 1990s.

EC Commissioners

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Prime Minister when he will be making a statement on the appointment of the United Kingdom's EC Commissioners.

The Prime Minister: As announced on 20 October, I have nominated Sir Leon Brittan and Mr. Bruce Millan to serve in the Commission of the European Communities taking office in January 1993.

Ministry of Justice

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Prime Minister what plans he has to abolish the Lord Chancellor's Department to make way for a Ministry of Justice.

The Prime Minister: None.

Government Consultants

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Prime Minister if he will publish guidelines concerning the appointment of consultants by his Government.

The Prime Minister: A guidance booklet on seeking help from management consultants was published by HM Treasury in May 1990. This booklet, copies of which are available in the Libraries of both Houses, also identifies central sources of advice and guidance for other types of consultancy, for example, information and technology and purchasing.

Subsidiarity

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Prime Minister if he will publish the 22-page document including a draft inter-institute agreement relating to the principle of subsidiarity forwarded to him by the President of the Commission of the European Communities.

The Prime Minister: The President of the Commission made a substantial presentation on subsidiarity at the Birmingham European Council, but he has not yet formally submitted a Commission paper. When the Commission submits a paper to the Council it will, of course, be published and deposited in the normal way.

Engagements

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 22 October.

Sir Peter Tapsell: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 22 October.

The Prime Minister: This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

EMPLOYMENT

Disabled People

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the current percentage of disabled people in employment.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Figures covering all disabled people are not readily available; however, we do have information for disabled people of working age.

Research commissioned by the Department and published in 1990 found that 78 per cent. of people in Great Britain who were occupationally handicapped, economically active and of working age, were in work.

The labour force survey for the spring quarter of 1992 found that 80 per cent. of people in Great Britain who had a health problem or disability which limited the kind of work they could do, were economically active and were of working age, were in work.

Direct comparison between these findings is difficult, because they do not always use the same definitions, in particular the definition of disability.

Youth Training

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the expenditure on youth training in the London East training and enterprise council area in 1991; and what it is in the current year.

Mr. McLoughlin: Expenditure on youth training in the London East TEC area in the period 1 April 1991 to 31 March 1992 was £10,051,191. Figures from 1 April 1992 are not yet available. The budget for expenditure for YT in the LETEC area for the current financial year is £13,056,731.

DEFENCE

Festival Sites

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the disused sites owned by his Department which might be available for free festivals following the request to his Department for suitable sites to be identified; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: There are no plans to make available MOD sites for free festivals.

SCOTLAND

Water and Sewerage

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will estimate the replacement costs of the assets of each Scottish water authority; if he will estimate for each authority what percentage of the population are supplied with (a) mains water and (b) sewerage by that authority; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro: Details of the assets of each Scottish water authority are not held centrally. The percentages of population receiving public mains water and public sewerage are given in the table.

Authority	Proportion of population re- ceiving mains water Per cent.	Proportion of population re- ceiving sewerage Per cent.
<i>Regional Councils</i>		
Borders	86.4	81.5
Central	98.7	96.7
Dumfries and Galloway	89.8	85.0
Fife	98.9	98.0
Grampian	93.0	87.5
Highland	97.5	80.4
Lothian	100.0	98.0
Strathclyde	99.8	98.4
Tayside	97.1	92.9
<i>Islands Councils</i>		
Orkney	98.0	47.3
Shetland	99.0	65.0
Western Isles	98.0	75.0
Scotland (weighted average)	98.1	94.8

Source: The UK Water Industry—Water Services and Costs 1990/91, published by the Centre for the Study of Regulated Industries.

Deregulation

Mr. Sproat: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what financial provisions, and how much, he has made within his Department in order to look at the potential for deregulation of each of the regulatory measures for which he has responsibility.

Mr. Allan Stewart: All Departments within the Scottish Office have an ongoing responsibility to identify potential areas for deregulation and any Department proposing new legislation or regulations which are likely to impose a burden on business must carry out an assessment of the cost to business of compliance. No separate financial provision has been made within the operating costs of the Scottish Office departments for those purposes.

Bellwin Formula

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland which local authorities claimed assistance under the Bellwin formula, following the storm damage of December 1991 and new year's day 1992; and how much was (a) claimed by and (b) paid to each authority under the scheme.

Mr. Allan Stewart: I announced the triggering of the Bellwin scheme on 10 January. On that occasion, the triggering applied to the Shetland, Orkney, and Western Isles islands council areas, and Highland and Central regions. Only Shetland islands council has submitted a claim for financial assistance this totals £83,000. Payment will be made once the council has provided some outstanding information to establish the eligibility of the expenditure incurred.

Water Industry

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the representations received regarding the future arrangements for the organisation of the water industry in Scotland.

Sir Hector Monro: Some 1,400 representations have been received to date.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the meetings or discussions held between his Department and (a) English water companies and (b) French water companies in the last two months.

Sir Hector Monro: One meeting has been held with an English water company, at its request, to discuss matters of mutual interest.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when the consultants' report on the future of the water industry in Scotland will be published.

Sir Hector Monro: A consultation document setting out a range of options for the future structure of the water and sewerage service in Scotland will be published shortly. The consultants' report itself will not be published.

Hampden Park

Mr. Gallie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will publish a list of tenderers for the upgrading of Hampden park;

(2) by what date tenders are to be submitted for the upgrading of Hampden park;

(3) if he will ensure that at least one independent construction company with its administrative base in Scotland is included on the list of tenderers for the upgrading of Hampden park;

(4) how much the Scottish Office has invested in the joint venture with the Scottish Football Association and the Football Trust for the upgrading of Hampden park.

