

March 15, 1990

PRIME MINISTER

MAIN EVENTS

Scottish Prison Officers' Association annual conference, Glasgow (to 16 March)

The Prince and Princess of Wales visit Nigeria (to 19 March)

---

STATISTICS

DEM: Labour Market statistics: unemployment and vacancies (Feb-prov); average earning indices (Jan-prov); employment, hours, productivity and unit wage costs; industrial disputes

---

PARLIAMENT

Commons

Questions: Treasury; Prime Minister

Business: Until 7.00pm  
National Health Service and Community Care Bill: Completion of Remaining Stages

OPPOSED PRIVATE BUSINESS

Tees and Hartlepool Port Authority Bill (DTp)

Coal Industry Bill: Consideration of Lords Amendments

Motion to amend Schedule 1 of the House of Commons Disqualifications Act 1975

Adjournment Debates: The uniform business rate as it affects seaside guest houses (Mr M Carttiss)

Select Committees: COURT OF REFEREES

COMMITTEES ON PRIVATE BILLS

Cardiff Bay Barrage Bill [Lords]  
King's Cross Railways Bill

Lords: Starred Questions  
Courts and Legal Services Bill (HL): Third Reading  
Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1989  
(Continuance) Order 1990: Motion for Approval

---



PRESS DIGESTMain News

Late news: Reuter reports Bazof executed (after Iraq had turned down idea of a visit by Foreign Secy).

Main news today is of bad opinion polls:

ICM in Guardian gives Labour 21% lead -  
52/31/SLD 5/Green 6/SDP 4

NOP in Mail on Mid-Staffs 25% - 55/30.  
Mail says if this is right lifelong Tories have decided to  
punish Govt.

Variously described as setbacks, blows etc, further jolts.

More than half of those polled by ICM want you to resign.

Michael Heseltine in Mid-Staffs urges Tories to stand firm and give no signal of a loss of nerve. Times adds Heseltine warns that a Labour victory would signal to the world that Britain has given up the battle to make itself internationally competitive.

NUR reject 8% offer - want 10%; power workers turn down 8.5% and to ballot on industrial action.

Health Service managers will attempt to privatise non-emergency services, as part of local cost cutting exercises following two year pay package overwhelmingly accepted by ambulance crews, govt officials say (Independent).

Britons said to be the biggest debtors in Europe according to Consumer Council; owing 7 times more than Dutch and Italians.

Dick Douglas MP quits Labour Party over community charge - Kinnock refuses to back non-payment.

FT leader looks at impact of inflation on investment The right way to discipline inflationary behaviour is through a firm exchange rate and tight control over demand. To squeeze corporations through a distorted tax system as well is to add unnecessary insult to injury. Changes to the system of corporate tax are needed.

Militant unveils plans for two anti-community charge marches in London and Glasgow on March 31.



PRESS DIGEST

Front page picture in the Times shows Dave Nellist with Militant supporters he invited for a press conference in a Commons Cttee room yesterday. They threaten mass burnings of community charge payment forms and predict over 100,000 people on streets of London in demonstration.

Michael Meacher accuses Govt of hiding the true costs of the community charge for the poorest sections of society (Times).

DSS concedes young adults and couples on income support will lose out under the poll tax in every local authority where charge is higher than £315 a year (Independent).

Tory led Berkshire County Council to use ancient device and petition MPs for relief from burden of community charge.

Political Comment

Today, on Labour PPB last night, says it cannot conceal the real gains most have made in the last decade - in home and share ownership, new jobs and a huge resurgence of confidence and enterprise. The house of cards that really did collapse was Labour's in 1979.

Express, in a front page lead, claims you will go into ERM next year; you are under irresistible pressure to do so from Foreign Secy and Chancellor.

Mail asks if Mid-Staffs poll means voters have decided to love Kinnock and yearn for socialism. Most certainly not. It is a ballot box revolt against community charge.

Independent leads with "Most voters want you to go" - two thirds of the electorate wanting your resignation before the next election according to ICM poll. Heseltine warns a Labour victory in Staffs could shake the financial markets. Although you have dismissed speculation about your leadership as "poppycock", such strong public antipathy must add weight to questions about your future.

Mr Heseltine, interviewed in the Independent, says he can't see any circumstances in which he would challenge you. But the interviewer suggests he is visibly excited by such flirting, teasing evasions and that he really could be Prime Minister by the Autumn.



