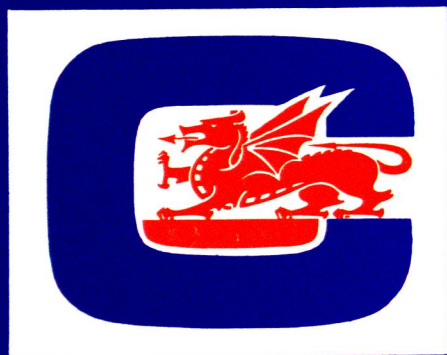


Conservative Manifesto for Wales

1983

PRICE 75p



Introduction

In this Welsh Manifesto we make no attempt to duplicate the contents of the Manifesto for the United Kingdom because Wales is part of Britain and that document is addressed to all electors wherever they may live. However, Wales has its special characteristics and problems, and here we spell out some of the priorities and identify some of the most important tasks for the next Government.

Economic Recovery

At the 1979 Election we warned the Welsh electorate that the Conservative Government would "come into a bleak inheritance", and that was before the further doubling in the price of oil accelerated the plunge into world recession. Britain under Labour had paid itself more than it earned, failed to adapt to a rapidly-changing world economy and become seriously uncompetitive. It therefore suffered more than many other industrial countries in the first phase of recession, but even the most successful of our competitors have faced serious problems and mounting unemployment. The Conservative Government has, in these very difficult circumstances, courageously tackled the job of restoring Britain's ability to compete in the world, whilst developing substantial programmes to help the unemployed and improve training arrangements.

In the midst of recession it has been the job of the Government to encourage changes in attitude. We have had to prepare the infrastructure and create the environment in which the economy of Wales, so long dependent on the old basic industries, can be diversified and rebuilt around the new technologies. This is the first recession in which unemployment has risen significantly less in Wales than in the United Kingdom as a whole, even though Wales has borne a particularly heavy share of the rundown of steel employment. The foundations for recovery have been firmly laid.

Nonetheless, unemployment has risen sharply and the consequences for those who have lost their jobs have been severe. The transition is painful: it takes longer for new companies to build up their workforce than it does to dismiss employees when old companies go out of business. The Government has an impressive record in helping the unemployed who, through no fault of their own, are paying the price of past errors, lack of competitiveness and change. Massive sums have been committed for training and special measures to help. As long as unemployment remains high, we shall maintain measures of this kind.

During the last four years new companies have been attracted into Wales in record numbers despite the recession. They include many representing the new technologies and the service sector.

We have to build on these foundations during the period of economic recovery and growth that has begun. We will continue to support and make full use of the Government Agencies: the Welsh Development Agency and the Development Board for Rural Wales (now known as Mid Wales Development).

We will take further the switch in strategy that they have already begun, from massive programmes of factory building to the use of taxpayers money as seedcorn to trigger private sector investment. There will be high priority for building in places where poor communications, geography or dereliction mean that private investment is initially less likely; and tighter commercial standards set for schemes in places where letting is easy. The growing confidence of investors will assist the development of this policy and the strengthening of the Welsh economy.

Urban Development Grants

The technique of using relatively small sums of public money to trigger major investments has been developed with striking success to achieve urban renewal through the system of Urban Development Grants. In the current financial year, out of a total Urban Programme in Wales of £21 million, about £5½ million has been allocated in the form of Urban Development Grants. These grants are leading to projects worth £29 million in different parts of Wales.

The Rebuilding of Swansea and Cardiff

The Government have used the UDG Scheme to support a major effort by the local authority to transform the environment of Swansea, and in particular to boost the very important redevelopment of the City's Maritime Quarter, which includes a 200-bed international hotel. UDG Grants have also made possible the Holiday Inn project in Cardiff, another 200-bed hotel and Conference Centre in the Hayes area of the City.

In March the Government announced a major initiative for the redevelopment of the extensive area of South Cardiff, between the railway and the sea, centred upon a mixture of housing, industrial, commercial and recreational building alongside the Bute East Dock.

It will be a major priority for the next Conservative Government to carry forward these initiatives which have received an encouraging response from both local government and the private sector.

The Valleys

The Urban Programme and the UDG Scheme supported by the work of the Agencies will be imaginatively used to regenerate the industrial valleys and other urban areas.

Regional Policy

Our Regional Policy has been concentrated on areas of real need and been responsive to changing circumstances as is shown by our upgrading of the areas affected by steel closures.

