

OUR TONE OF VOICE AND OUR TASKSA discussion paper by Sir Keith Joseph

- A. We have, I argue, allowed the country to move so far to the left partly because we have not over the years clearly enough asserted and given effect to our own beliefs - although as Angus Maude and Chris Patten wrote in *The Right Approach* many of our beliefs are shared by most of the population, however they vote.
- B. I would also argue that we, or at least most of us, have focussed too much on the economic dimension. By putting economic policy in the forefront we encourage an attitude - helpful to Socialism - that government has the main responsibility for the country's and the individual's economic well-being. We in fact have a different viewpoint - that it is government's task to create a framework such that people in their own interest unconsciously serve the national interest.

My first suggestion is therefore that we focus more than now on the non-economic issues, making clear our resolve to move in directions that are both justified and popular. We are on our way to doing so, but there is much still to be done.

If we present the non-economic policies effectively they will to some extent convoy our indispensable but in some features less palatable economic policies.

For I do not deny the importance of spelling out clearly our economic strategy but only suggest that it be not given automatic pride of place.

- C. We need, I believe, to bear in mind in all our considerations the importance of winning the second as well as the first election ahead. We should aim to show results - decreasing personal taxation throughout; less inflation and less unemployment from year to year. These will be crucial, but so will be our performance on the key non-economic issues - and that is why I hope that we give more attention to them.
- D. Non-economic issues

I start therefore with some of the issues which preoccupy voters as much as the economic ones - and above all patriotism, violent crime, immigration, abuse and housing. We have moved promisingly on all these subjects but there is much still to be done if we are not to be outflanked by the Government.

(1) Patriotism

We shall not, I believe, get far unless we can kindle a sense of patriotism, common identity and the renewed acceptance of a code of right and wrong. It is not, I suggest, that these attitudes have shrivelled amongst the British people. It is rather that large numbers of us well-intentioned politicians have

*Patriotism*  
*in*  
*religion.* - *supra*

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accepted from largely left-wing intellectuals a series of attitudes and therefore of policies that run in fact strongly counter to the views of most voters, whatever their party.

*17*  
*Ulster*

The main custodians of the older codes and of patriotism have been the people rather than the politicians. We now have both the opportunity and the duty to re-examine our attitudes. But we shall have to adopt stronger and more effective policies for Ulster as a start; we shall have to stand up for Englishness while allowing for a Scottish dimension. Current attitudes have largely been taken from socialist sources.

(ii) Violent crime

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Socialist ideas ascribe crime, for instance, largely to social conditions beyond the power of the individual - therefore exempting him from responsibility and even painting him as the victim. Socialist encouragement of class hatred of the existing social order is easily translated into exemption from obeying society's laws. Sedgemoor and Heffer, for example, openly distinguish between laws that should and laws that should not be obeyed - according to what they choose to identify as 'class' interests.

Each one of us has his own set of views. I think that we need to review our attitudes in the light of the outcome of existing policies. While capital punishment is not on its own any sort of panacea it does represent the state's sovereign right to use force to protect its citizens.

I have been an abolitionist all my life - for the familiar reason that most murderers - reacting in hot blood and in most cases on relatives or friends - would not have been deterred by the fear of execution. I am no longer so sure that I have been right in either this 'fact' or in giving the fact, if it be one, such overriding significance. Perhaps I am not the only waverer. No doubt there will always be a free vote on the subject but party leaders have a responsibility to lead.

Of course, reinforcing the police is only part of what is needed: an effective policy against violent crime will have to consider a range of punishment and treatment - financial, custodial and even physical. We owe it to the public to re-examine options and to let it be known that we intend to do so. But we shall do no good if we continue to dilute blame by excusing crime on grounds of bad material conditions. We have to restore right and wrong to the centre of policy and rejoin the public who have deserted old values less perhaps than have politicians.

