

April 19, 1990

PRIME MINISTER

MAIN EVENTS

Prince of Wales hosts private EC/UK conference at Sandringham on agriculture and environment

? Voluntary repatriation of Vietnamese Boat People

Anglo-Irish conference meeting in London

STATISTICS

BoE: Institutional investment (4th Qtr)

HMT/CSO: Public sector borrowing requirement (Mar)

OPCS: PCA annual report 1989

PUBLICATIONS

HMT: Finance Bill at 9am and 7 press notices (3 IR, 4 C&E)

PARLIAMENT

Commons

Questions: Agriculture, Fisheries and Food; Prime Minister

Business British Nationality (Hong Kong) Bill: 2nd Reading

Adjournment Debates: The second Severn crossing (Mr R Hughes)

Select Committees: Commons Defence Committee reports on reliability and maintainability of defence equipment

Lords: Starred Questions
National Health Service and Community Care Bill: Committee (1st Day)
Bromley London Borough Council (Crystal Palace) Bill: Second Reading

PRESS DIGESTMain News

Russia cuts off oil to Lithuanian refinery; Lithuanian Prime Minister in Norway seeking oil supplies.

Times says it is possible that the move by Moscow reflects a fear that oil supplies across the Soviet Union will have to be suspended shortly if workers in the Tyumen fields go through with their promise to strike.

Blockade of Lithuania could backfire on Moscow by affecting supplies to Kalinigrad, in the Western Soviet Union, and possibly encourage a tougher Western reaction (Independent).

James Baker warns that US/Soviet trade and commercial contacts are threatened by failure to resolve Lithuanian crisis. Summit on May 30 safe (FT).

Soviet trade union federation has pledged to block any move to a market economy which causes unemployment and calls for sacrifices for the low paid (FT).

Sir Hal Miller twice warned Govt Depts on behalf of William Somers that the Iraqi pipes might be for a gun; first time 2 years ago.

Gordon Brown says this "embarrassing episode" had made Govt "object of ridicule".

DTI accused of "slackness and complacency of almost criminal dimension".

Sun headline: "It's the big banger clanger". Express - Ridley hit by supergun recoil.

Mirror claims Nicholas Ridley is now fighting for his political life.

Mail puts the question simply: Was Britain tricked or did it turn a blind eye?

Egypt pressing for a ban on the spread of high-technology weapons in the Middle East (Independent).

Mirror claims Whips have crushed the revolt over the Hong Kong Bill.

PRESS DIGEST

Times leader says the practical help which Britain can afford to Hong Kong in the years to 1997 must extend beyond that provided in the Bill, and urgently. The attitude of the EC has been cautious and if they continue to treat Hong Kong as a British domestic concern, they will be taking a considerable risk with their own immigration problems. It concludes that those MPs who vote against the Bill should know that success for their obstruction would spell the end of any hope of real help from Britain's friends. Little Englanders, Labour and Tory, should be well satisfied with that; others must surely think again.

John Walden, former Director of Home Affairs in the Hong Kong Govt, writing in the Times, urges Britain to restore confidence in Hong Kong by standing up to China.

UN High Commissioner for Refugees backs legal action in Hong Kong by which human rights lawyers aim to challenge the screening system for Vietnamese Boat People, on the grounds it is in breach of international standards (Independent).

Leading Hong Kong businessman says there would be a "terrible legacy" if Hong Kong Bill is defeated today (Independent).

Tiananmen Square leader says students' resistance in China is still strong (Independent).

Star prints an article by Chief Buthelezi in which he says the ANC is intimidating and scaring people.

Seven prisoners escape from Gloucester jail; four - violent - still at large.

Express says security operation surrounding the Strangeways seige has been costing more than £100,000 a day.

Oxford Economic Forecasting Group predict current export boom will continue; Britain will avoid recession; and mortgage rates could be down one-third to 10% by end of next year.

Power workers vote 3-2 for a strike over pay; reject 8.5% offer. Sun says they will be offered 9.3% to prevent blackouts. Today forecasts power cuts within four weeks.

Times says Govt's programme to privatise electricity could be affected by decision.

PRESS DIGEST

Independent says inflation fears mount as Govt figures show sharp increase in manufacturing industries' wage costs and the decision by power workers to strike highlights the risk of a wage-price spiral.

NALGO urges white collar NHS staff to stage lightning walkouts over 7.7% offer.

