

26 FEBRUARY 1988

PRIME MINISTER

MAIN EVENTS

Prime Minister visits the North-West and West Yorkshire

EC: Environment Ministers, informal meeting Wildbad-Kreuth
(to 27 February)

The Prince of Wales visits Polesden Lay, Surrey, later visits the
Royal Pavilion, Brighton

The Princess of Wales attends the Penguin Swimathon '88 at the
Queen Mother Sports Centre, London

NUT rally and demo against Education Bill

STATISTICS

DHSS: Statistical bulletin: Pharmaceuticals

DTI: Finished steel consumption and stock changes (4th qtr prov)

DTI: Company liquidity survey (4th qtr)

PARLIAMENT

Commons

Business: PRIVATE MEMBERS' MOTIONS
Transplant Notification Procedures (Mr Gwilym Jones)
Property Services Agency (Mr James Couchman)
Solihull Enterprise (Mr John Taylor)

Adjournment Debate: The effects of night flying in areas adjacent to
airports (Mt T Cox)

Lords: Starred Questions
Public Utility Transfers and Water Charges Bill: Second Reading

UQ to ask HMG what steps they are taking to ensure that all
state schools provide a Christian act of worship and Christian
religious education for all children whose parents request them

PRESS DIGESTMAIN NEWS

Electricity privatisation plans on the whole well received;
Express P1 "Power to the people".

Lord Marshall says he deeply regrets plan which is "unlikely to be in best interests of consumers".

John Prescott says Mr Parkinson will become known as "Minister for Blackouts". Unions opposed.

But Conservative MPs back proposals.

Mail, reporting Reward Surveys work, says millions are reaping the benefit of your revolution - earning three times as much as they did 11 years ago, take more paid holidays and work fewer hours.

You are furious over South African crackdown - but rule out economic sanctions.

Lynda Chalker gives South African Ambassador a dressing down.

John Moore appoints a £40,000 official to take charge of income generation unit for NHS.

70 NUPE and TGWU activists barricade Wirral health authority in their meeting room for four hours as part of demo.

Mirror report another case of a child death, one of 107 waiting for heart operations in Birmingham.

You want matrons back on the wards.

Staff at DHSS are paying out £35m too much a year in handouts - PAC.

RUC pressing Garda to establish border anti-terrorist units.

Tom King invites SDLP to talks.

Army has told Private Thain he is on IRA hit list and is marked for life.

Charles Moore, in Express, says Anglo-Irish Agreement is a contradiction in terms and it gives the Republic a chance to interfere in the North which they are obliged to take.

Today wants Government to refer TV and lawyers to MMC for

investigations into restrictive practices.

20 Labour MPs sign Early Day Motion backing Land Rover strikers.

B/Telecom shares leap after £68m increase in quarterly profits to £574m; but directory inquiries may cost 30p a time because over-used service costs £150m.

ICI pre-tax profits jump 29% to £1.31bn in 1987.

Marks and Spencer bid £437m for US retail group.

Air Canada pilot says he was forced to pull out of a Heathrow landing because another 'plane was on runway.

CAA admits many of its air traffic controllers have second jobs.

Labour Party to go for tax cuts, down to 15p minimum rate, in U-turn to try to win Yuppie vote (Express).

Tory Right wingers backing idea of identity cards to fight against crime.

Bank robbers shoot policeman in leg in cold blood in North London.

Law lords bring high voltage sten guns within firearms regulations.

Fire chiefs reject so-called "wonder treatment" for foam furniture which makers say would save lives.

Home Secretary considering a special constable force for London Underground to help fight mounting crime.

Jonathan Aitken MP resigns as director of TV-AM following revelations that he secretly arranged investment by Saudi Arabia in station.

Case of a surveyor, Robin Thistlethwaite, who has inherited a village and 10,000 acres from an aunt he last had dinner with 25 years ago.

John Smith, detained for 8 years in Iraqi jail, freed with the help of your intervention.

Soviet troops called out to put down unrest in Armenia. Times leader says if unrest is not quelled peacefully, demonstrations could be replicated in many other parts of the country with historical grievances. If Gorbachev is serious about greater freedom of expression, protest demonstrations are something the

Soviet leadership will have to get used to.

Crisis in Panama after President dismisses military leader so that drugs allegations can be investigated.

ELECTRICITY PRIVATISATION

Star: Sparks fly at Cecil's sale plan; Opposition anger.

Sun: Cecil's power sell off sparks TV row; accuses Channel 4's Peter Sissons of bias in TV interview after he left Commons "in triumph".

Mirror: Cecil's £27bn power sell off sparks row.

