

17 February 1989

PRIME MINISTER

MAIN EVENTS

Prime Minister visits St Margaret's Church and Trimate Ltd in Uxbridge and United Biscuits Research & Development Centre in High Wycombe

'Lancet' report on incidence of listeria

Duke of Kent visits Oman

Lord Young visits India

STATISTICS

CSO: Tax and price index (Jan)

DEM: Retail prices index (Jan)

PUBLICATIONS

NAO: Financial management and control of the Sports Council

PARLIAMENT

Commons

Business:

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BILLS

Sunday Sports Bill: 2nd Reading. (Mr Andrew MacKay)

Disabled Persons (Northern Ireland) Bill: 2nd Reading. (Rev. Martin Smyth)

Housing Associations (Access to Information) Bill: 2nd Reading (Mr Andrew Welsh)

Adjournment Debates: Planning appeals from the London Borough of Croydon (Mr H Malins)

Select Committee: EXAMINERS OF PETITIONS FOR PRIVATE BILLS
Subject: Kings Cross Railway Bill (adjourned hearing)

MINISTERS - See Annex

PRESS DIGESTMain News

Guardian poll cuts Conservatives lead to 3% - 2% down:
42/39/SDLP 7/SDP 7.

David Owen, in Express, suggests the NHS is your Achilles heel.

But a doctor writing in the Mail says the solution is small hospitals run by local people and not by bureaucrats.

BMA's GPs committee urges doctors to warn patients that NHS reform plans will mean a deterioration in care. They are also being asked to write to their MPs.

Pay review body reports and Government's acceptance of them get reasonable press - but teachers and nurses' leaders react badly.

Number of unemployed falls below 2million for first time in 8 years - because, says Labour, the figures are fiddled. Norman Fowler jubilant (Star). Newspapers cover news quite extensively.

Today says more than 20,000 jobs have been lost in the City since the crash.

Times - Government and private economists worried that pay rises in private sector are adding to the inflationary pressures that will overshadow the Chancellor's Budget; leader says the City's nervous response to better-than-expected unemployment figures is the clearest signal yet to the Chancellor that inflation is now the overriding concern of the business community. It concludes that it may be time to revert to the lessons you tried so hard in the early 1980s to instil into the public consciousness; unearned wage increases translate into lost jobs. But to restore credibility to that message, an anti-inflationary Budget is no longer an option; it is an imperative.

Ministers left yesterday's Cabinet with the clear impression that the Chancellor may still reduce basic rate income tax by 1p and that he is preparing a package of measures to boost incomes of the low-paid (FT).

Independent - Some City concern that the labour market has tightened to a point which might intensify inflationary pressures.

Telegraph says Cabinet agreed yesterday Chancellor should introduce a prudent and cautious budget.

PRESS DIGEST

President Bush tells reporters he does not think inflationary pressures in US economy warrant substantially higher interest rates (FT).

Guardian says UK is near to breaking with Iran.

British Airways steps up security after Iranians threaten to bomb its planes over Rushdie novel.

Threats leave Britain's relations with Iran frozen.

Islamic world seriously divided by Ayatolla's threats.

Mail says Rushdie and wife face a future in hiding.

PanAm bomb was planted in cassette radio - and in Frankfurt, it is believed.

Lancet listeria article passes off very quietly.

The Chief Medical Officer in Times interview discusses how the current epidemics and alarm over food poisoning can best be controlled.

Hundreds of doctors have been advised to monitor patients recently treated at a Birmingham hospital where two liver transplant patients contracted legionnaire's disease (Times).

Sun says your loyalty is misplaced in relying on Kenneth Clarke and John MacGregor in the food and water debate. You should speak yourself.

Kinnock accuses you of being "frit over food" after you decline to take up challenge to reply to him in food safety debate (Times).

Kinnock is taking tips from a Leftie comedian to try to score points off you in Commons, according to Sun. He denies it.

Tribune warns Kinnock he is heading for disaster with party workers if he changes party's unilateralist stance.

Independent leader suggests that Labour is experiencing a modest revival in its fortunes, while the Government is starting to look incompetent. But the magnitude of the task facing Kinnock is immense.

