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Cost of Civil Service strike: £50m.

THE CIVIL Servants strike last year cost the Government £50 million, MPs were told last night.

The Public Accounts Committee has said that this figure represents the cost of the strike to the Treasury, not the cost of the services that were not provided by the staff.

Both men claimed that they would recover virtually all the money still owing to them.

Haig opposes involvement of the OAS

ARGENTINA called in Washington yesterday for the Organisation of American States (OAS) to demand the withdrawal of Britain's fleet from the South Atlantic, but US Secretary of State Mr. Alexander Haig opposed OAS involvement in the dispute.

Argentine Foreign Minister Nicanor Costa Mendez also called for an end to economic sanctions against Argentina following the Falkland Islands, but he stopped short of seeking collective action against Britain under the 1947 Rio Treaty.

Mr. Haig told the meeting of OAS Foreign Ministers it would have neither appropriate nor effective to handle the dispute in the framework of the hemispheric defence treaty.

BRITISH forces were fired on first before they attacked an Argentine submarine and recovered South Georgia, it was disclosed last night.

The dramatic account of how British and Argentine forces clashed in the South Atlantic, including the submarine, the battleship, the frigates, the mines and the booby traps to take almost 200 prisoners was given by a military spokesman in London.

Mrs Thatcher meanwhile told the Commons the Government were still determined to strive for a negotiated settlement, but (time was getting "extremely short"). She warned that the task force was now approaching the Falklands and "one just cannot have a wide range of choices — of military options — with the task force in the wild and stormy weather in that area".

He said there was no loss of life during the operation, and the

only injury was to an Argentine seaman, who had to have a leg amputated.

Mrs Thatcher said that Argentine troops captured would be returned home. They will have to be flown or shipped to a neutral country.

The Premier insisted in the Commons that the Argentines were not prisoners of war. "A state of war does not exist between us and Argentina".

For the Opposition Mr Foot said there was a "deepening sense of anxiety, but he backed the South Georgia invasion".

While Mrs Thatcher told M.P.s: "We search for peace... but we didn't break the peace, the Argentines accused the British of being the aggressors. The official news agency said that seven were injured Sunday's invasion — not just one as Britain had claimed.

He said there was no loss of life during the operation, and the

Government's determination to do everything possible to achieve a negotiated solution to the present crisis.

He said the implementation of the UN Security Council resolution which required the withdrawal of Argentine troops, and we seek it by peaceful means if possible."

But she returned again and again to her warning that time is now running out.

Whitehall officials stressed last night that Mr Haig was still in play as a negotiator. His mission, rather than a second appeal to the United Nations, is seen as the only way of avoiding a full-scale battle for the Falklands.

To Mr Foot, who urged caution and another trip to the UN, the Premier said: "I have not yet reached a settlement, the blame lies at the feet of the Argentine Government."

However, the Labour leader gave his party's backing to the decision to retake South Georgia.

But at Westminster last night, hopes of a peaceful making a last-ditch attempt to end the crisis were fading fast.

The War Cabinet, who met again yesterday, and Britain's defence chiefs clearly believe that military action must be taken swiftly or not at all.

One final, non-military measure that could provide a final turn of the screw on the Buenos Aires junta would be for America to impose sanctions on Argentina.

A head of steam is building in Washington among politicians anxious to see the US come down firmly on the British side. Such a move would be difficult for President Reagan to make in view of US interests in Latin America. But with an almost conflict now only days away, it may be the only way of heading it off.

Your last chance to become winner

YOUR last chance to become a winner in our Improve Your Home series appears in today's Press and Journal — SEE PAGES 13-16.

There's a final opportunity to become one of our weekly winners of £200-worth of goods for your home — and of being the outright winner of our main prize worth £1000.

And there's also the final entry coupon to find a winner of a bathroom suite worth £1000.



MEANWHILE an Aberdeen tylist was on Cloud Nine yesterday thanks to 'The Press and Journal' Miss Lynn Burnett (above), 78a Beechgrove Terrace, is the fourth £200 winner in our Improve Your Home competition.

An 'Absolutely delighted' Lynn (21), said she had been saving to buy her own flat. She has lived in a small bed-sitter since her parents moved to Elgin last year.

"This prize has come just at the right time because if I get a flat I will be able to buy lots of super kitchen equipment for it."

Lynn will be able to get £200 worth of items from any one of the advertisers appearing in our series.

Still time to win VCR

OUR free, easy-to-enter competition to win a video cassette recorder continues today on PAGE 10.

Now is your chance to catch up with the latest in home entertainment. Don't miss it!

Number spot

TODAY'S lucky number in our Sunstrip Spotter competition appears on PAGE 11.

Your top property guide

TODAY is Property day in 'The Press and Journal's' Classified Columns — the top guide in the North and North-east to the home of your choice. See today's Classified Section on PAGES 17-27.

More specials

A THREE-PAGE special feature on the new OFFICES at Inverness, of J. L. Parkinson on PAGES 7-9.

SPECIAL feature on Protective Clothing — See PAGE 17.

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'Meanness'

RESIDENT Taxes, led by ex-Chief Minister Sir Ian Gilmour last night slammed Government "meanness" over unemployment benefits.

Treasurer Minister Mr. Barney Hayhoe repeated the Government's refusal to restore a 5% abatement in dock master's dues imposed in November, 1980.

The rate was originally made an advance of plans, due for implementation this summer, were brought into law. Tony Blair said that if the rate was not lifted, the Government would be hit by a "double taxation".

Mr. Hayhoe refused to shift from the Government's stated position that the abatement would be restored next year.

