

15 January 1988

PRIME MINISTER

MAIN EVENTS

Prime Minister meets the Sultan of Brunei (photocall)

Opening of the UK/Japan 2000 Conference, London

US trade figures published.

STATISTICS

BSC/BISPA: Usable steel production (Dec)

CSO: Tax and price index (Dec)

DEM: Retail prices index (Dec)

DTI: Finished steel consumption and stock changes (3rd Qtr final)

DTI: Import penetration and export sales ratios for manufacturing industries (2nd Qtr-final/3rd Qtr prov)

PARLIAMENT

Commons

Business: PRIVATE MEMBERS' BILLS
Protection of Official Information Bill: 2nd Reading
(Mr Richard Shepherd)

Adjournment Debate: The terms of reference and duties of the newly appointed Staff Counsellor for the Security Services
(Mr D Winnick)

Lords: Starred Questions
Debate to take note of the White Paper on Human Fertilisation and Embryology: A Framework for Legislation

MINISTERS - See Annex

PRESS DIGESTMAIN NEWS

Last-ditch bid to save Lib/SDP merger dominates a number of front pages; Owen tries not to smile.

You refuse to back down over three-line whip for Shepherd Bill.

Families furious over no new trial for Moors murderers; Mirror leader says decision not to prosecute is right as they will never be freed.

Jobless total down a record half million in a year; Ministers confident it will be down to two million by end of year.

You give orders for military hospitals to be opened to thousands more NHS patients and tell DHSS and MoD to end their wrangling.

Blood transfusion dispute over but Government accused of backing down twice in one week.

BBC local radio stations in London, Manchester and Birmingham relieved.

Continued speculation about whether or not Duchess of York is pregnant.

Whites to lose jobs before blacks in Islington Council's staff cutbacks.

Elton John quizzed by Vice Squad investigating gay sex allegations.

BBC to screen controversial IRA thriller series "Crossfire" after all - Star,

Heart-op boy Matthew Collier still in critical condition.

NATO silent on your call for pre-summit meeting.

Mark set to make motor-racing comeback with BMW.

Chequers chef talks about your plain menus.

Sun leader asks what is there to hide in Gaitskell file.

Eddie Shah trying to raise £5m to launch new national daily tabloid.

Chancellor hints of tax cuts.

City Airport reopens for flights to Paris.

Chancellor steps up pressure on US to raise interest rates and cut federal budget deficit.

TV-AM technicians to have talks with management.

LIB/SDP

Paul Johnson, in the Mail, explains why no one should be happy about David Steel's merger shambles saying he is essentially a weak man when it comes to policy-forming.

David Owen launches campaign to rescue his party with message "Come home. All is forgiven." Sweet revenge for Dr Owen, says Express.

Edward Pearce, in Express, says the capacity of David Steel to get it calamitously wrong has been underlined in triplicate by the botched merger negotiations.

Mirror: Alliance leaders forced into humiliating climbdown.

Sun: Jubilant David Owen swoops to pick up the pieces of the Alliance - and tries to win back control of SDP.

Times: New Alliance team in last-ditch bid to save merger as Steel and MacLennan forced unceremoniously to dump the policy prospectus 28 hours after its release. Owen says "I must look sombre. I don't want to be photographed grinning."

Star: Owen out for revenge as merger flops.

Independent: Liberal and Social Democratic leaders swallow pride, jettison their joint policy statement and reopen way for a successful completion of merger talks; David Owen says merger should be dead after ghastly mess of Wednesday.

Telegraph: P1 lead says Dr Owen intensifies his efforts to re-launch a breakaway SDP.

Guardian: Alliance salvaged from wreckage. New tack on policy agreement but Owen speaks of dead duck.

Today: Owen gallops to the rescue of shattered Social Democrats.

Times leader says Steel should quit now, without any more playing for time.

LAW AND ORDER

Home Secretary under growing pressure to hold immediate inquiry into parole procedures for rapists and persistent sex offenders.

Mail leader says Judge Hazan has every right to be angry with Parole Board as another rape case blunder is revealed; Express leader says premature release is patently absurd when there have been too many such incidents for comfort in recent weeks.

Sun leader says problems would be solved by murderers, rapists and all violent criminals never being given parole.

