

PRIME MINISTER

PRESS DIGEST

LIBERALS/ALLIANCE

The Liberal Assembly yesterday defied David Steel and voted by 652 to 625 to back an amendment that any British contribution to collective European defence should be non-nuclear.

Headlines

- Express: "Liberals torpedo Alliance-Owen-Steel nuclear pact sunk".
- Today: "Steel humiliated on defence - Alliance pact is shattered".
- Star: "Shock defeat for Steel on nuclear deal".
- Mail: "Nuked! Steel's defence deal wrecked by his party".
- Mirror: "No nukes Libs beat Steel in big vote. Revolt hits Alliance".
- Sun: "Alliance blasted by Libs nuke ban".
- Times: "Steel defeat puts Alliance into disarray".
- Telegraph: "Liberals torpedo SDP deal".
- Guardian: "Liberals rebutt Steel over nuclear policy".

Opinion

- "Is there a credible SDP-Liberal Alliance any longer?" asks the Express. "The two Davids must know that the electorate will reject a partnership divorced on this most vital issue."
- George Gale, in the Mirror, says that "the trouble with the Liberal Party in conference assembled is that it neither looks nor sounds like a party of government".
- The Mail says the Liberals have dealt a major blow to the Alliance leaving many people questioning whether it has any future.
- Times: Many things can be fudged in politics - but not defence policy.
- The defeat is seen by the Telegraph as a chasm between the two parties which may prove unbridgeable. "The electorate will draw its own conclusions about the viability of the Alliance in the aftermath of this vote. A house which is half nuclear and half anti-nuclear is a house divided".
- Guardian: "Before yesterday's vote the prospect was that the electorate would be offered a three-way choice at the election..... Nothing is that clear today."
- The FT says the vote cannot fail to have a damaging effect on the Alliance as a whole.



LIBERALS/ALLIANCE (Cont'd)

- You would have to resign immediately if the Tories wanted to do a deal after a General Election which left a hung Parliament. Liberal Chief Whip, David Alton said yesterday (Express).
- David Steel attacked South African ambassador, Denis Worrall, for revealing that he (Steel) plans to visit South Africa next month.

DEFENCE

- Express: The US last night intervened directly in Britain's coming general election with a powerful warning that a Labour Government will lead to the break-up of NATO. Caspar Weinberger's words - due to be broadcast on Panorama on Monday - were leaked to the Wall Street Journal.
- Mail: Neil Kinnock said the Americans know that if they tried to prevent a democratically-elected government from fulfilling its mandate they would invalidate the very principles which NATO was pledged to defend.
- In his address to the UN General Assembly, Shevardnadze turned down President Reagan's offer to make a deal on Star Wars. Instead he proposed scrapping all nuclear weapons.
- Telegraph: India's Chief of Naval Staff will come to London in the next few weeks with an urgent equipment shopping list.
- Times: There is a growing feeling in Whitehall that the Government may be forced to buy the Boeing AWACs and scrap NIMROD.
- Guardian: On Weinberger's criticism, leader says if Labour seeks to make its theories of international cooperation on defence flesh, it will have to show that the international forces involved are really ready to cooperate.

LUTON

- Sun: Last night you blasted the Football League for kicking Luton out of the Littlewoods Cup. You called "foul!" and joined the storm of protest.
- Express looks at 'These men of shame of soccer'. 'Maggie backing fan ban club'. You have thrown your full support behind Luton's stand against soccer hooliganism.
- Mirror: You will seek a full explanation from the Football League.
- Mail: "Maggie backs Luton". Leader says the management committee of the League should be given the Golden Order of the Boot.



LUTON (Cont'd)

- Star: "Maggie's fury at soccer club ban. She raps League chiefs." Leader says you are rightly furious. If the football authorities do not put their house in order, Parliament should take over.
- Today: "Thatcher fights ban on Luton".
- Telegraph: 'Deep concern by Thatcher over Luton expulsion'.
- Times leader says that by failing to show the flexibility which lies within its powers, the management committee has scored a decisive own goal.
- Guardian: "Cup tie ban on Luton angers Thatcher". Leader is strongly critical of the League.

