

cc A Tyrie

Chenaker

18/4/88.

1. Too late to copy and circulate.
2. Welcome back
3. I think I am rickening for a term. Given the senior citizens have to cosset themselves, it is just possible that I will let make prayers tomorrow.
4. Do you think Nick Rideley thought through it before asserting that the Lords could not tamper with the Community Charge because it is a tax? We spent the seventies trying to prove that rates should be included in the computation of the tax burden. In the eighties we have been trying to prove that rates should not be included as part of the tax burden. Now they have got in under an alias.

PJC
Tuesday 19/4/88

New leak rocks Downing Street

by Charles Reiss
Political Editor

A NEW leak from Number Ten Downing Street, the most sensational yet in the recent embarrassing series, set alarm bells ringing in Whitehall today.

Labour produced copies of a minute, apparently genuine, from Mrs Thatcher's private secretary Paul Gray.

The document gives a detailed account of the meeting of senior ministers, chaired by Mrs Thatcher, at which it was decided to make a concession to the Tory rebels over poll tax.

It describes Mrs Thatcher, Chancellor Nigel Lawson, Environment Secretary Nicholas Ridley and Leader of the Commons John Wakeham admitting that the issue was now "a focus for concern" among their own back-bench MPs.

The group agreed "that some change to the rebate arrangements should be introduced" to help the worst off.

They then went on to discuss the timing of the concession which would need "careful thought".

The document says they agreed that ministers should avoid giving precise details until today's all important debate.

"But it would be desirable, possibly on April 14, to give some indication to back-benchers that a change to the rebate arrangements would be made".

Mr Ridley duly made just such an announcement last week.

The document was released by La-

bour's Shadow Health Secretary Robin Cook, evidently timed to create maximum embarrassment on the eve of tonight's vote when up to 40 Tories are threatening to rebel against the poll tax.

But it is the fact of the leak that is likely to alarm and anger ministers most.

Mr Cook erased the headings and other details including the date of the new document. But it appears to refer to a meeting at Downing Street only last week.

Copies went to the Environment Department, the Treasury and to the offices of Mr Wakeham and the Chief Whip Mr David Waddington.

For good measure Mr Cook also revealed a letter to the unfortunate Mr Gray, apparently from a private secretary in the Environment Department.

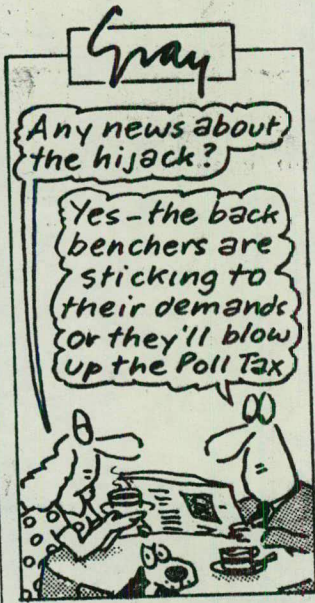
It speaks of Mr Ridley's problems with the housing benefit and poll tax and says "he is coming under increasing pressure in the local government Finance Bill where the issue is beginning to be understood by a number of back-benchers."

The incident is the second of its kind involving Mr Gray, one of Mrs Thatcher's private secretaries dealing with home affairs.

The first, in March, was a minute from Mr Gray to his opposite number in the Education Department and was used by Labour to embarrass Mr Kenneth Baker over his Education Reform Bill.

A few weeks later there was a further leak of a private secretary's letter in the Scottish Education Department.

A Whitehall mole hunt has already been launched



Poisoning scare at top hotel

MORE than 50 people have been taken ill at the Gatwick Hilton after an outbreak of salmonella poisoning.

One member of staff has been sent to hospital, 50 others were sent home and two hotel guests have been found to be suffering from salmonella poisoning.

A woman kitchen worker at the hotel who was taken to hospital was thought to be vulnerable to the disease because she was on a strict slimming diet.

Local health officers tested 275 of the hotel's 360 staff and found 50 were carrying the infection.

They have not formally identified the source, although they are testing one specific food source from outside the hotel.

A spokeswoman for the Hilton confirmed that more than 100 of the hotel's staff

Filth is blamed for King's Cross disaster

by Gervase Webb

A FILTHY escalator and lack of staff training were the two main causes of the King's Cross fire, the disaster inquiry heard today.

Charles Pugh, representing the victims and bereaved, said one of the two principal causes was the build-up of "muck" on the escalator which, he said, was as flammable as household firelighters.

And of the other cause he said: "For the purposes of dealing with fire emergencies, the vast majority of staff

Mr Pugh added that for the Underground management to admit the problem would show "a statesman-like approach and one that shows a little humility."

He said the Underground management should come clean about poor standards of staff training and management to save time at the inquiry.

"We consider that much time could and would be saved if London Underground Ltd were publicly to acknowledge that at all levels

Mr Pugh called for a radical shake-up of staff training in the light of King's Cross.

He said the inquiry had heard of 'a disturbing state of affairs' on the night of the fire where station staff had gone off for unauthorised meal breaks or simply not been at their posts, and of how the fire had been unfought for 15 minutes.

Station managers, he said, should have more authority, comparing the situation at the time of King's Cross to one where "there was the responsibility of the captain of the ship with the power of the cabin boy. We would sug-

lators and concourses to get to know the risks facing passengers, saying: "This should become part of the management duty of all station staff. Such personnel would then be more likely to be effective in a fire emergency."

Mr Pugh also called for an assessment of the fire risks at all stations to be kept so staff, emergency services and the public could be aware of the dangers.

And he called for a speeding-up of the Underground's replacement programme for wooden escalators and more frequent inspection.

Alan Cooper, QC, for the National Union of Railway-

learn the lessons of King's Cross, but "if plans for future cuts in staff are anything to go by, they will not learn the lessons," he said. He added: "It has become clear to the NUR that London Underground's concern for the safety of staff and passengers has been allowed to be sidetracked by a preoccupation with cost-effectiveness rather than safety-effectiveness"

John Hendy, QC, for the Association of London Authorities, said that there was only one railway safety inspector covering the whole of London Underground, BR Network South-East, and the

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