

# House of Lords

*Thursday, 4th March, 1982.*

The House met at three of the clock (*Prayers having been read earlier at the Judicial Sitting by the Lord Bishop of Derby*): The LORD CHANCELLOR on the Woolsack.

## British Citizens: Overseas Supplements

Lord Hatch of Lusby: My Lords, I beg leave to ask the first Question which stands in my name on the Order Paper.

The Question was as follows:

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many British citizens received British Expatriates Supplementation Scheme or Overseas Service Aid Scheme supplements in 1979 and in 1981 and what further changes are planned.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Lord Trefgarne): My Lords, the average number of British citizens receiving British Expatriates Supplementation Scheme or Overseas Service Aid Scheme supplements in 1979 was 4,083. In 1981, the comparable figure was 2,975. The numbers have fallen steadily since 1970 and reductions are expected to continue at about 10 per cent. per annum over the next few years. No changes in terms of service are planned at the moment.

Lord Hatch of Lusby: My Lords, may I ask the noble Lord the Minister whether he has read the Answer given by his colleague to a similar Question which I put in December? The Answer, which I paraphrase, was that the numbers had fallen because local indigenous people had now become sufficiently trained to take those positions. If the noble Lord has looked since at these figures, would he agree that this is not an adequate answer and that this is a deliberate policy by the Government to reduce the number of British citizens who are given supplements to work overseas? Would the noble Lord further agree that this is causing very great difficulty to universities, to technical colleges and to a whole range of national activities in the Commonwealth?

Lord Trefgarne: No, I do not agree with that, my Lords. I have indeed studied the Answer which my noble friend Lord Skelmersdale gave to the noble Lord, Lord Hatch of Lusby, at the end of last year. The reasons which my noble friend then gave remain correct.

Lord Hatch of Lusby: But surely the figures which have been given this afternoon, if I heard correctly, have reduced the number by about 25 per cent. in two years. Does this not entail a great reduction in British influence all over the Commonwealth? And is the noble Lord aware that particularly in universities it is causing very great anxiety and difficulty over the recruitment of the requisite trained staff?

III. 15 M2

Lord Trefgarne: My Lords, the numbers have indeed declined, as I described in the original Answer and as was referred to at the time of the earlier Question at the end of last year. But one has to remember that these schemes are operated in the closest consultation with the various Governments concerned, and they sometimes choose to use the aid funds for other purposes.

## Unidentified Flying Objects: Sightings

3.4 p.m.

The Earl of Clancarty: My Lords, I beg leave to ask the Question which stands in my name on the Order Paper.

The Question was as follows:

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many reports have been received by the Ministry of Defence on unidentified flying objects (UFOs) in each of the last four years, and what action has been taken in each case.

Viscount Long: My Lords, in 1978 there were 750 sightings; in 1979 there were 550 sightings; in 1980, 350 sightings; and in 1981, 600 sightings. All UFO reports are passed to operations staff who examine them solely for possible defence implications.

The Earl of Clancarty: My Lords, while thanking the noble Viscount for that Answer, may I ask him whether or not it is a fact that over 2,000 authenticated UFO reports were published last year in the national press? If so, were they accepted or passed on to the Ministry of Defence? And what happened to them?

Viscount Long: My Lords, they did not all get to the Ministry of Defence. I have just informed your Lordships of the numbers sighted. If the noble Earl is suspicious that the Ministry of Defence is covering up in any way, I can assure him that there is no reason why we should cover up the figures which he has mentioned if they are true. The sole interest of the Ministry of Defence in UFO reports is to establish whether they reveal anything of defence interest—for example, a Russian aircraft or an unidentified aircraft—which might have breached our security systems. That is the sole reason why we are interested in the reports.

Lord Wynne-Jones: My Lords, does the Answer given mean that since there has been a Conservative Government the UFOs have done a U-turn and departed?

Viscount Long: Not according to my reading, my Lords.

The Earl of Kimberley: My Lords, as my noble friend said that 600 UFOs had been officially reported or acknowledged by the Ministry of Defence in 1981, may I ask him how many of those sightings still remain unidentified and were not subject to security, or were Russian aeroplanes, or anything like that?