

competition. It decided to invest in the latest design and production techniques and it has beaten the overseas competitors. That company is not alone. Many others are doing the same.

**Mr. Joel Barnett:** Is the Prime Minister's forecast of an upturn in the economy based on the fact that the pound will not increase in value? If there is any chance of that happening, will she intervene to stop it?

**The Prime Minister:** The right hon. Gentleman is well aware of the rules of intervention and exactly how it is done. The Government intervene only to keep an orderly market or to stop sudden and volatile changes. The Government can never intervene to defend a specific rate. As to forecasts, the pound could rise a good deal yet without affecting export forecasts.

**Q4. Mr. Marlow** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for 3 May.

**The Prime Minister:** I refer my hon. Friend to the reply which I gave some moments ago.

**Mr. Marlow:** Is my right hon. Friend aware that those who voted Liberal in the previous county council elections in Northamptonshire, hoping that they would keep the Labour party out, wound up with a Labour minority council propped up by a somewhat comic and vague Liberal rump, with consequent large rate increases and great pressures on the local business community? Will my right hon. Friend use her objective authority to advise the electorate not to make the same mistake next Thursday?

**The Prime Minister:** For rating authorities in England, the general rate increase when Labour is in control is about 25 per cent. higher than when the Conservative party is in control. It is important to get and keep the Conservative party in control, and the only way to do that is to vote Conservative.

**Q5. Mr. Race** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 3 May.

**The Prime Minister:** I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply which I gave some moments ago.

**Mr. Race:** As the House of Commons' favourite own-goal merchant, the Minister for Consumer Affairs, was warned two years ago by his own Department of the danger of contaminated blood supplies coming from the United States, will the Prime Minister rectify that deplorable and disgraceful mistake by immediately authorising the necessary expenditure within the National Health Service to make Britain independent in its blood supplies?

**The Prime Minister:** We first need to find out a good deal more about the incident and the causes that have been reported before coming to any conclusion.

**Mr. Shersby:** Will my right hon. Friend consider the splendid contribution that is being made to the provision of new jobs in Britain by the legitimate video and tape industry? Is she aware that new jobs are likely to increase as a result of the private Member's Bill promoted by my right hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth, West (Sir J. Eden)? Will my right hon. Friend encourage further reforms of the Copyright Act designed to protect the legitimate audio-tape industry from home taping? Enormous job opportunities exist in this industry if the Government can further reform copyright law.

**The Prime Minister:** My hon. Friend is correct in assuming that although Britain has not produced many video recorders—we are just beginning to do so—their advent has created many jobs in the retail trade and in the cassette industry. I agree that it is vital to the printing of cassettes and the private Member's Bill is designed to do that. Such printing is totally unprofitable to those who produce cassettes and will soon stop the business. The Government will do everything possible to ensure that the printing industry survives.

**Mr. Gordon Wilson:** Does the Prime Minister approve of reports in the Scottish press that, because of a major miscalculation by the Department of Education and Science, about 4,000 qualified applicants for Scottish universities have been deprived of access to the higher institutes of learning, and does not this smack less of the resolute approach and more of the Phillistine approach on the Government's part in allowing that to happen?

**The Prime Minister:** If we examine the number of people in the age group who qualify for degrees, we find that Britain has one of the best records in Europe. By measuring the degrees given by age group one finds that Britain performs strongly—better than Germany and about the same as France. Britain's participation rate in full-time degree courses has improved quite markedly since we took office—from 12.4 to 13.2 per cent. [Interruption.] Scottish student come to English universities and English students go to Scottish universities. The hon. Gentleman knows that the Scottish universities come under the University Grants Committee.

**Q6. Mr. R. C. Mitchell** asked the Prime Minister whether she will state her official engagements for Tuesday 3 May.

**The Prime Minister:** I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply which I gave some moments ago.

**Mr. Mitchell:** Has the Prime Minister had time to read about the events in Poland during the weekend, when peaceful Solidarity marchers were brutally attacked by the Polish Communist police? Will she give an assurance that no Polish citizen will be sent back from Britain against his or her will while that state of affairs persists?

**The Prime Minister:** The hon. Gentleman knows that Britain has kept many Polish people for precisely that reason. My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary's record in that sphere is extremely good. The object lesson for this country, and that of the Opposition, is that Britain must defend the peace with freedom and justice.

**Mr. Cyril D. Townsend:** Can my right hon. Friend confirm that the United States, far from wishing to withdraw from the Holy Loch base, as has been suggested by the deputy Leader of the Labour party, for Labour party internal reasons, has recently announced that it wishes to remain there until the end of the century? Will she encourage the United States to keep its bases here in our long-term interest and that of the Atlantic community?

**The Prime Minister:** Yes, certainly, the American bases in this country are part of our defence, and Europe is part of America's defence. It is vital that NATO should stick together, otherwise our defence will cease to be sure.

**Q7. Mr. Canavan** asked the Prime Minister what are her official engagements for 3 May.