

# Relationship with Commons secretary brought about the downfall of Government minister

## Countdown to resignation as Parkinson's affair undermined polls success

By Staff Reporters

Mrs Keays and Mr Cecil Parkinson first met about thirteen years ago. They have been close friends for the past 12 years. Miss Keays worked for Mr Parkinson as his secretary from about 1975.

In 1979, according to Miss Keays's statement, Mr Parkinson first asked her to marry him. She spent 1980 in Brussels working for the European Commission.

October, 1982: Miss Keays came within one vote of getting the Conservative nomination for the then seat of Southwark, Bermondsey, to fight it at a general election. November 2: Mrs Keays narrowly missed being chosen by the party for nomination when the man who had been her husband's secretary could not fight because of his election caused by the resignation of Mr Robert Mottist. May, 1983: Having discovered she was pregnant, she learns that Mr Parkinson was not prepared to marry her.

Miss Keays had made it plain in a role in which she was considered their relationship being a long-standing love affair. She was to continue because she was pregnant, she learns that Mr Parkinson was not prepared to marry her.

Neither she nor Mr Parkinson have discussed the position since they parted in the period between the first proposed, and May, 1983. Mrs Thatcher announced a weekend meeting with senior colleagues. Mr Parkinson was to be present. She planned a general election.

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the office of Mr Roy Jenkins. There have been many suggestions that at this stage she sought to break off the affair but that Mr Parkinson insisted that it should continue.

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that issue at very short notice. It was its effects were explosive. Along with the pressure from Mrs Keays, it provoked a public statement from Mr Parkinson that night, delivered to the Press Association news agency. Almost immediately, at 11.45pm, it was being relayed to Britain's morning newspapers.

It read: "To bring to an end our marriage, Miss Keays and myself, and to prevent further harassment of Miss Keays and her family, I have had her removed from my home. I have had a relationship with Miss Keays for a number of years."

"She is expecting a child due to be born in January, of which I am the father, I am, of course, making financial provision for both mother and child."

"During our relationship I have told Miss Keays of my wish to marry her. Despite my having given Miss Keays that assurance, my wife, who has been a source of great strength, and I have decided to stay together and live happily ever after."

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## Party supports leader's action

By Our Political Editor

There was no sign yesterday that the Parkinson affair has done the Prime Minister lasting harm.

If Mrs Margaret Thatcher had made no effort to defend him, she would have been criticised for that. By the time she knew she had to go in, at 8pm yesterday, she was in the party had any doubt that she would be supported.

However, conference reports, as with many major constituency parties, were fully devoted and confused.

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Master strategist: Mrs Thatcher, flanked by Mr and Mrs Parkinson, after the Conservative Party conference.

confront him with the matter soon.

Miss Keays's statement to *The Times* states clearly that, while on holiday, Mr Parkinson changed his mind once over the matter of marriage and decided against it.

September 14: Mr John Selwyn Gummer was suddenly and surprisingly named as Tory party chairman in place of Mr Parkinson.

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## Press lays siege to house

By Richard Dowden

Miss Sara Keays yesterday let it be known that she hoped that it would not be necessary to say anything about the affair. She said that she was in a relationship with Mr Cecil Parkinson, but she was not expecting in January.

"This meant that, it would be wrong to say that the statement issued to *The Times* yesterday was the first one since she reserved the right to say more if the fact was proved to be an unfair criticism."

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Family album: Cecil Parkinson, the Cambridge student in 1953 (left), the Enfield by-election victory in 1970 (right) and the family man with his wife and three daughters when he first took up his Commons seat. He was assistant government whip in 1974 and became junior trade minister in 1979 before taking over as chairman of the party.

Backbench return after Cabinet office

## Thatcher protégé who missed stardom

By Ronald Butt

Few politicians have risen to Cabinet prominence so suddenly, and with such little previous publicity, as Mr Cecil Parkinson. Unlike Mr Norman Tebbit (an early ally of Mrs Thatcher), Parkinson was not a backbencher but had been notorious as a backbencher for successfully rough-hauling the Labour front-bench. Mr Parkinson had never been a walk-on House of Commons figure.

In 1974, only four years after winning Enfield West at a by-election, Mr Parkinson had been given the job of Assistant Whip by Mr Edward Heath, the Prime Minister, but he had not been at Westminster, though his growth direction taken by the Heath government was little concerned in private conversations with sympathetic colleagues.

Subsequently, he became an Opposition whip until 1976, after which he was made, first, Opposition spokesman for the party before the election, and Minister for Health after Mrs Thatcher's victory.

'Promoting the party's cause'

It was a job well suited to a personable businessman, well-skilled in the arts of private negotiation, but it was hardly one which gave him any opportunity to make his mark as a House of Commons man in successful government political life in the country. The chance to do so came in 1981, when Mrs Thatcher, suddenly, promoted him to be Paymaster-General in the Cabinet, and made him an assistant chairman of the party in succession to the elder statesman Lord Thorpe, who had been brought out of retire-

ment to the job when he first became leader of the party. Parkinson's name was not the most junior position, but his dedication to the party and his skill in promoting the party's cause were well known.

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## Tasks that face new man in job

By Edward Townsend

Industrial Correspondent

The successor to Mr Parkinson will be assuming control not only of the government's biggest department of state but also of that charged with carrying out much of the industrial privatisation programme, one of the cornerstones of Conservative economic policy.

The foundations for selling chunks of state-owned industry were laid by Mr Patrick Jenkin, the first Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, and Mr Parkinson's successor will find considerable progress in the complicated and controversial process of privatising British Telecom.

Regional policy is another area where the new minister will be faced with a difficult task. Mr Parkinson has already submitted proposals to a Cabinet committee for a British Steel for new distribution, and a White Paper expected by the end of the year.

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## Friends and allies stay loyal to a colleague in trouble

From Michael Evans in London and Philip Webster in Blackpool

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