

7 NOVEMBER 1988

PRIME MINISTER

MAIN EVENTS

The Prince and Princess of Wales visit France (to 11 November)

EC: ECOFIN Council, Brussels

GCHQ Day of Action. (prov)

STATISTICS

CSO: Regional GDP (1987)

DTI: Retail Sales (Sept-final)

DTI: Credit Business (Sept)

HO: Offenders convicted of drunkenness in England and Wales 1987

PARLIAMENT

Commons

Questions: Energy; Social Security; Transport

Business: Rate Support Grants Bill: Committee and Remaining Stages

Adjournment Debate: Maternity services in Ashbourne and Belper (Mr P McLoughlin)

Select Committees: TELEVISION OF PROCEEDINGS OF THE HOUSE
Witnesses: BBC; IBA

Lords: Starred Questions
School Boards (Scotland) Bill: Third Reading
Sheriff Courts (Scotland) Act 1971 (Privative Jurisdiction and Summary Courts) Order 1988: Motion for Approval
Small Claims (Scotland) Order 1988: Motion for Approval
Liverpool and Wirral Urban Development Area Order 1988: Motion for Approval
UQ to ask HMG what steps they are taking to provide more effective treatment for mental offenders

MINISTERS - See Annex

PRESS DIGESTMain News

Labour to pursue John Moore and Chancellor over suggestion that in briefing Chancellor foreshadowed means testing of pensioners' Christmas bonus and other benefits.

Barney Hayhoe says it is "ill prepared, politically inept and half-baked".

Concern over timing of briefing in advance of Lords' dental and eyesight test charge vote in Lords tomorrow.

Sun leader says it has never made sense to treat all old people as if they were in equal need. Surveys suggest that average pensioner has 50% more disposable income than rest of population.

Leaders in praise of your visit to Poland in Mirror (signed by Maxwell) and Independent as well as Star.

Walesa says he will back a strike if closure of Lenin shipyard is not withdrawn.

Claims that Dukakis is narrowing Bush's lead in final days of campaign.

Much trailing of Broadcasting White Paper, published today, and some mention of student loans White Paper later in the week.

CBI claim that Britain is far too open to foreign takeovers and that public sector prices are rising 6 times rate of those in private industry. It calls on union leaders to end destructive class war tactics and help industry profit from a single Euro market. If unions maintain their adversarial role they will be bypassed.

Some CBI members fear Banham is getting them into protectionist stance over takeovers.

Thousands of Civil Servants expected to strike today in protest over dismissal of GCHQ trade unionists.

Radio and TV journalists call off one day strike in protest against ban on interviews with terrorists and supporters.

But Mail says ITV and BBC management have agreed to screen "health warnings" during some items about Northern Ireland carrying declarations that the report has been compiled under Government restrictions; Tory MPs furious.

PRESS DIGEST

Mail leader describes the comparison with South Africa as insidious. It stinks. This morning only the friends of terror have cause to smile.

NUPE urges 16,000 nurses in London to work to rule over pay.

The Government yesterday announced a U-turn on a £192million plan to give control of rundown housing estates. Lord Caithness said the Government would be ready to offer tenants a ballot (Independent).

Police seize cocaine worth £5million in lock up drugs factory at Cranleigh, Surrey.

Violent crime has risen 23% in London over the last 12 months (Independent).

Vickers say their Leeds factory will be closed if MoD refuses to buy their tanks - with loss of 1,000 jobs.

Jaguar faces 24 hour strike today for sacking a foreman for making 50 copies of a personal letter on a copying machine.

Today claims airlines want air traffic control privatised "to end holiday chaos".

John Humphries, former chairman of the Water Space Amenity Commission, writing in the Times, urges total opposition to the water sell-off under the heading "Privatisation too Many" (Times).

Survey shows that only about one in ten children think schooling is a complete waste of time, with about half saying school had made them more confident and had taught them things that would be useful in a job (Times).

AEU negotiating a merger with CPSA.

Alan Bond acquires 23% of Lonrho.

Employment Ministers have refused to appear on a BBC TV programme - Brass Tacks - which seems to undermine recent Government pronouncements on job vacancies (Independent).

Nicholas Ridley's call for a massive increase in Britain's nuclear power capacity has been repudiated by well placed Government sources raising questions about his future at the DOE (Independent).

PRESS DIGEST

Fog shuts 6 airports in Britain.

DTI have relaxed some of the conditions governing sale of Girobank in an attempt to avoid cancelling this latest dispersal in the privatisation programme (Independent).

