

Daily Notes

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THE VITAL ISSUE

No issue at this Election is more important than defence. Our individual lives and our traditional way of life depend upon the security of the nation.

All parties say they are in favour of Britain being adequately defended; and all parties wish to avoid a nuclear holocaust. Where they differ is on the means of achieving these ends. And the means are so important to the survival of the nation that the people have a right to know precisely where the major parties stand.

Conservatives believe that our nuclear deterrent, which has helped to keep the peace for 30 years, should be retained. Labour want to scrap it. Or do they? Their manifesto commitment is to a 'non-nuclear defence policy', which means the rejection of all nuclear weapons or bases on 'British soil or in British waters'. Mr Healey and others seem to have watered this down and appear to favour retaining Polaris as a bargaining counter in the Geneva arms talks.

Labour's defence policy is at present in disarray. In the national interest, Mr Foot must come clean on his party's plans.

**Conservative
Research
Department**



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1. LABOUR'S DEFENCELESS POLICY

There is no doubt that defence is the most important issue in this campaign. At all previous elections since the Second World War, there has been a broad consensus on the essentials of defence policy; but the Labour Party has now abandoned completely the policies which have preserved peace in Europe for nearly 40 years. The successful policy of deterrence is to be replaced by a muddled amalgam of appeasement and pious hopes. Our nuclear defence is to be wiped out and our conventional defence is to be savagely slashed.

Labour's Manifesto Commitment

First, Labour is pledged to abandon the Trident system, which would modernise our nuclear deterrent, even though the last Labour Government accepted the need to maintain the effectiveness of our existing Polaris deterrent with the secret Chevaline programme.

Second, Labour would refuse to accept Cruise missiles in this country under any circumstances, despite the massive deployment of Soviet SS20 missiles aimed at Western Europe, and even though Labour initially supported the December 1979 decision to deploy the missiles if necessary.

Third, Labour propose that Polaris should be included in the Geneva disarmament negotiations with the Russians. But they also say that a

Labour government would carry through a 'non-nuclear defence policy' (which must mean getting rid of Polaris) by the end of the next Parliament. How can these two policies be reconciled with one another? What possible reason is there for Russians to negotiate seriously if we say in advance that we will abandon our nuclear weapons whatever happens?

Fourth, Labour calls for the closure of all nuclear bases and weapons on British soil and in British waters. This would mean that our American allies would be kicked out of this country. Such a policy would both deal a body blow to NATO and cause the gravest possible crisis in Anglo-American relations.

Mr Healey now acquiesces in this shameful repudiation of Western defence policy. But less than two years ago he declared:

'Whether we like it or not, it is the stability of the military balance between NATO and the Warsaw powers which has kept Europe at peace for over 30 years when over 20 million people have been killed in wars outside Europe. NATO's nuclear strategy is an essential part of that balance. To threaten to upset it by refusing to let America base any of her nuclear weapons in Britain would make war more likely not less likely' (Oxford, 11th August 1981).

As **Sir Keith Joseph** said in Fulham on 24th May:

'Things have come to a pretty pass when the Deputy Leader of the Labour Party chooses to support a policy which, on his own admission, would increase the likelihood of war.'

Finally, Labour promise to reduce the proportion of the nation's resources devoted to defence, from 5.1 per cent of GNP to roughly 3.5 per cent, despite the fact that the Soviet Union spends some 13-15 per cent of its GNP on defence.

What Labour's policy means in practice is that defence spending would have to be cut by over 30 per cent or, on the basis of last year's defence budget figures, about £4,500 million.

Cuts on such a staggering scale would virtually destroy our armed forces. Labour spokesmen like to give the impression that under their plans the cancellation of Trident and the adoption of a non-nuclear defence policy would leave enough resources for strong conventional defence. They have even had the gall to suggest that the Government has been damaging our conventional forces by supporting Trident. But their planned reduction in the defence budget (31 per cent of the total) is over ten times larger than the estimated average annual cost of Trident. Moreover as **Mr Heseltine** said on 21st May:

'The grand total of jobs linked to our defence effort is 1,300,000. A cut in the defence budget of some 31 per cent, plus Labour's attack on defence sales, could destroy over 400,000 jobs.'

