Articles, stories and adverts published

ON THIS DAY

in either The Guardian or Observer Newspapers (1791 to 2000) LGfL digital archive.

LONDON GRID FOR LEARNING

Prime Minister Harold Wilson in shock resignation
17/3/1976

Publication: Guardian 1821-2000; Date: Mar 17, 1976; Section: Front page; Page: 1

Odds on for Callaghan

Ballot next Thursday

By IAN AITKEN, Political Editor

MR JAMES CALLAGHAN, everybody's favourite uncle, last night looked like the odds-on favourite to become the next Prime Minister in succession to Mr Harold Wilson. On a unique day for the Labour Party, Mr Callaghan emerged as either a first choice or a compromise candidate for an overwhelming majority of Labour MPs.

Mr Wilson's successor may be named next Thursday when the result of the first ballot of Labour MPs is to be declared. If a second ballot is needed the result will be on Tuesday, March 30 ; if the vote goes to a third ballot the result will be given on Monday, April 5, the day before the Budget.

Nothing like Mr Wilson's astounding announcement of his impending retirement has ever happened to the Labour Party before. No Labour leader has resigned while in office as Prime Minister.

A handful of his closest friends, including Lord Goodman, his lawyer, Mr Joe Haines, his press adviser, and Mr Ted Short, the deputy Prime Minister, are understood to have been informed in advance of Mr Wilson's intention. Apart from that, the Prime Minister's statement to his Cabinet colleagues yesterday morning came as a staggering surprise.

STEPPING OUT: Mr Wilson outside No. 10 yesterday. Picture by Kenneth Saunders

© LGfL 2016 guardian.lgfl.net