Today leader says let Hindley and Brady rot in prison until they're dead. The rest of us should firmly expel them from our minds.

SHEPHERD BILL

Express: You refuse to withdraw three-line whip over Shepherd's Bill following frosty 30-minute meeting with him; leader discusses Section 2 saying it is in urgent need of reform, but it might be better to wait for Government's plans. The danger is that "insurmountable" difficulties will be found to prevent real reform of this antiquated and inequitable Act.

Times: You reject Shepherd's final appeal to withdraw your opposition to the Bill as Government faces one of its biggest backbench rebellions; leader says that while not perfect, Shepherd's proposals are a serious and careful response to a problem. It hopes that the decision to discourage debate on the Bill is not an attempt to minimise comparison with the Government's own eventual efforts, which should not be allowed to drop simply because the Bill is defeated.

Robin Oakley, in Times, calls for a Government reassessment of its policy on official secrets. He says you showed splendid vigour at first when bringing the Blunt affair into the open. He urges you to return to your earlier ways and Tory MPs to ignore today's three-line whip.

Telegraph: Government prepares for major revolt among Tory MPs.

Independent: You refuse to make any concessions to Richard Shepherd; he could not accept the idea that backbenchers should confine themselves to "flea-picking" legislation and attacks Douglas Hurd for briefing lobby journalists before attending a strictly private meeting of Tory Backbenchers.

Independent: Jonathan Aitken attacks Government opposition to a sensible initiative. He says the casualty is the future of official secrecy and the control of information, an issue which needs a consensus but has now been hijacked into party politics.

Guardian: After his meeting with you yesterday, he said: "I think it is a generation gap. People of my generation don't expect to stand at the end of the line saying thank you for little bits of information.

Telegraph leader admits that official secrecy is too important a matter for a private members bill but says the whip is inappropriate. Despite increasingly squalid behaviour from parts of the British press, Whitehall's cult of secrecy badly needs reform. The Government should have attempted this sooner.

HEALTH

Blood supply dispute halted after interim agreement reached over meal allowances.

Mail: First pay-outs on way for OPREN drug victims.

Mail leader critical of Scottish hospital strikers accusing NUPE of using the nurses for its own ends.

Ombudsman finds health authority guilty of maladministration over sick 83-year-old woman being left to sit in chilly hospital ward for several hours because there was no bedding for her. She died four days later of pneumonia.

Express: David Alton prepared to water down his Abortion Bill to get it through Parliament. Could be exceptions to 18-week rule where woman discovers late in pregnancy that baby would be handicapped.

Mirror: You slam door on desperate parents of children waiting for heart operations by refusing to meet them.

Mirror: Treasury hatchet man John Major dashes hopes of extra funds for health service only day after John Moore admits NHS needs more cash.

Sun: You have put John Moore on trial over his handling of NHS crisis. You are dismayed by impression given after meeting between Mr Moore and medical chiefs that more cash would be available; leader says John Moore has habit of talking good sense and then doing nothing.

Times: Report by Sir Donald Acheson calls for more specialists to control spread of potentially fatal diseases such as meningitis and AIDS.

Independent: Health Ministers accused of suppressing the annual report by the General Practitioners finance corporation because it criticises the Government's proposal to privatise it with the Health and Medicine Bill.

Telegraph: Scores of nurses join hospital workers in Edinburgh to demand all-out strike over privatisation plans for ancillary services.

Guardian: Ian Aitken says that, apart from community charge, the Moore crisis is now the most ~~dismissed~~ *drummed* anxiety of senior Tories.

POLITICS

Mail: Tory MPs want Labour's "Yobbo tendency" to lose at least a week's pay when expelled from Commons.

Mail: Tony Benn possible challenger to Neil Kinnock's leadership as frustrated left-wingers see election as a way to make presence felt. Kinnock says any potential rival should ask whether a contest is in interests of the Party - Express.

Telegraph: Anxiety is growing among staff and senior MPs and Conservative Central Office over the possibility of a hard-right takeover of the Young Conservatives.

Chris Buckland, in Today, under heading "Wanted: Brave man to tackle Thatcher" asks who will be lord protector to ambitious Ministers now that Lord Whitelaw has retired.

DEFENCE

Guardian: MoD police step up inquiry into award of £3.5bn contracts to GEC-Marconi over last 10 years.