'But you do not have to take my word for this. In 1981 the then Labour defence spokesman - **Brynmor John**, the MP for Pontypridd - said what would happen if Labour pursued its anti-nuclear, anti-defence policies. This is what he said then:

"To implement what the National Executive Committee has in mind... would mean a loss of jobs...of a minimum of 325,000 and probably over half a million."

Mr. Heseltine concluded:

'so you see that you are on a two-way loser if you vote Labour. Defenceless and jobless.'

Labour Confusion

Over the last few days, it has begun to dawn on the leaders of the Labour Party that their defence policies are catastrophically unpopular. Mr Healey and Mr Foot are, therefore, trying desperately to fudge the issues – to mean all things to all men. All they have succeeded in doing is to baffle the public with a mélange of contradictions.

In particular, it is impossible to tell exactly what Labour's policy is towards the Polaris missile. As stated above, the Manifesto says both that Polaris should be included in disarmament talks and that there would be a non-nuclear policy (i.e., complete unilateral disarmament) in the lifetime of the next Parliament.

Mr Healey has repeatedly ignored the promise to achieve unilateral disarmament, and has taken the view that the commitment is to phase out Polaris only as part of multilateral negotiations:

'we don't get rid of them (the Polaris submarines) unless the Russians cut their forces aimed at us' (*Guardian*, 21st May 1983).

Asked to clarify the position, **Mr Foot** has writhed and wriggled, but has given no clear answer on Polaris. However, in a speech at Birmingham on 24th May, he gave an indication of his true feelings, when he stated that a vote for Labour was a vote for a Britain 'without nuclear weapons' (*Guardian*, 25th May 1983).

The truth is that Labour's so-called defence policy was not devised as a rational policy for the British people. It was devised as a cloak to cover the rampant and rancorous divisions in the Labour Party. Now the cloak is fraying at the edges and splitting at the seams.

2. WHAT PRICE LABOUR'S MANIFESTO?

So many of Labour's Manifesto pledges are so vague that it is impossible to calculate the cost of the programme with any precision. We are promised 'a major increase in public investment', 'a huge programme of construction', and so on. Labour claim that this has all been costed at £7,500 million in the first year. This is certainly a very large figure. It would not, however, cover even the quantifiable elements in Labour's emergency programme.

In *Daily Notes* No 2, we published Treasury estimates of the cost of Labour's pre-campaign document *New Hope for Britain* (March 1983). The Manifesto was almost identical to this document. Since publication, more detailed costings have been carried out by the Conservative

Research Department. These reveal that the recurrent costs of Labour's Manifesto would be much worse than we first supposed. Our new costings point to a *first year* recurrent cost of the *quantifiable* parts of the programme of between £9,700 million and £11,000 million. Promises on social security alone amount to around £3,500 million. Housing promises add £2,750 million-£2,850 million and special employment measures another £1,700 million. Interest on the extra borrowing would add another £600 million.

By the fifth year of a Labour government, it is almost inevitable that the economic realities would have forced Labour to rethink their policies. But on their present plans, annual spending by that year would have reached anywhere between £36,000 million and £43,000 million more than present plans—expressed in 1983 prices. That is £1,800-£2,150 a year for every household in Britain. Given the likely consequences of Labour's policies for inflation, one can only imagine how large these figures would be in 1988 prices.

These figures do not include the one-off capital costs of the programme, which would amount to £5,000 million to £6,000 million over a five-year period. Nor do they include the £20,000 million cost of Labour's nationalisation programme. They ignore the cost of subsidising basic products and nationalised industry prices, to hide the effects of rocketing inflation; and the need for additional external financing of the massively expanded public sector industries.

There are other pledges which defy costing. Labour, for example, promise 'the restoration of housing subsidies, and reinstatement of an adequate housing subsidy system'; 'a new system of housing benefits for lower income groups'; to ensure 'that everyone can afford adequate heat and light at home'; to ensure 'a basic minimum level of bus service throughout the country'; and even 'powers to invest in individual companies, to purchase them outright or to assume temporary control' under certain circumstances. Because it cannot even be guessed at, the cost of this sort of sweeping commitment has to be outside the calculations.

Finally, there is *Labour's lost pledge*. On 1st March 1983, **Mr Foot**, in a speech to the National Pensioners' Convention, made twelve specific promises on pensions. One of these was to raise the retirement pension to one-third of average earnings for a single person, and one half of average earnings for a married couple. This would cost an extra £8,000 million per year—rising to £14,000 million if extended to other long term benefits. By the time of the publication of *New Hope for Britain*, this promise had become noticeably less precise. By the time the Manifesto was published, it had disappeared altogether.