Janes Security and Counter-Insurgency Equipment says more effort and research is now being put into fighting terrorism than into conventional defence.

Army find 1,400 lbs of explosives in field in Fermanagh.

Irish Government want new measures to reduce harassment of Roman Catholics in Northern Ireland by security forces (Telegraph).

"Options" magazine survey shows you have restored feeling of national pride and brought country back to life.

Lord Chancellor went to church yesterday - and gets some backing from church members.

Pictures of Paul Channon and Carol Thatcher on London-Brighton run.

Sun sets out 20 great triumphs of President Reagan.

Hindu priest fires two shots - and misses - at Prime Minister of Mauritius.

~~Seven~~ hostages killed before Indians take over freighter commandeered by mercenaries following attempted coup in Maldives.

Sakharovs expected to meet President Reagan in US.

Khmer Rouge to join talks on Cambodia in France today.

Johannesburg reporter for Times says the possible release soon of Nelson Mandela is being linked to your visit next month to black states in southern Africa; Pik Botha storms out of foreign press dinner after hostile questioning (Times).

2 former Pentagon consultants, with the Bush campaign, travelled to Syria for talks with intelligence officers about US hostages - visit has embarrassed Bush campaign (Independent).

PRESS DIGESTPENSIONS etc

Star - 'Means test' outrage; Scrooge plan to scrap pensioners' Christmas bonus and other perks plunges Tories into crisis.

Sun - Moore: I won't cut cash for old folk. Storm over means test plan.

Mirror - Fury at Tory blow to old folk - Chancellor faces storm of protests over his plans to means test pensioners - and for the underhand way he revealed them.

Today - Lawson faces Maggie wrath on means tests. Cabinet colleagues angry with Chancellor. Leader headed "Lawson's blunder" says the result of the Chancellor daring to hint that he wants to stop universal benefit for pensioners has been a furore. It is hard to say which is more ridiculous - Chancellor's veiled hints or bogus outrage for his critics. It's been obvious for years welfare state needs shaking up; the question is how. The Government is right to challenge on inconsistencies but it has gone about it the wrong way by sniping at bits of the system.

Express page 1 lead - Thatcher anger at Lawson's "own goal" - another confrontation in offing; leader says the Government must not ignore the wealth of pensioners when it calculates their needs over the next decade and beyond. The great middle class are incredibly cosseted. They should be given every opportunity to provide more for themselves and their families under your new prosperity by reducing taxes.

Mail - Lawson faces Tory fury over means tests for elderly. Senior Ministers furious over substance and "diabolical timing"; leader headed "Rogue elephant" says the Chancellor lit the blue touch paper and retired to what he no doubt thought was a safe distance. Peers may find this provocative tomorrow.

Times - Report says life expectancy for pensioners lower in Britain than most European countries and has remained almost static for last 30 years.

Times - John Moore to face Commons grilling after reports that Chancellor is planning to means test pensioners. Ministers taken by surprise and some say it is politically impossible: MORI/Times poll shows Conservatives were losing pensioners' support even before announcing plans to cut benefits.

PRESS DIGEST

FT - Nigel Lawson emerges as leader of move within Government to examine scope for cutting of universal State benefits for the elderly. Treasury indicates that no radical changes are likely before the next general election. Some peers suggest that latest reports strengthen possibility of Government being defeated in Lords of dental and eye tests. Treasury and No 10 make it clear that Government remains "firmly committed" to maintaining present value of retirement pension. Leader suggests Chancellor has chosen the classic method of flying an unattributable kite as a means of initiating a debate; and calls for a Commons Statement.

Independent - Labour will demand a Commons statement today on weekend revelations that Ministers are to consider long-term means testing of pensions and all other social security benefits.

Telegraph page 1 lead - Lawson leak on pensions preview provokes uproar. Chancellor engulfed by criticism; leader headed "Ill-timed realism" says Chancellor scores no marks for timing. But this should not be allowed to detract from the logic of his approach.

Independent leader says Government's ideas are "retrograde and rash". Means tests are bureaucratic, intrusive and potentially offensive to the pride.

Guardian leads with "Poor Lookout for Old" - severe poverty being partly to blame for shorter life expectancy among Britain's elderly compared with other countries. And another story - Lawson starts benefits storm.

YOUR VISIT TO POLAND

Star leader, under heading "What a trip of triumph" says Labour MPs spit vitriol in a fit of petulant pique over the visit's success. George Foulkes' claim that it was the "most mistaken intervention since Hitler" was an offensive insult both to you and Poles. Your call to both sides was freedom and your visit was a major act of diplomacy.

