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Engagements

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Q1. *Mr. Hinchliffe* To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 2 November.

The Prime Minister (Mr. John Major) This morning, I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Mr. Hinchliffe Is the Prime Minister aware that early next month Mrs. Margaret Humphreys will become the first British citizen outside the royal family to be awarded the prestigious Order of Australia medal for her work in rehabilitating victims of the British child migrants scheme? In recognition of that award, will the Prime Minister set up an independent public inquiry into the operation of the scheme until 1967 and the resulting appalling treatment of vast numbers of British children? In view of his professed commitment to open government, will the Prime Minister end the disgraceful Government cover-up of the issue once and for all?

The Prime Minister I am certainly happy to congratulate Mrs. Humphreys on her award. I was not aware that that was the case, but I give her my warmest congratulations. As the hon. Gentleman will know—for I am aware that he has taken a great interest in the matter—the migration schemes to Australia and other countries were run at the time by respected national voluntary bodies. The Government's concern now is to ensure that former child migrants who want to make contact with their families are able to do so. Any concern about the treatment of the children in another country is essentially a matter for the authorities in that country.