



Straight and Level



I think I'll take a running jump at myself

ASKED about the cost of Polaris, Mr Peter Thorneycroft, Minister of Defence, says: "We don't publish figures, because they may disclose to an enemy the precise establishment of the weapons system."

I am sorry, Mr Thorneycroft, but you simply cannot get away with that. Every dollar spent on Polaris by the American taxpayer is published for all, including an enemy, to see. This goes for every American weapon system.

What is sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander. The British taxpayer should be allowed—indeed he has the right—to have a gander at the cost of imported Polaris.

The "security" that conceals British spending on defence (and on civil aircraft too) is at best pure humbug and at worst a cover for possible Ministerial mistakes.

What the thinks-bubble coming out of Mr Thorneycroft's head says is: "We don't publish figures, because they may disclose to the British taxpayer just how much this weapon is costing us."

● Mr Mark Vilensky said in a recent Moscow Radio commentary that the latest American proposal for catching up with the Soviet Union in spaceflight had come from the first Congress of American Hypnotists in Las Vegas, which had suggested to the US Secretary of Defense the use of hypnosis in the training of American cosmonauts. However, said Mr Vilensky, it was in vain that the hypnotists were casting a slur on

the cosmonauts, whom he described as "brave and courageous lads."

This made me feel so good that I wanted to dash out and cable my greetings and congratulations to Mr Vilensky and not put it down on expenses. Perhaps I made a mistake in reading on—to learn from Mr Vilensky that these brave and courageous lads "use up all their resistance in order to carry out flights in cramped and insufficiently adapted cabins, where, in addition, one instrument or another is constantly out of order." Even if they were trained in the Yoga system, said the Moscow commentator, this would not do any good. The American system itself was the trouble.

I have retained the money for the cable, just as I retain hope for Russo/American collaboration in space. My own contribution to the success of that collaboration is to advise Mr Vilensky that in the context of bravery and courage his final comments appear tendentious, inept, ungracious and snide.

Instead of the cable I shall be pleased to send him a good English dictionary—just in case there is any misunderstanding.

Oral Answers MINISTRY OF PLANES Or.351

1. **Mr O'Toole** asked the Minister of Planes when he expects to be in a position to make a statement concerning the placing of an order for the OR.351 aircraft for the RAF. **Mr V. Dodgy:** I have nothing to add to the answer given by my predecessor on April 1, 1953.

Mr Hector McTavish: In considering this important matter, will the Minister bear in mind the shortage of orders in the fish-gutting industry in Potters Bar?

Mr Dodgy: I will have due regard to all the relevant factors.

Capt Humphrey Cobweb-Splonge: Will my right hon Friend also take into account the fact that seven out of every eight ship-figurehead carvers in Chorleywood are emigrating to America?

Mr Dodgy: I thank my hon Friend for this information.

Mr D. Gruffydd: In the interests of my people I must ask for a proportion of this contract to be placed with the former makers of Bardic crowns.

Mr Dodgy: I shall take into account the overall picture.

Mr McTavish: Talking about overalls, Minister, don't forget the Potters Bar overall-manufacturing industry.

● A leading personality in British civil aviation has written to me at length of his experiences of being overbooked by airlines. He concedes that the "no-show" passenger is one of the big problems—but the overbooked passenger, he says, is going to make a multiple booking next time. So, on all flights but one, he becomes

another no-show—and so on, and so on. He concludes:—

"I suggest all airlines include in their very clever and complicated booking machinery a button which a booking clerk is made to press every time a passenger is refused a seat. I am certain they would be astounded by the number refused and the income they had lost."

● Did you know that excess capacity on the North Atlantic route in 1961 was equivalent to 30 empty one-way jet flights per day?

● I see that Mr George Hole of the Ministry of Aviation is appointed Under-Secretary (Aerodromes-General).

His particular concern will be for the trading accounts of London (Heathrow) Airport and London (Gatwick) Airport.

Now I have little doubt, *brackets* in fact I happen to know *close brackets*, that Mr Hole is an exceptionally able, amiable and thoroughly unstuffy official. So I would hope, nay I *implore*, that he will at once EXPUNGE FROM MINISTRY OFFICIALESE ALL THESE STUPID, POINTLESS AND AFFECTED BRACKETS.

A new man should be appointed specially for the job, perhaps with the title Assistant Secretary (Brackets Disposal).

ROGER BACON

"Are You All Right?"—No 9 in the series