Guardian: NATO silent on your call for pre-Summit unity meeting. In Bonn, Chancellor Kohl displays anti-British sentiment when

questioned by journalists about planned Franco-German defence alliance.

EDUCATION

Express: Kenneth Baker strongly resisting Tory pressure for immediate abolition of the ILEA.

Independent: Report says children will do better at mathematics if given fewer facts and rules.

INDUSTRY

Call for legislation against inflammable car interiors as figures show car fires in Britain almost doubled in 10 years.

Times: Austin-Rover pulls out of European research project in order to concentrate on developing new cars.

Times: BP announces plans to make Glasgow the headquarters of its combined British oil and gas exploration and production business as it launches its bid for Britoil.

Guardian: Inland Revenue staff delegates reject by four to one pay package offering increases of between 9.8% and 19.1%. There will be a ballot of members next week.

HOUSING

Times: You will shortly have to intervene in Cabinet dispute between Messrs Ridley and Lawson over the £5bn housing benefit budget.

WATER

Telegraph: Water authorities may be forced to charge VAT on their bills to industry and commerce if the European Court accepts the advice of its Advocate General.

CHURCH

Independent: Relations between the Church of England and the national press have deteriorated considerably in the wake of the Crockford's row and the persecution of homosexual clergy.

PEOPLE

Plain British fare is your menu at Chequers says chief chef Flight Sgt Lavender as he talks to Mail about being made a Licentiate of the City and Guilds of London Institute.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Times: Former IRA Chief of Staff, Seamus Twomey to be guest of honour at a NORAIID fund-raising banquet in New York as popular support for NORAIID appears to be on the increase.

Telegraph: Sinn Fein rules out IRA truce or ceasefire.

WEST GERMANY

Times: Thatcher and Kohl wage their own "cold war": concern grows in London and Bonn at lack of warmth in your personal relations with Kohl. This contrasts with your earlier relationship with Schmidt and with your close and regular contact with Chirac. The contrast with the Paris-Bonn axis is even more striking.

MIDDLE EAST

Guardian: Outburst by Mellor angered Thatcher. You are determined that Britain should play a leading role in ending the crisis in Israeli-occupied territories.

FT: West Germany probes allegations of nuclear exports to Libya.

EC

FT: EC tough regime to control milk production will cut UK butter production capacity by 25%, according to Milk Marketing Board.

NIGERIA

FT: Majority of Nigeria's creditors yesterday backed plan to reschedule £1.79bn of unpaid trade debts over next 22 years.

TERRY PERKS

MINISTERS (UK VISITS, SPEECHES ETC)

DEM: Mr Fowler addresses West Midlands CBI

DTI: Lord Young visits Salford

HO: Mr Hurd addresses South East London Magistrates Association

WO: Mr Walker visits Blaenan Gwent and opens Creative Research Devices, new factory, Rassau, also visits industrial estate

DES: Lady Hooper attends British Council lunch for Deputy Minister of Education, Tasmania

DOE: Mrs Roe visits Rugby and Lichfield (Gypsies and housing)

DOE: Mr Moynihan visits British Water Board, Birmingham

MAFF: Mr Thompson visits Frozen Quality Ltd, Lincolnshire

MINISTERS (PRESS INTERVIEWS)

DTI: Mr Clarke on BBC Radio 4 Any Questions

TV AND RADIO

"Today": BBC Radio 4 (6.30)

"Kilroy": BBC 1 (9.20)

"Business Daily": Channel 4 (12.00)

"The Parliament Programme": Channel 4 (14.00)

"Underground to Europe": BBC 2 (19.10) on Channel Tunnel

"The Friday Report": BBC 2 (20.00) on problems with cervical smear campaign

"Any Questions?": BBC Radio 4 (20.20) with Kenneth Clarke, Gerald Kaufman, Tariq Ali and Sue Slipman

"The London Programme": ITV (22.35)

"The World Tonight": BBC Radio 4 (22.30) followed by "The Financial World Tonight" then "Today in Parliament"

"Newsnight": BBC 2 (22.50)

"Week Ending": BBC Radio 4 (23.30) - Bill Wallis, David Tate, Sally Grace and Royce Mills with a satirical view of the week's news