Today: Parkinson explodes at TV bias. Comment: The massive transfer of assets, welcome through its creation of millions of new shareholders, will have to be handled with extreme skill.

Express: Parkinson wins battle with electricity board chief to launch record £27bn sell off - power to the people. Proceeds will give more scope for tax cuts. Comment: Privatisation should bring cheaper, better and more consumer oriented service. The concept is correct and heralds a very definite return to the political front line of Cecil Parkinson.

Mail: Cecil wins the power game. Victorious in major political and industrial row. Comment: It is far from clear how the consumer is going to emerge from this scheme. But in the end the huge exercise will be judged not by the revenue it raises but by its treatment of the customer in terms of cheapness and quality of service.

Telegraph: Parkinson wins fight for £15bn power sell off; pledges cheaper electricity. Comment: After B/Gas and B/Telecom, Cecil Parkinson should not be surprised if plaudits for his electricity plans are reserved until they are seen to have succeeded. The form of privatisation suggests Government has learned from past traumas. But it will be years before public can tell whether this time privatisation is giving it a better deal.

Guardian: Electricity gets a new power base - balance of power will be tipped from CEGB to hitherto near impotent area boards. Comments: Plans built on false proposition that coal industry needs to be cut down to size and trodden on as well. The Government's fear of the power of the miners has led it to deliver walloping blow to coal. But any gains from cheaper coal must be offset against the extra costs of the Government's refusal to

allow the same market pressures to govern future of nuclear industry.

Independent: Break up of CEGB for privatisation. The most controversial part of the White Paper is the decision to force the privatised distribution companies to buy about 20% of their power from nuclear sources. Opposition, environmentalists, and unions hostile to proposals but Electricity Consumer Council calls them "imaginative". **Comment:** Privatisation is one of the Government's most formidable challenges and it is an open question whether the White Paper will advance either its own fortunes or those of Cecil Parkinson. It is not a bad attempt at reconciling the claims of consumers, producers and employees, but the detail of the eventual Act will determine whether the challenge has been met.

FT: Parkinson wins backing of Tory MPs. **Comment:** A radical approach for electricity privatisation was needed and the Government has achieved it, but it questions whether it goes far enough. The danger is that the proposals will not stimulate enough competition in generation. There was a good case for creating four or five separate generation companies. But the biggest question still left unanswered is the nature of the regulatory system.

Power sell-off "a better deal for customer", says **Times.** Cecil Parkinson hints at cheaper electricity after privatisation. He rejects Labour's warning that plans spell death knell of coal industry. Unions react angrily.

City expecting rich pickings as flotation of 14 new companies will need armies of brokers, bankers, accountants and lawyers.

Comment: Cecil Parkinson has steered skillful course through political minefield but he is unlikely to emerge from his journey unscathed. Putting the customer first instead of maximising privatisation proceeds could backfire. Investors are not likely to want to buy shares in companies without high returns.

INDUSTRY

FT: White collar staff at Land Rover accept 2-year pay deal which the company says is broadly in line with the offer turned down by their striking production workers.

Times: Moves by US trade unions to throw protectionist cordon around American aircraft maintenance could cost Britain billions of pounds in lost business.

Times: Company set up at Manchester Polytechnic for use in teaching students about business goes bankrupt.

POLITICS

Paul Johnson, in Mail, commenting on our billionaires and millionaires, says there seems for the first time to be evidence that the Thatcher revolution is not just affecting our physical performance but altering our psychology - ie wealth is not to be envied but welcomed, admired and imitated.

George Gale, on the prospect of the hard Left taking over TGWU, says Kinnock reminds him of Eddie the Eagle, our Olympic ski jumper: brave, foolhardy but out of his class.

Guardian says the outside world must find the hard Left's takeover of the TGWU disturbing in view of the block vote.

Times: Alan Quinn, who is at the centre of the dispute over the hard Left takeover of the TGWU, likely to prove tough opponent to Kinnock's plans for Labour Party reform; moderate officials ready to take allegation of ballot irregularities to Government Certification Officer if union does not order re-run of election.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Sun comments on Southwark becoming the first council with rent arrears exceeding £30m - 15% of all those in the country - says Michael Howard should set about them with a big stick.

Kent County council gives its senior officers pay rises of up to 30% after consultants' report on pay for equivalent jobs in South East.

COMMUNITY CHARGE

Independent: Cabinet Committee has decided that the benefits of up to four million of the poorest people may be cut by the courts if they default on their payments. Ministers expect a bitterly hostile reaction to the plan.

NHS

Times: You are considering proposals from Centre for Policy Studies to scrap health authorities and set up publicly funded financing organisations to buy and manage health care.

