

15 September 1986

PRIME MINISTER

PRESS DIGEST

SDP CONFERENCE

- Not front page material - Defence debate seen as ending in fudge.
- SDP rejects renationalisation of B/Telecom and B/Cas.
- David Owen rules out a merger with the Liberals before next election.
- D/Star: Owen given a free hand on riches deal.
- Sun: Strongman Owen wins Nukes battle; Defence 'softies' squashed.
- Mirror: SDP fills in the cracks.
- Today: P1 lead "Threat of new Alliance rift - Owen snub over merger". Given free hand over defence - sees off his party critics.
- Express: Polaris warning as Owen wins the defence vote; leader attacks a "disgraceful" Alliance "fudge" on defence. To put off such a fundamental decision about the safety of our country is as frightening as it is irresponsible.
- Mail: Owen's victory; party backs leader and hits at change of heart on Polaris. Paul Johnson, in Mail, says Owen is his party's only real asset but he is still in the game - a cool, forceful player whose time may yet come.
- Telegraph: Nuclear unity bid by SDP; leader says the main issues in the first two days of the conference have been blandly predictable. How far the Alliance is prepared to note the lessons of the past will be clearer after the Liberal Assembly.
- Guardian says the Alliance gap on defence narrows; leader headed "Round one to Owen - over to the Liberals" says the question now is how far the Liberals are prepared to be pushed by the SDP leader.
- Times: Owen's tough defence stand wins support. Geoffrey Smith says a minimum European deterrent remains a clever political idea to serve a political purpose, but it does not remove the need to choose on a point of principle.
- FT: SDP moves against pledge to renationalise; defence second order of interest; Ian Davidson, in FT, on European defence, says the revulsion of the Labour and German SPD parties from nuclear weaponry is understandable enough, but their alternative proposals are either absurd or irrelevant.

POLITICS

- Guardian says Kinnock wants to become Chairman of the Labour Party next year.

TERRORISM

- Sun says you refused permission for the US to base its Delta anti-terrorist squad here; leader says if Reagan wants to station the force here he should be allowed to.
- D/Star says terrorism demands an international solution and there must be no petty politicking about the idea of America's Delta Squad establishing a base here.
- Today hopes that the Government will wake up to the fact that Gaddafi is not the only ogre in this world and that Khomeini is perfectly happy to use the world as a battleground.
- Telegraph says Home Secretary has brought forward a meeting of Euro Interior Ministers to review cooperation against terrorism at the request of the French Government.

DEFENCE

- Threat of a scandal over discovery on Thames footpath of secret Navy papers showing massive cutback in Navy; George Younger says they do not represent Government policy. He orders inquiry.
- Mail leader says the security row should be no more than a squall compared to what is in the file. Times leader on "the leaky Ministry", says that if warships leaked as much as the Navy's staff the safety of the realm would be in jeopardy.
- Westland facing another crisis - hundreds of jobs at risk unless MoD decides to buy helicopters soon.
- Ministers to be asked to explain why a book critical of participation in Star Wars has been withdrawn by publishers - the result of Government pressure?

NORTHERN IRELAND

- IRA shot dead man they accuse of leading a Loyalist murder gang.

MEDIA

- Row over BBC's programme "The Monocled Mutineer" for historical inaccuracy and bias.
- Mirror comes to defence of programme saying the Tory Party is stepping up its campaign against the BBC.
- Express says the controversy over the programme is the latest example of BBC's incompetence; Jon Akass says Neil Hamilton's complaint about the programme's "blatant" Left wing bias destroys his argument - it is so blatant as to be harmless.
- Eric Moonman, ex-MP, wants BBC governors to hold an inquiry into the programme and is calling for a Broadcasting Complaints Commission inquiry.
- Telegraph reports Labour MPs rallying to the support of the programme; leader writes of shameless fabrication of events in a series advertised as historical, not fictional, compounded by showing gratuitous violence. Not surprising that many members of the public, including MPs, are angry.
- Times says Lord King is favourite to take over as BBC chairman.
- Express writes approvingly of ^{first} Matthew Parris interview on LWT.

ECONOMY

- Midland Bank economists say a boom is on the way - if pay rises fall; jobless figures will be virtually unchanged on Thursday.
- John Edmonds, GMWU, attacks Kenneth Clarke for calling for lower wages and says he should say this to CBI's bosses.
- Mail says petrol companies are to increase prices by up to 10p a gallon.
- Times says Job Restart programme is finding 10% of those it counsels jobs.
- FT says Treasury appears reconciled to a drastic reduction in its contingency reserve because of public spending pressure.
- Meanwhile, leaders of Labour controlled councils are preparing to offer 6.7% to manual workers and rebuff Government calls for lower pay rises.

INDUSTRY

- Miners' redundancy payments to be cut by a third when British Coal takes over financing from Government next March.

EDUCATION

- Sun, on GCSE tested and found easy by 11 and 12 year olds in Liverpool, says it is a con trick.
- Times says Kenneth Baker will announce at the Tory Party conference a plan to set up a network of 20 Government-funded secondary schools specialising in technical subjects.

MEDICAL

- British Journal of Surgeons says patients are being put at risk in operations carried out by trainee surgeons.

DRUGS

- President and Nancy Reagan go on TV to launch an anti-drugs drive.
- Today says Mrs Reagan goes too far in calling for the death penalty for drug pushers.

SOCCER

- Mail leader, approving Luton's banning visiting fans, says the experiment is proving most encouraging and the attendance was only a hundred or so down on same fixture last season.

SOUTH AFRICA

- Sun, following up a Sunday Express report, says the South Africans are laughing all the way to the bank because the threat of sanctions has doubled the price of platinum and the value of gold and diamonds is soaring.

PARIS

- Another bomb - 4 in 10 days - kills one and injures 2. Chirac introduces visas for all apart from visitors from EC and Switzerland.

GREECE

- 17 die in earthquake; 300 injured.

BERNARD INGHAM