

17 January 1986

PRIME MINISTER

MAIN EVENTS

Prime Minister makes regional tour of Eastern area

Reform of Social Security Bill published

Westland shareholders meet to decide on offers

Ford trade union negotiators meet to discuss possible strike action over pay

STATISTICS

CSO: Tax and price index (December)

DOE: Homelessness statistics (3rd qtr 1985)

DEM: Retail prices index (December)

HMT/
CSO: Public sector borrowing requirement (December)

PUBLICATIONS

DTI: 'British Business' - includes interview with John Butcher on industrial design; feature on the launch of Industry Year; market report on West Germany

PARLIAMENT

Commons

Business:

PRIVATE MEMBERS' MOTIONS

Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Bill: Second Reading (Mr T Clarke)

Criminal Records Bill: Second Reading (Sir N Bonsor on behalf of Mr P Cormack)

New Towns (Access to Information) (Scotland) Bill: Second Reading (Mr R Cook)

Corneal Tissue Bill: Second Reading (Mr J Hannam)

Marriage (Wales) Bill: Second Reading (Mr D Coleman)

Law Reform (Parent and Child) (Scotland) Bill: Second Reading (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton)

Adjournment Debate

Government policy on the recruitment of special constables (Mr D Conway)

PRESS DIGESTWESTLAND

- Michael Heseltine has his second walk-out - from a Channel 4 studio after discovering Ponting was in same programme. Mirror makes it its front page lead; says he returned 10 minutes later after Ponting's interview had been put off to today.
- Ponting in New Statesman says the biter-Heseltine - has been bitten.
- Lord Hanson revealed as mystery buyer of 15% of Westland shares on eve of today's company meeting on Kikorsky offer, which seems likely to be blocked.
- Sun says Cabinet launch last bid to save Brittan but his few friends at Westminster say it seems a lost cause. Question is not if he goes but when.
- Mirror says there is to be an official hush up of the Westland leak inquiry; leader, referring to prosecution of Tisdall and Ponting, say the Solicitor-General's letter was a far more serious leak yet we shall not know outcome.
- Guardian says you will refuse to give Select Committee on Defence minutes of Ministerial meetings.
- Norman Lamont says he nearly resigned last week along with Heseltine but he did not consider it a constitutional crisis and believes that in years to come people will wonder what the central issue was.
- Joe Haines, in Mirror, says Leon Brittan never intended to answer questions in winding up speech on Wednesday - but Labour let him off the hook by not extending the time he was given to speak.
- Express P2: Gross betrayal - Ridley opens fire on Heseltine.
- Mail P9: Heseltine walk out in news row. Lygo ready to appear as Select Committee witness; uses its two centre pages to invent the Great Westland Game - a sort of snakes and ladders.
- Andrew Alexander, in Mail, says it is all too possible for Lygo to be capable of missing subtleties, getting hold of the wrong end of the stick and adhering to first conclusions through thick and thin.
- Telegraph reports overtures to try to heal the breach between Mr Brittan and Lygo; company wants a speedy improvement in relations with DTI but there is no question of company climbing down.
- Telegraph leader, under heading "A party at risk" says the Tory Party has been perhaps fatally slow to grasp what Heseltine is now about: in pursuit of self aggrandisement it is to inflict as much damage as possible on you - an exceedingly rare occurrence in British politics.
- Guardian says you and Select Committee seemed to be heading for a serious dispute over minutes of Ministerial meetings of October 4 and 1 - Select Committee wants to establish precedent. Mr Brittan in favour of releasing John Mogg's notes.
- Guardian says some civil servants have balked at the way Mr Brittan has appeared to hold up his officials as some kind of independent arbiters in his dispute with Heseltine and B/Aerospace.