PRESS DIGEST

Peter Jenkins, writing in the Independent, says next week's by-election poses fascinating questions about the present shape of party politics. Speculating that Labour could win, he says it could mark the turning of a two party tide, but his own guess is it will join Orpington and others in the annals of glorious protest.

FT interview with Douglas Hurd dismisses speculation about a leadership challenge to you.

Hugo Young, in Guardian, on why you are likely to cling on notwithstanding, he says, strong criticism from Tory leaders of a similar recent conclusion. He still puts his shirt on the combined capacity of your nerve and your party's lack of it.

Philip Stephens in FT says that there is no plot against you. The feverish speculation at Westminster about a threat to you has its roots in a general sense of despondency among Tory MPs rather than in any tangible evidence of a conspiracy.

Writing in the Times under the heading "Why Mrs Thatcher should feel secure" Ronald Butt says Tories who want change have not considered the effect.

USA denies starting fire at Libyan chemical plant.

Gorbachev poised today to become "President of the USSR" with sweeping executive powers (Independent). Premier Ryzhkov threatened to resign during day of high passion and vicious politics in Moscow (Times).

Boris Yeltsin reported to have suffered a heart attack on Sunday during a plenum of the Communist Party. He is said to be now recovering at home (Independent).

East Germany's Conservative Alliance dealt a damaging blow as one of its leaders resigns over links with East German secret police (Independent).

FT feature article on counting the cost of German unification: it could mean inflation in the West and unemployment in the East.

Signs are emerging in Brussels that the European Commission feels increasingly excluded from the German question as Bonn sets the pace for reunification (Times).

Delors calls for EC political union - arguing that existing channels for co-operation are outdated and ineffective (FT).



PRESS DIGEST

A new classified assessment by America's Joint Chiefs of Staff suggests that NATO could now defend Western Europe against a Soviet invasion without resorting to nuclear weapons (Times).

Kohl says a united Germany would never have nuclear weapons but rejects Moscow's call for a neutral Germany (Times).

Northern Ireland Secy says Judge's reason for refusing to extradite two IRA fugitives "an unacceptable slur on professionalism of NI prison service".

Attorney General to consider asking the Irish Govt to prosecute the two convicted terrorists freed by the Irish Supreme Court, Mr Brooke tells MPs (Independent).

Times leader says that extradition between friendly states does not depend on each state's requiring the other to be perfect. It requires a minimum level of trust. Any reasonable observer might ask why the Irish Govt pays such heed to the Anglo-Irish Agreement with a state whose prison service and courts fall so short of its own standards.

Conor Cruise O'Brien in the Times explains the law preventing IRA extraditions. He says that what the Irish Justice is saying is that persons charged with politically motivated offences are not to be extradited "when the objective of those offences was to secure Irish unity". He adds that while this decision stands, no more IRA men will be extradited, whatever they may have done.

Social Security

Mail says you rallied your mutinous troops yesterday after setbacks.

Mirror says that if there is any decency, sense and honour left in the Govt you will accept your defeat in the Commons and increase financial support to old and disabled.

Today says voters are not impressed by these macho marathon debates.

Times leader says Govt's defeat on Tuesday night is another warning that the public is uneasy about the way community care has been implemented. There was some logic, nevertheless, in the Govt's refusal to sign what could amount to a blank cheque for the residential care of elderly people.



PRESS DIGEST

Times says that the Govt is expected to bring forward new proposals on social security payments to hard-up pensioners.

Telegraph says the Govt has a simple choice - either provide additional funds next year and longer term or see elderly people being forced back into hospitals.

Independent editorial says the complaints surrounding Michael Mates' involvement with a consultancy firm raise questions about whether the obligations on MPs to declare their interests is sufficiently detailed. It concludes membership of the Commons is increasingly a full-time occupation and MPs should be paid accordingly, but they should come to terms with growing pressure for higher ethical standards.

BAe says there has been no official call from the EC to repay £38million of "sweeteners" given to the group to buy Rover as the group announces £333million profits for 1989 (Times).

Manchester Olympics bid includes science park plan (FT).

Commons Public Accounts Cttee set to urge tighter defence contract control (Independent).

Paul Foot, in Mirror, says two of the strongest supporters of the Fayed brothers were golfing chums of DT - John Sunley and John Fryer.

Mohamed Fayed is to be appeals president of Cottage Homes, the retailing industry charity which cares for retired sales workers (FT).

Media hails as hero Underground driver who leaned out of cab to cut off power to prevent oncoming train crashing into his.