(iii) Immigration

Our policies on immigration have already moved significantly. But we have not yet had to face the dilemmas involved in fulfilling our pledges. We should, I believe, be ready to disappoint the expectations of immigrants if the only alternative is to disappoint the expectations of the English. The English have rights too. This may involve (a) ending entry for large and potentially very large groups as fiancées and fiancés from the New Commonwealth and perhaps (b) aborting the 'endless queue' of wives and children of those already here. There may be no other way to fulfil our undertaking. And we may have to

take very inconvenient action to deal with illegal immigrants. Unless this sort of determination is clear from what we say under questioning our pledges will be discredited.

Moreover there are non-Commonwealth, non-EEC workers still here in relatively large numbers at a time when many British men and women should be available for work. If we want to reduce unemployment and to make a reality of the work-test we should send those admitted on temporary work-permits home.

(iv) Housing

Our housing policies should do much good. But we need also, I suggest, if we are to reduce homelessness and increase mobility and choice, to create conditions in which private money is again invested in housing for rent. This will depend upon (a) freeing new building and conversions for rent from controls and giving them suitable tax treatment for amortisation and repairs and (b) so behaving (- auctioning perhaps all publicly-owned land not imminently needed plus removing land subsidies and some aspects of compensation for compulsory purchase or reducing the scope for compulsory purchase altogether) that land prices fall sharply in the cities and towns. It is essential for our integrity that we do not attack the Government if they cut local authority house-building since we intend to reduce it mainly to sheltered house building for the elderly and the disabled.

(v) Abuse

Both fraudulent and non-fraudulent (i.e. Why Work?) abuse have already been put firmly on the agenda by the press, the public and us. Labour will fiddle at the edges, setting us useful precedents. Only we will be able to operate decisively first by toughening the work-test; then by cutting direct taxation and eroding the real value of short-term benefits; and secondly, by introducing tax-credits. We cannot in the short term avoid coming to decisions on supplementary benefits for strikers' families and on tax rebates.

(vi) In all these subjects and in education what seem to me to be nationally sensible is what to a large extent the public already believe in. We need to sharpen up policy therefore and above all first speakers in addition to the Shadow spokesmen who have the ability to convey our ideas with an irresistible simplicity and effectiveness. I suggest that while we must be firm on economic issues we should try to help particularly deserving - and not just high-pressure - non-economic needs.

(vii) We should be aware that there are some aspects of office that are especially easy to monitor. I would myself like to see less public exhibition of and advertisement for violent films etc. and perhaps a change in the violence content of television.

I hope that from the beginning we shall not condone violence. We shall be judged disproportionately on the decision we make on MPs' pay.

E. Trades unions

The most important issue at the next election may well be the trades unions. They stem from a nobly conceived movement with vast numbers of patriots - and some outstanding ones - in their history. But their purposes no longer seem constructive and beneficent. Trade union leaders have in many cases become so party-political that unions are now more a political than a social-economic movement.

Trades unions and the Labour Party are twin manifestations of the same purposes. Their common aim has become to usurp political and economic power. It is true that increased state power erodes and finally destroys trade union independence, but some leaders may regard the gain as greater than the loss, and anyway by the time the truth is recognised it may be too late.

(1) Trade union power - negative and positive

Trade union leaders and/or militants have used and are still using their power by strike and, above all, by strike-threat to discourage or frustrate the modernisation and the new techniques that would otherwise raise the standard of living steadily and create the climate in which new jobs and new activities would be continually emerging; to impose or to resist political change; to resist the reduction of overmanning; to resist the reduction of government spending; to threaten the freedom of the press; to use blackmail against the public to secure 'rescues'; to intimidate, to expel and to bully; to impose closed shops; to harass specific countries against which the Left is campaigning; to mobilise a conscript army for Socialist purposes. All this power is intensified in the nationalised and the State subsidised sectors.

