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THE FRIENDS OF THE FALKLAND ISLANDS

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VICE-PRESIDENTS:

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE LORD SHACKLETON, K.G., O.B.E.
THE RIGHT HONOURABLE VISCOUNT BOYD OF MERTON, C.H.
THE RIGHT HONOURABLE VISCOUNT THURSO OF ULBSTER, J.P.

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Mrs. J. LEWIS Vice-Chairman
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NEWS LETTER.

June, 1977.

In February this year the Foreign Secretary, the late Mr. Anthony Crosland, announced a new British initiative in the dispute between Britain and Argentina. The Foreign Secretary stated that the Government had decided that the time had come to consider both with the Islanders and the Argentine Government whether a climate exists for discussing the broad issues which bear on the future of the Falkland Islands and the possibilities of co-operation between Britain and Argentina in the region of the S.W. Atlantic. Mr. Crosland made these pledges. First, any discussion would take place under the sovereignty umbrella. Secondly, any changes which might be proposed must be acceptable to the Islanders. Thirdly, there must be full consultation with the Islanders at every stage and nothing would be done behind their backs.

The first stage in this initiative was the visit to the Colony and to Argentina of the Minister of State, Mr. Edward Rowlands. News of the Ministerial visit was welcomed in the Falkland Islands although the under-lying assumptions in the House of Commons statements were questioned.

Mr. Crosland said -

"... implicit in many of the things Lord Shackleton says about tourism, fisheries, airport enlargement and so on, that in practice they can go ahead only in the framework of a wider economic co-operation in the South-West Atlantic."

In fact, as Viscount Boyd of Merton stated in the House of Lords in April this year, the report actually said -

"It is logical that in any major new development of the Islands' economy, especially those relating to the exploitation of the off-shore resources, co-operation with Argentine, even participation, should if possible be secured."

In the same House of Lords debate Lord Shackleton said that whilst →

development will proceed faster with co-operation it is possible for

development to proceed, with or without Argentine participation, provided there is the Will in this country. Lord Shackleton went on to correct the Foreign Secretary's statement that the Economic Survey had recommended expenditure of between £1 million to £14 million. What was actually recommended was £5.4 million over the next five years with an exploratory fishing programme adding another £1.15 million.

It is the implication that any development in the Colony whether off-shore or on-shore necessitates Argentine co-operation and the fact that sovereignty would not be excluded from the discussions which caused anxiety in the Islands.

In the event the Minister's visit to the Colony was a most successful one. The Minister is now aware of the depth of feeling among the Islanders over their desire to stay British. For his part, the Minister has stated that he now has a subjective caring as well as an objective caring for the Islands and the people there.

The formal talks with Argentine commence this summer to a background of mounting criticism of the Argentine Government's suppression of human rights. The British Government has stressed its concern over abuses of human rights in Argentina. Experienced politicians are also apprehensive over the possibility of the talks exacerbating relationships between the two countries in view of the British Government's commitment on sovereignty and the known policy of the Argentine Government of demanding that sovereignty be discussed in any talks which take place.

PERMANENT AIRFIELD.

The new airfield built to the specification of the British Government has now been completed and is to be formally opened shortly. The airfield was designed for F27 Argentine aircraft, which were obsolete before construction commenced, and the Hawker Siddeley HS748 which is not now in service in Southern South America. In constructing the airfield to this specification the British Government has wholly committed the Colony to dependence upon Argentine for communications.

The airfield can easily be lengthened by 300 metres to the West over relatively easy ground and 450 metres to the East after removal of peat.

Expert opinion is that the cost of the extension would be substantially less than figures emanating from official sources. Nevertheless, despite the strong recommendation of Lord Shackleton in his report and notwithstanding powerful, if not irresistible economic arguments put forward by the Committee, the Minister of State has said that he is unconvinced that an extension is justifiable.

It is worth repeating Lord Shackleton's statement. It was to the effect that without an extension to the airfield there is strong doubt whether tourism, fisheries and other diversifying industrial potential would be realised to any significant degree.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SHACKLETON REPORT.