Sir Hector Monro: The Government are providing £3.5 million as a cash-limited contribution towards a £12 million project being undertaken by the national stadium committee to make Hampden park all-seated, in line with Taylor report requirements. The national stadium committee, set up by Queen's Park FC, the Scottish Football Association and the Scottish Football League to respond to Scotland's national football stadium needs, is solely responsible for all matters relating to the contracts for work to make Hampden all-seated.

National Council for Vocational Qualifications

Mr. Barry Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the progress of the National Council for Vocational Qualifications programme and its implementation.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton [*holding answer 19 October 1992*]: The remit of the National Council for Vocational Qualifications does not extend to Scotland. The equivalent body, which is responsible for the accreditation and award of vocational qualifications in Scotland, is the Scottish Vocational Education Council.

The Scottish programme is designed to make available vocational qualifications which are broadly compatible with those being developed by the National Council for Vocational Qualifications. Scottish vocational qualifications—SVQs—embrace industry-determined standards to meet the needs of specific occupations. The target set by the Government was to have these qualifications in place for 80 per cent. of the Scottish work force by December 1992. The Scottish Vocational Education Council is well on course towards meeting this target, 288 individual SVQs having been accredited to date.

Dounreay

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has received on the cause and cost of the technical problem that resulted in the shut-down for an indefinite period of the prototype fast reactor at Dounreay; and when is it expected to re-open.

Mr. Eggar: I have been asked to reply.

We receive regular reports from the Atomic Energy Authority on the performance of the prototype fast reactor. It has been shut down since 29 June 1991 when a leak of oil into the primary sodium cooling circuit was discovered. The major cost has been the loss of electricity revenue. The amount involved is commercially confidential. I understand from the AEA that it hopes to restart the reactor by the end of January.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Collapsed Holiday Firms

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what representations he has received seeking increased powers to deal with holiday firms which have collapsed without bonding and assistance to those people who have lost money or their holiday.

Mr. Leigh: I have had a number of such representations. I shall shortly be laying before Parliament regulations which will require all organisers of packages, including package holidays, to have security for prepayments in the event of insolvency.

Land Travel

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many people were affected by the collapse of Land Travel.

Mr. Leigh: The exact number of people affected by the collapse of Land Travel is not known since claims are still being received by the liquidator. In the region of 40,000 claims have been submitted so far but many of these are for multiple bookings.

Nuclear Reprocessing

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will set out the implications for United Kingdom civil nuclear reprocessing at Sellafield and Dounreay of the provisions of articles 107a to 107c on the amendments concerning Euratom in the treaty on European Union (Cm 1934).

Mr. Eggar: There are none. These articles bring the Euratom treaty into line with the treaty of Rome, as amended by the treaty of European union.

Export Licences

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answer of 6 July, *Official Report*, column 28, if he has now received a response from *The Independent* newspaper in regard to export licences.

Mr. Needham: No.

Wave Energy

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he expects to receive the report on wave energy by Tom Thorpe commissioned by his predecessor in April 1989.

Mr. Eggar: The report on the wave energy review is in preparation, and I expect to receive a copy by the end of the year.

Radioactive Materials

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will investigate the discovery of radioactive materials on 11 October at an unlicensed site in Cranbrook, Kent, in regard to the application of safeguards to the materials.

Mr. Eggar: A small radioactive source was discovered at an address in Cranbrook, Kent on 11 October and was

taken to Dungeness power station for analysis. If the substance is confirmed to be subject to safeguards legislation it will be declared to Euratom.

Municipal Mutual Insurance

Mr. Vaz: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what meetings and discussions he has had concerning Municipal Mutual Insurance.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: My Department has been in constant contact with Municipal and Mutual Insurance Limited since the company informed the Department in March 1992 that it might have failed to maintain its required minimum solvency margin.

Displays (Safety)

Mr. Spearing: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what information he has concerning consultations in preparation for, or draft of, a regulation of the European Economic Community prohibiting the inclusion of artificial or real grapes in floral or similar displays, on the grounds of child or other safety considerations.

Mr. Leigh [*holding answer 19 October 1992*]: I am not aware of any consultations at present concerning any EC regulations prohibiting the inclusion of artificial or real grapes in the products mentioned.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Lord President of the Council when he expects to reply to the recommendations of the Third Report of the Procedure Committee, session 1990-91 on Parliamentary Questions.

Mr. Tony Newton: I am considering the report and will reply in due course.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Monetary Co-operation

Mr. Cash: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer which states at present qualify for co-operation under the terms of the declaration on monetary co-operation with non-Community countries.

Mr. Nelson: Whether or not the Community would consider that a particular country qualified for monetary co-operation is a matter for the Council of Ministers. It is therefore not possible to provide a definitive list.

Bank of Credit and Commerce International

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make it his policy to publish the Bingham report into BCCI in full.

Mr. Nelson: My right hon. Friend has concluded that the balance of public interest lies in favour of publishing not only Lord Justice Bingham's recommendations and conclusions, but the report in full.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the cost to the Exchequer of the Bingham inquiry into BCCI.

Mr. Nelson: The total direct costs of Lord Justice Bingham and his inquiry team to date are some £595,000. These costs are shared equally between the Treasury and the Bank of England. The overall cost to the taxpayer also includes the administration and legal costs of the Government Departments concerned. To provide an estimate of these costs would involve disproportionate cost.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many claims have been paid by the deposit protection board to former depositors with BCCI by (a) number and (b) value.

