

PRIME MINISTER

PRESS DIGEST

Two election issues dominate the press today - President Reagan's view that Labour defence policy is a "grievous error" and Kinnock's ducking and weaving to avoid the media.

Alliance slump in Gallup to below 20 - Conservatives up 2.5 at 44.5; Lab. 36; Alliance 18. **Telegraph** makes the point that Tory support is at its highest for 2 1/2 years

Independent Labour candidate to stand against Ken Livingstone

Star: Reagan drops a bombshell - and it implies Reagan did it because you are finding you have a real battle on your hands to stay in power. Kenneth Baker ridicules ILEA. Kinnock tried to stop defence issue wrecking his campaign and denies using phrases about guerrilla warfare. Centre-page spread on 10 questions put to each party leader -with answers.

Sun has Kinnock and Healey clashing over defence policy: Healey expects US to help us if we face nuclear blackmail - Kinnock says there is no future in the threat to use nuclear weapons. You claim Kinnock has fallen at the first hurdle - Tory leaders believe he is showing the first signs of strain. Home Secretary says Labour would be soft on terrorists.

Elsewhere, **Sun** reports Bruce Kent as saying no one who believes in Christ could vote Conservative and Anglican Bishop of Manchester attacking Tories'"uncaring" policies.

Sun leader headed "Say nowt, know nowt Kinnock" says once only a sack over his head would stop Kinnock talking, now he has become as quiet as a stone. But there is no mystery about it. Kinnock says nowt because he knows nowt about defence or anything else. Behind his slick image there is a whole lot of nothing.

A **Sun** feature on "The fat cats behind Labour's sob story" - Colin Welland, Hugh Hudson and John Gau who made the Kinnock commercial.

Mirror makes much of two babies who had heart operations cancelled by NHS hospital because of shortage of nurses and who were then operated on at private hospital; evidence of crisis, it says. It also plays up your remarks in 1977 on unemployment.

Kinnock, the *Mirror* adds, puts you on the spot by again challenging you to a face to face debate.

Mirror leader on telling off for 8 junior doctors who claimed there would be no NHS if the Tories won by consultants who, it says, are the cream of medicine and, unlike junior doctors, swallow it in large lumps.

Inside the *Mirror* features education - what the Conservatives promised and what they have delivered and what Labour promises.

Today leads with "Reagan pokes his nose in" - an astonishing attempt to influence the election. Steel says Alliance could do a deal with Labour if it changed its defence policy. Leading Tories in Tottenham to back Alliance to keep out Bernie Grant. Kinnock furious over "poisonous" personal attacks on him.

Today leader says the two Davids must not be panicked by the polls. They must get across the truth that a vote for the Alliance is a vote for a more united Britain than the other parties can deliver.

Inside a feature on Edwina Currie, the making of a Tory firebrand.

Daily News leads with "Reagan's bombshell"; Kinnock avoided any comment last night but the remarks are expected to cause a furore at his press conference today. Leader says Reagan's ponderous intervention may do Labour more good than harm but what is more important is how Labour leaders are presenting their case. Healey failed yesterday. Labour has no reason to be ashamed of its policy. Article by Hattersley's economic adviser comes out against tactical voting.

Express leads with Reagan on Kinnock's grievous errors. And to add to Kinnock's troubles he appeared to be at odds with Healey. Alliance crash in polls. Tories focus attack on Labour's "thorny Left" in their election broadcast. Your mission is to free schools from the Left. John Smith on the rack in 'phone in over defence.

Express leader on "Questions Kinnock cannot answer" says his refusal to face rigorous cross-questioning on his defence policy is a serious matter. But ducking and weaving which might be acceptable in the middle of a Parliament isn't now when the country is choosing a Government.

Mail leads with its comment on "No questions please, I'm Kinnock - how the Labour leader patronising Britain". It asks what kind of people does Kinnock think the British are? The more you see of him the less there is of him. The more he talks the less he says. This is the week the patronising ceased to work. Kinnock does not have an argument; he has an attitude - of the Left wing ban-the-bomber. To entrust Kinnock with power over all our destinies could be a political nightmare come true.