We shall continue to maintain an effective regional policy which is essential to ease the process of change. We do not propose sudden changes in regional policy. But we will:

Make sure that these policies are economical and effective in creating jobs;

Further develop local self-help initiatives such as those provided by the establishment of Enterprise Trusts;

Build on the good work of the Government Agencies, the Enterprise Zones — of which there are now three in Wales — and a new initiative to establish experimental Freeports in various parts of the United Kingdom;

Broaden the base of the Welsh economy by encouraging the fullest use of our schemes for innovation.

The Road Programme

The Road Programme is another essential component in the task of rebuilding Wales. Spending on the motorway and trunk road improvement in Wales has doubled in cash terms over the last five years. In the next two to three years the Government expects to complete another 40 miles of major trunk road improvement at a cost of £275 million. A number of major schemes are in progress, or about to start, including improvements on the roads west from the M4; around Cardiff; on the A470 north to Merthyr; at Chepstow and in North Wales on the A55, A5 and the A483 near Wrexham. More than 20 new By-Pass schemes will improve conditions throughout Wales.

We intend to strengthen and repair the Severn and Wye Bridges to meet the requirements of modern traffic. The work will be carried out with minimum disruption to traffic. When the repairs are completed the bridges will give good service well into the next century. Traffic forecasts at present indicate that it will not be necessary to start a second crossing for some considerable time. However, the Conservative Government will stand fully ready to begin building a second crossing whenever it is needed.

Transport in Wales

The Government recognises the important contribution of the railway system to economic and social activity in Wales. The Serpel Report illustrates the cost of various sizes of network but makes no proposals. The Government has announced that it rejects the more extreme options and wishes to consult widely about the future pattern of rail services before reaching any conclusions. The Report shows that a modern, efficient railway does not require ever-rising subsidies: nor does it require embarking on a programme of major route closures. We do not intend to do so.

The next Conservative Government will also issue a Consultation Paper about possible changes in the organisation and responsibilities for transport services in Wales which would include the option that more decisions about transport, including local railways, might be taken within Wales, possibly by the County Councils which are closest to the needs of their own districts, with suitable financial arrangements.

We shall explore the possibilities of more flexible transport systems suited to different local needs.

A Diversified Economy

With lower inflation, rising economic activity and improved competitiveness, the objective of Government in Wales must be to create a broadly based economy including the new technologies and services, in addition to steel and coal. Experience in other parts of the world shows this is much the best way to create the new jobs that are needed.

A good start has been made. As well as encouraging the Agencies to place increasing emphasis on investment, particularly in the new technologies and in assisting new and expanding businesses, the Conservative Government will make major efforts to improve the links between industry, the financial markets and the Universities. It will be a major objective of the Government to demonstrate how far Wales is now sympathetic to industrial change and equipped to receive it. With that objective in mind, the Government will develop two initiatives which it has already launched:

WINVEST — Wales Investment Location — the new organisation for encouraging new investment.

WINTECH — Wales Industry Technology Centre which will identify Wales as a place sympathetic to change, and make available in a single centre, industrial, technological and financial information and guidance which will help such change.

Our objective is to have the centre operational by the autumn.

Steel

We will continue to support BSC's progress towards viability through increased efficiency, quality and service to customers. We welcome the remarkable improvements in productivity achieved by the Welsh steel plants. The proposal to modernise the hot strip mill at Port Talbot has been approved and will proceed, subject to formal consent by the European Commission. This scheme is essential to improve quality but will not increase overall steel making capacity.

Coal

The Conservative Government has given massive financial support to the industry. It is for the NCB to decide where this investment is directed. The

interests of the whole country require Britain's coal industry on which we depend for the overwhelming bulk of our electricity generation, to return to economic viability. Some pits will have to close for the sake of the future of the industry. Decisions on closures will continue to be made individually at local level by the NCB after consultation with the Unions.

European Community

Continued membership of the European Community is not only essential to secure a free and prosperous future for Britain and the West, but also if we are to succeed in rebuilding the Welsh economy. The Community provides the necessary market support for the new industries. It is a major reason why so many overseas companies have decided to locate in Wales. Existing companies and potential investors have made it clear that they would abandon their plans, close plants and invest elsewhere, if Britain was to leave the European Community.

The programme of the Labour Party, therefore, represents a grave threat to jobs. The Conservative Government remains firmly committed to continue membership of the Community. It will fight for British interests within the Community and will seek further development of the infrastructure and social programmes that have already brought substantial benefits to the Welsh economy.

