

21 May 1987

PRIME MINISTER

PRESS DIGEST

The battle hots up a bit with all manner of rows going on - yours with Owen over defence policy; Norman Tebbit's with Hattersley over what he is alleged to have said about unemployment; and with Kinnock and Healey generally abusive, with Healey likening you to Stalin.

New polls suggest you and Labour are gaining at the expense of the Alliance which is slipping - Gallup: 42/33/23 - you are up 3, Labour up 5 and Alliance down 7; NOP of marginals - 41/33/25.

Earlier polls suggesting Labour was closing the gap sent a bit of a shiver through the City.

Two main teachers' unions plan to double their strike action in the run up to the election.

Papers carry full page Labour ads. alleging that the Tory manifesto says nothing about reducing unemployment, building more houses or improving the NHS and education. (This is a plain lie). Also Tory full page ad on your performance in the NHS.

Rolls-Royce shares rocket on first trading - gain of 59p a share on initial payment of 85p.

Harvey Proctor fined £1,450, with £250 costs, on indecency charges.

Jeffrey Archer says he will pay betting debt of nearly £500 if he gets the bill, and so end racecourse ban of 12 years.

Don Concannon, retiring MP for Mansfield, says he won't be voting for Labour - some of the activities of Labour hierarchy have frightened people off, he says.

Sun says a top official at the Russian Embassy last night praised your work for peace - a slap in the face for Healey.

Star features the insults as the campaign takes an ugly turn and makes the point that Mr Tebbit has told Labour to prove his alleged remark over unemployment or give £500 to charity. Diary speculates whether Kinnock's voice will take the strain.

Sun features on its front page the Alliance losing out to Labour and Tories who, it says, are heading for a clear victory. In another story it says the Alliance fudge over defence was torn to shreds by you yesterday. Home Secretary accuses Labour of hiding plans to take political control of the police.

Sun leader on teachers' strikes asks what do the teachers imagine they will gain. You will never give in to blackmail and the nation will back you to the hilt.

In another story the Sun says the opening of a £100,000 lesbian centre in Camden has been shelved until after the election to avoid embarrassing Kinnock; Manchester City Council is spending £1,000 on a party for gay men to demonstrate their opposition to discrimination.

Elsewhere the Sun reports that the brainy are coming back to Britain.

Mirror covers its front page with Harvey Proctor and an allegation that a hospital highlighted in the Tory manifesto - Mayday in Croydon - has been crippled by Government cash cuts. Leader features four stories which, it says, illustrate the point that life in Thatcher's Britain is better for the few but worse for the many.

The Mirror says the new Bishop of Birmingham yesterday criticised your record on health, education and jobs. John Wakeham got a roasting from angry wives on 'phone in. Paul Foot alleges that the greater the repression the more Tory MPs travel to South Africa.

Today's front page dominated by Harvey Proctor and your row with Owen.

Inside it says that gremlins struck Kinnock's election plane again last night - his plane was grounded with battery trouble. Hattersley pledges that the wealth tax will just be for Dukes and tycoons. You warned voters not to put higher living standards and improved public services at risk.

Today leader on your defence row with Owen says the party political was so over the top that people would not have been surprised to hear you declaring that you had won the war single handed. The truth is that Britain has performed its patriotic best when its had a coalition government.

Daily News covers its front page with supporters of Harvey Proctor complaining they were betrayed and a new row between Steel and you - Steel saying in a speech at Cheltenham complaining that you have no concept what the majority mean when they talk about power and individual freedom. A feature claims that many of our basic freedoms have been eroded under the Conservatives - the article is by Hattersley's economic adviser.

Express leads with Alliance facing "poll disaster" and Don Concannon deserting Labour. Its main story says the two Davids were rocked by Gallup's poll showing a 7 point collapse in their support. Inside the Express gives prime place to your rallying call to candidates: "Together we can win the future." Power to the people is not just a slogan, you tell them. A feature notes Kinnock's US presidential style party political.

Express leaders on police and teachers says Leslie Curtis's allegations that politicians are using the police as a political football is bucking responsibility. In demanding more and more for the police he ignores increased spending, manpower, pay and conditions and new powers. As for teachers, the Express asks whether they care any more what parents think of them and whether they have any decency or professional standards left. They are behaving quite despicably.

The Express carries a centre page feature by Katharine Hadley on "the private thoughts of Margaret Thatcher" with lots of pictures.

Mail notes on its front page that Theresa Gorman, of the Small Businesses Federation, has been selected to replace Proctor; and that the Alliance is doing badly in the polls. Inside it says the Alliance is in trouble "as Maggie rides high".

Mail leader on "Labour's Old Curiosity Shop" says while presentationally it is roses and razzmatazz all the way, what's on offer? If Labour were to win the trade union brothers would be back. Kinnock lampooned the Tories as Dickensian, but its not the Tories who are living in the past. Labour is the party with the programme rummaged from the Old Curiosity Shop and the election could well signal that most affecting of scenes: the political death of Little Neil.

Frank Chapple, in a tough Mail column, says loony Left councils aren't against racism - they just believe in a different kind of racism; two Labour candidates - Meacher and Heffer - have just featured in the Communist Morning Star; ^{he} comes out in favour of tactical voting.