Govt announces tighter controls on £110million spent on help for ethnic minorities saying it particularly wanted more money spent on teaching English (Independent).

A study of a hospital in Worcestershire suggests it could raise its revenue by £1.2million within four years if it opted for self-governing status (Independent).

Council on Tribunals says that reformed procedures for making complaints about doctors are unfair to patients and should be withdrawn (Times).



PRESS DIGEST

Friends of the Earth scientist-activist who gives evidence to Select Cttee in hot water for suggesting bathers are at risk to AIDS from sewage dumped at sea. Other experts say his claims are nonsense. Express describes them as hysterical and irresponsible.

Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution say Govt should give an assurance that there will be tight controls on the release into the environment of genetically manipulated organisms (Independent).

Hopes rise for early elimination of CFCs. Countries which signed '87 Montreal Protocol are expected to agree at meeting in London in June the complete elimination by 2000 of production of CFCs (FT).

NUJ demands newspaper proprietors, to fight AIDS, should put condom machines in all toilets at wheelchair height, presumably, the Sun says, so that the pygmies who run the NUJ can reach them.

Today launches a bitter attack on David Shaw MP after court case for assaulting Today photographer.

New Press Council Code of Conduct comes into force today.

Lord Chancellor signals what is taken to be action to make divorce more difficult - in the interests of children.

Mail leader says Lord Mackay does well to remind both lawyers and legislators to do more to help young couples make do and mend.

BMA gives go ahead for help to childless couples to have babies through surrogate mother.

After Scotland Yard investigation, two gamekeepers arrested in Kenya for murder of British girl whose charred body was found in safari park.

You are to meet Bush in Bermuda on Good Friday.

Independent quotes Downing Street saying you were not due to meet Bush until later in the year, but in view of fast-developing world events, you felt an earlier meeting was necessary. Bush will also meet Mitterrand as part of an effort to keep in close touch with Western allies in advance of German unification.

Four plus two talks get underway; Poland to be invited when its border is discussed.



PRESS DIGEST

Shamir and Peres court minority parties as both work to build a majority for today's vote of confidence (Independent).

Hizbollah has met in Lebanon over the past week to discuss possible release of Western hostages (Independent).

Hong Kong legislation to be unveiled soon (FT).

GORBACHEV - (EAST/WEST)

Express - The Soviet leader has removed the party millstone from his neck - a vital prelude to removing it from the neck of Soviet society and economy. Now we shall see what he is really made of.

Independent editorial reviews Gorbachev's new presidential status, saying that it is regrettable but no doubt realistic that the first incumbent be elected by the People's Congress rather than the people. Adding that without high quality advice from technocrats and managers drawn from outside the dead world of communism, he will not be able to use his new powers effectively, he will nevertheless bear the blame for any mistakes and failures. Emulating US President Truman, he should install a sign in his office reminding himself that the buck (or Russian equivalent) stops here.



MINISTERS (UK VISITS, SPEECHES ETC)

- DES: Mr MacGregor meets the Association for Science Education at the Royal Society, London
- DEM: Mr Nicholls attends Violence to Staff in the Retail Sector conference, London; later attends Alcohol at Work conference, London
- DES: Mr Howarth addresses South Warwickshire National Association of Head Teachers
- DOE: Mr Trippier attends Economic Forestry Group annual luncheon, London
- DTI: Mr Hogg attends National Defence Industry Council, London
- FCO: Mr Waldegrave meets Mrs Danielle de St Jorr, Seychelles Foreign Minister, London
- ODA: Mrs Chalker hosts lunch for Danielle de St Jorne, Seychelles Foreign Minister, Lancaster House, London
- WO: Mr Roberts attends Economic Forestry Group lunch, London
- WO: Mr Grist attends UK Council for Nursing and Midwifery reception, Cardiff

---

MINISTERS (OVERSEAS VISITS)

- DTI: Lord Trefgarne visits Leipzig Fair
- FCO: Lord Brabazon visits Australia, Papua New Guinea and Fiji (to 31 March)

---

TV AND RADIO

- "Yes Minister" BBC 2 (8.00pm)
- "Analysis BBC Radio 4 (8.00pm) Programme asks "Does Britain have a foreign policy for the 90's?"
- "This Week ITV (8.30pm) Looks at green issues
- "Crimewatch UK" BBC 1 (10.00pm)
- "Question Time" BBC 1 (10.45pm) With John MacGregor, Gordon Brown, Des Wilson and Mary Ann Sieghart (The Times)
-