Health

We entirely reject the allegation that we will weaken the Welfare State. We are firmly committed to the maintenance and development of the National Health Service. In the past four years total NHS resources in Wales have been increased by 10% in real terms which is significantly greater than in the UK as a whole, and revenue allocations to Health Authorities have increased by over 11%. Patient services have benefited. There are at least 10% more nurses and 7% more doctors than in 1979. A very large programme of hospital building has been undertaken, with starts made on major schemes costing together over £81 million. We will carry through this programme to completion.

With so many new District General Hospitals built the priority will switch to modernising some of the older hospitals and to the development of new services including new facilities in Wales for cardio-thoracic surgery.

There has been a very wide welcome for the initiative to improve the care in the community of mentally handicapped people. This strategy has to be

developed and made effective. The principles that it establishes of helping families in the community are particularly relevant to the next major task to which Conservatives are committed:—

The Support of the Elderly in the Community

Increasing numbers of old people have to be cared for and it will be a priority for the next Conservative Government to ensure that as many old people as possible can be cared for at home in the community, rather than in institutions. This strategy will involve providing greater help to families, so they can better look after their own old people.

Housing

More than 50,000 tenants of local authorities and new towns in Wales have already applied to buy their homes under the Conservative Government's "Right to Buy" legislation. More than 25,000 sales have taken place. This increase in home ownership represents a major social advance. The next Conservative Government will continue to encourage more tenants to take advantage of this extension of freedom and responsibility.

The Labour Party is pledged to take away the right of tenants to buy their council houses and any former tenant who wanted to sell his house would be forced to sell it back to the Council. The Alliance also opposes the Right to Buy.

For Council tenants the present Right to Buy Scheme will be improved and extended to include shared ownership. The discount will be increased for those who have been tenants for more than 20 years.

The number of homes being built have been rising in the last year but the greatest need in Wales today is for the restoration of existing homes and special schemes to assist particular groups of people. One scheme introduced by the Conservative Government makes it possible for young people to start on the road to home ownership by sharing the cost with the Council or with a private builder. The Government have produced a wide range of measures to encourage home improvement and will continue to make money available for this purpose.

The Welsh local authorities have not made full use of the money from the sale of council houses and additional finance authorised by Government. They

have under-spent by £35 million in 1981/2 and by an estimated £50 million in 1982/3. The Government will continue to press local authorities to make use of the resources that are available.

Agriculture and the Countryside

The Government will seek to maintain the measures of agricultural support that have played such an important part in restoring farm incomes and maintaining agricultural confidence; particularly the Sheep Meat Regime, the system of hill livestock support and the Suckler Cow Premium. The Government will continue to press the European Commission to approve its application for marginal land to be included in the less favoured areas.

As a result of our tough negotiations in Europe we have obtained a larger share of the CAP budget to help British farmers whilst reducing the cost to British taxpayers. Food prices more than doubled under Labour and rose faster than other prices. Under the Conservatives they have risen much less than other prices — last year they grew by only 1½%, the smallest rise for nearly twenty years.

The next Conservative Government will give every encouragement to the development of the new processing and marketing arrangements that are so important for Welsh farmers.

Conservatives recognise the importance of reconciling the interests and views of those who live and work in the countryside with those concerned with conservation both of land and wildlife. The Conservative Government will continue to encourage full consultation between all those involved.

Guidelines have been given to local authority planning departments to encourage the use of existing buildings in the countryside by small businesses and to make possible industrial and commercial developments suitable for rural areas. We shall encourage development that will strengthen the rural economy.

We will continue to support the work of the Government Agencies in Mid Wales and particularly that of Mid Wales Development and the Wales Tourist Board.

Tourism

The Wales Tourist Board has been encouraged to carry out a fundamental review of its policy. Urban Development Grants have been used to encourage private sector investment in international hotels and in tourist related schemes

in urban areas. All this will help to strengthen the international tourist trade in Wales and develop new outlets. Alongside these developments the Board will be supported and encouraged to attract visitors from other parts of the United Kingdom.

The Government has published a report by Consultants on the advertising and marketing of the ancient monuments in the care of the Welsh Office. We intend to set up an appropriate organisation to manage the Monuments on behalf of the Welsh Office. It is also intended to introduce a variety of local arrangements, which will include private and local authority participation, in the marketing of these Monuments in order to make the best possible use of the opportunities they provide for attracting visitors and strengthening the tourists' contribution to the Welsh economy.

Welsh Language and Broadcasting

In a speech at Llanwrst in 1980 the Secretary of State for Wales set out a policy of support for the Welsh Language that has been widely welcomed in Wales.

Financial support for the language has increased from £681,000 in 1978/9 to over £2.5m in the current financial year.

