

7 February 1989

PRIME MINISTER

MAIN EVENTS

Prime Minister meets Fernandez Ordonez, Spanish Foreign Minister and Vladimir Kamentsev, Deputy Chairman of the Soviet Council of Ministers

The Duke of Edinburgh attends Sail Training Association dinner, Fishmongers' Hall, London

Visit of French Minister for European Affairs, London

STATISTICS

DTP: ? Government Response to North Report

DOE: Announcement of Water Industry Guaranteed Standards Scheme and publication of Consumer Protection Codes

HMT: Economic Progress Report

PARLIAMENT

Commons

Questions: Defence; Employment; Prime Minister

Business: 10 Minute Rule Bill: Postal Privilege (Amendment) (Mr John Bowis)

Opposition Day (4th allotted day)

Until about 7.00 pm. Debate on Transport on an Opposition Motion

Afterwards, Debate on Science and Scientific Research on an Opposition Motion

Motions on the Local Authority Social Services (Designation of Functions) Order and the Access to Personal Files (Social Services) and (Housing) Regulations

Adjournment Debates: Employment opportunities for disabled people (Sir M. McNair-Wilson)

Select Committees: EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND ARTS
Subject: The Supply of Teachers for the 1990s
Witnesses: National Association of Head Teachers at 4.15 pm; Secondary Heads Association at 4.45 pm (approx); Head Masters' Conference at 5.15 pm (approx)

MEMBERS' INTERESTS

Subject: Parliamentary Lobbying

Witnesses: 4.30 pm Westminster Strategy 5.20 pm
(approx) Profile Political Relations**COMMITTEES ON PRIVATE BILLS**

1. Associated British Ports (No 2) North Killingholme
Cargo Terminal

Lords: Starred Questions

Children Bill (HL): Report (2nd Day)

Debate to take note of the Report of the European Communities
Committee on Visual Display Units (22nd Report, 1987-88. HL Paper
110)

MINISTERS - See Annex

PRESS DIGESTMain News

Concerted intervention by several central banks, including Bundesbank and the Federal Reserve Bank of New York, pegged back the dollar yesterday (Times).

Share prices fall as retail sales rise. FT-SE index closed 25.6 down at 2,044.3 (FT).

Oxford Economic Forecasting believes Chancellor is on course to achieve desired slowing of economy, but by 1991 growth will be back above 3% (FT).

Edwina Currie tells Select Committee for a third time she cannot help them with their inquiry and asks them to allow her to get on with her life.

Select Committee now to consider whether to compel her to give evidence.

Sunday Times confirms that they have the rights to her book.

Express leads with efforts by stores and London Food Commission, an independent body, to stop the hysteria over food poisoning - risk in a tiny proportion of meals served.

Wandsworth prison dispute ends - Mirror says as defeat for warders.

Home Office drawing up plans for a voluntary national identity card costing up to £10 each; but Times says Government's mind is still open on issue.

Justices Clerks Society urge Government to adopt a package of far-reaching, proposals on magistrates' courts, including a new inspectorate to monitor efficiency and the merger of more than 100 small benches (Times):

Government to soften the blow of big rate rises for businesses next year after forecasts of up to 100% rate increases for them - full details of safeguards likely to be published within next fortnight. Times says Nicholas Ridley is expected to impose a 5 year ceiling of about 15-20% for business rate rises.

PRESS DIGEST

Times page 1 lead says you are spearheading a drive against fraud in EC which may amount to £6billion a year. You have taken this initiative because of British concern at the extent of the frauds and fears that proceeds from agricultural subsidy fiddles are being syphoned off to the Mafia in Italy and the IRA. The subject was raised by you at last week's Cabinet meeting following a report by the EC's financial watchdogs.

GEC/Siemens lodges new set of takeover proposals for Plessey with with MMC (FT).

Michael Howard to see private water companies today over reported plans for price increases of 30-50%. Express leader headed "We must stem the water rises" says the companies' announcement has "try on" written all over it - and an attempt to embarrass the Government. Mr Howard must put public fears to rest.

Mail says Ministerial anger over projected rises is bluster and humbug. the only reason water authorities have not increased their charges to invest in new drains etc is because the Government has prevented them from doing so. We are now being faced with a bill for past neglect.

