

PRIME MINISTER

KENNETH BAKER

I attach a copy of Ken Baker's interview with Chris Buckland in today's Express. Apparently Ken Baker's remarks that you were partly to blame for the "failure of the Party in last month's Euro elections" are the cause of some comment in the Lobby. There is an outside chance that this may be raised at Questions tomorrow.

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JOHN WHITTINGDALE

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CC ODAY

**I**F Mrs Thatcher's new team think they are in for an easy ride then Kenneth Baker has news for them. The days of complacency are over. The Tories are being ordered onto the attack. The next General Election campaign began yesterday.

And even though the actual polling day may not come until 1992, Mr Baker, as the new Party Chairman, believes there is no time to waste.

Only hours after sweeping into his new political home, the party headquarters in London's Smith Square, he declares: "We're in the run up to the election now. Let's be clear about this. Whether the race is in 1991 or 1992, the Cabinet changes were so sweeping that this will be the team that will broadly be there on polling day."

Mr Baker was appointed by Mrs Thatcher to set the Party organisation buzzing after two years under the worthy, but crusty leadership of Peter Brooke, the new Northern Ireland Secretary.

### Action

And with only one final job as Education Secretary to fulfil — officiating at a Buckingham Palace Garden Party for teachers — he started his task as he means to continue. In at 8.30am, reviewing the papers and the previous night's TV to see what issues need an "action this day" stamp.

It's clear that his almost permanent, charming smile hides a grim determination that will keep other Cabinet colleagues — and Mrs Thatcher herself — on their toes.

His main task? "To make a much better job of what I think is a very good case. We've not been putting our best foot forward for the past nine months or so. We've been thrown onto the defensive and we must go onto the attack."

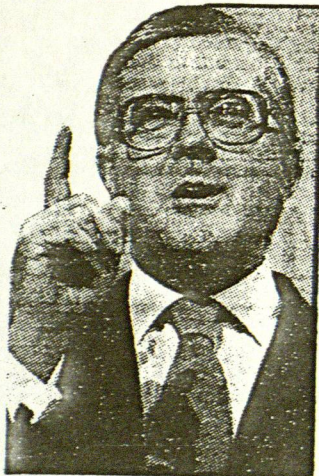
"I want to pump steel back into the Party. The chairman of the Party can only do so much. Other ministers have got to do it, too. It's a team effort that counts at the end of the day."

And that means his colleagues fighting to get on TV to face up to their Labour attackers, taking the battle into their court.

"We've got to be more reactive, more alert, more on the ball."

"Ministers must take the

# 'I want to pump steel into the Party. We must go on the attack'



**Baker: Determination**

*battle to the enemy. Labour has been allowed to get away with it for far too long. I'm going to show them up for the hollowness of their policy review; show how the leopard hasn't changed its spots. Once a socialist, always a socialist."*

Mr Baker at 54 is seen as one of the front runners to succeed Mrs Thatcher once she decides to quit, and he's the bookies' favourite for the job despite a tough-looking challenger in 46-year-old John Major, the new Foreign Secretary.

But he insists that race isn't even on the calendar yet. "I'm not looking at things in that way

at all. I said to the Prime Minister when she offered me the job, 'I give you my total personal loyalty,' — which I've always done — because I want to ensure that she is re-elected Prime Minister."

Yet the man once regarded as a wet clearly doesn't wince from the prospect of advising Mrs Thatcher to take a different tack.

### Fault

The failure of the Party in last month's Euro-elections was at least partly her fault, he says. "The trumpet gave an uncertain sound and when it does that the army doesn't know which way to march."

*"If Margaret had imposed her political style — in the way she did later at the Madrid Common Market summit — into the campaign then it would have been a different result. That came a bit too late."*

Now if Mr Baker can talk like that about his leader you can just imagine how he will deal with ministers who are reluctant to defend their corner properly. They won't stand a chance.

After all, he says he gets on very well with the lady in Number 10, adding: "The relationship between the chairman and the Prime Minister has to be one of the closest in Government."

As well as trying to nobble the Labour horse, the new Party chairman wants to trumpet Tory achievements.

"We rather get tired of saying how well we've done, and we

shouldn't. We've transformed our country in the past 10 years.

"The 'Sixties were the swinging 'Sixties, the 'Seventies the sagging 'Seventies. The 'Eighties are the decade of expansion and enterprise with much greater prosperity. This has been taken for granted."

And when Mr Baker looks at the 1990's he sees them as "a decade of the quality of life".

He plans to beat the Greens at their own game in proving that only the Tories can provide that by creating the wealth to make it affordable.

"This is the theme, this is why environmental and green issues are so important."

He says the Government has a very good environmental record "but we don't sing it from the rooftops". The team announced on Monday will help. It means "the Government is much fresher than it was 24 hours ago".

Mr Baker, as you might expect, has no doubts that the Tories will win the next election race. "We're going to win. I want to win convincingly."

And he adds: "At the moment the Government enters that race as favourite, though the Labour nag has been improving in recent outings."

"The trouble with the Labour nag is that it hasn't got a winning jockey. I don't think Neil Kinnock is a winning jockey. Many of the Labour stable lads who've been grooming the nag from the front bench also don't believe he's a winner."

"Margaret Thatcher, though, is a winning jockey."