Trades unions are daily usurping more power - political and economic - sometimes by coercion, sometimes by strike, sometimes by strike-threat, sometimes by abuse of office and by injuring the public in any quarrel they have with the Government of the day.

And the outcome is and will be the decreasing competitiveness, the declining freedoms, the lower standard of living and the increased politicisation of the people.

(11) Limits

And yet, except in a few of these cases, the winning cards can all be in the hands of a determined Government, provided that

1. It has the right general policies.
2. It has educated the public where the public's interest lies.
3. It fights to win.
4. It explains and explains and explains.

It is true that some strikes are more winnable than others. We must try to achieve our aims without leading to the strikes most difficult to win - but even those can, and, if they occur, must be won. Though the cost of winning them may be high, the cost of losing them will be higher still. It is true that some strikes impose heavy balance of payments costs. It is true that some firms will fall into receivership if unions misjudge our determination not to rescue. It is true that if public sector trades unions like NUPE misuse their strike power we shall have to dismiss those concerned.

But there is no hope of freedom or prosperity if we are not ready to stand our ground when we judge it necessary.

(iii) Yet union power - negative and hostile to progress - and to us.

It is all made harder because there is no balance to trade union power at the moment. The CBI has, mercifully, no equivalent

power in relation to industry or Government and is not politicised as unions are. Tripartite activities therefore only strengthen the power of the unions and therefore of Labour and therefore of Socialism.

I have tried to put these uncomfortable thoughts from me, but I fear that we should face them. With the union wing of the Labour movement so entrenched and so expansionist it is fanciful to think that we shall be able to govern the country as we believe is in the best interest of the people as things now are. We shall find too many levers of power grasped by the union wing of the labour movement. We shall be faced with direct conflict with public service unions on economics and on policy. What can be done?

(iv) But the pendulum may swing.

First, the pendulum may swing, may indeed be swinging. Union members and the rapidly changing economic climate may influence attitudes. But union attitudes have been what they are partly because Governments have protected unenlightened, destructive and Luddite union leaders and their followers from the consequences of their actions. So the pendulum will not swing far or long unless our general economic policies encourage commonsense and enlightened self-interest rather than militancy and destruction.

(v) Economic strategy crucial

We are, I think, already determined not to print. We are half-determined not to rescue. We are half-determined to phase out or end pay as well as price and dividend controls. Such a change of climate will create one set of problems and test cases but a far smaller set of problems and test cases, I believe, than the alternative.

So our general economic policies should encourage self-discipline and the recognition of realities, but these will only be effective if we explain and explain both what we are after and the damage that current union attitudes - not of all but of many unions - have inflicted and will inflict on the public as a whole including all union members.

(vi) Public education needed

We have not yet systematically and soberly, and without blaming the unions for all our troubles, denounced the politicisation of what was once an acceptable counterbalance to a then excessive employer power, nor denounced their misuse of power nor systematically explained the damage they have done and are doing to the very living standards and freedoms they were designed to serve.

We have not yet therefore legitimised the public's instinctive distaste for what is going on and placed it in a frame of reference within which they can judge individual cases. We have not exposed the double-talk which conceals self-interest behind alleged national interest. We have not clinched the argument that unions are really quarrelling about the division of the dwindling cake among themselves rather than quarrelling with employers.

And yet there are union leaders and unions with enlightened understanding of the community of interest between workers and employers; for instance, a number of unions are not affiliated to the TUC. There must be millions of union members who are well aware of the handicaps that Luddism imposes on the job-creating, wealth-creating, standard-of-living-lifting capacity of enterprise, private and public, and we should be encouraging them to exercise their influence on their union's policies.

Of course, the unions are not the sole cause of our failings. Nor are all our factories crippled - though troubles should not be measured by strikes alone but rather by the shackles imposed on progress by strike-threat as well as by strike. Good management can and does achieve splendid results. Bad management, sometimes understandable in the light of union attitudes, may be widespread. Governments have both encouraged bad practices and set bad examples. I do not suggest that we present an unbalanced picture.

