Thatcher's key role on Parkinson

By Anthony Bevins, Political Correspondent

The Prime Minister played a key role in persuading Mr Cecil Parkinson not to marry Miss Sara Keays but to stay with his wife, in the hope of keeping him as a highly-valued member of her Cabinet.

Mrs Thatcher's views on divorce are particularly strong and when Mr Parkinson first told her on June 9 of his secretary's pregnancy and his view that he would have to marry her, it is understood that the Prime Minister advised cantion and further consider-

- It is also understood that Mr Ian Gow, then the Prime Mittister's parliamentary privator secretary and a friend of Mr. Parkinson: because active in reinfacting that strong and influencial advice.

hibidious as highly experi-nced solicitor who has since en made Minister of Housing

ink man, working behind the cenes to ensure that Mr rkinson's marriage and career ere protected from the imading scandal. Those efforts affed to keep Mr Parkinson in the Cabinet, but he announced vesterday that he planned to continue as MP for Herismere.

Mrs Thatcher's positive stand during June, July and August and Mrs Ann Parkinson's decision to stand by her ausband explain the change of mind and the secret September meeting when Miss Keays was told by Mr Parkinson that he was not going to marry her fafter all".

It also explains why the Prime Minister so defiantly fused the resignation of the

Secretary of State for Trade and Industry once the scandal broke.

Ministers have undoubtedly been dismayed by the intense media pressure on Mr Parkinson during last week's party conference. But they have been

Bernard Levin Voters' sympathy

even more dismayed by Miss Keays's refusal to remain silent in the face of their attempts to save his career.

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Those attempts explain the reports, which first emerged at Blackpool last week, that the baby had not been conceived in a long-standing loving

"in a long-standing loving relationship".

It has been stated on Mr Parkinson's part that the relationship began to neme our as far back as 1980, the year after Mr Parkinson first asked with relative to the parkinson's friends was made nublic vesterday by Mr

made public yesterday by Norman Tebbit, who said in an interview on London Weekend Televison's Weekend World: You will recollect that an agreement was made, and it was published, between Mr Parkinson and Miss Keays that they would neither of them com-ment any further upon the matter".

Mr Brian Walden interjected: "But they did, didn't they?" Mr Tebbit said: "They did indeed. Now had that agreement been adhered to, I think we would have been in a slightly different position.

"Politics is dangerous and sometimes you have to take risks if you want to do what is right, and I think it would have been right for Cecil Parkinson to have been in the Cabinet today. I wish he were.

"Not only for reasons of personal friendship but because of his ability, and because I think it is a finally when what I regard predominantly as pysmies can bring down a man like Cecil Parkinson.

Mr Tebbit also said: "I think it does damage the Government, temporarily, yes.

Mr Parkinson spoke briefly to reporters yestersay when he and his wife and daughters took Continued on tack page, val.2.

"Mr ian Gow: Yink man