A characteristic of Labour's Manifesto is that while wild concessions to the Left are given prominence, sentences inserted by the Right at intervals in the prose provide possible escape clauses. On public spending, the escape clause comes on page 8: 'Our proposals add up to a considerable increase in public spending. Our programme is thus heavily dependent

upon the achievement of our basic objectives: namely a large and sustained increase in the nation's output and income and a matching decline in the numbers out of work. It is this that will make the resources available for higher public spending programmes and cut the enormous cost of unemployment. Even so, some of our commitments will be phased in over a number of years. At each stage, clearly, we shall have to choose carefully our priorities'.

This disclaimer is, in fact, circular. Only two paragraphs later, the Manifesto asserts 'spending money creates jobs'. Yet in the disclaimer, the Right are saying that they will spend money *only if* output rises and unemployment starts to fall. This is, of course, by no means the only such paradox in the Manifesto.

Speaking in Oxford on 20th May, **Mr Foot** said that it would be quite wrong for any Party to campaign on promises which it could not cost nor fulfil. To do so, he said, would be a cruel deceit. It is now up to him, therefore, to spell out the cost of the pledges too vague for us to quantify, and to leave us no longer in doubt as to his priorities within the plethora of Manifesto promises.

3. WHICH BATTLE?

'We believe the Labour Party is fitter now for battle than for many, many years.'

(**Mr Terry Duffy**, President of the AUEW, *Morning Star*, 25th May 1983)

4. COUNCIL HOUSE SALES

Mr Tom King, Environment Secretary, speaking at the Conservative press conference on 25th May, described the Labour Manifesto as a classic piece of Orwellian 'double-speak'.

'To the argument on what the Labour Manifesto actually means on defence policy, should be added their statement on housing.

'May I offer the British electorate my translation into English since I am very sure that no Labour candidate in the country will be very keen to do so.

'Labour will -

"End enforced council house sales."

"Empower public landlords to repurchase homes sold under the Tories on first resale..."

"Provide that future voluntary sales will be at market value."

'This means -

- the removal of the right to buy from all council tenants;

- a Labour Government would, on resale, force you to sell your council home back to the council at their price;

- the end of all discounts, no matter how long you have been in the house.

'Under the Conservative Government, your right to buy is safe.

'More help from a Conservative Government is on the way:

- those people who have been council tenants for over twenty years will get increased discounts of up to 60 per cent when they buy their council house;

- those who can't buy outright will get the right to buy on a part-ownership and part-rent basis with the right to move to full home-ownership later on.'

5. COMMUNIST ADVICE FOR MR FOOT

'The Labour leadership will do no service to the movement if it continues to fudge the Polaris issue.

That will only create cynicism among Labour's supporters, which the Tories will not be slow to exploit.

It is obvious that some Labour leaders, like Denis Healey and Peter Shore, do not agree with the Labour manifesto on Polaris.

They are concentrating on that part of the manifesto which says that Polaris should be placed on the agenda of the Geneva talks.

But they want to bury the part of the manifesto which gives a totally unconditional pledge that Britain will be non-nuclear during the term of the next Parliament.

If that means anything at all, then it means that Polaris will be scrapped within four or five years, whatever happens at Geneva.

While Mr Foot spoke of phasing out Polaris and associated himself with the idea of a non-nuclear policy, he failed to mention any time-scale. It is vital that he clears up any doubts that do now exist on this score.

Mr Foot should repeat the pledge categorically given in the manifesto. Thousands of Labour votes depend on it. They are more important than Denis Healey's tender feelings.'

(*Morning Star*, 25th May 1983)

6. CONSERVATIVE SUPPORT FOR THE ARTS

Since taking office in 1979, in spite of all the financial difficulties, and the need to curtail public expenditure, the Conservative Government has maintained arts funding in real terms. Expenditure on the arts and, much more important, artistic standards, have never been higher.

No government can create artistic achievement. What a government can do is to create conditions in which artistic achievement can flourish. Since the war, successive governments of all political persuasions have believed in the 'arms length' principle, under which governments financed the arts to a large extent but did not seek to interfere in artistic decisions.

