

16 December 1988

PRIME MINISTER

MAIN EVENTS

Prime Minister gives interview to Thames Valley Police newspaper; receives Christmas turkey (photocall); gives interview to Blue Peter; and looks in at Lobby Party for children

The Princess Royal visits King's College, London

EC: Social Affairs Council, Brussels

Mr Mersie Ejigu, Ethiopian Minister of Planning, visits ODA

MOD: End of likely INF inspection period at Molesworth/Greenham

Grant Maintained ballot result of Wilson's School, Sutton

School Examination and Assessment Council announcement of successful bids for contracts to develop "Standard Assessment Tasks" for 7 year-olds

STATISTICS

CSO: Tax Index (Nov)

CSO: Retail Prices Index (Nov)

CSO/HMT: PSBR (Nov)

PUBLICATIONS

DSS: Social Security Bill

PARLIAMENT

Commons

Business: PRIVATE MEMBERS' MOTIONS
Protection of the Unborn Child - Mr John Watts
Channel Tunnel Rail Links - Mr Kenneth Hind
Safety in Children's Playgrounds - Mr Robert B Hughes

Adjournment Debates: The accountability of funding The Sports Council (Mr T Jessel)

MINISTERS - See attached

PRESS DIGESTMain News

Conservatives easily hold Epping in much reduced poll.

Meanwhile, Gallup in Telegraph gives Conservatives 11 point lead and Kinnock his lowest personal rating in his 5 years' leadership.

Sun - Kinnock's hopes of winning next election were snuffed out last night as Labour was beaten into humiliating third place in Epping by-election.

You shoot down John Biffen over nuclear disarmament suggestions.

New low in jobless total and slowing down of wage increases for first time in two years gives Government double boost.

Compensation scheme for egg producers widely canvassed as a farmers' group takes out a writ against Edwina Currie. Pressure on her to resign intensifies. She pulls out of children's TV programme.

BR withdraw 35 of their new Super Sprinter trains after problem with electric doors.

Claims that a train nearly crashed 13 months ago at Waterloo in near identical circumstances to those at Clapham.

You announce £250,000 Government donation to Clapham rail disaster fund.

Paul Channon appoints QC for Clapham rail disaster inquiry.

Times - Claims that railway signal rules were not followed as more faults are revealed following Clapham crash. ASLEF say signals fail three times a month on average throughout the country. Meanwhile, Labour criticise scope of inquiry's terms of reference saying they are unacceptably narrow.

Memorial service for victims of Clapham crash to be held at Winchester Cathedral in mid-January (Telegraph).

Armenian relief fund in Britain now stands at over £6million. Search for survivors in Armenia is scaled down (Times).

Department of Transport unlikely to ban Suzuki mini-jeep although tests show it can roll over at slow speeds (Today).

Ford's inventors slash cost of clean air cars (Today).

PRESS DIGEST

Consortium of small airlines link up in £25million sky wars deal to fight giant British Airways.

Guardian - DTI says it plans to meet representatives of Acemex, Cuban shipping company, next week amid hopes that up to 900 of 2,200 jobs at North East Shipbuilders can be saved.

Settlement appears imminent on Britain's investment in European Space Agency, with 5% growth over 3 years expected (Guardian).

FT - Britain withdraws objection to ESA scheme Horizon 2000 as the £2billion programme in astronomy satellites and unmanned space probes is launched.

FT leader looks at the Government's approach to the telecommunications industry in the light of the DTI report on fibre optics. It calls for the early abolition of the BT/Mercury duopoly to allow new technologies to forge their own competition.

Britain wins fight with France to export Sunderland built Nissan Bluebirds without restriction (Independent).

Commons Trade & Industry Committee attacks Government's approach to development of IT industry (FT).

Swan Hunter announces 450 job losses (Telegraph).

Nurses at the Royal Free Hospital are living in prefabricated portable cabins in the car park because they cannot afford to buy or rent homes and the hospital cannot afford to build a nursing home (Telegraph).

House of Lords rejects nursery nurse's claim for equal pay (Guardian).

New figures show that the community charge will mean smaller bills for most families in South but bigger ones for those in the North (Mail).

House prices falling in South while those in the North are still buoyant.

Security guard shot in East London bank raid. Police arrest two and recover £60,000 stolen.