This imaginative and constructive survey was published in July, 1976 and was widely accepted in the Colony. Commercial interests there, whilst not agreeing wholly with the recommendations, committed themselves to a programme of examination and implementation. In the event, the determination and will to build a strong diversified economy which would increase even the present economic contribution to Britain have been frustrated by political pressure and bureaucratic procrastination.

The following is a brief resume of the principal diversifying elements recommended in the Shackleton Report.

Alginates.

The potential annual gross revenue from full exploitation of the seaweed surrounding the Islands is estimated at £40 million. The foreign exchange earnings in the first 3 years of development would exceed the entire cost of construction of a commercial airfield. One of the conditions upon which Alginate Industries Ltd. are insisting before implementing their plans is the extension of the airfield.

Tourism.

Within one month of publication of the Shackleton Report plans were formulated for the commencement of an experimental tourism project in the 1976/7 season. The plan was discussed with the Ministry of Overseas Development and with the Foreign Office whose co-operation was essential →

in securing flight reservations from Argentina. No progress has been made.

Fishing.

Plans have been frustrated by the action of the Argentine Government and the unwillingness of the Foreign Office to take action to extend the 3 mile limit around the Colony. Argentine claims a 200 mile limit.

The Argentine Foreign Minister has declared that his Government would continue to pressurise and prevent any Company from exploiting marine resources around the Islands unless it was done in co-operation with his Government. This pressure has stopped a joint Falkland Islands/British fish meal venture, which would have greatly benefited the Islands' economy, from commencing. The pressure continues to hamper development of shell-fish within Falklands coastal waters. Meanwhile, the waters around the Colony continue to be exploited by other Nations.

Oil.

A powerful North American oil consortium has submitted an attractive proposal for exploration to Her Majesty's Government. The response from the Foreign Office to such approaches remains, as it has done for 30 years, that no meaningful discussions can be held on licensing until it is established that oil exists in exploitable quantities.

HOUSE OF LORDS.

The Falkland Islands were debated in the House of Lords on the 20th April, 1977 following a question raised by Viscount Boyd of Merton. In the debate, which lasted 2½ hours, Viscount Boyd was ably supported, among others, by Lord Shackleton and Viscount Thurso. The record of the debate has been published in the Colony and the Islanders have been heartened by the sympathetic understanding and interest in their affairs and the support they enjoy in the Lords.

INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS.

Morale in the Colony, particularly on farms, reached a very low ebb at the end of 1976 when official internal air communications ceased following the tragic accident involving Captain Ian Campbell. Replacement planes were brought in but new safety regulations prevented their introduction for a time.

Further total disruption of the service was averted at a later stage

when a late replacement was obtained for the only pilot who was departing on leave.

The local radio service is unsatisfactory and can barely be heard over large areas of the Islands.

NEW GOVERNOR.

Mr. J.R.W. Parker, O.B.E. was appointed Governor of the Colony early this year and has quickly won the confidence of the people of the Colony, not least those in isolated farm communities.

It is to be hoped that the new Governor will quickly arrest the serious decline in Governmental services particularly internal communications, medical service and education.

LOCAL COMMITTEE - STANLEY.

At a meeting held in January, 1977 Mr. Neil Watson was elected Chairman, Mr. Stan Smith Vice-Chairman and Mrs. Velma Malcolm and Mr. Stewart Wallace, Joint Secretaries.

THE PALALAND ISLANDS CO.LTD.

An attempt by Argentine businessmen to take over the Company has been frustrated. The Board of Directors of the Company announced that they would not agree to a transfer of ownership to Argentine interests and pointed out that in any event/pre-emptive right to purchase the Company is vested in the Falkland Islands Sheepowners' Association Ltd. and that the Falkland Islands Government would need to approve any transfer of control to an alien. The Falkland Islands Government has previously exercised its power to prevent transfer of other land to Argentine interests and the British Government has stated that it supports this policy.

THE FALKLAND ISLANDS RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATION LTD.

This Association has been formed to represent the interests of the Falkland Islands Worldwide and to help to promote their development in accordance with the wishes of the Islanders.

Existing members of the Friends of the Falkland Islands will become without formality Associate Members of F.I.R.A.D.A.

The Friends of the Falkland Islands will continue its separate

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existence without formality as a means of providing information to members and to enable their support to be mobilised in a crisis.