THE arrival at Holy Loch of Proteus, the Polaris submarine mother ship, resulted in quite a few headlines. The ones I liked best both appeared on March 10, and were:

Proteus seaman coshed —Daily Herald

Proteus welcome pleases U.S. —Daily Mail

• "The United States Line has cancelled the voyage to Europe of the liner America, scheduled for Saturday, because of lack of bookings. The 450 people who booked passages have been told they can transfer to the liner United States, sailing on Friday, or to a later sailing. The United States, which can carry 1,700 passengers, had bookings for about 900."—Reuter.

Is this the beginning of the end for Britain's new Queen liner? The Government are to spend £18m on this ship, on the basis of an unpublished report and believing (I quote Lord Mills) that "sea traffic is increasing." Is it? North Atlantic passenger traffic has declined every year since 1957, and last year it was the lowest it has been since 1952. Has there ever been a proposed grosser misuse of public money?

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