Reward management consultancy group says managers are setting a bad example with average rises of 11.8%. Today says the essence of good management is responsibility.

Doug McAvoy, NUT leader, heckled by Left when he tells conference strikes must be a last resort.

Times says the NUT is split. Meanwhile NAS/UWT decide to strike in the autumn unless Govt restores teachers' pay negotiating rights.

Leftwing moves to force NUT to mount a campaign of mass non-payment of the community charge rejected by the leadership (Times).

Teachers, meeting in Scarborough to mount a campaign against increased workload, which could scupper Govt plans for implementing the national curriculum (Independent).

London Underground increasingly confident Govt will support new £1.7billion Tube line from Chelsea to Hackney to ease traffic problems (Independent).

Business travellers between London and Paris have been denied the chance of saving £100 on a return air ticket by the obduracy of the French Govt (Times).

General Motors announce a mass produced electric car.

Strong criticism of Govt's cut in collection of detailed industrial statistics made at seminar organised by the Statistics Users Council by Sir Douglas Wass, former Treasury Permanent Secy (Times).

Times says Labour sets out to turn local govt elections into a national referendum on the Govt, with the community charge as its centrepiece.

PRESS DIGEST

Labour would keep the community charge for at least 2 years and possibly for good; they have failed to come up with a fairer system (Express).

Labour Party launches local election campaign accusing Govt of one big "con".

Telegraph leader says Kinnock's credentials should not allow him through the door of No 10. Quite apart from his lack of experience, his style is unsuited to government. He has yet to prove he can master a brief or the saviour faire to conduct himself properly abroad.

Sarah Hogg, in Telegraph, reviewing Labour Party says the biggest threat to Labour comes from the public sector, facing a choice between alientating unions and agreeing to a pay explosion.

Kinnock confident of big local election gains ("a few hundred seats") as Tories accuse Labour of a "fraudulent" manifesto by failing to spell out details of its alternative to the poll tax (Independent).

Today says Labour will double the tax on company cars, VAT on environmentally damaging products would be raised to 25% and water shares will be snatched back at knock down prices.

Express leader says the Govt's problems with inflation, high mortgage rates and community charge are bad enough, but Tory Party is fast emerging as the biggest problem of all. Govt supporters must keep their nerve and fight their corner. They must rally round and take on the real enemy: socialism.

Community Charge

North Tyneside LEA is to challenge the decision to cap the local council's community charge (FT).

Sun columnist says the main problem is that local govt is financially and politically corrupt from top to bottom.

Paul Foot, in Mirror, notes that Michael Heseltine voted for the Scottish community charge Bill.

Police criticise BBC after middle aged disc jockey, John Peel, says he has a lot of sympathy with Trafalgar Square rioters.

Bath traders revolt against unified business rate.

PRESS DIGEST

Mail feature on Mr (John) Smith goes to Washington and nobody really notices. It says he missed Capitol Hill and met no one with a household name in power. It did not rate a single para in a US newspaper or mention on radio and TV.

Royal College of Surgeons is pressing for tighter controls over junior doctors who carry out operations, and is recommending consultants take greater responsibility for supervision of trainees (Independent).

Star continues its campaign to get Sellafield shut down - it says this "nuclear dustbin" will reprocess mainly Japanese waste 10 times more deadly than anything handled before.

Independent editorial comments on President Bush's uninspiring performance at the global warming conference, and comments that the most realistic approach is for govts to encourage changes that would be wise, come what may.

FT leader on the global warming conference says there is a danger of the wrong signals emerging from the meeting as Bush cautions more research needed before rushing into action. It would be a mistake to be mesmerized by the problems. It should be possible to agree on a twin track response - more research and action to stabilise and cut greenhouse gas emissions over 10-20 years.

Researchers claim they have found a way of screening test tube babies for genetic disease.

Home Secy backs Prince Charles' plan for a "national service army" of youngsters to keep them off the streets (Express).

Police say £2000 was stolen from Irish ferry which caught fire, causing one death.

Sheffield inquest told 15 of Hillsborough dead had drunk so much they would have been unfit to drive; 51 had been drinking.

Football League and FA to consider merger to provide the sport with the co-ordinated leadership called for by the Taylor report (Independent).

Times leader discusses the Courts and Legal Services Bill saying that once it is safely through the Commons, Lord Mackay might apply his formidable ingenuity to an equally radical reform of the legal aid system.