NASA research programme discovers hole in ozone layer over Arctic as well as the Antarctic.

PRESS DIGEST

Nissan studying plan to export cars from Britain to Taiwan
(Times).

British Aerospace cuts its labour force by 2,500 at Hatfield and Bracknell.

Guardian says Harland & Wolff faces run down and closure.

MMC report says more than 60% of trains are late, too many are dirty and prices can vary wildly.

You pledge built-in protection for the environment along the Chunnel link route.

Pressure Group Transport 2000 claims Chunnel will force firms in North to move to South East or into France and Belgium.

Which? claims that garden centres all over the country are leading people up the garden path when it comes to giving advice.

Lord Donaldson backs Lord Chief Justice's criticism of law reform plans.

Thousands of students take to streets in protest at Government's plans to introduce student loans and abolish their rights to claim welfare benefits (Times).

OFT confirms it is conducting a wide-ranging review of UK media market, looking at any concentrations of ownership. Any serious worries could be fully investigated by the MMC (FT).

Timothy Renton says Government is considering moratorium on hostile bids for ITV companies for 18-24 months after new licences are issued in 1992 (Independent).

ITV face confrontation with unions after buying a mini-series filmed in South Africa.

Doctor at centre of kidneys for sale row resigns as director of National Kidney Centre.

Sun: Ombudsman criticises Sun for buying story from fellow patient about Leslie Crowther's alcoholism and publishing it.

Claims that millions of counterfeit US dollars are rolling off IRA presses to buy arms.

PRESS DIGEST

Gunmen line up customers in Belfast bar and shoot and injure five, including 2 women.

Mail says Winnie Mandela's glamorous image can no longer conceal the instincts of the gangster - she's ostracised by her own community for the activities of her bodyguards. This must be the moment to free Mandela.

You offer to hold international conference to discuss flood aid to Bangladesh (Times).

Ruling party wins Sri Lankan parliamentary election, but polling day violence brings fear that the island's racial conflicts may get worse (Independent).

Gorbachev, in address to industrial workers, admits that perestroika is in danger of running out of steam (FT).

Poland at last admit USSR, not Nazis, responsible for Katyn massacre of 4,000 officers.

IRAN

Today says Government has decided to do as little as possible about the Ayatollah's offer of blood money for Salman Rushdie's head. But we could expel all Iranian students providing none of them would be executed on their return.

Express leader headed "Time to shun Ayatollah" says his incitement to murder has made Sir Geoffrey Howe fighting mad. But the FCO is not going to do much. What on earth is the value of diplomatic relations with such a regime? No more Iranian students should be allowed into the EC.

Independent - UK balancing act over Rushdie: Government acts with studied moderation as Khomeini threat is condemned but diplomatic links remain. Germany joins France and Italy in cancelling plans to publish the book. Meanwhile, Iran's leading clerical newspaper criticises \$1million bounty for Rushdie's murder.

Times - Plans shelved to establish normal relations with Iran and strong protest made because of death threat to Salman Rushdie.

Guardian says for the UK to refuse to contemplate breaking with Iran would be a mistake of principle. What is needed is an equally loud and clear response to Iranian's blood curdling threat.

PRESS DIGESTFOOD

Today says Government has to stop fumbling and bungling over food and find a permanent solution; its performance is too laid back.

Express - Supermarkets in new listeria alert on "ready to eat" chicken. CMO writes to every doctor about listeria risk.

Independent - Egg producers say eggs blamed unfairly for food poisoning. It is more to do with poor hygiene in the catering industry. The Lancet says that Public Health Laboratory officials believe food industry preparation practices, especially cook-chill, must be reviewed.

PAY BODIES

Star - Pay storm as Maggie wages war on angels. Near inflation rate rises only. You are determined public sector pay must not get out of control.

Sun - Maggie gives the junior doctors a pay rise tonic.

Today - Double overtime ends 96-hour docs scandal. Nurses rage at pay "betrayal"; Baker's £470million apple for the teacher.