Times: West Midlands study says doctors should be on legal aid panels to stop public funds being granted for fruitless medical negligence actions.

Ray Whitney, writing in Times about his book on the national health crisis, argues for clarity and courage in health reform. He suggests a voucher or credit scheme for medical care.

Independent: CPS study proposes splitting the health service into hundreds of publicly-funded competing health-care organisations which would buy services on contract from GPs, NHS and private hospitals.

FT: John Moore announces new measures to help health authorities generate more income for use in patient care, as part of a short-term plan for the NHS.

LAW AND ORDER

Times: Lord Chancellor's officials to hold an unprecedented meeting with editors, Home Office officials, magistrates and justices clerks because of mounting concern over court secrecy.

Independent: Two Greenham peace women win appeal against convictions of trespassing as Reading Crown Court rules that Greenham Common is common land according to mediaeval rights of residents.

IRELAND

Times: Home Secretary rallies support for Anglo-Irish Agreement.

Independent: Ministers determined to defend Sir John Hermon and oppose his early retirement, although Whitehall is dubious about his version of events during the "shoot to kill" episodes.

Independent: Kevin McNamara accuses you of being behind decision not to prosecute RUC officers in "shoot to kill" affair.

EC

Times: European Commission officials confirm that Britain has retained the right to remain exempted for the time being from planned EC fiscal harmonisation measures.

Times: EC Commission survey shows more Britons (49%) think the country is benefiting from EC membership but indifference to Europe is still highest of any member state.

EAST/WEST

Independent: US, Israel and Soviet Union plan triple spy swap.

FT: The Russians begin to withdraw their SS.12 missiles from East Germany as a spur to the West to implement quickly the INF accord.

BERNARD INGHAM

MINISTERS (UK VISITS, SPEECHES ETC)

- DHSS: Mr Moore visits Wellcome Research Laboratory
- HO: Mr Hurd addresses Berkshire County Council Crime Prevention Seminar; later visits Berkshire Probation Service
- SO: Mr Rifkind addresses Institute of Directors annual dinner, Royal Scottish Automobile Club, Glasgow
- DEM: Mr Lee attends Remploy Approved Training Status Presentation, Smallshaw Industrial Estate, Burnley
- DHSS: Mrs Currie visits Licensed Victuallers National Homes, Burton on Trent
- DHSS: Lord Skelmersdale visits Society of St James, Southampton
- DHSS: Mr Portillo visits Scunthorpe and Grimsby ILOs
- DOE: Mrs Roe visits Lancaster and Blackpool on housing
- DOE: Mr Moynihan addresses the 99 Rowing Club Dinner, Cambridge
- DTp: Mr Bottomley visits Isle of Sheppey with Roger Moate MP to look at transport problems
- FCO: Mrs Chalker addresses Confederation of British Industry conference on Investment in Kenya
- HO: Mr Renton addresses International Press Institute Seminar 'Journalism in the 90s'
- MAFF: Baroness Trumpington visits British Food Manufacturing Industries Research Association
- SO: Lord James Douglas Hamilton visits various housing estates, Dundee
- WO: Mr Roberts visits Disputed Forestry Grant Scheme Sites, Dyfed; later addresses Llandudno and District Parent/Teachers Association, Llandudno
- WO: Mr Grist makes speech to mark final phase of development, Stackpole Trust, Cardiff

MINISTERS (OVERSEAS VISITS)

- DOE: Lord Caithness attends Informal Environment Council meeting, West Germany (to 27 February)
- MAFF: Mr Gummer meets M. Guellec French Fisheries Minister to look at fisheries protection management (to 27 February)
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TV AND RADIO

"Today": BBC Radio 4 (6.30)

"Analysis": BBC Radio 4 (11.00). Looks at how Britain can support an ageing population (first shown yesterday)

"Business Daily": Channel 4 (12.00)

"You and Yours": BBC Radio 4 (12.00) - third of four programmes looking at forthcoming changes in the social security system

"The Parliament Programme": Channel 4 (14.00)

"Wilko's Weekly": BBC Radio 4 (16.05): looking at how the local press operates, visits "The Leeds Other Paper"

"Dispatches": Channel 4 (20.15). Investigative documentary

"Any Questions?": BBC Radio 4 (20.20) with Lynda Chalker, Diane Abbott, John Bercow, Lambeth councillor and banker, and Sheila McKechnie, director of Shelter (repeated Saturday)

"The London Programme": ITV (22.35)

"Newsnight": BBC 2 (22.35)

"The World Tonight": BBC Radio 4 (22.30) followed by "The Financial World Tonight" then "Today in Parliament"
