



MR. THORPE

## An Express reconstruction of an ordeal that no other British politician has had to endure

# THE AMAZING 'TRIAL' OF JEREMY THORPE

And now new facts emerge

By John Warden and Paul Hopkins

**THE** extraordinary details emerged last night of how Jeremy Thorpe was put through an ordeal no British political leader has endured before.

And today the Liberal leader faces new questions about:—

- A business partnership with former Liberal M.P. Peter Bessell.
- Meetings Mr. Thorpe and Liberal M.P. David Steel had in New York with Mr. Bessell in 1972.
- The revelations of a woman who tipped off police about a possible attempt on his life.

### The scene

The ordeal of Mr. Thorpe reached historical heights when he was given a Star Chamber grilling by his fellow Liberal M.P.s on Wednesday night.

They wanted to get at the root of the imputations that for a week have been fired at Mr. Thorpe over the case of Norman Scott, whose claim of a "sexual relationship" he has denied. At issue was nothing less than the leader's credibility.

It was not planned to be a Star Chamber or a kangaroo-court, but in their anguish to do the right thing the Liberals came near to deserting their principles, though they could find a good Liberal word to excuse what went on—participation by a democratic party.

For nearly two hours behind closed doors Mr. Thorpe was on trial. Judge and jury were his 12 M.P.s along with six Liberal peers.

The one woman there in cheerless committee room No. 10 at the Commons was Mrs. Margaret Winfield, the party president, by special invitation. Everyone else, party officials and all, was excluded.

Mr. Thorpe was in the chair—or dock—and was flanked by Chief Whip Cyril Smith and party elder Lord Byers. Lined up jury-like on the benches below him sat the M.P.s and peers.

### The evidence

One of the M.P.s, the eminent Q.C. Mr. Emlyn Hooson—who in 1967 competed with Mr. Thorpe for the leadership—was counsel for the prosecution.

He soon took charge in professional style as master of his brief. This was to go through the evidence, consisting of the correspondence in the case—the letters sent by Peter Bessell to Norman Scott.

Almost line by line Mr. Hooson took Mr. Thorpe through the file of letters. He was out to discover if there was anything in them that incriminated the leader and might damage his political credibility.

Question: "And now will you turn to the letter dated . . . ?" Question: "What have you to say about the passage which I shall read . . . ?"

### Pocket Cartoon

By Osbert Lancaster



"Ursula! Come away from that window AT ONCE!"

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The grilling: Mr Thorpe, flanked by Lord Byers and Cyril Smith, is questioned by the party's own Q.C., Mr. Emlyn Hooson

DRAWING BY BOB WILLIAMS

### Ex-Jaguar boss to fight poll

Mr. Geoffrey Robinson, former Jaguar car chief, was chosen last night as Labour candidate for the Coventry North-West by-election caused by the death of Maurice Edelman, who had a 7,488 majority for Labour.

Polling day at Coventry and for by-elections at Carrington and Wirral will be March 11—Mr. Wilson's 60th birthday—according to Commons sources.

### Trade warning for Argentine

The Argentines were warned yesterday against a repetition of the incident in which their destroyer fired on the British survey ship Shackleton.

Foreign Under Secretary Mr. Edward Rowlands told M.P.s that it would "call into question Britain's political and commercial ties with the Argentine."

### Carrying on

The Government is not embarking on immediate cuts in the size of the Civil Service. Mr. Charles Morris, Civil Service Minister, told the Commons last night. But a review aimed at cutting back growth was being made.

### Wall Street down

NEW YORK, Thursday.—The Dow Jones index fell 11.81 points to 964.81 on Wall Street today.

### It's a boy

Singer Clodagh Rodgers, 28, yesterday gave birth to a 7lb. 8oz. son, Matthew John.

### What a sauce . . .

THE Rt. Hon. Harold Wilson, O.B.E., H.P. That is how the Prime Minister—who has the reputation of being almost a bottle-a-week H.P. sauce man—is listed in a Belgian Government book out yesterday. H.P.? A very embarrassing printing mistake, said the Belgian Foreign Ministry.

## Navy returns to Cod War

By Roy Blackman

TWO Royal Navy frigates were heading back into the Cod War at 30 knots last night after a day in which Britain claimed Icelandic gunboats had "run riot" in the disputed fishing grounds.

There were at least two warp-cutting attempts on the British trawler fleet—one successful—and an attempted ramming.

The new onslaught also ratcheted up the Icelandic determination to sever diplomatic ties with Britain.

Return of British war-ships was automatic because Foreign Secretary James Callaghan had warned that a single further harassment would bring in the Navy.

### Promise

And his Icelandic counterpart, Erlingur Agustsson, matched this with a promise that the Navy's return would be countered by his country breaking off relations with Britain.

He warned that there would be no return and the break would be "an historical turn for the worse."

There was a threat, too, from the Icelandic Foreign Minister that there would also be other serious consequences for Britain.

This new, serious twist in the six-month dispute means that yet again the relations of the two NATO allies are in a state of collapse.

Breaking point came at 3.19 p.m. when the Icelandic coastguard vessel Baldur cut both trawl warps of the 740-ton Hull trawler Loch Erriboll 22 miles off Iceland's north-east coast.

The Icelandic claimed that the trawler and three others were fishing in a conservation area. At the same time, the coastguard flagship Tyr made an unsuccessful run on the 532-ton Fleetwood trawler, Gavina, 30 miles away.

Now R.A.F. surveillance will be resumed. As the frigates Juno and Diomedea raced in a British Trawler Federation spokesman said: "Our reaction is a mixture of relief and sorrow—sorrow that we had to do this again."

"The only solution still remains to sit down around a table and start talking."

## Maggie lambasts £335 tax increase

By George Lochhead

THE average British household will this year pay £335 more in income tax than in 1974, Mrs. Margaret Thatcher told the Commons yesterday.

The Opposition Leader protested: "Is not this the intolerable cost of Socialism?"

"To Tory cheers she urged Mr. Harold Wilson to discuss with the T.U.C. the enormous increase in the amount of tax taken out of the pay packet by our Government."

### 'Anxiety'

The Prime Minister told her: "The Chancellor [Mr. Denis Healey] has already expressed his anxiety about this and has given some hint, even of his intentions."

Mr. Wilson added: "You will know that the figures you quote would have been very much increased if we increased defence expenditure by £4.8 billion as you have been advocating."

"And there would be a far bigger increase if this Government were to fulfil the frivolous election promises you made in 1974 on mortgages."

### Budget Day

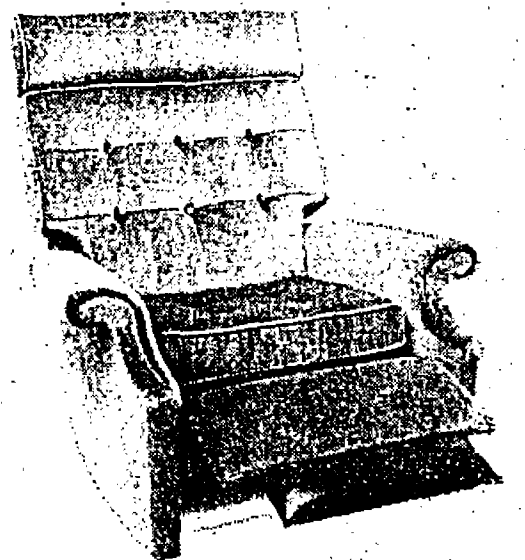
BUDGET DAY—with high hopes of tax cuts—will be April 8, Chancellor Denis Healey confirmed the date yesterday and announced that next week he intends to spell out his special measures to combat unemployment.



Callaghan: Warning

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