WESTLAND (Cont'd)

- Guardian leader says there remain compelling and continuing difficulties for you and Mr Brittan who it claims cannot remain in office and do a proper job.
 - Michael Brown MP, in Guardian, says Heseltine did not get a fair trial while he remained in Government.
 - Times says Westland board is confident it will be able to salvage a Sikorsky/Fiat rescue deal - if no 75% majority GEC/B.Aerospace will be challenged to make a full takeover bid or withdraw and allow majority view of shareholders to prevail.
 - Geoffrey Smith, in Times, says he now believes Mr Brittan will not be forced to resign now unless there is a new and damaging development because one of the deepest Tory instincts is to close ranks.
 - Michael Heseltine, in Times, says he intervened because it is right for Governments to have views about who owns shares in a defence company.
 - David Watt, in Times, says what matters from a purely political point of view is that the whole story fits in with the notion of you as a hard faced termagant who has surrounded herself with third rate creeps and who, when you encounter opposition, tramples on it blindly and ruthlessly. Crudely distorted but just enough truth to be deadly. Only your style can come to Heseltine's rescue.
 - FT: Senior British Ministers rally to ease pressure on Brittan; friends say he is over the worst.
 - Peter Riddell, in FT, says Mr Brittan's view of his duties, in meeting Lygo, may not have coincided with what was politically sensible.
 - Malcolm Rutherford, in FT, says the Government is probably over the worst but it has been a close run thing. The crisis need never have developed as far as it did if you had made the statement yourself on Monday. Few people will forget that, certainly not Mr Brittan. But no one should overlook the fact that the Government is sitting on a pile of counter charges that could be unleashed against Heseltine.
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ECONOMY

- Sun leader says for the first time since the Tories came to power there is to be a fall in public spending this year - but Chancellor is still only wielding a tooth pick, not an axe.
- Telegraph says Chancellor hopes for a 1% cut in tax rate and 11.5% one in allowances in Budget. Chevening meeting decided to aim for £2.25bn tax cuts.

INDUSTRY YEAR

- Prince Philip accuses British industry of complacency at launch of British Industry Year. Response to his call 20 years ago to them "to pull their finger out" not brilliant.
- Norman Willis offers TUC cooperation in helping to rebuild British industry and revive our fortunes.
- Express leads P1 with "Prince bashes Britain" - no one escaped Royal reprimand. Mail says out exports per head a third higher than Japan... leader says Britain's recovery owes much to the fact we now have fewer strikes.

INDUSTRY

- BP and National cut petrol price by 4p a gallon in Scotland, Northern Ireland and some rural areas. Jet to cut price by up to 10p.
- Gartcosh to close March 31; first redundancies February 8.
- Plans for selling off airports unveiled with publication of Bill.
- NCB says miners at pits up and down the country are smashing production records over and over again.
- Du Pont electronics plant at Bristol will create 400 new jobs.
- Government to extend benefit cuts to strikers' families at beginning of disputes.
- Big EC row brewing over blockade of imports of British cars into Spain, allegedly with help of Italian officials.
- B/Airports Authority sale could raise £500m.

AGRICULTURE

- D/Star, spearheading drive in Fleet St against EC food mountains, leads its front page with heading "Man of Straw" ; it says MPs are accusing Michael Jopling of making hay at the taxpayers' expense - all his farms wheat crop went straight into intervention.
- George Foulkes MP - hypocrisy of this Government is simply breathtaking.

UNIONS

- Bank workers demand £20 a week pay rise.
- TGWU official in Isle of Man, who has left TGWU over Militant, forms a new breakaway union on Island.

CHANNEL LINK

- Express says MoD is investigating fears that Link will pose a threat to Britain's defences by decimating ferry service and robbing us of supply ships in war.
- Telegraph says France backed Euroroute scheme last night in talks with Nicholas Ridley; this fits in with your desire for a road link.
- Times claims a deal was struck last night.

POLITICS

- Jim Prior to leave Commons at next election - and he means to leave politics for good, according to Guardian.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

- Mirror exposé on leading member of Militant Tendency in Liverpool who jumped housing queue, getting a flat normally occupied by elderly; whose rent is paid by taxpayers; and whose house is front organisation for Militant.
- FT says Government faces its biggest Backbench rebellion since last summer in RSG vote on Monday.

HEALTH/WELFARE

- Mirror claims that a boy with a broken leg was turned away from eight hospitals because of Government health cuts.

EDUCATION

- More talks between two sides on Tuesday to try to settle pay dispute; Express sees a deal coming closer.

HOUSING

- Ministers drawing up a plan for council tenants to run their own housing estates, developing a new pride in them.
- Labour Government would retain mortgage tax relief.