But I believe that a sober and forceful case describing the implications of union behaviour for jobs, standard of living and freedoms should be put. We should denounce their attitudes even though we cannot by words or law enforce them. We should, in other words, put the union leaders on the defensive.

#### (vi) Political strikes

At the same time, I suggest, we should take advice on what is and is not a political strike - and we should be ready to condemn any such strike, even though it is a Labour Government that is faced with it. We must demand that the Government denounce political strikes and on no account should we back such strikes.

I wish that I could realistically suggest that we could recast the union movement on a non-party basis with the Conservatives receiving their share of the levy - but I do not see how we could achieve this.

#### (vii) Non-politicised unions?

It might, however, be possible to encourage the creation of a non-Socialist, non-party-political trade union structure - practical, harnessing enlightened self-interest within a broader framework and in the light of consciousness of common interest with employers. The scope for gains in productivity and earnings - and therefore for generous redundancy pay to reduce overmanning - must in many cases be large and could be won by any union that followed such a course.

There would be trials of strength, but these are inevitable unless we capitulate.

#### (ix) The penalty of doing nothing effective

But I must end this part with two warnings. If we do nothing about the unions, then, unless the pendulum swings and does our work for us, we shall leave the country at the end of our time in office more politicised, less competitive, less free, shabbier and poorer - or we shall be pushed aside by parties to our right with the stomachs to resist.

(k) Morale and resolution indispensable

Stomach and robust but sensible policies and explanations are the keys. For we must recognise that we shall be regarded as transitory, ephemeral and appeasing. The Socialists will appear ruthless and determined. How many heroes can we expect there to be willing to sacrifice career, livelihood and family tranquillity if we are ourselves irresolute and half-hearted?

The TUC is politicised. It is part of Socialism. If there is to be progress in freedoms and in prosperity we have to mobilise the non-affiliated unions and those discontented with union Luddism: we shall have through our most suitable spokesmen to generate morale and spirit. People do not embark upon the sort of endeavour that is needed merely for the sake of a bit more economic welfare.

They need the vision of an escape from bullying and a route to the much greater choice, larger spending power and greater dignity that could be theirs if intelligent co-operation rather than conflict became the order of the day. Without the vision and without the social policies described earlier in this paper nothing will be achieved.

F. Economic Policy

I turn now to economic policy. Perhaps we should see how far we already agree.

(i) Time-scale for the positive plus negative treatment

We shall need, I suggest to emphasise that ending inflation and achieving full economic vitality will take at least five years. We shall need to stress that it can only be done by a combination of positive and negative factors - steady deceleration in the growth of the money supply unless it reaches say 5% p.a., accompanied by a switch of resources from the public to the private sector and the release and encouragement of talent and effort by competition coupled with sharply lowered direct taxation at every level, including the top.

The hope of more and sustainable jobs can only come from a galvanised private sector, but - after so severe a battering - people cannot be expected to plunge into expansion and enterprise until they have had time to test the stability of the new climate. We can challenge Labour when the time comes not to spoil job-creation prospects by blood-curdling threats of what they will do if they regain office.

We shall be accused of planning to increase unemployment. But unemployment will have continued rising under Labour. We shall be able to say - as the Leader, Geoffrey Howe and Jim Prior already say - that increased Government spending has coincided with increased unemployment.

If we are both to encourage the creation of jobs and the filling of them we shall need not only to raise the tax threshold but also to make earnings much more attractive than benefits and to sharpen the work-test; to phase out or end pay controls; to end price and dividend control and to amend those parts of recent legislation that discourage the creation of jobs.

What has not yet been grasped by most commentators and most business and trade union leaders is that a steadily contracting and, later, and only modestly increasing money supply - with the difficulties of measurement and achievement that we well understand will be involved - will create a background in which jobs will be at risk if wage-costs rise.

