

THURSDAY 18 AUGUST

Main Newspaper Stories

Widespread coverage of President Zia's death, with speculation about its implications for Pakistan and stability of the region.

Edwina Currie writes to Robin Cook (copy of letter attached) and is interpreted as saying that Government will pay more if necessary to meet cost of nurses' regrading.

Norman Fowler launches £12million scheme of 30 'compacts' between schools and industry to guarantee jobs and training for inner city school-leavers.

IBA gives TV-am 14 day ultimatum to improve its programmes. Carol Thatcher joins TV-am, reviewing newspapers on David Frost programme.

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Hayden
Australia's Foreign Minister Bill Hayden is confirmed by Buckingham Palace as next Governor-General.

North West Times - new regional daily - to be launched on September 20.

Much criticism of M25 and DTp policy after mother and three daughters die in horrific crash.

Lord Silkin dies at 70.

Brent Council makes £17million spending cuts.

Royal Opera and Royal Ballet consider using Lyceum theatre when Royal Opera House closes for redevelopment in 1993-96

Maze escapee Robert Russell to be extradited when he ends three-year sentence at Portlaoise on August 27.

Gallup poll in Daily Telegraph shows Kinnock's personal standing to have slumped since General Election. He is least popular post-war Labour leader after Michael Foot; and Tories have 12 point lead.

Home Office unveils consultation paper on non-custodial sentencing for 17-20 year-old offenders, including proposals for extending closely supervised community service.

"Maggie all set to see Lech Walesa on trip to Poland", according to Daily Express. Meanwhile, there are more strikes at coal mines and shipyards in Poland in support of demands for free unions and higher wages.



Robin Cook Esq MP

16 AUG 8r

My dear Robin

I am replying to your letter of 16 August which was addressed to the Secretary of State. The exact words he used were

"I am firmly resolved to carry out the undertaking which the Government gave to implement its Review Body recommendations and I am anxious to complete the complex re-grading process within the agreed timetable."

That is, and always has been the Government's position. So far as funding is concerned the cost was estimated at the time of the Review Body awards at £803 million and that is the amount which has been made available to the health authorities. It is not possible to say whether that estimate will be exceeded or not until the provisional returns which we have requested from the health authorities have been received.

I am sad to see that over the last week, you have repeatedly implied that the Government is somehow going back on its word. Let me make it clear once and for all that we will keep our promise to the nurses - which is more than can be said for the last Labour Government. For you to talk about broken promises when nurses' pay was cut by more than 20 per cent in real terms between 1974 and 1979 suggests you either have no memory or no shame.

I am releasing this letter to the press to try to clear up once and for all the misunderstanding that you have wilfully sought to cause. Meanwhile I hope you are enjoying your holiday.

Yours sincerely
Edwina

EDWINA CURRIE

PRESS RELEASE

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Speaking in London tonight Edwina Currie, Parliamentary Secretary for Health confirmed that the regrading exercise for nurses is continuing. She welcomed, and agreed with, the statement of Trevor Clay that "the climate had changed".

She said: "I believe that we have now firmly nailed the lies that we are in any way reneging on our word despite the partial comments from some quarters.

"Health authorities up and down the country are getting on with the re-grading exercise, covering 500,000 nurses, the biggest personnel change the NHS has seen since its inception.

"We intend to proceed with the re-grading in good faith and have asked the HAS to report in to us by early September. That has been the position for some time and neither we, nor anyone else, will have a fuller picture before then. Any other comments or statements are necessarily incomplete and fragmented and therefore bound to be misleading.

"We condemn the actions of all those who are hoping to generate anxiety and concern amongst our staff. The "what if?" brigade really are talking nonsense this time. We have the best health service in the world and this Government intends to keep it that way. We have given firm commitments to our nurses and we will keep those commitments.

"In these circumstances I hope that calls for strike action will now be withdrawn, and I hope that Labour spokesmen will make the same appeal in the interests of our patients".

ENDS