Mr. Nelson: I understand that at 19 October 1992 some 9,500 claims had been processed involving payments of some £51.7 million.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what discussions he has had with the Governor of the Bank of England concerning the Bingham report into BCCI since he received a copy of the report.

Mr. Nelson: My right hon. Friend meets the Governor of the Bank of England frequently and they discuss a wide range of issues.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he intends to publish the Bingham report into BCCI.

Mr. Watts: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he intends to publish the Bingham report on the failure of BCCI.

Mr. Nelson: The report of Lord Justice Bingham's inquiry into the supervision of BCCI has been published today, in response to an unopposed motion for the return of papers.

Bank of England

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he intends to announce the name of the next Governor of the Bank of England.

Mr. Nelson: The Governor of the Bank of England is appointed by Her Majesty the Queen on the advice of the Prime Minister. The present Governor's term of office expires on 30 June 1993. The name of the next Governor will be announced in due course.

Exchange Rate Mechanism

Mr. Redmond: To ask Mr. Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the effects on inflation of the withdrawal from the ERM.

Mr. Nelson: The easing of monetary policy which has occurred since sterling's withdrawal from the ERM is consistent with keeping downward pressure on inflation. I shall be publishing a revised forecast of prospects for inflation in the autumn statement, in the usual way.

Civil Servants

Mr. Burn: To ask Mr. Chancellor of the Exchequer what changes have been made in the rules on travel, subsistence and relocation expenses for civil servants.

Mr. Dorrell: As part of our ongoing programme for delegating to departments and agencies greater responsibility for managing personnel management policies,

departments and agencies have been given the freedom to determine within defined limits their own rules and rates for subsistence and the use of private cars on official business.

The rates for subsistence will continue to reflect the principle of reimbursement of necessary additional costs. The rates for motor mileage allowance may go beyond reimbursement of motoring costs and provide an incentive for staff to use their cars on official business but only where it is cost effective for the department to do so. We will also be extending the range of measures available to departments and agencies to meet motoring costs incurred on official business by giving departments and agencies the freedom to offer eligible staff an interest free loan towards the purchase of a car needed for official business.

Such loans may be made only in circumstances where this is the most cost effective approach for departments. The package of measures for new recruits has been extended to provide for refund of relocation expenses on the same basis as existing staff, provided it is limited to shortage and hard-to-fill posts.

The use of these additional measures is at the discretion of departments and agencies, and they must be contained within existing resources.

Economic and Finance Council

Mr. Burns: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the outcome of the latest meeting of the European Community's Economic and Finance Council.

Sir John Cope: The Economic and Finance Council of the European Community met in Luxembourg under my presidency on 19 October.

The Council discussed three issues related to the current review of the Community's future financing: overseas loan guarantees; aspects of the cohesion fund agreed at Maastricht; and the inter-institutional agreement on budgetary discipline and improvement of the budgetary procedure, between the Council, the Commission and the European Parliament. On loan guarantees, the Council agreed in principle to establish a self-standing fund, to make provision against liabilities on loans to third countries guaranteed by the Community. Payments into the fund would be set as a proportion of the value of new loans, and would be financed by a reserve in the financial perspective and the Community budget.

Of the cohesion fund the Council discussed the rules of eligibility and allocation criteria for the fund, and how the provisions of the Maastricht cohesion protocol on macroeconomic conditionality should be applied. All member states agreed that the criterion laid down in article 104c of the Maastricht treaty, on excessive budget deficits, should be the basis of the macroeconomic test; on other aspects no conclusions were reached.

The Council also had the opportunity to give first reactions to the Commission's proposal for a new inter-institutional agreement. The Council agreed that the Commission draft formed a good basis for discussion, and that the Presidency should report member states' initial reactions to the European Parliament.

The Council discussed the need for improved offers of market access for financial services from a number of countries in the GATT round and agreed that the

presidency and the Commission should lobby those countries accordingly on behalf of the Community and its member states.

The call for a review of recent economic and financial events in the conclusions of the special European Council was remitted to the Committee of Central Bank Governors and the Monetary Committee for further work.

The Council agreed to the release of the remainder of Russia's share of the Community's 1.25 becu loan to the former Soviet Union for food and medical aid. The Council also adopted a balance of payments loan to Bulgaria but the first tranche will not be released until Bulgaria has reached satisfactory rescheduling agreements with its creditors in the Paris Club. A request from Poland for a structural adjustment loan was remitted to the Monetary Committee for further consideration.

The Council discussed future relations with Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia with Mr. Attali, the President of the EBRD in preparation for the presidency's meeting with those countries on 28 October. The Council also agreed in principle to continue to provide technical assistance funding from the PHARE and TACIS programmes to be administered by the EBRD.

Following the resolution of outstanding problems, the Council adopted the package of eight indirect tax proposals on the structures and rates for VAT and excise duties provisionally agreed at the 27 July meeting of Finance Ministers. This was a key objective for the United Kingdom presidency as agreement was necessary for the introduction of the single market on 1 January 1992.

The agreement includes an undertaking from the United Kingdom that we will progressively reduce the duty differential, between intermediate products (fortified wines) exceeding 15 per cent. alcohol by volume (abv) and those intermediate products up to 15 per cent. abv, to 25 per cent. by the end of 1995. The undertaking also provides for the use of the names "British Sherry", "Irish Sherry" and "Cyprus Sherry" to end by 1 January 1996. In return Spain will discontinue their present action against the United Kingdom in the European Court of Justice.

There was no substantive discussion of the 7th VAT Directive on second-hand goods, including works of art. The Commission explained why such a directive was necessary and it was agreed that the proposal should be remitted to working groups for further discussion.