The new Welsh language television service has been introduced. We shall continue to give firm support to the education service, individuals and to voluntary organisations that value and sustain the Welsh language.

Local Government and Rates

The measures taken by the Conservative Government to check the increase in local authority expenditure have had a great deal of success and rates in Wales have risen over the period since 1979 by 44% during a period when the retail price index has risen by 55%. At the same time, the introduction of a separate system of rate support for Wales has made it possible to respond to the special needs and circumstances of the Principality. The Conservative Government will take further steps to protect companies and individuals from excessive and damaging rate increases.

Structure of Government

The Labour Government's proposals for devolution were overwhelmingly rejected in a Referendum by the Welsh people. We have brought Government closer to the people by enlarging the responsibilities of the Welsh Office and by improving Parliamentary scrutiny of its work. We believe that the interests of Wales are best served through the presence of the Secretary of State for Wales in the British Cabinet, where decisions about the whole of the United Kingdom are taken. We therefore oppose the proposals of the Alliance with regard to devolved Government for Wales.

Conclusion

In this Manifesto we have made no promises which we do not believe we can achieve. Grandiose pledges to abolish unemployment by printing or borrowing billions of pounds represent a cruel deception. Such measures would unleash a far more savage economic crisis than the last one and would bring higher unemployment in its wake. Despite their promise to bring down unemployment, the fact remains that under every single Labour Government unemployment has actually gone up.

By our policies, Britain has become among the lowest inflation nations in the western world. Prices are rising more slowly now than at any time for fifteen years; we have more than protected the pensioner against rising prices; we have strengthened the National Health Service; we have given tenants the right to buy their own homes; we have kept our promise to strengthen the Police and the Armed Forces of the Crown: we have done all this and still kept our promise to bring public spending under control.

In the last four years the Nation has recaptured its confidence and sense of purpose. The five central tasks for the next Conservative Government are:

To create an economy which provides stable prices, lasting prosperity and employment for our people;

To build a responsible society which protects the weak but also allows the family and the individual to flourish;

To uphold Parliamentary democracy and strengthen the rule of law;

To improve the quality of life of our cities and countryside;

To defend Britain's freedom, to keep faith with our Allies in Europe and NATO and to keep the peace with justice.

These tasks will require sustained determination, imagination and effort from Government and the people alike. We believe that the job of the next Conservative Government is to build resolutely on the firm foundations that have been laid.

We look to the future: our opponents look to the past.

**Conservatives
look to the future**

**Our opponents
look to the past**

CONSERVATIVE



SPEAKERS NOTES

(Welsh Pages)

I **INDUSTRY AND EMPLOYMENT**

II **EDUCATION AND THE WELSH LANGUAGE**

III **HOUSING**

IV **HEALTH**

V **PARLIAMENT AND WALES**

Conservative Research Department

May 1983

INDUSTRY AND EMPLOYMENT

Welsh Conservatives believe that:

- for too long Wales has been over-dependent on the old basic industries and that diversification and re-structuring of the economy must be vigorously pursued
- employment is best expanded by encouraging the growth of new industries and attracting overseas investment as well as by helping existing industries to expand

Labour legacy:

The last Labour Government left behind record inflation, high taxes and increased unemployment. Labour failed to take the decisions necessary to ensure the modernisation of the coal and steel industries with the result that neither could match the productivity levels of overseas competitors. New jobs were desperately needed in Wales to replace those being lost through the decline of the traditional industries.

Since 1979 we have:

- despite the worldwide economic recession, brought about a change in attitude, dramatic improvements in productivity and improved still further Wales' record of good industrial relations
- built 1100 advance factories through the Welsh Development Agency, the Development Board for Rural Wales and the Cwmbran Development Corporation. In the last four years, the Welsh Development Agency has built more than three times as many factories as it did during its entire existence under Labour and some 20,000 new jobs should be created as a result
- helped make Llanwern and Port Talbot two of the most competitive steel-making plants in Europe, with improvements in productivity of 50%
- increased overseas investment in Wales, particularly in the new technology industries, and established a new body ("Winvest") to promote foreign investment in the principality even more vigorously

Labour would:

- withdraw Britain from the European Community, destroying export markets, discouraging foreign investment and causing thousands of job losses
- extend the powers of the Welsh Development Agency to allow it to take over the ownership of private firms and to set up firms of its own, which would be able to compete unfairly with existing businesses

EDUCATION AND THE WELSH LANGUAGE

Welsh Conservatives believe that:

- the decline in educational standards must be reversed
- parents have basic rights in the choice of education for their children
- encouragement should be given to the use of Welsh in our schools and active Government support given to the maintenance of the Welsh language generally

