



Ref. A084/3337

PRIME MINISTER

Cabinet: Parliamentary Affairs: Civil Aviation Bill

BACKGROUND

The Civil Aviation Bill is mainly designed to implement a Government commitment when giving planning approval for Terminal 4 at Heathrow Airport for an air traffic movement (ATM) limit of 275,000. This limit is to come into effect when the terminal opens next autumn. The Bill does not itself contain the limit; it enables the Secretary of State for Transport to give directions to the British Airports Authority in respect of the number of movements which may be permitted at any airport.

2. The Bill was due to be taken in Committee in the House of Commons for the first time on Tuesday 11 December. In the event, the Government were unable to secure the sittings motion. The main argument mounted by its opponents (which on this occasion included three Conservative MPs) was that there had been insufficient time for them to consider the implications of the Inspector's Report on Stansted and Terminal 5 at Heathrow. This Report is currently with the Secretaries of State for Transport and for the Environment for decisions on a number of planning applications in connection with the expansion of Stansted and the construction of a fifth terminal at Heathrow. It recommends an increase in the number of passengers to be handled at both airports (a further 14½ million at Stansted in the short term and a further 15 million at Heathrow in the mid-1990s). The recommendation conflicts with the Government's commitment to an ATM limit of 275,000 at Heathrow.



3. The Lord Privy Seal will explain that the defeat in Committee seems unlikely to be repeated, because one Conservative Member is prepared to support the Government in securing a future sittings motion. However, difficulties can be expected in continued discussion of the Bill. Nevertheless, the Secretary of State for Transport has decided that the best course of action is to continue and to explain to the House that the enabling powers contained in the Bill do not prevent him from exercising his quasi-judicial functions in respect of the Inspector's Report.

HANDLING

4. The Lord Privy Seal will introduce the item and you may wish to ask the Secretary of State for Transport for his views. The Lord President may wish to comment in the context of the general presentation of Government policy, as well as possible handling problems in the House of Lords.

5. Other Cabinet members with an interest in the Civil Aviation Bill are the Secretary of State for the Environment (who has disqualified himself from taking decisions on the Stansted Inquiry) and the Secretary of State for Scotland (the Civil Aviation Bill also deals with the preconditions for the disposal of certain Scottish aerodromes).

CONCLUSION

6. Unless there is strong opposition in the Cabinet to the proposal that the Government should continue with the Civil Aviation Bill, you will merely wish the Cabinet to take note of what is being proposed.

REA

12 December 1984

ROBERT ARMSTRONG