Research Contracts

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list all the contracts the Treasury has placed with non-governmental advisory bodies on research and forecasting matters, together with information on the value of all contracts for the last 15 years.

Mr. Portillo [holding answer 21 October 1992]: Details of project expenditure from the Treasury's macroeconomic research budget for 1983-84 to 1991-92, and of planned expenditure for 1992-93 have been placed in the Library of the House. Corresponding information for the micro-economic research budget is also provided. Information could not be obtained for earlier years.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Income Support

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what steps he has taken to carry out the recommendations of the Social Security Advisory Committee that the DSS reviews the procedures for young people claiming income support.

Mr. Burt: Social security administration is subject to continuous review. Procedures for young people are part of this process.

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what consideration he has given to the recommendation of the Social Security Advisory Committee in its sixth, seventh and eighth reports that the full rate of income support should be restored for young people under 25 years of age living away from home; and what was his conclusion.

Mr. Burt: We have studied these reports by the Social Security Advisory Committee. We have no plans to change the level of income support personal allowances paid to people aged under 25 years.

Children

Mr. Wicks: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish the latest figures showing how many (a) families with children and (b) children are living on income support.

Mr. Burt: There are 1.3 million claims which include one or more children under 16. The total number of children in families receiving income support is 2.4 million. *Source:* Income support annual statistical inquiry, May 1991.

Benefits

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement on the policy of the Government towards the updating of pensions and other benefits.

Miss Widdecombe: The House will be informed in due course.

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his estimate of the failure-to-claim rate in respect of social security benefits; and what savings to social security expenditure this represents.

Mr. Wicks: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish the latest figures for the take-up of income-related benefits.

Mr. Burt: We will publish the latest available estimates for take-up of the income-related benefits shortly.

Pensioners

Ms. Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people living in residential care will not receive an increase in their pension from 5 October; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Burt: The income support pensioner premiums were increased on 5 October. People living in residential care and receiving the higher income support limits do not receive premiums.

Social Fund

Ms. Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what changes he intends to make to the social fund in light of the "Evaluating the Social Fund" report; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: We are carefully considering the report on the social fund by the university of York's social policy research unit. No decisions have been made about the future operation of the social fund.

HEALTH

Severe Combined Immune Deficiency Syndrome

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what grant the supra-regional services advisory group has recommended for the Newcastle general hospital in respect of severe combined immune deficiency syndrome care.

Mr. Yeo: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave him on 22 June at columns 53-54.

Diet

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if, as part of her quality of service objectives, she will require the publication of all reports related to the cost of a healthy diet commissioned since 1986 using public money.

Mr. Sackville: I am not aware of any such reports which have been commissioned by central Government and are awaiting publication.

Secure Places

Mr. Gunnell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will indicate the number of secure places for young people aged under 18 years in England and Wales and their percentage occupancy in 1991-92; and whether she has plans to increase the number of places within the next two years.

Mr. Yeo: On 30 September 1992 there were 290 secure places in local authority community homes in England. In addition, the youth treatment service runs two youth treatment centres providing 60 secure places.

Information about the use of local authority secure units, including numbers accommodated at the end of each month, is in the annual statistical publication "Children accommodated in secure units during the year ending 31 March". The latest available information covers the 12 months ending 31 March 1991. Copies are available in the Library.

Discussions are currently being held with a range of local authorities to determine how the additional secure accommodation which will be required to implement fully the revised juvenile remand arrangements in the Criminal Justice Act 1991 might most effectively be provided.

The information relating to Wales is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

West Midlands Regional Health Authority

Mr. Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to discuss with West Midlands regional health authority its treatment of offers of voluntary part-funding for an magnetic resonance imaging scanner at the Midland centre for neurology and neurosurgery.

Mr. Sackville: The acceptance of voluntary funding is a matter for West Midlands regional health authority.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what are the terms of reference and the time scale for the involvement of Sir Roy Griffiths in the West Midlands regional health authority; and if she will make a statement;

(2) what plans she has for an investigation into the activities of the West Midlands regional health authority; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: Sir Roy Griffiths has been asked to work with West Midlands regional health authority to help it discharge its role efficiently and effectively for the future. This work is already underway and Sir Roy will be keeping me in touch as this develops. No time scale has been set for the completion of his work and I have no plans to set up any further investigation into the activities of the West Midlands regional health authority.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the operation of the West Midlands regional health authority's computerised hospital supply system.

Dr. Mawhinney: I understand that the Audit Commission is looking into this matter and is to report to West Midlands regional health authority.

Waiting Lists

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will give for England the numbers of people on waiting lists on 30 September 1987 and at the end of each subsequent six-month period, for admission for (a) in-patient and (b) day case treatment and the numbers on each occasion who were categorised as (i) self-deferred, (ii) waiting under 12 months, (iii) waiting 12 to 24 months and (iv) waiting over two years.

Mr. Sackville: The information requested is given in the Department of Health's statistical bulletins which are available from the Library. From March 1992, self-deferred cases are included in the total number waiting.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the reasons for the differences between the figures given for the numbers of people on waiting lists in March and September of 1988 to 1991 in her Department's statistical bulletin 2(5)92 and those given in statistical bulletin 2(8)92.

Mr. Sackville: In statistical bulletin 2(5)92 and in previous bulletins, figures for self-deferred cases were shown separately. From March 1992, self-deferred cases are included in the overall total waiting. This is consistent with the provisional figures from regional health authorities published quarterly.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will publish her estimates for each six-month period from April 1987 of (a) the numbers of people admitted from waiting lists to hospital for in-patient treatment, (b) the numbers of people removed from in-patient waiting lists for reasons other than treatment, (c) the numbers of people admitted from waiting lists for day case treatment and (d) the numbers of people removed from day case waiting lists for reasons other than treatment.

