

THE ERRANT CENTRE

We have been reminded that the word economy originally meant the household. Now just as we take objects down for a dusting from time to time, so in economics, we have to take words down from time to time, dust them off, see what has been happening to them. And a strange thing has been happening to the word "Centre". We are told to seize the centre ground, at whatever cost, it must be a good political investment. But the centre has been moving to the left. The Centre of the Labour Party is now Mr Foot and the Tribune group, unilateral disarmament, total nationalisation along Soviet, or Polish, lines.

And however far it goes, the Left wing then begins to shift it further. Gaitskell, Wilson, Callaghan, Foot . . . and who next? Dare I hazard a guess?

We have allowed the centre ground to move so far to the left of the spectrum that it will soon be over the edge. It has not turned out to be a political eldorado, but a will-o'-the-wisp. But what is it worth? Does anyone here believe that this represents the centre of gravity of the thinking of the British people? If not, what should we do about it?

I shall tell you. We must bring the centre of British politics back to where we are. *it belongs.*

We must make the centre correspond to what we have in common with the vast majority of British people. We Tories have common ground based on commonsense, common decency, belief in hard work, self-reliance, initiative, personal responsibility, without which society just limps along.

If that is "Right wing", then I am Right wing, and so are you, and so are the British people. Let us stand firmly on this common ground, there is room for us all, and leave Mr Foot, Mr Benn and Mrs Williams the other half of the Labour Party, squabble about dividing up the left edge of the spectrum as they will.

Does anyone in our Party hanker after joining them and claiming a share of the outer margin? I don't believe anyone here does.