

FILE

(W)

PRIME MINISTER

FALKLAND ISLANDS: STATEMENT/PM'S QUESTIONS

It is within the Speaker's authority to extend your Question Time, although the present Speaker has never done this - unlike his predecessor.

If circumstances arise where Parliament needs a report on a Tuesday or Thursday, but not a major one, we could propose an extension. The argument would be that it is unrealistic for you to refuse to take Falklands questions between 1515 hrs and 1530 hrs on the grounds of a later statement, whether from you or another Minister; that you would therefore be ready to beat the Despatch Box for rather longer than usual, and that you would be giving a substantive answer on the Falklands at the first opportunity. The Speaker would have to be approached by the Leader of the House, preferably with John Silkin as Shadow Leader.

If you felt it useful to try this arrangement on any particular day, it should not be too difficult to set it up. And I think that it could be done on this basis over the Falklands without establishing a precedent which could too readily be drawn on for other matters in the future.

M. A. PATTISON

21 April, 1982