Mr. Sackville: The information requested, which is only available from 1988, is given in the table.

Most removals are due to health authorities validating their waiting lists. It is good management practice to validate lists regularly to ensure they include only those who need treatment. Many patients on waiting lists no longer need to be admitted for treatment because, for example, they have moved or had their treatment elsewhere. Validation leads to fewer cancelled operations and faster treatment for those who need it.

<i>Patients waiting for admission: England</i>			<i>Thousands</i>
<i>Figures—six months period ending</i>	<i>Number treated from waiting list</i>	<i>Number removed for other reasons (not admitted)</i>	
<i>Ordinary admissions</i>			
1987 September	1—	1—	
1988 March	924.7	69.2	
September	941.4	72.1	
1989 March	938.9	86.3	
September	939.5	92.7	
1990 March	934.2	103.0	
September	910.6	101.6	
1991 March	888.3	125.4	
September	918.4	115.4	
1992 March	938.8	157.8	
<i>Day cases</i>			
1987 September	1—	1—	
1988 March	353.3	15.9	
September	359.2	18.4	
1989 March	392.6	23.9	
September	420.5	26.8	
1990 March	454.3	31.0	
September	465.6	36.4	
1991 March	496.6	43.5	
September	535.0	47.6	
1992 March	601.3	67.3	

¹ As Korner based figures were first collected in September 1987 six months flow data was not available until March 1988.

Mersey Regional Health Authority

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the visit of the Minister for Health to the Mersey regional health authority headquarters on 21 September; what subjects were discussed; and what proposals were made.

Dr. Mawhinney: I visited Mersey regional health authority headquarters on 21 September as part of my programme of visits to regions throughout the country. While in Mersey, I also visited the Countess of Chester hospital and the Liverpool drug dependency clinic. I met a cross-section of staff and discussed a range of different subjects.

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the visit of the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health to the Mersey region on 1 October.

Mr. Sackville: I visited Mersey region on 1 October as part of my programme of visits to regions throughout the country. I visited the regional headquarters, Mersey Regional Ambulance Service NHS Trust, Walton Centre for Neurology and Neurosurgery NHS Trust, Royal Liverpool Children's Hospital NHS Trust and Princes Park health centre. I met a cross-section of staff and discussed a range of different subjects.

Dentistry

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to publish the report of the oral health strategy group on proposed changes to dental policy; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: The oral health strategy group was asked, among other things, to advise on the development of an oral health strategy for England. Work on the strategy is still being carried forward.

Home Care Services

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations she has received urging legislation requiring the inspection of private home care services; if she has any proposals to introduce such legislation; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo: A small number of representations have been received urging statutory or voluntary control of independent sector domiciliary care agencies. We have no proposals to introduce controls at present.

London Health Care

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she intends to publish the Tomlinson report; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: Soon.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Drug Prevention

1. **Mr. Booth:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he is taking to ensure that the drug prevention initiative fully participates in European drug prevention week.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The central drugs prevention unit and the 20 local drugs prevention teams have been actively involved in the planning of events for European drug prevention week. In co-operation with local agencies and community groups, the local teams have devised full and varied programmes. The drugs prevention initiative will make a major contribution to the international seminar and workshop to be held in London on 17 and 18 November.

16. **Mr. Hawkins:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what commercial support has been received by his Department's drug prevention initiative.

Mr. Jack: In addition to cash donations, commercial support for the drugs prevention initiative has been given in the form of in-kind contributions of a number of specific events and projects. Between 29 October 1990, when the first local drugs prevention team began work, and 31 August 1992 the estimated total amount of quantifiable commercial support was £140,000, in cash and in kind.

Extradition

13. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will seek amendment to the rules on international extradition regulations, with a view to clarifying the legal position of Libyans suspected of the Lockerbie bombing.

Mr. Kenneth Clark: The legal position is not in doubt. By its resolution 748, the Security Council of the United Nations decided that the Libyan Government must surrender the accused for trial, either in Scotland or in the United States. Under the United Nations charter this obligation prevails over any other obligation which Libya might have under any other international agreement.

Mr. Kaufman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make it his policy not to extradite persons to India who would be liable to capital punishment there.

Mr. Jack: It is already Government policy in all cases in which an extradited person might be subject to capital punishment to obtain a satisfactory and acceptable guarantee from the requesting state that the death penalty will not be imposed or carried out. That policy is underpinned by provisions in both the Extradition Act 1989 and the new extradition treaty with India.

Primates

14. **Mrs. Bridget Prentice:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to improve the standards set out in the code of practice for the housing and care of animals used in scientific procedures with regard to primates.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The Home Office code of practice for the housing and care of animals used in scientific procedures is based on guidelines drawn up jointly by the Royal Society and the Universities Federation for Animal Welfare. We have no present plans to amend the code.

Mr. Etherington: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what percentage of primates used in scientific procedures in the United Kingdom are single housed in isolation from their fellows.

Mr. Charles Wardle: We are not aware of any cases where primates used in scientific procedures are being singly housed in isolation from their fellows—that is, without any opportunity to see and hear other primates held in the same room.

Holding primates in isolation would need special scientific justification and would require specific authority on project and personal licences issued under Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986.