Our national museums rate among the greatest in the world. As a result of a Conservative Act of Parliament (the National Heritage Act 1983), the Science Museum and the Victoria and Albert Museum will become independent bodies later this year with trustees to run them. The last Parliament saw the start of the new extension to the Tate Gallery with generous private help. Next month, the new National Museum of Photography will open in Bradford. It is hoped that one day it may be possible to have a Tate Gallery for the North in Liverpool. In London, we have seen the opening of the Henry Cole wing of the Victoria and Albert Museum; and work will begin shortly on the Theatre Museum. It has also been possible to save the Bethnal Green Museum of Childhood from closure.

One of the outstanding achievements of the Conservative Government has been the creation of the National Heritage Memorial Fund. Endowed with public money, it has made a successful start at saving threatened parts of the heritage. As part of our policy towards the heritage, Sir Geoffrey Howe announced recently that VAT would not be imposed on objects which are offered in lieu of tax, or which are sold to museums. Conservatives believe that our country houses must not be emptied of all their great objects.

For years the British Library has desperately needed renewing. Although it is one of the greatest libraries in the world, its facilities are woefully inadequate. This Government has started on the first stage of the mammoth task of building a new Library. In addition, authors will soon receive an overdue measure of justice: under the Public Lending Rights Scheme, they will get a modest sum whenever their books are lent by public libraries.

Conservatives believe not only in the State supporting the Arts, but also in a large and increasing role for private sponsorship and patronage. Private sponsorship has grown from about £500,000 a year in 1976 to well over £10 million a year. But even if private sponsorship of the Arts were to double in real terms, it would be less than a quarter of the public money that the Arts Council spends annually. Private sponsorship is a supplement, not a substitute, for public money in the arts. In our Manifesto, Conservatives are already pledged to keep up public expenditure on the arts. We have already done a great deal by changing the covenant system and by enabling businesses to write off against tax what they spend on sponsoring the arts. But we are determined in the next Parliament to take the process further, and to see if there are ways of using the tax system to encourage further growth in private support for the arts and the heritage.

7. FIELD SPORTS

Conservatives have always believed that field sports are not a party political matter. The Labour Party has made them an issue at this Election by stating in its Manifesto that 'hare coursing, fox hunting and all forms of hunting with dogs will be made illegal'.

If this policy has been adopted on the grounds of cruelty, it is interesting to note that an official enquiry into practices or activities which might involve cruelty was set up by the Labour Government in 1948. It recommended that hunting and hare coursing should not be banned as being cruel. If, with their passion for equality, Labour consider that fox-hunting is the sport of a privileged few, many Labour supporters would not agree. Yorkshire and Welsh miners, for example, are avid hunt followers. As the Master of the Ystrad Hunt has said:

'The entire following of my hunt work locally in collieries, factories, schools, farming and forestry, and consider hunting to be their main form of outside recreation' (November 1982).

There have been country sports in Britain from time immemorial. They involve up to six million people. Some 62,000 jobs are directly dependent on country and field sports and approximately £958 million is spent each year by enthusiasts. There are about 6,000 firms dependent on field sports, and the Government receives some £214 million a year from them via rates, licences, taxes etc.

A previous experiment in the 19th century to ban hunting (on Exmoor) proved disastrous. The herd nearly became extinct as local people took control of the deer into their own hands. Gassing or shooting as alternatives to hunting with dogs has been suggested. This shows complete ignorance of the suffering these methods of control inflict—the Ministry of Agriculture has now banned the gassing of badgers because of uncertainty of the time it takes to kill.

Angling. The Labour Party, realising that angling is a sport indulged in by millions of people, has not suggested that it should be banned. Indeed, **Mr John Golding**, a member of Labour's National Executive Committee, has promised that Britain's eight million anglers would get a better deal for the sport under Labour. He said that:

'they would get more access to rivers and lakes and cash aid would be given to clubs to help them buy waters from private owners' (*Daily Mirror*, 23rd May 1983).

Anglers, however, should bear in mind a statement in April 1982 by **Mr Richard Course**, Executive Director of the League Against Cruel Sports, of which former Labour Minister, Lord Houghton, is Vice-President. When asked if he opposed angling, Mr Course said:

'If we are talking about fish you can't eat, of course we are opposed'. Furthermore, several Labour controlled councils—notably Sheffield, Northampton and Reading—have already banned fishing in their waters. It should also be noted that the League Against Cruel Sports said on 24th May that it would pay more than £100,000 to the Labour Party. The money would consist of £50,000 and interest, which the party was ordered to pay back to the League in a High Court judgment yesterday and a further £50,000 in recognition of the party's pledge to abolish hunting if returned to power next month (*Times*, 25th May 1983).