PRESS DIGEST

Litter louts could soon face on-the-spot fines in your crusade for a cleaner country (Express). Leader says public will fully support plan but asks whether £10 is enough.

Latest figures show that girls at primary school aged just 10 and 11 among 3,763 youngsters given abortions last year (Express).

Parents could be banned from hitting their children too hard under proposed amendment to Children Bill (Express).

Lord Chancellor has given his support to the monitoring on sentences and bail decisions in relation to black defendants (Independent).

Woolworths withdraw from sale video of film on 'Yorkshire Ripper' killings (Telegraph).

Tory MP Barry Porter denies taking a swing at Labour's "Gorgeous George Galloway" in the Commons (Express).

BBC and Gerald Kaufman to pay out £175,000 libel damages to 16 policemen over allegations that they beat up five schoolboys.

Sun carries your Christmas card saying you have sent out 2,500.

Your new photograph by Norman Parkinson appears in Today.

Sun features a new slim John Smith after his heart attack. He's lost two stones and plans to lose another two.

Former Olympic champion Steve Ovett buys £400,000 mansion overlooking Solway Firth.

Britain planning to increase its quota of Vietnamese boat people next year from 240 to 500 (Mail).

Sun leader says Middle East has lived with hatred and bloodshed for half a century. Even a half chance to help them is worth taking.

You increase pressure on Israel to talk with PLO.

Gorbachev may visit Britain in January (Express).

Gorbachev's appointment of 49 year-old man as new Chief of General Staff underlines his determination to create a slicker, younger military leadership (Telegraph).

PRESS DIGEST

EC survey finds 56% of Britons back your opposition to a single European currency (Guardian).

Delors poised to distribute commissioner posts in today's "night of long knives". Brittan expected to get Competition and Millan regional development funds (Times).

EGGS

Mail - Storm building up over Government plan for £10million rescue package for struggling egg farmers.

Express - Edwina hit by writ in egg storm as farmers win £10million aid.

"Eggwina Sued for Millions" is headline in Sun.

Star - Currie sued by Egg Bosses. Quit, Edwina told.

Today - Chicks gassed as Edwina faces axe.

The wicked fair on top of everyone's Christmas tree this year is Edwina Currie, writes Chris Buckland in his weekly column in Today.

Post - Edwina Chickens out of TV. She was due to be quizzed by 10 year-olds on children's TV tomorrow morning but suddenly pulls out without explanation.

Times - Egg producer to sue Mrs Currie. Trade Association predicts writ will be the first of several. In Times letter, John Biffen criticises you and Mrs Currie. He says the failure to apologise for the remarks "fosters the cancer of arrogance".

Telegraph leader says Mrs Currie's display of hyperbole has proved costly. The cost of any compensation scheme could dwarf that of the advertising campaign. Nothing has emerged that could justify the outlandishness of her claim. When they have made nonsenses they should say so.

Scientist claims danger from eggs is 100 times greater than stated in today's advertising campaign (Independent).

Egg Producers' Association say a lack of cyanide gas is holding up culling of hens (Telegraph).

PRESS DIGESTDEFENCE

Mail - Vickers expected to get order for new tank but with tough strings attached. Leader says decision over new tank is one of the hardest this Government has been called on to make. Vickers deserves more time, but, at the end of the day, Britain must have the best tank.

LAW & ORDER

Mirror - Speed trap which has landed thousands of drivers in court has been found faulty and withdrawn on Home Office orders.

Star leader looks at drink-drive court cases saying anyone who drives after drinking is a potential killer and tells its readers "Don't Drink and Drive".

Post leader catalogues recent violent incidents and reflects on "the mounting tide of lawlessness that has become the number one concern of people in Britain". It is a situation for which successive Governments and judges bear a heavy responsibility.

Times - Law Commission calls for measures to speed up house buying.

A major inquiry into public order policing methods including a review of the need to replace the baton charge with CS gas or plastic bullets will follow the trial of police officers charged in connection with incidents at Wapping (Independent).

Independent leader says Home Secretary's words of support for the police following announcement that officers were to be charged in connection with Wapping were "a gross misjudgement".

HEALTH

Today claims that health watchdogs who give doctors the go-ahead to prescribe new medicines are often on the payroll of major drugs firms. Leader asks who watches the watchdogs saying there must be sufficient qualified people without drug company connections who could sit on these vital committees. They should be appointed as replacements without delay.