Mr. Etherington: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proportion of primates used in the United Kingdom in scientific procedures in each of the last five years for which figures are available were (a) wild caught, (b) captive bred outside the United Kingdom and (c) captive bred in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The information requested is not collected on a regular basis, and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Guildford and Woolwich Bombings

15. **Mr. Mullin:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects Sir John May to complete his inquiry into the Guildford and Woolwich bombings; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Sir John May has completed his examination of the circumstances surrounding the

convictions of the Maguire family and their co-defendants. I expect shortly to receive his final report on that part of his inquiry. He announced on 31 July how he intends to examine the Guildford and Woolwich case without prejudicing the impending trial of three Surrey police officers. I expect to receive his report on this next year.

Prisons (Overcrowding)

17. **Mr. Jon Owen Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to find a solution to the problem of overcrowding in prisons generally and Cardiff prison in particular.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The existing prison building programme is intended to provide sufficient places for those sent to prison. It was begun in the early 1980s and will have delivered in excess of 11,000 places when it reaches completion in 1994. I hope very much to be able to provide additional accommodation in Cardiff prison, but it is not yet possible to announce our conclusions on this matter.

Police

18. **Mr. Eastham:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what has been the level of expenditure on police, excluding police salaries, over the last five years; and how much of this amount was specifically for crime prevention equipment.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Between 1986-87 and 1990-91 central and local government spent £4 billion on non-pay expenditure in the police service. No specific expenditure is allotted by the police for crime prevention equipment.

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the estimated cost of overtime payments to police officers in the financial year 1991-92 in respect of the holding of prisoners in police cells in England and Wales, the Metropolitan police district, Greater Manchester and west Yorkshire, respectively.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Information on the cost of overtime payments to police officers is not collected centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. The table shows the total payments made in 1991-92. The sums paid covered police salary costs, and all other costs arising from the operation including food, medical facilities, repairs to accommodation and transport.

Payment made to police forces, 1991-92

<i>Police force</i>	<i>Total paid £</i>
Greater Manchester	20,522,278.17
Metropolitan	11,316,943.02
West Yorkshire	5,425,866.08
England and Wales total	94,739,978.00

Travellers

19. **Mr. Gill:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent representations he has received regarding new age travellers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We have received several hundred letters from Members of Parliament and the public over the last few months.

Vehicle-Marking

20. **Mrs. Chaplin:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many police forces have adopted vehicle-marking schemes.

Mr. Jack: There are now 32 vehicle watch type schemes operating in different police force areas in England and Wales.

Traffic Congestion, London

21. **Mr. Adley:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will discuss with the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis the problem of traffic congestion in London.

Mr. Charles Wardle: My right hon. and learned Friend has no current plans to discuss the subject with the Commissioner.

Special Constabulary

22. **Mr. Pawsey:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will include the special constabulary in his review of the police service.

Mr. Charles Wardle: No.

Law and Order

23. **Mr. Campbell-Savours:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received on questions relating to law and order over the past three months.

Mr. Jack: I have received very many representations on a wide variety of issues which are covered by the term law and order from hon. Members, organisations and the public.

Frontier Controls

24. **Sir Teddy Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will discuss with the European Commission the implications of article 8A of the treaty of Rome for frontier controls after 1 January 1993.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The Government's views on article 8A are well known to the Commission, and vice versa. In my right hon. and learned Friend's discussion with Vice-President Bangemann, however, we have agreed to concentrate on practical measures to make it as easy as possible for EC nationals to enter and leave the United Kingdom. My right hon. and learned Friend will report to the House in due course on the outcome of these discussions.

Cheshire Police Stations

25. **Mrs. Dunwoody:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners have been housed in Cheshire police stations after conviction since 1990.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information available centrally enables me to provide for each month since April 1990 a figure for the average daily total of inmates, both convicted and unconvicted, who should have been in prison but were held instead in police cells in the Cheshire force area. I will arrange for a table, setting out this information, to be placed in the *Official Report*.

On 21 October, the latest date for which information is available there were 27 prisoners in police cells in Cheshire of whom one was convicted and sentenced.

Average daily total of inmates locked out to the Cheshire Constabulary

Month	Daily average
April 1990 (w.e.f 9/4/90)	21
May 1 1990	17
June 1990	10
July 1990	9
August 1990	9
September 1990	13
October 1990	20
November 1990	20
December 1990	20
January 1991	23
February 1991	24
March 1991	24
April 1991	28
May 1991	25
June 1991	26
July 1991	31
August 1991	33
September 1991	33
October 1991	32
November 1991	42
December 1991	36
January 1992	38
February 1992	42
March 1992	47
April 1992	47
May 1992	39
June 1992	40
July 1992	40
August 1992	41
September 1992	36

Prisons (Children)

26. **Miss Lestor:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the number of children in prison with their mothers, their ages and the establishment in which they reside.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: On 8 October 1992, there were a total of 26 babies in the three prison mother and baby units. The 10 babies at Holloway were all under nine months; the seven babies at Styal were between two months and 18 months and the 11 babies at Askham Grange ranged from one month to 18 months.

Criminal Offences

27. **Mr. Hardy:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many criminal offences were recorded in the first six months of 1992; and what was the number for the first six months of 1979.

Mr. Jack: Information for the first six months of 1992 is not yet available, but in the 12 months to the end of March 1992, 5.4 million notifiable offences were recorded by the police. But this is not directly comparable with 2.5 million recorded notifiable offences in 1979, because of the new counting rules introduced at the beginning of 1980.

Wheel Clamping

28. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he last discussed wheel clamping with the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis.