Mirror leader, signed by Robert Maxwell under heading "The Shining Beacon - for Poles, Britain is still the symbol of freedom" says your tumultuous welcome was as Prime Minister. It does the Labour Party no credit to denounce you and compare you with Hitler. To decry the first visit of a British Prime Minister to Poland in order to score a petty political point is to misunderstand and misjudge the importance of the event to those who still look to us with admiration and hope.

PRESS DIGEST

John Akass, in Express, finds your triumphant progress through Poland the strangest episode in our recent history.

Mail - Walesa gives Maggie a gift for the Queen.

Times - Walesa puts Poles on alert for national strike over Gdansk shipyard closure.

Independent - Walesa has proposed a national strike over the closure of the Lenin shipyard. The prospect of starting talks between government and opposition now appears more remote than ever.

Telegraph - Vatican very satisfied with success of your visit. Official says you struck just the right note.

Guardian - Poland denies Thatcher role - ie as go-between. Otherwise Rakowski says he is well satisfied with visit. He is adamant decision to close shipyard will not be reversed.

Independent leader says your enormous success in Poland has added to your reputation. No other British Prime Minister since Winston Churchill could have hoped to receive so warm a welcome or to have had so marked an effect and it is hard to envisage any contemporary Western European leader matching your success. Labour's comments show a failure to understand Poland's plight and implicitly insult the Poles. ... Perhaps your success will be the seed of a coherent Thatcherite Ostpolitik.

BROADCASTING WHITE PAPER

Star - Britain could have up to 17 TV channels by 1990s under White Paper.

Sun - TV stations for sale in Hurd's telly revolution.

Today - ITV firms battle to keep licences.

Independent - Much delayed White Paper will try to solve a number of policy issues. Will reduce privileges of the established duopoly, ITV especially, while fixing outline terms by which new channels, whether funded by subscription or advertising, can compete.

FT - Government intends to use lump sum bids to allocate ITV franchises and to impose continuing progressive levy on ITV advertising revenues throughout new 8-year franchise periods.

MINISTERS (UK VISITS, SPEECHES ETC)

- DEM: Mr Fowler addresses CBI conference, Torquay
- DEN: Mr Parkinson addresses the Economist Electricity Privatisation conference, London
- DTI: Mr Clarke and Mr Maude meet M. Papandrea, Greek Minister responsible for the Single European Market and GATT, London
- DTp: Mr Channon attends Air Traffic Control Seminar, Lancaster House, London
- LCD: Lord Mackay visited by Rt Hon Geoffrey Palmer, Deputy PM of New Zealand; later addresses annual dinner to celebrate anniversary of Balfour Declaration
- DEM: Mr Lee attends Caterer and Hotel Keeper open day
- DES: Mrs Rumbold sees Records of Achievement, Plume School, Essex
- DES: Mr Jackson addresses one day conference on the subject of philosophy in higher education, St Andrews University
- DH: Mrs Currie attends launch of Asian Heart Disease Video; later addresses Pharmaceutical Negotiating Committee Dinner
- DH: Mr Mellor visits Royal Marsden
- DTI: Mr Maude attends Single Market Breakfast, Belfast
- DTp: Mr Bottomley addresses Managing the Drink/Driver conference, Kings Fund Centre, London
- DTp: Mr Portillo visits Channel Tunnel Sites at Folkstone and Dover
- HO: Lord Ferrers visits West Midlands Fire Service
- MAFF: Mr Thompson addresses Impact Europe 1992 conference, Bristol
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MINISTERS (PRESS INTERVIEWS)

- DOE: Mr Ridley interviewed by BBC TV's Panorama (prov)
- HMT: Mr Lawson appears live on BBC TV's Panorama
- DEM: Mr Nicholls appears on TVS Head to Head, Fareham
- DES: Mrs Rumbold's interviewed on broadcast of what makes a good school, BBC 2
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TV AND RADIO

"Today": BBC Radio 4 (6.30)

"Kilroy": BBC 1 (9.20)

"Business Daily": C4 (12.30)

"The World at One": BBC Radio 4 (13.00)

"The Education Programme": BBC 2 (19.05). Choosing a school in the new world of open enrolment

"Watchdog": BBC 1 (19.30)

"World in Action": ITV (20.30)

"Cities Fit To Live In": C4 (21.00). Profile of Barcelona

"Panorama": BBC 1 (21.30). Are tougher laws needed to control the Waste Cowboys in Britain's booming waste industry"? (prov)

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

"Newsnight": BBC 2 (22.30)

"Television and the Presidency": BBC 2 (23.20). The growing impact of television on presidential campaigns