Inside the Mail covers the furious row over other party claims that the Tories are trying to set themselves up as the only patriotic party.

Telegraph leads with Gallup showing the Alliance diving to third place and the Tories on course for a majority of 60. It lifts out of its interview with you - covered on inside pages - a front page piece saying you want to reduce the basic rate of income tax below the 25p target set in the manifesto if you win a third term. It reports Princess Anne as saying that the voters are likely to be bored to tears with politics by polling day.

Telegraph dominated by its Gallup Poll. Professor Richard Rose commenting on it says the loss of Alliance support to both established parties is consistent with past performance.

Guardian leads with the Alliance rounding on "Brutish Thatcher" - a reference to Steel's speech last night attacking your style of Government and saying a third term would be a disaster of historic magnitude. Another story says that Kenneth Baker has infuriated his civil servants by asking them to give him information on politically contentious issues during the election.

Inside Guardian reports that Labour has seized on your commitment to privatise electricity suggesting it would mean putting nuclear reactors into private hands.

Guardian leader attacks what it claims is the Tory assumption that they have a monopoly of patriotic instincts. This assumption ought to be confronted at this election. You may fly the flag but you are not the only voice of the real Britain. On Venice it says the Summit, after the Citycorp decision, is not just a photo opportunity for you - there are choppy waters to navigate.

Hugo Young in the Guardian says the Tory manifesto is not a radical document - only three items are radical: abolition of rates; ending LEA hegemony; and increased controls on broadcasting. But it is not radical in the two areas of major public concern - health and law and order.

Independent has the Conservatives losing ground in key marginals and Labour gains sending jitters through the City. Inside you go on the attack over your uncaring health image and in an analysis of how your first manifesto has stood the test of time, it says many of the pledges made in 1979 are echoed in this week's manifesto.

Independent leader headed "Nailing Mrs Thatcher's Lie" says for the Conservatives to attack an Alliance dominated by Owen as unilateralist is both inept and dishonest. It shows a poor grasp of both tactics and reality to suggest that all Liberals and Social Democrats are the same. You should stop claiming a monopoly of patriotism.

Peter Jenkins in the Independent says the case for bullishness about the economy is unproven. And the Government has sown seeds of future decline by cutting back scientific research and development and skimping on university education.

Times leads with teachers doubling strikes before the election; the Tories trapping Owen on defence; all the polls showing the Tories are holding firm; and Roman Catholic Bishops urging their flocks not to decide how they vote on the basis of "single issue politics" but ^{on} a range of issues.

Robin Oakley in the Times says opinion polls are showing up the Tories weak points. The Government is vulnerable as never before on law and order and education and not as impregnable as might have been thought on defence; but it is strong on foreign affairs, inflation and taxation.

Geoffrey Smith in Times compares the party leaders between this and the 1983 election. You are still dominant and Kinnock will not look as formidable a national leader but he may be a more accomplished campaigner than his opponents have expected. The two Davids do not seem to be doing too badly but there is a certain sparkle lacking from the Alliance campaign.

Times adds that 6 Left wing parliamentary candidates in Liverpool say they will call for more extreme socialist policies if Labour wins.

Times leader discusses the Churches' activities in the election, saying if voters did not cast their votes using some kind of moral criteria, and acted solely in their own self interest, democracy would have cause for despair. The word morality, it says, can be bandied about in a manner which debases it.

The FT reports the Tories under strong attack on unemployment, and Hattersley claiming that the Government needed high unemployment to carry out its economic policies. You make the centre piece of your campaign the popular appeal on spreading capital ownership and freeing council tenants and parents from "municipal socialism".

The FT says there is a rift between Labour and journalists covering the campaign. After two days on the road there is simmering discontent among the writing press over the return they are getting for their £3,500 fee.

FT says you dismiss Owen's complaint about what he sees as a slur on the Alliance's defence policy.

OTHER ITEMS

LAW AND ORDER

Express, reporting the Police Federation Conference quotes the Chairman as saying Britain's police are suffering the worst onslaught of street violence in their history.

The husband wife police team who have been assaulted 18 times on duty, featured at Police Federation Conference.

The **Mail** says that the private lives of 2 other MPs reputed to have links with the rent boy scene have been investigated by Scotland Yard.

Times: Police demand jail sentences for serious attacks on officers; prison officers warn that more than half prison population are thought to be involved with drug abuse.

ECONOMY

Telegraph leader on City Corps loss reflecting uncertainties about repayment of Latin American loans, stresses the importance of recognising our interdependence.

Times: Building societies net receipts reach £727m - the highest figure this year.

FT: Britain's economic output rose by 0.4% in the first quarter to put it 3.6% higher than a year earlier.

FT: The greater optimism being voiced by industry represents the "turn of the tide", according to Mr David Nickson, CBI.

FT: Money supply figures for April are raising concern at Bank of England about the inflationary implications of rising house prices and strong consumer spending.

INDUSTRY

Times survey shows that there have been more than 1,300 management buyouts since 1980.

FT: Privatising electricity could raise £18bn, but the industry would need to be split into competing companies, according to FT newsletter study.

FIJI

Fears of a race war grow in Fiji.

Mail says warships are on standby to go to Fiji.

SOUTH AFRICA

Car bombs kill 3 white policemen in Johannesburg.

BERNARD INGHAM