Mr. Charles Wardle: My right hon. and learned Friend has had no specific discussion with the Commissioner on that subject. Officials, however, maintain regular contact with the Metropolitan police about the wheel clamping operation.

United Kingdom Immigrants Advisory Service

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has for the replacement of the United Kingdom Immigrants Advisory Service; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement outlining the proposed organisation, structure and services provided by the United Kingdom Immigration Advisory Service; and if he will ensure no final decisions are made until the House has had an opportunity to debate his proposals.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I refer my hon. Friend and the hon. Member to the reply given to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North (Sir J. Wheeler) on 8 July, at columns 202-3.

Crime

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many offences of each category of crime were committed in each of the police divisions of the South Wales constabulary in the year ending March 1992; and what percentage this represented compared to (a) the year ended March 1991 and (b) the year ended March 1990.

Mr. Jack: The information available centrally for the year ending March 1992 relates to the South Wales constabulary as a whole and is contained in the table. Information on total crime recorded in each police division for calendar years can be found in the annual report of the chief constable for South Wales.

Notifiable offences recorded by the police in the South Wales police force area

	Number of offences in year ending March 1992	Percentage change year ending March 1992	
		Over year ending March 1991	Over year ending March 1992
Violence against the person	5,180	16	15
Sexual offences	521	-1	6
Robbery	358	47	44
Burglary	37,618	27	48
Theft and handling stolen goods	82,642	7	30
Fraud and forgery	3,615	14	26
Criminal damage	33,466	13	40
Other offences	786	11	38
Total	164,186	13	35

Repatriation

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give the number of voluntary repatriations over the past 12 months showing (a) how many of those who were repatriated suffered from mental illness and (b) to what countries they were repatriated.

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the legal and administrative processes involved in the decision to authorise repatriation.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Between September 1991 and October 1992 there have been 44 cases of voluntary repatriation under section 29 of the Immigration Act 1971, involving 56 individuals. None of these individuals was suffering from any form of psychiatric illness at the time of departure. Under the section 29 scheme, financial assistance is available in certain circumstances from public funds for non-British citizens settled in this country who wish to return permanently to their country of origin. This scheme is administered on behalf of the Home Office by the International Social Service of the United Kingdom, which assesses each application for assistance on its merits, according to certain conditions. If the hon. Member has any particular case in mind, he is invited to write to me and I shall send a substantive reply.

Immigration

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps have been taken to ensure that proposals and resolutions presented for adoption by the immigration Ministers of the member states of the EC meeting inter-governmentally on 30 November and 1 December are in compliance with the international obligations of the member states and Community law.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The proposals and draft resolutions do not constitute legally binding instruments and cannot override Community law or the other international obligations of member states.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what proposals or resolutions are being presented to the immigration Ministers of the member states of the EC meeting inter-governmentally on 30 November and 1 December; what is the status of such proposals; and if he will place copies in the Library;

(2) what steps have been taken to inform Parliament about the contents of proposals and resolutions which will be considered for adoption by the immigration Ministers of the member states meeting inter-governmentally on 30 November and 1 December and the extent to which such proposals or resolutions will affect United Kingdom immigration control, policy and law.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I refer the hon. Member to the answers which I gave to his previous questions on this matter on 19 October 1992 at columns 45-50. Parliament will be informed in the normal way of decisions or resolutions adopted by Ministers.

Blasphemy Laws

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to reform the blasphemy laws.

Mr. Jack: We have no plans to legislate in this area.

Racial Discrimination

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whom he consulted in creating the information pack sent to judges to increase their awareness of their duty to avoid racial discrimination.

Mr. Jack: The publication "Race and the Criminal Justice System" published under section 95 of the Criminal Justice Act 1991 and drawing on statistics and research findings currently available was published after consultation with the Judicial Studies Board and in particular the chairman of its ethnic minorities advisory committee.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to extend legislative protection from racial discrimination to cover religious discrimination.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: In its second review of the Race Relations Act 1976 the Commission for Racial Equality has recommended that consideration be given to legislation on religious discrimination. The Government are currently giving careful consideration to all the recommendations which were put forward in the review.

Race Relations

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what response he has made to the recommendations of the Commission for Racial Equality in the second review of the Race Relations Act 1976.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The Commission for Racial Equality has put forward wide-ranging recommendations in its second review of the Race Relations Act 1976. The Government are now giving these careful consideration.

Racial Harassment

Ms. Abbott: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will introduce legislation to amend the Race Relations Act 1976 to make racial discrimination and harassment of one private household by another an offence.

Mr. Peter Lloyd [*holding answer 19 October 1992*]: Sanctions against threatening, abusive or anti-social behaviour, which clearly could include racial harassment, are contained in several Acts of Parliament. Sections 4 and 5 of the Public Order Act 1986 may be used where appropriate.

The Government are currently giving careful consideration to the recommendations which were put forward last month by the Commission for Racial Equality in its second review of the Race Relations Act 1976.

Crime Squad Report

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what response he has made to the report of Her Majesty's inspector of constabulary on No. 8 regional crime squad.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I was pleased to note the recent report of Her Majesty's inspector of constabulary which attested to the effectiveness of the existing No. 8 regional crime squad. However, I share the inspector's view that the region would be better served by amalgamating the No. 7 and No. 8 regional crime squads.

Guinea Pigs (Research)

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will withdraw the project licence authorising the University of Glasgow's department of neuropathology to undertake research on guinea pigs.

Mr. Charles Wardle: My right hon. and learned Friend is required by the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 to consider the scientific justification for research involving living animals, alongside any adverse effects on the animals involved. He is satisfied that the work authorised at the university of Glasgow meets this test.