Express - Thatcher pegs public pay rises in £1.5billion package. Fines plan in pay awards to aid overworked doctors. 'Nurses heartbroken; teachers could resign'.

Mail - New rise gives hope to junior doctors.

Times - Pay increases to public servants held to rate of inflation but teachers and nurses attack deal as stingy.

Independent - Nursing unions angry over wage rise below inflation, and BMA describes decision not to give consultants an extra £1,000 a slap in the face. But teachers get higher increase than expected. Leader says the teachers pay award is not generous enough. Your Government's sniping has contributed much to the teachers' low morale. Without the underpinning of adequate funds for teaching as a whole, there is little point in Kenneth Baker talking about expanded opportunities for 16-19 year olds.

Telegraph page 1 lead - Ministers keep lid on public sector pay rises. 6-8% deal will cost £1.5billion. Leader says overall the Review Body recommendations are sensible, and so is the Government's acceptance of them.

PRESS DIGEST

Guardian page 1 - £1.5billion pay rise for public employees. Kinnock claims teacher and nurse shortages will worsen.

FT - Government's handling of restructuring of nurses' pay criticised by pay review body. Leader says civil service is losing staff at twice the rate it did in the early 1980s, suggesting that it has yet to become a competitive employer. Ministers should recognise that any future deterioration in the relative pay of public sector employees will be likely to undermine rather than advance its policies.

UNEMPLOYMENT

Sun leader says Socialists can carp that we are still far from the old levels of unemployment, but the difference then was that rogue unions forced employers to carry workers they did not need. That phantom army almost fatally handicapped Britain.

Star - Whingeing windbags complain that Government keeps moving the goal posts but readers should not listen to them. Unemployment is steadily falling. We should rejoice.

Today - Dole queue dips below 2 million.

Express - Dole total slips below 2million mark.

Mail - Jobless on course to hit 1.5million mark. Leader on Labour's 1987 manifesto pledge to cut unemployment of 1 million in 2 years points out that the Conservatives have virtually achieved that yet there is no welcome from Socialists.

Guardian - Jobless total dips below 2 million.

MINISTERS (UK VISITS, SPEECHES ETC)

- DEM: Mr Fowler addresses Birmingham Venture lunch on Training and Enterprise Councils, Chamber of Commerce House, Birmingham
- DH: Mr Clarke attends City of London luncheon for President Ershad of Bangladesh, Mansion House, London
- DTI: Lord Young visits Central TV, Birmingham
- DEM: Mr Cope visits Moorfoot, Sheffield; later attends reception for local employers with training agency contracts and meets staff concerned with YTS, TECs etc at training agency, Sheffield
- DOE: Mr Trippier visits Manchester Ship Canal, Kirklees and Wakefield
- DOE: Mrs Bottomley launches Hampshire lead free petrol week
- FCO: Mr Waldegrave addresses Barclays de Zoete Wedd Ltd seminar on "The Dimensions of British Foreign Policy", All Souls College, Oxford
- HO: Mr Hogg visits HM Young Offenders Institution, Warrington, Staffs
- MAFF: Mr Thompson attends Rastrick annual general meeting, Yorkshire
- SO: Lord James Douglas-Hamilton addresses Scottish Federation of Housing Associations and Planning Exchange conference on Housing (Scotland) Act 1988, Hospitality Inn, Glasgow
- WO: Mr Roberts visits Coed Cae school, Llanelli, and Teilo Sant school, Llandeilo
- WO: Mr Grist addresses Save the Children Fund lunch, Cardiff

MINISTERS (OVERSEAS VISITS)

- DTI: Lord Young visits India (to 26 February)

TV AND RADIO

'Analysis': Radio 4 (11.00). Broadcasting's Big Bang. Looks at the future of broadcasting in the light of the White Paper

'Next Left': C4 (20.00). A new four part series on the future of European socialism

"Any Questions?" BBC Radio 4 (20.05) With Roy Hattersley MP, Des Wilson, Chairman of the Campaign for Freedom of Information, Lord St. John of Fawsley, Rosalind Gilmour, Director of St George's House, Windsor Castle