

# Pym wins

## the job

Times - 6 APR 1982

## he most wanted

By George Clark

Mr Francis Pym, who became Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs at the age of 60, gets the job he had set his heart on at the outset of this government.

After serving as Shadow Foreign Secretary in the final days of opposition, his hopes were thwarted as Mrs Thatcher formed her first Cabinet, and he rapidly chose Defence as second best.

There, in resisting the first rounds of defence cuts, he twice threatened resignation, and was moved in Mrs Thatcher's first Cabinet reshuffle, rather than cause embarrassment. But he has caused acute embarrassment since, with his comparatively gloomy assessments of economic prospects.

He is acutely aware of political rather than policy implications, and is concerned that the Conservative Party does not alienate its natural supporters.

In early February, as minister in charge of the coordination of the Government's information services, he upset Mrs Thatcher by contradicting the impressions she had given that the worst of the economic recession was over.

His message was that the nation must expect continuing high unemployment. He forecast a long-term struggle to maintain existing living standards, and suggested that public expectations were being raised too high.

It was not the first time he had shown his disagreements. After the 1981 Budget, he was one of a small group of leading ministers who protested that there had not been adequate discussion in the Cabinet about the Treasury's economic strategy.

He and others had wanted some stimulation in the Budget to give greater encouragement to small businesses. As a result of this protest, the Chancellor changed his procedure this year.

The interpretation placed on Mr Pym's speech in February was that he saw more Conservative votes being lost at the general election through rousing expectations too high, without hope of fulfilment, than by presenting the electors with economic realism.

Mr Pym was educated at Eton and Magdalene College, Cambridge, and won the Military Cross when he was a captain in the 9th Lancers. He served in North Africa and Italy. He worked for Lewis's for five years after the war in Birmingham and Liverpool, and later took over the running of a small business in Hereford. He was a member of the Herefordshire County Council from 1958 to 1961.

He unsuccessfully contested a Labour stronghold, Rhonda West, in 1959 when he described himself in typically Tory terms as "a managing director and landowner". He got only 3,000 votes against Labour's 21,000, but was elected for Cambridgeshire in March, 1961, and has held the seat since.

His advancement came through the whips office. After being Parliamentary Private Secretary to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, in 1962, he was appointed an Assistant Whip, graduating to the position of Deputy Chief Whip in 1967.

With the Conservative victory in June, 1970, Mr Pym was appointed Government Chief Whip, holding this office until he was made Secretary of State for Northern Ireland for the last few months of the Heath Administration.

In opposition, Mr Pym was front bench spokesman for Northern Ireland and for agriculture. When Mrs Thatcher was elected leader in 1975 he was reappointed to the Shadow Cabinet but with responsibility only for agriculture.

In 1976, he was appointed spokesman on House of