Some of us have been expressing some of these thoughts for some time. Part only of the message has got over. We need, I suggest, to spell it out time and again and to accompany it with the crucial rider that we are no more in the rescue than we are in the printing business.

#### (ii) Rescues

Probably our main difficulties will come on the rescue front. BHC and Govan will be test cases - and there will be many others. We shall not be able to avoid questioning on them during the election and beforehand. We shall have to argue that only by encouraging efficiency rather than penalising the efficient to subsidise the inefficient will we prosper.

#### (iii) Spending cuts

We shall have the task of reducing Government spending sharply over say three years so as to reduce borrowing, and thus gradually and inflation, and reduce direct taxation - and still be able to spend more on defence and police.

In reducing Government spending there are unpopular cuts - like modifying benefit up-ratings and phasing out nationalised industry subsidies; cuts unpopular with relatively large numbers - like reducing manpower and costs in central and local government; raising council rents; reducing sharply the number of new council houses to be built; raising charges, including school meals. But there are also cuts which will be popular with most, though very unpopular with some - like refusing to subsidise overmanning and low productivity at BHC or Govan; abolition of some of the Boards and Commissions; reduction of some ingredients of overseas aid; reducing the grant to the Arts Council and to the British Council; abolishing the Social Science Research Council. And there will be some cuts that will be generally popular except for those immediately involved - like cutting waste in Water Authorities, Training Boards and overlap and excess in town planning, in local Government and NHS, even though we caused it; and toughening up the work-test.

#### (iv) Scope and use of cuts

We shall be asked whether any service or subsidy will be immune from cuts. We shall carry no credibility if we flinch. We should reply that if we are to end inflation, cut direct taxation and stimulate the growth of sustainable jobs we can make no commitment except that we will not cut defence or police and that we shall do our very best to avoid damaging the most vulnerable, including those on small private incomes. (I have not slotted in such commitment as we have on agriculture but we shall need to take that into account).

It will be open to us to say that we shall offset the impact of some of the cuts by specific help to deserving elements - and by, for instance, tax relief for charities.



The division of the proceeds of reducing Government spending between cutting borrowing and cutting taxing will be for decision at the time, but I hope that a third to a half will be devoted to tax cuts.

(v) Price rises not themselves inflationary - if part of the cure.

In cutting inflation and Government spending - and in fulfilling our pledge on rates - we shall inevitably raise prices. But higher prices are not in themselves the same as inflation. Inflation is a continuing general rise in prices. Price rises, for instance, that reduce the borrowing requirement by reducing the subsidies that contribute to borrowing will, if part of a strategy with decelerating money supply growth at its centre, be part of the cure for inflation rather than its symptoms.

(vi) Preparations and motivations for cutting spending

If we can agree on a strategy of this sort - and it is explicitly or implicitly all in "The Right Approach" - we need to decide whether to spell it out clearly - and stand up to cross-examination on it. I hope that we will.

We also need to prepare our own colleagues much more than they are, in some cases, now prepared for the task of cutting Government spending. We have policy groups at work but I suggest that we need to take very seriously indeed the motivation of ourselves and of top civil servants on the one hand and the mechanisms we can use on the other.

I believe that top civil servants will be eager to help us if we show ourselves willing to take responsibility for cutting functions and numbers.

On the mechanisms, in addition to the pursuit of functions to eliminate or slim, and methods of reducing the manpower engaged on other functions, we should surely prepare colleagues to hunt in their Departments for services for which charges can be made or raised or which can be contracted out to private enterprise.

For these combined purposes I suggest that the leader should consider letting it be known that one of the most important aspects of performance in her eyes will be the degree to which Government spending is sensibly cut by her ministers - with the help of their top civil servants. I also suggest that we should circulate to all colleagues a short package of reading incorporating recent articles or booklets on the relevant subjects and emphasising the leader's concern that they be taken seriously.

G. Nationalised Industries

We shall be receiving advice.

