

F & G

In a discussion which lasted for over an hour, a wide number of topics were covered, and all were matters of concern.

The subjects raised were local government capital spending, imports, British Leyland, defence, GATT, pensions and 5% abatements.

The interconnecting theme concerned the Government's credibility and the timing of the Election.

It was common ground within the group that one of the strengths of the Government was that people, generally, recognised that the administration, and in particular the Prime Minister, was firm in purpose.

However, doubts were beginning to creep in among our own supporters that we might be blurring the edges of what had up to the Conference been clear lines of policy.

Examples given were the exhortation to local authorities to push ahead with capital projects; British Steel is now causing concern, in that if plants were kept open for political reasons that would open the floodgates for further intervention (UCS again); the question of imports and import penetration and possible controls were causing concern (eg in Japan only 8% unprotected whilst 92% are protected).

Defence: because of US action on pipeline and in United Nations on Argentina, the United States is unpopular. The group feeling was that anti-US feeling is growing and this is being reflected in attitude to Cruise and the fact that there would be no dual-key control. (It was appreciated that we are not paying for a separate key).

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Our campaign against CND was described as "all going horribly wrong" and may be our biggest Achilles' heel at the Election. We need to get more Members of Parliament and Candidates out speaking against CND.

It was the considered view that primary legislation to abate pensions' payments next November would not be passed.

General Election

For differing reasons, mainly economic, all members of the group thought that May/June 1983 was the best time. It would have the element of surprise, would be on new boundaries and everybody was predicting October/November 1983. All thought that 1984 was a "high risk strategy".