Mr. Hayhoe said that the Government would be hit by a "double taxation" if the rate was not lifted, the Government would be hit by a "double taxation".

GET OFF — WE GO IN

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Mrs T's ultimatum to the generals

BY PHIL JOHNSTON
PREMIER Margaret Thatcher delivered a stark ultimatum to Argentina's generals last night: Get off the Falklands, or the task force go in.

Flushed with the success of Britain's recapture of South Georgia,

she told the Commons there was little time left for talking.

But, in a dramatic new twist to the crisis, she threw a lifeline to the military junta in Buenos Aires, offering them a way of avoiding the slide into war.

Speaking on television last night, the Premier hinted that if the first time that Britain

would accept the presence of a peace-keeping force in the Falklands — if Argentina's troops were withdrawn.

They may even be possible to recall the task force, Mrs Thatcher added.

The nature of the interim administration of the islands while long-term negotiations continue has been a major stumbling block in the peace mission of US envoy Mr. Alexander Haig, Argentina has insisted they should remain at

least a token presence in the Falklands. This Britain has rejected, believing it rewards the dictators for their aggression.

With one Argentine ship already under her belt, Mrs Thatcher is now clearly prepared to compromise slightly. But — crucially — she insisted that the rights of the islanders to choose their own form of government must be honoured.

And this is where Argentina has always drawn the line.

American pressure, however, may now be brought to bear on the general to accept an interim force — either from the US or the United Nations — to prevent a battle in the South Atlantic.

Whether they can also force a cave-in on the issue of self-determination is another matter, and Ministers were pessimistic last night.

Mrs Thatcher's statement is a clear indication that diplomatic niceties are rapidly coming to a close — a message heard loud and clear in Santiago.

But at Westminster last night, hopes of a peaceful making a last-ditch attempt to end the crisis were fading fast.

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FALKLANDS FLASHPOINT

Turned down

A PLEA by Orkney and Shetland M.P. Mr. Gordon for a plebiscite on petrol prices on the south compared with the mainland was turned down last night.

Consumer Affairs Minister for Gerard Vaughan told the former Liberal Leader that price investigations would be carried out only in the most exceptional circumstances.

TRAILPIECE

Not another Dr No!



MISS HAZEL GAULD-DUFFUS beside the hole in her garden at 24 Stonedfield Drive, Inverurie, last night.

Gas Board admit error in digging up woman's garden

BY JOHN DUCKERS

A DISPUTE over Gas Board women digging a hole in a North-east woman's garden may soon have a happy ending.

A Scottish Gas spokesman said to 'The Press and Journal' yesterday: "We made a genuine mistake. It all began two weeks ago when Miss Hazel Gauld-Duffus, 24 Stonedfield Drive, Inverurie, arrived home and was dumfounded to find the hole.

She contacted her solicitor and subsequently reached the Gas Board's district superintendent.

It transpired the board had wanted to take gas to a second phase of the housing estate here. Unfortunately the plans from which they were working showed a borehole where the garden is now situated.

Miss Gauld-Duffus says her solicitor demanded reinstatement of the ground and it was agreed no further work would be done by the board at the site until a settlement had been agreed.

Miss Gauld-Duffus added: "I was at home last week when I was horrified to see two gas men yet again in my garden. I told them to get out. A supervisor came along and tried to persuade me to let them carry on but I said no."

A letter they were left with an ugly mess at the foot of her garden an exposed pipe and uncertainty about what would happen next.

Yesterday Scottish Gas admitted they had been misled by their plans of the area. As soon as Miss Gauld-Duffus allowed them back onto her property they would reinstate the land.

They said they had found a connection with the main gas main through her property.

Scottish Gas added that in digging the hole they had found a broken drain which had had to be sorted out. A letter they were left with an ugly mess at the foot of her garden an exposed pipe and uncertainty about what would happen next.

High flying race-track action



THRILLS and spills during the US Auto Club Silver Crown Championship race for dirt cars at a speedway track in Basingstoke, Oct. 27 in foreground driven by Richard Powell slides backwards down the track and is hit by Elvin Fenty whose machine somersaults through the air. Meanwhile, a third car sneaks clear of the trouble on the outside. Near: Powell not Fenty was hurt.

Call-off group's singer reported missing

BY JOHN DUCKERS

disappointment for 1300 fans of Clash, some of whom had journeyed from Monrovia, Elgin and Perth to watch the band.

Strummer apparently went missing last Wednesday. He had just completed a photo interview with Scottish newspapers.

Mr. Bernard Rhodes, manager of the Clash, said: "Joe Strummer's personal confidant, who does the socially concerned rock artist, said that he had seen him in the environs of today's I feel he has probably gone away for a serious holiday help from Clash."

Appalling for help from Clash fans in finding Strummer, Mr. Rhodes said: "We must have him back by Wednesday at Edinburgh."

The Clash were last in Aberdeen two years ago. They are building up a strong following by talking through their music sub-cultures such as unemployment, violence, racism and vandalism. They have steadfastly refused to appear on the top-rated television programme 'Top of the Pops'.

Mr. Rhoads said Strummer (29) was "having a problem about trying to get himself heard — being serious and still playing good music."

He said Strummer had never missed a show before. Mr. Vinyl said the Aberdeen and Inverness dates would be rescheduled.

A spokesman for Fuston said they were hoping the concert would now go ahead on Sunday. Tickets would be valid for Sunday. Alternatively, ticket holders could get their money refunded.

The spokesman said she did not believe it was a publicity stunt.

The other members of the group are Mick Jones (guitar), Topper Headon (drums) and Paul Simonon (bass).

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