

THE NEXT STAGE OF POLICY WORK

(A Paper by Sir Keith Joseph and Mr. Maude)

1. In the first stage which ended with the recent successful Party Conference, our policy work tended to be decentralised and to depend primarily on the parliamentary party. Each Shadow Minister set up such policy groups as he felt appropriate and we ended up with some ninety different groups. This obviously placed a considerable strain on the resources of the Research Department and presented problems of co-ordination. Moreover the quality of the work was unavoidably uneven as the amount of work that could be put in varied according to the other commitments - not least those of a heavy legislative programme - with which the different Members had to cope. Nonetheless the threads were successfully and fairly adequately drawn together during a series of meetings of the Shadow Cabinet at the end of the last Session which led to the publication of The Right Approach.

2. In this note we set out for consideration by our colleagues some ideas on how the Second Stage of the policy work might be organised. We have tried to suggest methods that preserve some of the flexibility of the first stage but permit a rather more concentrated and structured effort.

Existing Publication Commitments

3. The first point is a minor tidying up exercise. The Right Approach commits us to further policy papers on three specific areas:

Profit Sharing "proposals of this kind which we shall publish later in more detail for wide discussion with industry, unions, and the financial institutions" (P.29)

Small Businesses "we shall therefore be announcing in a few months a detailed programme for the revival of smaller businesses" (P.35)

The Arts "we intend to publish a discussion paper on the problems facing all the arts, with a view to establishing a sensible framework for finance, training, and co-operation between public and private bodies" (P.65)

4. When completed the drafts will need to be approved by the Shadow Cabinet (or a sub-committee of it) and decisions taken as to the form of publication.

Priority Areas for Further Policy Work

5. There are vast areas in which an incoming Conservative Government will have to act. In an ideal world the party would have cleared its mind as to what it wants to do in all areas before reaching office but in practice we simply have not the resources to cover the whole water front - quite apart from the fact that in many cases it is not possible exactly to foresee the circumstances with which we shall be faced. In practice we have to concentrate on a few areas in which we must pursue our policy work in greater depth than was sufficient for the first stage.

6. We suggest that a very short list - not more than a dozen subjects - should be drawn up of the topics on which it is of the highest political importance that the party should have worked out positions that are sound, credible and politically attractive.

7. We suggest that each of these topics should be tackled by a small inter-disciplinary group of Shadow Ministers chaired by the Shadow Minister most immediately affected with one or two other of his colleagues to permit cross-fertilisation of ideas and some preliminary synthesis of views. The servicing of these groups would be a priority for the Research Department staff. The groups should, as appropriate, be strengthened by the addition both of back bench Members interested in the topic and of high calibre people from outside parliament who were experienced or who have made a special study of the topic. The topics should be those that are central to our whole political posture.

8. We suggest for the consideration of colleagues the following topics as the priority areas:

3. a) Economic Policy Effectively for this we envisage a continuation and extension of the work of the three policy groups chaired by Geoffrey Howe, John Nott and David Howell on Economic Reconstruction, the Public Sector and Taxation with perhaps the addition of some other front bench spokesmen. A sub-group on public sector manpower chaired by Kenneth Baker has already been set up to work to John Nott.

Make by St. John Stevas b) Education For this we suggest a group chaired by Norman St. John Stevas with perhaps Tim Raison, Jim Prior and ourselves and a strong non-parliamentary team which would seek to find answers to three very specific questions we are likely to encounter:

1) How precisely we would propose to raise standards in practice?

2) Precisely how do we suggest higher education should be organised and financed?

3) How could education and vocational training better provide pupils and students with the skills and techniques they need to play a full part in the economic life of the country.

c) Industrial Relations For this we suggest a group chaired by Jim Prior with strong representation also by some of those involved in the economic policy group. We see this group as having to cope with two somewhat different types of questions we are likely to face:

1) Precisely what changes in the existing law are required to safeguard individual rights and secure democracy in the Unions?

2) How do we in practice propose to make "collective bargaining a more orderly and responsible process"?

The latter obviously bears on our position about the future of incomes policy and clearly allied to both is the question of:

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iii) How do we deal with the Socialist claim that we would be unable to work with the Unions?