POPPLEWELL REPORT

- Gets a good reception.
- D/Star P2: More sports face fire curbs.
- Sun P10: Changing face of football aggro. Yobs dressed up in wedding outfits. Star tantrums spark riots.
- Mirror P7: Soccer players guilty of professional fouls should be banned for life, says Popplewell.
- Express P5: Football reform leads way for cricket, rugby shake-up; leader says report is an impressive piece of work.
- Mail P15: Cricket to face safety test in a crackdown on stadiums; dangerous games of cheating stars.
- Telegraph: Government backs down from its demand for an all embracing membership card scheme; inside - Popplewell relents over a total ban on drinking and says "we can never suppress soccer thugs completely"; leader says report is a salutary reminder of the depths to which soccer has sunk.
- Guardian gives lots of coverage - Popplewell urges urgent but costly surgery for sport.
- Times says clubs' failure to make progress on a membership scheme is a sorry index of how energetically they are performing. Mr Popplewell offers them assistance, perhaps too generously.

LAW AND ORDER

- Police Federation says armed soldiers should be guarding our airports; nor armed police.
- D/Star says the terrorist threat does not mean it is right for police armed with machine guns to be on patrol at Heathrow and Ringway; no job for the police. An ever more violent world makes the fine tradition of unarmed British bobbies hard to sustain.
- Express says we should consider whether we should have a special counter terrorist force rather than arming the police. Mail says authorities would be well advised to let the Army resume control of airport security.
- Black activist, Farrakhan, denied entry to Britain; notorious for his anti-Semitism.
- Black leaders dismiss Tottenham riot report; says riot was spontaneous.

LAW AND ORDER (Cont'd)

- Latest cost of holding a prisoner overnight in a cell in London - £176 - more than a room at Savoy.
- Police investigating deaths of three family doctors from same surgery - were heart attacks brought on by drugs? All three heavily insured with same man collecting payments.
- Four London teenagers accused of mugging wave in East London, jailed for total of 24 years.

IRELAND

- Two Maze breakout fugitives arrested in Amsterdam with a shipping container outside their flat containing rifles, ammunition, grenades and explosives.
- Youth killed, fiancée seriously injured, in car bomb in Co Tyrone.
- Soldier, IRA bomb victim who lost his sight, gets £250,000 compensation.

HONG KONG

- Speculation that Prince Charles is being mooted as Governor.

EAST-WEST

- Mail says the glow of the Geneva fireside Summit was rekindled last night - Reagan says he is grateful for Gorbachev's proposals - "different from anything we have heard in the past". Mail leader says there now seems to be some basis for optimism among Geneva negotiators.

LIBYA

- Shultz dismisses your objections to a retaliatory strike against Libya as "absurd".

BERNARD INGHAM

MINISTERS (UK VISITS, SPEECHES ETC)

- MAPP: Mr Jopling and Mrs Fenner attend H J Heinz Co centenary dinner, London
- DHSS: Mr Fowler attends Midland Life pensions meeting, Birmingham
- DTI: Mr Brittan addresses Royal Institute of International Affairs, lunch, London
- WO: Mr Edwards visits Comdial, Cardiff; Griffiths Metals, Aberbargoed; ICI, Barry; Noble Hardman Aviation Ltd, Rhose
- MAPP: Lord Belstead lunches with management board of NORSK Hydro Fertilisers, Ipswich
- MOD: Mr Lee visits Vickers Shipbuilding
- DOE: Mr Patten opens sheltered housing scheme, Winchester
- DTI: Mr Channon meets Dutch Trade Minister, London; also Maltese trade Minister
- DTI: Mr Morrison addresses Chemical Industries Association conference, London
- DTI: Lord Lucas launches Hampshire Industry Year, Basingstoke
- WO: Mr Robinson visits Malpas Church Junior School, Newport

MINISTERS (OVERSEAS VISITS)

- FCO: Mr Renton departs for China (to January 23) then Hong Kong (to January 24) then Thailand (to January 27)

TV AND RADIO

"A Question of Economics"; Channel 4 TV; (14.30): "More or less equal?" - Zeinab Badawi and Peter Donaldson discuss levels of pay

"Micro Live"; BBC 2; (19.00): First programme of 1986 comes which Computer? show at the NEC in Birmingham

"What the Papers Say"; Channel 4; (20.00): Julia Langdon of the Mirror reviews the week's papers.

"A Week in Politics"; Channel 4; (20.15):

"Law in Action"; BBC Radio 4; (20.20): New series looks at issues thrown up by the courts and Parliament

"Any Questions"; Radio 4; (20.45): With Sir David English, Nicholas Hinton, John Edmonds and Marghanita Laski
