

January 8, 1990

PRIME MINISTER

MAIN EVENTS

EC: FCO open day for European Democratic Group MEPs, London

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STATISTICS

CSO: Retail sales (Nov-final)

CSO: Credit business (Nov)

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PARLIAMENT

Commons

Questions: Social Security; Attorney General; Foreign and Commonwealth  
(Overseas Development Questions)

Business: Until about 7.00 pm Pensions (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill:  
2nd Reading and Money Resolution  
Afterwards, Government Trading Bill: 2nd Reading and Money  
Resolution

Adjournment Debates: Smoking in public places (Mr A Amos)

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PRESS DIGESTMain News

Confusion over what, if anything, the Government is prepared to do by way of a higher offer to ambulancemen. Express says Government is prepared to offer 8% - up 1.5% - and foreshadows a settlement.

Telegraph says Government and unions taking tentative steps towards breaking deadlock.

Roger Poole, NUPE, agrees to meeting after report of an 8% offer.

Unions said to recognise they will not get pay linked to firemen, arbitration or a review body. Mail: unions ready to back down on key pay link.

Some newspapers - eg Mirror - have Kenneth Clarke battling for his political life. Kenneth Baker says Cabinet is 100% behind Health Minister, but Express claims number of disgruntled Conservatives grows daily.

Pressure mounting on the Government to commit itself to substantial pay rises for teachers in State schools (Times).

Mystery bug kills six babies in Brompton heart and lung hospital.

Gorbachev sends troops to Georgia to keep peace between rival communities.

Lithuanians planning a big demonstration to coincide with his visit this week.

Times leader sees Gorbachev taking a small carrot and a weak stick to Lithuania. Having, according to Lithuanians, already conceded the principle of independence, what Gorbachev needs is time, ie to persuade the Lithuanians not to secede before the 28th Congress of the Soviet Union next Autumn. By an ironic twist of history, Gorbachev's political future could lie in Lithuanian hands.

East Germany's New Forum threatens a general strike if the Communists do not loosen their grip on power.

3,000 students demonstrate in Bucharest for a share of power.

Fourth day of protests in Bulgaria opposing restoration of Muslim rights.

FT says Chancellor is to review and possibly change monetary policy as part of preparations for Budget.

PRESS DIGEST

Sir Robert Reid to criticise Government's handling of railways in speech today calling for considerably more financial and moral support.

Government will write to every business in the country to explain the new uniform business rate in an attempt to calm those facing large increases (Times).

Telegraph leader, rehearsing political accountability arguments for community charge, says there are many more pressing issues which require the attention of Tory Backbenchers.

Threat of water shortage in South-East.

The Centre for the History of Science Technology and Medicine says Government's approach to investment in scientific and research education is damaging British Industry's ability to innovate (Times).

Westland wins £20million order for tyre pressure indicating systems for Airbus.

Times editorial previews Japanese Prime Minister Kaifu's visit this week to East and West Europe, suggesting that Japan has a financial and developmental role in the rebuilding of Eastern European economies. The real challenge for the Japanese will be in also finding ways to import more of what Eastern Europe produces - perhaps raw materials represent the best hope here.

Scotland Yard fraud investigation leads to closure of 200 'paper banks' in Montserrat (Times).

Sun backs the idea of an elected second chamber on the lines of the American Senate.

Kenneth Baker attacks Labour's new Rights Charter proposals, saying they would mean more Government and more expense.

Paul Johnson in Mail says Labour's Charter of Rights campaign is a phoney because it rests on the lying assumption that you run a Government which has slashed freedom. Kinnock is emerging as the great chameleon of British politics, busily trying to rewrite history, particularly his own.

Today leads with family Budget to increase mortgage tax relief and cut stamp duty and restore child tax allowances. Leader calls for 50% increase on alcohol and tobacco duties.

PRESS DIGEST

Norman Tebbit says he could not afford to succeed you as Prime Minister.

Professor Black, one of the Government's most influential advisers, has criticised the GCSE's reliability as a means of testing children's knowledge (Independent).

Royal College of Art has retained its popularity despite introduction of charges for courses (Independent).

Family Policy Studies Centre says school-leavers who can't get a job are left destitute if their families won't keep them; forces them to sleep rough.

Some say Sir Percy Cradock's mission to Peking was snubbed by China. Express says Sir Percy must get tough with frightened old men of Peking. Times says there have been reservations about the visit.

Telegraph says the trip has backfired because it has caused fresh consternation in Hong Kong.

Independent editorial on Foreign Secretary's forthcoming visit to Hong Kong says that the most important issue is now democratisation. He should stand firm on this issue. All we can do, it says, given the uncertainty of future Chinese policies, is what we think is right. The more we do, the more the Chinese have to un-do: more difficult for them, more honour for us.