FT says you have told Michael Howard and Nicholas Ridley to reduce political damage. Leader, headed "Water Sale in a muddle", says round of price increases is being driven by need to increase monopoly profits in advance of sale. If Bill must go ahead it should be on basis of regulatory proposals which are much clearer about the balance between prices, profit and investment. In a feature, deputy Chairman of Council for Environment Conservation, John Humphries, accuses Government of selling something it does not own and for which it has never paid.

Ridley admits he has no powers to curb price increases of up to 70% sought by private water companies (Independent).

Health leak inquiry is focusing on a Scottish Office Department (Independent).

LRT to spend £300million on improving fire safety on Underground.

Paul Channon to seek legislation to allow private toll roads. Despite earlier reluctance you are now said to be enthusiastic about a range of radical schemes (Independent).

Jaguar workers reject £7.50 a week rise (want £17) and threaten 24-hour walkouts.

PRESS DIGEST

CBI is to launch campaign to curb growth in absenteeism which is believed could be costing Britain £5billion a year (FT).

Shares in National Freight Corporation take off - 50p above market estimates at 270p at one stage; finish day at 248p.

Row over bags of AIDS waste dumped illegally in Cheshire landfill tip rather than burned as required.

Concern over second death in construction of Channel Tunnel.

Guardian feature on a resurgent Wales and Cardiff's confidence - and Peter Walker, the man behind it.

NatWest joins other banks in abolishing charges on current accounts.

Introduction of VAT on commercial property and construction may hit inner city projects. But Tim Yeo welcomes exemption of new buildings used by charities (FT).

Times leader under heading "Green Theme" says today's Opposition debate on science will give the Government the opportunity to do two things; to rebuild its commitment to basic research in general, and to reinforce its particular interest in research on the environment.

Lord Young, in speech to RSA, promises to carry the Thatcher revolution into Europe, concentrating on market freedom and deregulation. "Maggie's way is best for Europe" - Mail.

Governor of the Bank says plans for Euro economic and monetary union likely to prove premature. Europe not ready to take necessary steps.

Delors extends a friendly hand to you: denies he wants to see governments surrender sovereignty and seeks only "the minimum of management at the European level" (Independent).

Independent leader says you have built Delors into a "bogeyman" who personally threatens Britain with drastic emasculation of sovereignty and creeping sovereignty. In reality the much exaggerated social dimension of the single European market poses no significant threat to economic efficiency - no danger that close co-operation will erode Britain's national identity.

PRESS DIGEST

Today infuriated over British Telecom's behaviour in shutting down chat lines - it has preferred the easy way out - chopping them rather than ensuring they are run properly.

Number of men aged 100 or more in UK has doubled since 1984.

Mr Michael Bewick, surgeon at Dulwich Hospital, and Dr Raymond Crockett, consultant renal physician, have been referred to General Medical Council by Bloomsbury Health Authority over transplants (Times).

Bill to allow Sunday horse racing published.

Small Heath School, Birmingham, votes to opt out of local authority control after court actions and bitter campaign.

Peter Dawson, general secretary of Professional Association of Teachers, says teachers who set a bad moral and political example to children should be sacked.

Lots of coverage for Kenneth Baker's opening of CTC for performing arts technology in Abbey Road.

Sun says Kenneth Baker's plan for student loans is a "stinker". He should not ask youngsters to start out in life with a financial burden on their shoulder. Telegraph advises unco-operative banks to think again.

Students in 9 West Country colleges write protest letter to Rob Hayward MP with 7 spelling mistakes.

British 13 year olds come near the bottom of the league in maths results compared with other countries (Independent).

BBC wants to keep night hours on both its channels for subscription TV.

Today wants to see the Corporation floated on the Stock Market. Express says the BBC won't become more enterprising so long as it relies on a licence fee.

After more than 30 years of centralised pay agreements, from 1 July each ITV company will negotiate at local level (Times).

Relatives of victims of the Lockerbie air disaster condemn US government for not telling the public about a bomb threat, and call for a Congressional investigation.

PRESS DIGEST

Guardian leads with secret talks on the construction of a £60million Royal Opera House in Covent Garden surrounded by a Disneyland-type entertainment complex.