Times - Cancer Research Campaign reports successful experiments with new cancer treatment.

Times - Kenneth Clarke announces training shake-up to cure specialist nurses shortage.

PRESS DIGEST

Times - MAFF withdraws research grant from scientists on brink of discovering how to rid poultry industry of salmonella.

Times - King's Fund College report says Government should spell out which treatments NHS can no longer afford to provide under rigorous rationalisation.

IRELAND

Guardian - Growing tensions are developing between you and the Home Secretary over the use of a highly restrictive ministerial committee to push through measures to combat Sinn Fein and the IRA. Relations have become increasingly cool. Sharper division was over prison remission policy for terrorist offences. Top official is quoted: "The Home Office is virutally being run from No 10 Downing Street".

Experts in Irish constitutional law say UK could win legal challenge against Irish decision on Ryan in Dublin High Court (Times).

Irish Government offered amendments to warrant procedures during inter-governmental conference, but they were not enough to soothe British anger over non-extradition of Ryan (Telegraph).

MIDDLE EAST

Guardian - US moves swiftly on Palestinian talks. Two pages of analysis and reaction. Foreign Secretary said to be ready to see Arafat in New year. Mr Hayim Pinner, director general of Jewish Board of Deputies, says Europe is being taken for a ride by the PLO. Leader describes US policy as not a U-turn but the fulfilment of a promise. No matter how long and hard the road now open may be, it is a joyous event to set against the long list of recent horrors at home and abroad.

FT - Soviet Union calls for peace talks on Middle East after US move. Leader welcomes US move but warns that the problem is far from solved.

Israel shocked as Washington makes first contact with PLO in 13 years. UN gives Arafat its blessing - voted overwhelmingly in favour of setting up international conference on the Middle East in which PLO would participate on equal footing with Israel and other states (Independent).

PRESS DIGEST

Times - US launches historic talks with PLO. Dismay in Israel but international support is overwhelming, Arab nations jubilant and Europe satisfied. President Reagan warns that the US would break off contact with the PLO if it reneged on its declaration. Leader says the Arafat declaration provides only a crack in the ice. The dossier for discussion is fiercely complicated and it would be unreasonable to expect an early breakthrough. A step-by-step approach is the only one with any chance of success.

Bush played key role in decision to open door to direct talks with the PLO by encouraging State Department not to take too pessimist a view of the "clarified" PLO statement (Independent). Leader says without abandoning their seasoned scepticism Israelis must now show the world that their own desire for peace is sincere.

MINISTERS (UK VISITS, SPEECHES ETC)

FCO: Sir Geoffrey Howe addresses public meeting of Third World Group, Oxted

DES: Mr Jackson signs Eurosynchrotron Radiation Facility, on behalf of HMG

DH: Mrs Currie attends Variety Club of Great Britain, Businessman Award of the Year

DOE: Mr Moynihan visits Dorset and opens Leisure Centre

DOE: Mr Gummer receives Danish Minister for the Interior

DTI: Mr Clark meets Chilean Mining Delegation

DTp: Mr Bottomley launches the City of London anti drink/drive campaign, Guildhall

HMT: Mr Lilley visits HM Customs and Excise at London Heathrow Airport

HO: Mr Hogg visits Ranby Prison

MAFF: Baroness Trumpington visits AFRC Institute of Engineering, Silsoe

WO: Mr Roberts opens Welsh Archaeological Soviet conference, Cardiff; later attends Drink/Drive Campaign promotional event, Cardiff

WO: Mr Grist visits Amersham International, Cardiff

MINISTERS (OVERSEAS VISITS)

DTI: Mr Newton attends Research Council, Brussels

TV AND RADIO

'Today': BBC Radio 4 (6.30)

'Kilroy': BBC 1 (9.20)

'The Parliament Programme': C4 (12.00)

'Business Daily': C4 (12.30)

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

'The Friday Report': BBC 2 (20.00) 'Rising Concern' The dangers facing the south-east, should the Thames ever break its banks

'Any Questions?' BBC Radio 4 (20.20) with Ludovic Kennedy, Jim Sillars, Barbara Castle and Andrew Neill

'Newsnight': BBC 2 (22.30)

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