Since 1979 we have:

- achieved the best ever pupil-teacher ratio of 18.1:1. Recurrent spending per pupil has increased from £381 in primary schools and £531 in secondary schools in 1978/79 to levels of £650 and £862 respectively in 1982/83
- increased parental choice through the 1980 Education Act
- laid a requirement upon local authorities to make available full information about their schools
- initiated consultations through the Welsh office with all interested bodies on methods of improving teaching and standards
- introduced new grants for the teaching of Welsh in schools; in 1983/84 about £1 million will be provided
- increased total government expenditure on support for the Welsh language (including schools) from £681,000 in 1978/9 to £2,540,000 in 1983/4
- launched the new television channel, Sianel Pedwar Cymru, in November 1982. The channel transmits 22 hours of Welsh language programmes each week

Labour would:

- destroy freedom of choice by ending the assisted places scheme and abolishing the independent schools

HOUSING

Welsh Conservatives believe that:

- tenants of councils and new town development corporations should be able to buy their own homes
- a greater share of housing resources should be used for improvements to make more effective use of our large stock of old houses

Labour legacy:

Labour halted the previous Conservative Government's successful drive to improve older properties and undermined the private sector housing market.

Since 1979 we have:

- introduced the Right to Buy. Already 25,000 people have bought their own council and new town homes out of a total of 50,000 applicants
- increased intermediate and repair grant entitlement to 90% for all applications received by the end of March 1984. Welsh local authorities have been allowed to incur additional expenditure on house renovation grants in excess of their total housing allocation

Labour would:

- abolish the Right to Buy
- destroy shorthold letting by giving security of tenure to all shorthold tenants, thus preventing landlords from repossessing their own property
- municipalise privately rented houses at great cost to taxpayers and ratepayers without adding to the housing stock
- allow local authorities first refusal on private house sales in holiday areas of Wales

HEALTH

Welsh Conservatives believe that:

- more resources should be concentrated on patient care, and less on administration
- the service should be decentralised to allow for more local decision-making
- there is a need for more spending on hospital building and improvement programmes

Since 1979 we have:

- increased NHS resources by nearly 10% in real terms. NHS expenditure is now at record levels and higher in real terms than in any year of the previous Labour Government
- increased the number of doctors by 7% and the number of nurses by 10%
- re-organised the health service in Wales to give local health authorities more independence and ensure that decisions are taken closer to where patient care is delivered
- set aside more than £81m to carry through a major new hospital building programme which will provide Wales with 12 additional district general hospitals and make possible the modernisation of several small institutions
- launched a major initiative to improve the services for the care of mentally-handicapped people

Labour would:

- introduce a new layer of bureaucracy; a body of councillors to take planning decisions away from those employed in the health service
- abolish NHS pay-beds and discourage private medicine

The SDP would:

- vastly increase bureaucracy with the introduction of a Welsh Assembly of 75 representatives, with power over health and personal social services

PARLIAMENT AND WALES

Welsh Conservatives believe that:

- the Welsh people were and still are opposed to the establishment of a Welsh Assembly which would add another tier to our existing system of government
- fundamental economic and social problems must be tackled on a United Kingdom basis
- Parliamentary control needs to be closely exercised over Government and the bodies it appoints
- the office of the Secretary of State for Wales is vital and must be retained

Labour legacy:

Labour gave a low priority to Welsh affairs during its term of office. Despite repeated protests from the Conservatives, Labour allowed the long-established practice of holding annual Welsh day debates on the floor of the House of Commons to fall into disuse. Proposals for an elected Welsh Assembly were overwhelmingly rejected by the Welsh people in the 1979 referendum, and the present Government therefore repealed the Wales Act under which the Assembly would have been established.

Since 1979 we have:

- restored the practice of holding Annual Welsh Day Debates and arranged frequent meetings of the Welsh Grand Committee to debate Welsh Affairs
- increased the powers of the Welsh Office to include responsibility for the Rate Support Grant settlement in Wales, thus greatly strengthening the system of devolved administration in the Principality
- established the Select Committee on Welsh Affairs to examine the expenditure, administration, and policy of the Welsh Office and associated public bodies

The SDP would:

- seek to set up a Welsh Assembly and several associated tiers of administration to deal with tasks already adequately dealt with by the Welsh Office despite the overwhelmingly hostile verdict of the Welsh people in the 1979 referendum
- phase out the post of Secretary of State for Wales, depriving Welsh people of their important access to Cabinet and Government "decision making"