Mrs Dukakis admitted to clinic for alcoholics.

Lech Walesa launches an appeal for "the dismantling of Communism" in talks with Polish Government. Start of debate broadcast live. Demands legislation of Solidarity.

General election in Paraguay on May 1.

Russians fail to win face-saving agreement on Afghanistan which would have given ruling Communist party a role in future Government.

Britain opposes food relief for Kabul (Times).

Israel urges US to end dialogue with PLO after it wipes out a 5-man Palestinian death squad in Southern Lebanon.

Russia and China agree on joint statement plotting path to peace for Cambodia.

Anti-apartheid Movement says you are encouraging companies to undermine and evade economic sanctions against South Africa agreed by Commonwealth and EC.

All Party War Crimes Group seeks legislation to permit suspected Nazi war criminals in the UK to be prosecuted for offences committed outside Britain (Independent).

EGGS

Star page 2 - Edwina reaches boiling point.

Sun page 4 - Leave me alone! Edwina in new snub to poison egg probe MPs.

Mirror page 2 - "Now let me get on with my life" - Edwina's plea as she snubs Commons watchdogs again. Leader headed "Bring her to book" says her conduct has been appalling and she should give the information "we all have a right to".

Today page 1 - Edwina: I want to be alone. Wants Select Committee to stop hounding her.

PRESS DIGEST

Express page 2 - Please let me get on with life, by Edwina. Remarkable plea, but MPs may still bring her to book.

Mail page 1 - Edwina at the end of her tether. Let me get on with my life, pleads beleaguered MP. Tory foes scent blood.

Telegraph page 1 - Decision day on Currie. Select Committee meets to decide on whether to insist she gives evidence.

Times - Edwina Currie pleads to be spared a personal appearance before Select Committee asking to be allowed to get on with the rest of her life.

Guardian leader identifies the authority and competence of Select Committee as the real issue. No account of the salmonella scare will be authoritative which neglects her role. Government should stick to the line when it comes to the Commons that this is not a Government matter.

Independent - Edwina Currie under renewed pressure to give evidence to Agriculture Committee - now being seen as a matter of principle about the powers of select committee. Her book not about salmonella.

Public Health Lab in Exeter claims as many as one third of eggs coming from a single farm may be infected (Independent).

Independent leader says Edwina Currie should see a doctor: it's not unusual to lose one's voice for a day or two but to have been dumb since December 16, the day she resigned is worrying. Her refusal to appear before the Select Committee is a direct challenge to parliamentary scrutiny of the executive.

ANNEX

MINISTERS (UK VISITS, SPEECHES ETC)

- DES: Mr Baker addresses reception to mark the award of the first ESSO centenary bursaries, London
- DTI: Lord Young and Mr Clarke meet Mr Kamentsev, Soviet Deputy Prime Minister; Lord Young later meets Mr Aviel Sharon, Israeli Trade and Industry Minister, London
- MAFF: Mr MacGregor tours Northern Region
- DEM: Mr Lee opens British Holiday and Home Park Association national convention and exhibition, Harrogate; later presents management training certificates and 'Best of British Holidays 89' award for environmental excellence, Harrogate
- DES: Mr Jackson visits Crawley Engineering Industry Training Board
- DOE: Lord Caithness addresses, and Mr Thompson (MAFF) attends National Agriculture and Countryside 'Rural Housing' forum, London
- DTI: Mr Maude addresses Financial Times conference on mergers and acquisitions, London
- DTI: Mr Clark meets Madame Cresson, French EC Minister
- DTI: Mr Forth addresses British Standards Institute consumer reception, London
- DTp: Mr Bottomley unveils plaque commemorating EEC's contribution to financing M25, South Mimms
- HO: Mr Renton makes keynote speech on the future regulation of television broadcasting in Europe, King's College, London
- MAFF: Baroness Trumpington addresses National Proficiency Test Council conference, London

MINISTERS (OVERSEAS VISITS)

- DTI: Mr Newton visits European Regional Development Fund, Brussels

TV AND RADIO

"The Open Learning Business": (13.00)

"Tomorrow's World": BBC 1 (19.00). How the trade winds are helping to supply Hawaii with energy for the future