Sun identifies 11 "soft" judges who "let evil men go free".

PRESS DIGEST

Row over judge freeing driver who killed a girl student, refusing to hear 11 witnesses who said he had been drinking.

Racial and sexual discrimination against barristers to be banned by law under proposals announced in the Commons by the Attorney General (Independent).

Mirror claims a network of child sex rings has been uncovered in Canterbury and that 30 men and women have been arrested.

Tory MPs call on BBC to cancel a new TV series with Glenda Jackson now she is a prospective Labour candidate.

Calcutt inquiry into press and privacy of the individual expected to recommend self-regulation of the press should be given a last chance (FT).

Broadcasting and Entertainments Alliance calls for £100 TV licence so that pensioners can have their's free.

Royal Opera House takes unprecedented step of budgeting for a £2million deficit in the current year (Times).

Honeymoon between the Poles and Solidarity is over, as polls show 30% decline in support for the Govt, Walesa and the movement itself (Independent).

Border controls between East and West Germany to be scrapped by the summer (FT).

EC paper on implications of German unification warns that factories in East Germany which pollute the environment may have to be closed as the price for integration (FT).

Pro-Iranian kidnap gang say they will release an American hostage by tomorrow - at the request of Iran and Syria (Times).

Soviet Embassy in East Berlin sets out in detail its objections to swift German unification (Times).

11 children burn to death in Beirut when grenade hits their bus and blows up fuel tank.

Ivory ban has mixed impact with prices plummeting in US, remaining stable in Europe but actually rising in Japan. Poaching appears to have declined in Zaire, Congo and Gabon (FT).

PRESS DIGEST

You are the Guild of British Toastmasters' best after dinner speaker.

THE GUN - COMMENT

Mirror says the "successful operation" which Nicholas Ridley claimed ought never to have been necessary. He was evasive, complacent and ignorant in defending his bungling officials.

Today leader headed "Ridley still hiding the truth" says it is a cop out for Nicholas Ridley to clam up about okaying the deal while prosecutions are being considered. For all we know other companies in Britain may be making guns for the IRA under cover of DTI approval. If Mr Ridley won't give the answers you must replace him.

Independent says Mr Ridley completely fails to explain the affair, and asks whether his department were negligent or dishonest. It concludes that since there has evidently been incompetence or dishonesty, or both, it would be better to say so at once, and, alien though the idea may sound to them, Ministers should stop claiming a success, and apologise.

Express says it is a relief to be assured officially that Whitehall boffins can recognise a gun when they stumble across one. But Opposition huffing and puffing is absurdly overdone.

Mail leader headed "Dozing on guard duty at the DTI" asks what alerted HM Customs. It suspects the alarm was raised only by the murder of Gerald Bull. The happy ending does not absolve the Govt from giving Parliament and public a more complete account of this menacing story.

ANNEX

MINISTERS (UK VISITS, SPEECHES ETC)

- FCO: Mr Hurd has working supper with the Belgium Foreign Minister, Mr Eyskens
- LPC: Sir Geoffrey Howe hosts dinner for Goh Chok Tong, first Deputy Prime Minister of Singapore, London
- MAFF: Mr Gummer attends European Environmental Ministers' meeting with Prince of Wales, Sandringham
- WO: Mr Walker address Jiji Press seminar, London
- DEM: Mr Nicholls launches CITB safety video for Federation of Piling Specialists, London
- DH: Mrs Bottomley visits Crossroads Care Attendance Scheme, Guildford; later meets Hull MPs re Health Service Finance
- DSS: Mrs Shephard meets the Voluntary Hostels Group to discuss hostel changes and homelessness
- DTI: Mr Redwood addresses Institute of Economic Affairs conference on wider share ownership, QEII Conference Centre, London
- DTI: Mr Forth addresses opening of Radio Frequency Investigation Ltd's automated test facility, Basingstoke
- DTp: Mr Atkins visits Stanstead Airport
- MAFF: Mr Curry addresses Bi-ennial Divisional Veterinary conference dinner, Kemble
- OAL: Mr Luce addresses presentation of Student Design Awards, Institute of Practitioners in Advertising, London
- WO: Mr Grist addresses Challenge to the Community, Aids conference, Cardiff

MINISTERS (PRESS INTERVIEWS)

- DH: Mr Clarke interviewed by Nick Robinson, BBC
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