Elsewhere, the Mail reports your fears that pensioners would lose their homes under Labour's capital value rating; Haringey council demanding all councilors reveal their and their spouse's involvement in groups and professional bodies; Meacher revealing that Labour plans to nationalise a major drug firm as part of hidden manifesto; and the view that last night's Conservative election broadcast is bound to be seen by Labour as a declaration of war.

Mail also has a two-page feature in which Kenneth Baker answers questions about education policy.

Telegraph leads with Reagan's attack on Labour defence plans; Tebbit and Archer mobbed by Left in Yorkshire; Cecil Parkinson enjoys the hustings in the Midlands. Labour's handling of the campaign becomes an election issue.

Telegraph leader says it has become increasingly clear that Labour's entire election strategy hinges on the packaging of Kinnock and the cold-blooded exclusion of any discussion of substance.

Guardian leads with Reagan warns against Labour defence errors and abandons his neutrality; Tories direct fire against Kinnock. Leader says that Kinnock is on the right side in the nuclear debate but he doesn't know how to get there: he's half way round spaghetti junction in a fog. Sooner or later he was going to be in difficulties over defence. In the throes of a campaign ducking, weaving, declining interviews allows the feeling of confusion to spread.

Independent leads with Owen risking rift to revitalise Alliance by re-stating his commitment to the social market economy; and it says tensions are building in the opposition parties. Healey is at odds with Kinnock on nuclear role. Meanwhile poll rumours push sterling down but voters are sticking firmly by the Tories in key seats. Inside, it says that eyebrows are being raised in the EC over claims by the Conservatives about their economic achievements.

Independent leader sets out the questions which each party must answer to fill the gaps after 10 days' campaigning.

Peter Jenkins, in *Independent*, says that if anything was predictable in this election it was that Kinnock would impale himself upon the defence questions. By his rejection of nuclear deterrence in all forms Kinnock invites the charge that he offers no strategy at all for effective defence. Nor is this merely an electoral allegation. It is true.

Times leads with Tories charging Kinnock with running away; you believe Labour pins too much on personality of their leader. Labour alleges that Conservatives have "surrendered" on jobs.

Geoffrey Smith, in *Times*, says it is not enough for the Conservatives simply to win the argument on defence. They need to make it as big an issue as in 1983. He is impressed with George Younger's handling of the issue.

Ronald Butt, in the *Times*, criticises the poor start to the Conservatives' campaign but then goes on to savage Kinnock who, he says, is where he is because he had the political history and vocabulary necessary for leading a party of which the Left had gained control. There is a deep dishonesty in the Labour Party. On most questions which affect people's lives, public thinking hardly connects with that of those who now control Labour.

Times leader says the Alliance list of 101 Damns is an election stunt but because it is a stunt does not mean it is untrue. Whether the figure is 101 or more, a Kinnock majority would contain many MPs who believe in Left ideas or, if they do not believe them, will purport to do so in order to survive as MPs.

FT leads with Tory campaign lead strengthened by opinion polls. Leader headed "Long road to a miracle" argues that voters could be forgiven for wondering what country they are living in. The Government describes the economy as the most dynamic in the Western world; Labour surveys a scene of ruin; while the Alliance takes a middle course. Today's survey by the NIESR concludes that while UK manufacturing is enjoying a modest miracle, productivity is still low compared with our main industrial competitors. The Institute's cautious verdict is something well short of heckling the the face of the Government's claims.

OTHER NEWS

ILEA sacks former rent boy whom it made a governor of two schools.

Customs strike over pay spreads to more Channel ports.

Patrick Minford says black economy on Merseyside is worth £457m a year and half the unemployed are at it.

Trading Standards Officers find private schools in Sussex have been making bogus claims about examination results.

Irish vote decisively in favour of Single European Act.

Star leads with case of woman, in court for being drunk in charge of her baby, living in an hotel in Brent Council and with handouts worth £545 a week.

Man detained in Lancashire remand centre being questioned about series of child murders.

Monopolies Commission to investigate monopoly profits made by Barclaycard and Access.

More than 20 Heathrow baggage handlers and loaders arrested for theft of passengers' property.

Herald of Free Enterprise sold for £1.4m to sail as a ferry, but not to Britain.

Hawke calls Australian General Election eight months before his term of office is due to end - for July 11.

Brian Wenham to leave BBC, according to Guardian, and renewed speculation that Alan Protheroe is to go, too.

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