Commission for Racial Equality

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he intends to announce the name of the next chairman of the Commission for Racial Equality.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I hope to make an announcement in the near future.

Suspects' Rights

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to ensure that the leaflet which police must give all suspects explaining their rights can be understood by the average suspect.

Mr. Charles Wardle: My right hon. and learned Friend recognises that some suspects have reading or learning difficulties. It is in their best interests to tell the custody officer about their problem so that he can explain their rights to them. For those who are reluctant to admit a disability, he is considering the issue of a simplified leaflet which could complement the existing notice of entitlements.

Suspects whose main language is other than English are offered a leaflet in one of the 29 languages now available.

Animals (Scientific Procedures)

Mr. Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the trends in the numbers of animals used in scientific procedures.

Mr. Charles Wardle: There has been a long-term downward trend in the number of experiments using animals, although there are bound to be fluctuations from year to year. For example, the 1991 statistics, published in July, showed that animal testing for cosmetics safety was down on the previous year and so was the number of experiments involving primates, but that there had been a slight increase in the total number of procedures carried out. The main reasons for the latter increase were the development of new techniques involving genetically modified material, and the clarification of rules controlling the number of times individual animals may be used in research.

Mr. Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what reasons underlay his decision to discontinue the listing of statistics for the LD50 and LC50 tests on live animals separately from other statistics relating to laboratory procedures on animals.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The change in the published statistics in 1990 and 1991 was for the sake of clarity, the objective being to ensure that all acute lethal toxicity tests were clearly identified, and not just the formal LD50 and LC50 tests.

Trial By Jury

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to restrict defendants' rights to trial by jury.

Mr. Jack: We have no current plans to restrict the existing rights of defendants to elect trial by jury.

Police Complaints Authority

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what new appointment has been made to the Police Complaints Authority.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Mr. John Cartwright, the former Labour and Social Democrat Member for Woolwich, has accepted my invitation to serve as a member of the Police Complaints Authority. He will take up his post on 26 October.

British National Party

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what response he intends to make to the statement by police in Woolwich and Plumstead concerning the effect of the activities of the British National party on the level of racial harassment, intimidation and attacks in the area.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I am not aware of any such statement. The number of reported racial incidents in Woolwich and Plumstead is much lower this year than it was last.

Of the 103 racial incidents reported this year, only two were directly attributable to the activities of the British National party. I have every confidence in the ability and determination of the local police to respond effectively whenever any individual steps outside the law with regard to racial harassment.

Deregulation

Mr. Sproat: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what financial provisions, and how much, he has made within his Department in order to look at the potential for deregulation of each of the regulatory measures for which he has responsibility.

Mr. Charles Wardle: No separate financial provision has been made. Identifying the potential for deregulation is an integral part of this Department's work.

Fire Services (Wales)

Mr. Hanson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what arrangements he envisages for the organisation of Fire Services in Wales following the planned introduction of unitary authorities.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: These matters are still under discussion.

General Election

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the average cost of the general election to public funds in constituencies in (a) England, (b) Scotland, (c) Wales and (d) Great Britain; and what were the three highest and three lowest in each case.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Information on the cost of the general election in each constituency will not be available until all returning officers' accounts have been submitted and settled. Returning officers have 12 months from the date of the general election in which to submit their claims.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the (a) average, (b) shortest and (c) longest period of time taken to carry out the count for constituencies in (i) England, (ii) Scotland, (iii) Wales and (iv) Great Britain at the general election in 1992.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Information on the time taken to count the votes at parliamentary elections is not collected centrally.

Police Shootings

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the people shot dead by police officers for each year since 1979 giving the date in each case.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The information requested is set out in the table:

<i>Year and Date</i>	<i>Name</i>
1979—21 March	Paul Andrew Howe
1980—12 June	Gail Kinchen
1985—24 August	John Shorthouse
1987— 6 February	Denis Bergin
19 July	Nicholas Payne
19 July	Michael Flynn
22 November	Glyn Davis
23 November	Tony Ash
1989—13 April	James Farrell
	Terence Dewsnap
1990—26 April	Michael Alexander
27 November	Kenneth Baker
	Ian Garfield
1991—12 August	Gordon
12 October	Derek Wallbanks
10 December	Keith Carrott
1992— 1 January	Ian Charles Bennett
27 February	Barry Clutterham
23 June	Peter Swann

Immigration Records

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what records of passengers arriving at United Kingdom ports of entry, by category of admission, are placed on the immigration and nationality department electronic computer system—INDECS—computer; what actions are recorded about individuals; what criteria are used when considering whether passenger details should be entered on INDECS; and how many entrants to the United Kingdom have had any details entered on INDECS.

Mr. Charles Wardle [*holding answer 19 October 1992*]: INDECS contains records of passengers given a limited leave to enter the United Kingdom although most people admitted for short term purposes are not entered on the system. Details on the landing card are recorded with the expiry date of the leave to enter. Any subsequent variations to that leave, and the person's departure from the United Kingdom, are also recorded. Of the 8.1 million admissions of non-EC nationals in 1991, 1.2 million were recorded on INDECS.

Convictions (Safety)

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received into the safety of the conviction of Frank Johnson; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jack [*holding answer 19 October 1992*]: My right hon. Friend is considering representations about this case received recently from the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair). Representations have previously been received from Mr. Johnson, from a number of hon. Members and former hon. Members and from the National Association of Probation Officers in conjunction with the organisations Conviction and Liberty; but no grounds for intervention in the case could be found after consideration of any of these particular representations.

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