HEALTH/WELFARE

- Guardian: Women who are entitled to a £23.25 a week invalid care allowance under new rules have discovered they will be no better off if the person being cared for is receiving social security, because this sum will be cut by the amount of the care allowance.
- Guardian: Tony Newton will today be asked to help local authorities pay for hospital social work or face a £2m legal action from Camden Council.
- Sun: Leader criticises Neil Kinnock's opposition of AIDS checks on visitors from black countries. "Does he really imagine it would be of comfort to victims of AIDS to know they died in the cause of racial harmony?"
- Star: Whitehall has rejected as impractical a call for AIDS check on all African visitors to Britain.
- Mail: Edwina Currie last night blamed Northern health problems on ignorance and crisps. She said people in the north also drank and smoked too much.
- Today: The British Pharmacists Association is threatening to sue doctors for not writing enough prescriptions. GPs give patients too great a supply of drugs in one go, they say, so the chemists, who are paid per prescription, get less money.



LAW AND ORDER

- Sun: Young thugs hunting in packs have turned Brixton into a more dangerous place than America's most feared area - the 46th Precinct in the Bronx, the Metropolitan Police revealed yesterday.

TERRORISM

- Mail: Speculation was growing last night that France is about to give in to the Arab bombers and release Lebanese gang leader, Ibrahim Abdullah
- Times: EEC interior ministers meeting in London tomorrow are under greater pressure than ever to create a new political impetus to combat terrorism in Western Europe.

INDUSTRY

- Express: Sir Robert Haslam, British Coal's new chairman, met Arthur Scargill for the first time yesterday - and rejected his demand for this month's pay rise to be backdated.
- Telegraph: GM is to arrange for management and workers to eat together at its UK factories, in line with NISSAN's single-status canteen at Washington.
- FT: Libya is to sell its stake in Fiat.

EEC

- FT: Transport ministers have been summoned to a special meeting next week in a bid by Britain to break the long-standing deadlock on liberating air fares and routes.



ECONOMY

- Telegraph: The Government was forced to take action yesterday to reverse the slide in the £. Dealers said the Bank of England was active.
- Times: Public spending is running £1½bn ahead of target.

EDUCATION

- Mail: Brent Council will next week introduce a new approach to religious education. Faith will be understood to be "any consistent, coherent and ethical religion or life stance". It will not matter if it involves belief in a god or not.
- Today: Leader says your government is fond of saying that you cannot solve every problem by throwing money at it. But there are some problems that cannot be solved in any other way. One is education.
- Telegraph: Five years of conflict and criticism between universities and the government seemed to end yesterday when Kenneth Baker apologised to vice chancellors for failing to communicate enthusiasm for higher education.
- Her Majesty's School Inspectors have strongly praised the German education system after a visit there.
- Times: Mr Baker pledged that no university would be forced to close through lack of cash, but he called for a bigger private role in funding higher education.
- Children should be protected from biased commercial propaganda in the classroom, a National Consumer Council report says. A third of books and videos are slanted.
- Guardian: The NCC report says schools are turning to "free" teaching materials from commercial organisations because they cannot afford to buy them.



POLITICS

- Star: Derek Hatton is to be given the chance to hijack Labour's annual conference. Neil Kinnock has agreed to Hatton and another Militant, Tony Mulhearn, being allowed to speak at Blackpool.
- Guardian: Norman Strauss says you lack the will to reform Whitehall.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

- Sun: Hounslow Council is to give paternity leave to lesbians - so they can "stay home and play daddy on the rates".

LEBANON

- Sun: Israeli jets stuck deep into Lebanon yesterday, amid rising fears of a new Middle East row.
- Times: Syria threatens to hit back if Israel attacks.



PEOPLE

- Mail: Geoff Boycott has been sacked by Yorkshire after 24 years with the county cricket club.

ROYALTY

- Telegraph: The Prince of Wales has been criticised by the Church Society for attending a Roman Catholic Mass in Cumbria during a private holiday.

TAX

- Times: The Equal Opportunities Commission is against government proposals for reforming income tax.

IMMIGRATION

- Telegraph: The number of people being detained at Heathrow for further examination has doubled since the announcement of the new visa system, the Immigration Service Union said yesterday.

JIM COE