Two British Parliamentarians arrived yesterday in Hanoi to question 51 Vietnamese Boat People repatriated against their will last month.

Police investigating a young insider dealing ring in City.

Home Office has been given new evidence on the Birmingham Six, one element of which is understood to contradict police evidence in the case, according to Independent. It says it is likely there will be a limited police investigation before possible referral to Court of Appeal.

BSB completes its financial package for an April launch of satellite TV.

Row over Dave Allen using bad language on BBC before 10pm in recorded show. Mirror says BBC should clean up its act.

PRESS DIGEST

Lech Walesa accepts £750,000 for film rights on his life.

Chariots of Fire film star Ian Charleson dies of AIDS, 40.

Lord McAlpine of Moffat dies, 82.

American warships patrolling sea off Colombia on anti-drugs patrol.

Independent concludes that it would be tragic if the opportunity developments in Eastern Europe present to reduce military force levels were to be squandered because the US military lobby were to find an alternative fix in cocaine.

Independent has picture of HMS Andromeda with its two laser projectors circled. Labour Party will call for more light to be shed on weaponry.

France restores links with Kabul.

In unconfirmed reports, the Khmer Rouge claim to have attacked Cambodia's second city, Battambang, in a dramatic escalation of the war between the Resistance and Hun Sen forces.

AMBULANCEMEN

Star p2 - Mercy pay storm. Clarke under fire. Confusion reigns as he denies more money is on offer.

Sun p2 - 999 union admit they will have to back down. Clarke hints at pay deal. Union admits it would not get pay linked to firemen's pay, arbitration or a review body. Leader wants to know if the Cabinet supports Kenneth Clarke. It thinks the silence of Kenneth Baker a little strange but the buck still stops with Kenneth Clarke who should offer the ambulancemen 9%.

Mirror p2 - Clarke battles for his future over 999 men. Quit calls as he does a U-turn. First he hinted at a higher offer; then he denied it.

Today p4 - High fliers' pay boost traps outcast Clarke - it says pay review award of 7.7% to top salary people will put him in trouble. Leader says Kenneth Clarke's handling of dispute has been abominable. But his colleagues have made it Mission Impossible by failing to back him up. It will be the kiss of death for the Government if Cabinet members are more interested in manoeuvring for the succession than backing each other up.

PRESS DIGEST

Express p1 - Clarke set to pay 8% to 999 crews; leader says Kenneth Clarke's unsuspected capacity to be misunderstood has haunted him throughout the dispute. What we need now is understanding and the dispute to be settled sensibly and quickly.

Mail p1 - Unions in 999 dispute ready to back down on key pay link. Leader headed "The same refrain more softly sung" says Kenneth Clarke has not changed his tune but has sweetened his tone. It advocates an increased offer of between 1 and 2% and more stress in future on reward for training.

Independent p1 lead - Ambulance peace hopes emerge following tactical blunder exposing the Government's bargaining hand. Mr Clarke now seen as being willing to pay more if demand for index-linked pay is dropped.

Times - Government will today come under pressure from Tory MPs for an "honourable draw" in ambulance dispute, in the wake of a perception Government has lost the "hearts and minds" battle against the unions. Clear signals in Whitehall on how the dispute could be broken, following hints from Mr Clarke that stalemate could be ended if unions demands for index-linked pay were abandoned.

Telegraph p1 lead - Clarke calls for compromise by ambulance men. Government and unions taking tentative steps towards breaking deadlock.

Guardian p1 lead - "Offer" row isolates Clarke - unions condemn confusion. Quotes an unnamed Conservative Backbencher as saying "This is getting close to terminal for him (Mr Clarke)". Leader headed "Clarke in a corner" says he needs Cabinet friends to help him find how to get gracefully off the hook. Everyone knows there must be concessions.

FT leads with "Poole prepared to negotiate to end ambulance deadlock".

MINISTERS (UK VISITS, SPEECHES ETC)

- DTI: Mr Ridley and Mr Redwood attend NEDC meeting
- FCO: Mr Hurd addresses Rotary Club, Windrush Valley on "East-West"
- DES: Mr Jackson attends European Democratic Group open day at FCO, London
- DH: Mr Freeman visits National Biological Standards Board; later meets Michael Shersby MP and GPs, Hillingdon
- DTI: Mr Hogg visits Westland Helicopters
- WO: Mr Robert visits Antur Dwyryd Enterprise agency, Penrhyneddraeth; later addresses British Hotels, Caterers and Restaurants Association conference banquet, Llandrindod Wells
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TV AND RADIO

"Behind the Headlines" BBC 2 (16.30) Jeremy Paxman introduces a new series looking behind current news stories

"Panorama" BBC 1 (21.30) "Sinking into Squalor" Reports from Manchester and Canterbury into the effects of tightening public spending