H. Law and order

On several grounds I believe that we should early on recruit large numbers of special constables - to help patrol the streets and thus reduce crime: to be quickly available to help deal with industrial conviction; to help with football crowds. They will need some brief training. The Police Federation, relieved to be free of pay control, should be willing to be helped.

I. Communications

Though I have no knowledge of the subject I draw attention to what colleagues well recognise - the importance of understanding the inwardness of relations with communicators in general and radio and television in particular. We need to be guided on the time-consuming slog we should make before the election and in office to be understood. I hope that suitable advice will be prepared for us and that the leader will consider allocating among us certain continuing duties. Communicators value boldness and personal contacts.

It is also important that we should make and keep healthy links with the intellectual world. There are initiatives in prospect which could be helpful.

J. Leader's tone

There are two subjects to which it is proper to refer briefly. The first is the tone which the leader herself adopts. It seems to me that her tone should increasingly be national - as at Brighton this year. She has abundantly demonstrated her combativeness - and will continue to do so when apt at PM's Questions. She manifests her warmth and humanity on her tours. Should not her speeches increasingly propound our themes and policies and the national need? The attacks should be made by the rest of us and only occasionally by her.

K. A broader base

The second subject is the wisdom, as it seems to me, of seeking continually before and during office to broaden our base. This is another large topic which I mention only to put it on the agenda.

L. Themes

I turn at last to the messages that come from this analysis. Over all, I believe that our tone too should be more national than partisan, not concealing the difficulties, though we have to be on the attack some of the time.

To have won without having warned what will have to be done will weaken our authority when we come to do it. Moreover, every time we blur our answers on crucial issues we discredit every pledge we have given. There will have been enough evidence, it seems to me, of bland statements by Ministers, followed by drastic disappointment, to justify our unwillingness to be bland. This is no time to govern without the moral authority that we will gain by making our diagnosis and our intentions clear.

Since the leader is apt, legitimately, to ask at the end of a discussion 'what then is the message?' I set down a few suggestions as targets for others to improve upon:-

- (a) General 'national self-respect and stable money'.
- (b) The economy 'Prune and fertilise for well-being'.
- (c) Crime 'People's safety is our aim'.

- (d) Immigration 'Enough'
- (e) Education 'Wider choice, don't destroy it'.
- (f) Trades unions 'Enlightened self-interest'.

14. For convenience I list the propositions above in case it is decided to agree some and allocate work in connection with others.

- 1. Focus more on non-economic issues (B)
- 2. Plan throughout to win second election (C)
- 3. Sound the note of patriotism (Di)
- 4. Consider penal policies (Dii)
- 5. Face up to the implications of our immigration stance (Diii)
- 6. Include revival of new housing to rent in our housing policy (Div)
- 7. Face up to implications of 'Why work?' (Dv)
- 8. Encourage speakers on these non-economic issues (Dvi)
- 9. Discourage violence (Dvii)
- 10. Frame economic policies to encourage Unions' enlightened self-interest (Eiv and v)
- 11. Denounce misuse of union power and damage caused (Evi)
- 12. Define and do not condone political strikes (Evii)
- 13. Encourage non-political unions (Eviii)
- 14. Generate morale and spirit against union Luddism (Ex)
- 15. Stress time-scale for economic recovery (Fi)
- 16. Cut controls and contract real money supply (Fi)
- 17. Explain economic strategy (Fi)
- 18. Rescue preferably not at all (Fii)
- 19. Cut borrowing and direct taxing (Fiii and iv)
- 20. Include popular spending cuts (Fiii)
- 21. Explain price rises not necessarily inflation (Fv)
- 22. Prepare colleagues to cut spending (Fv)
- 23. Recruit many special constables (H)

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| 24. Relations with communicators | (I) |
| 25. Tone of leader's speeches    | (J) |
| 26. Broaden our base             | (K) |
| 27. Consider messages            | (L) |

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