2) d) Social Security This group would obviously be chaired by Patrick Jenkin with one of the Treasury team particularly concerned with taxation. The basic question with which it would have to deal is how we see the transition to a Tax Credit/negative/reverse income tax approach taking place subject to the probable financial constraints. However, it would also have to deal with a number of other and perhaps more immediate social security problems such as the taxation of short term benefits, how we would protect the really needy from the repercussions of such cuts as may be required, social security benefits for the families of those on strike, supplementary benefits for new entrants to the UK, ~~abuses~~ of the social services generally, etc. *John*

1) e) Rates This is a crucial area for credibility. We are committed to abolish the domestic rate. What would we put in its place? Do we keep the commercial and industrial rates? etc. These raise the whole question of the control of local government finance and its implications for the relationship of central to local government. This would be a matter for Tim Raison and the finance team.

1) f) Industrial Policy *Region* This includes both our attitude to the future of British Leyland, the NEB and the like and also regional policy. What instruments of policy would a Conservative Government use to raise the level of economic activity in the relatively disadvantaged areas? Michael Heseltine is obviously particularly concerned but Tim Raison might also be interested as questions of transport and the regional infra-structure are also likely to be involved as well as general economic policy.

1) g) Nationalisation Under what discipline should the existing nationalised industries operate and what should be their relationship to the government? Nick Ridley already has a group which has done a certain amount of work on this subject, but it probably needs to be strengthened by the addition of Michael Heseltine and John Biffen or their representatives.

1) h) Town and Country Planning and the Environment Planning questions are becoming more politically sensitive and it is likely that this policy area will become more salient. We have probably got as far on housing as such as we need before an election but we need to develop a more detailed policy stance regarding the environment questions. The primary interest is again Tim Raison's but other colleagues are probably also interested. *Joby*

No Jones
1) British Nationality Revision of the law regarding British nationality is part of our immigration policy as the peculiarities of our law on this subject are one of the prime causes of the problem. The Society of Conservative Lawyers published some recommendations on this subject in May 1975 but it is not clear whether these are either adequate or acceptable to the Party as a whole. It is essentially a topic for lawyers and it may be that the right way of dealing with it is not a policy group but rather to commission a study by some legal authority for discussion by the Shadow Cabinet.

j) Law and Order Anxiety on this score is a commonplace of the political scene and so far our specific constructive proposals have been virtually limited to methods of improving

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the recruitment of the police force. But it is possible that there are other ideas both about the prevention of crime and the treatment of criminals on which we could have something to say. The primary interest for these last two would be Willie Whitelaw's.

9. We have confined our suggestions for these priority areas to topics that are both likely to be of considerable electoral significance in an election campaign and central to our political posture. There are a number of other topics that are probably of equal importance without quite these characteristics. The machinery of government, for example, could be of crucial importance as it will affect our ability to control expenditure but it is not so much a matter of electoral significance as one on which the Leader will want advice when taking office. Devolution is of key importance but we will need to have made our position clear before the election. We also feel that the party needs policy advice on such topics as the civil nuclear programme and its implications for the danger of nuclear pollution, the husbanding of water resources, the future of the NHS, methods of strengthening the control of the Executive by Parliament whose precise electoral significance is difficult to gauge at present. The two of us are also going to discuss with Quintin Hailsham and Michael Havers the question of a Bill of Rights and possible constitutional reforms.

Synoptic Policy Work

10. Concurrently with work on the priority areas each Shadow Minister will presumably wish to keep the whole area of his responsibilities under review. This would include keeping under review areas like Housing where we are already fairly far advanced. The Steering Committee formula already used by several Shadow Ministers would seem appropriate for this purpose. In general, however, although Shadow Ministers may well wish to get groups of colleagues working on specific problems only the Steering Committees and the Priority Areas Groups would be serviced by the Research Department.

'Private Enterprise' Policy Work

11. We obviously have no desire to dissuade other individuals or groups of members of the parliamentary party with particular interests from developing their ideas for policy. In suitable cases these could be published by the CPC with the usual disclaimer. So long as such ideas were not flagrantly at variance with party policy and of the requisite intellectual standard for the CPC, these activities do not probably need to be very closely co-ordinated. An element of controversy may not be a bad thing. Indeed the Liberal Party, the Labour Party and its associates like the Fabian Society have probably derived something of their spurious reputation for intellectual vigour by publications of this sort.

K.J.

A.M.