8. MR FOOT AND THE MILITANTS

Less than three months after voting to expel leaders of the Militant Tendency from the Labour Party, Mr Foot is prepared to support members of the extreme Trotskyist group as official Labour candidates in the General Election. During the campaign he is scheduled to appear alongside four of the five Militant supporters who are standing for Labour.

Mr Foot's action stands in sharp contrast to his earlier opposition to the Militant Tendency. In 1981 he said the group was 'a pestilential nuisance to the party as a whole' (*Guardian*, 14th February 1981). At the 1982 Labour Party Conference, Mr Foot supported a National Executive Committee report declaring that Militant was not eligible for affiliation to the party. He told the Conference that he 'must take full responsibility for the matter' because he had proposed the motion which had initiated the NEC's investigation.

The Conference duly approved the report and subsequent NEC meetings moved against the Militant Tendency's leaders. In February 1983 the NEC decided to expel the five members of the editorial board of the *Militant* newspaper. Mr Foot voted in favour of the expulsions.

Many constituency parties have however resisted what they call a 'witch hunt', and five have adopted prominent Militant activists as their parliamentary candidates. They are:

Bradford North: Pat Wall

Brighton Kemptown: Rod Fitch

Coventry South East: Dave Nellist

Isle of Wight: Mrs Cathy Wilson

Liverpool Broadgreen: Terry Fields

Despite his declared distaste for the Militant Tendency, Mr Foot has so far in the campaign appeared alongside Mr Rod Fitch in Brighton and Mr Terry Fields in Liverpool (*Daily Mail*, 23rd May 1983). On Saturday, 28th May the Labour leader is due to share the platform with one of the most controversial of all Militant's candidates, Mr Pat Wall, followed next week by an appearance to support Mr Dave Nellist in Coventry.

All these candidates are the supporters of a secretive group of Marxist revolutionaries which has spent nearly thirty years infiltrating the Labour Party. Named after its weekly newspaper, *Militant*, the group has around 2,000 supporters active in up to 200 constituency Labour parties, and has sufficient resources to be able to employ over 60 full-time workers. It controls the Labour Party Young Socialists and has a representative on the Party's National Executive.

The policies of the Militant Tendency include the abolition of the monarchy and the House of Lords, the nationalisation of the 'top 200 monopolies', unilateral nuclear disarmament, and withdrawal from the EEC and NATO. Mr Wall once described how such policies might be put into effect. He said that it was possible to transform society along these lines peacefully, only if 'we deal with the capitalist state machine

immediately; that requires we mobilise the whole of the working class...'. It not, 'we will get violence in Britain. We will face bloodshed in Britain. We will face the possibility in Britain of a civil war and the terrible death and bloodshed that will mean' (*Sunday Times*, 7th March 1982).

When Mr Foot arrives in Bradford to give his blessing to Mr Wall, he will find the local Labour Party less than united. Although Mr Wall has the backing of party activists in Bradford North, the former MP he replaced, Mr Ben Ford, will be opposing him as an Independent Labour candidate. And the oldest Labour club in the country, which is located in the constituency, has refused active assistance to Mr Wall (*Daily Telegraph*, 24th May 1982).

Other Militant candidates have been equally forthright about their views. For example, Mrs Cathy Wilson told the 1981 Labour Party Conference that 'we need to take over the commanding heights, the monopolies, the banks, the financial institutions. Take the lot'.

Labour Party moderates attached great importance to disciplinary action against the Militant Tendency. They believed that this would demonstrate that the party had not capitulated to extremism; and Mr Foot has personally identified himself with their desire to rid the party of the Trotskyists. But the much-publicised modest counter offensive has collapsed, despite pretence to the contrary. The constituency parties to which the only five Militant supporters to be expelled belong, have refused to comply with the expulsion order from the NEC, and several hundred local parties have passed resolutions opposing 'witch-hunts'. The Militant Tendency's organisation remains intact and its domination of the Young Socialists is as complete as ever. Mr Foot's endorsement of Militant's parliamentary candidates only confirms his retreat.

9. COMRADES IN ARMS

'Vote Communist wherever you can if you are a CND supporter . . . This is the clear message emerging from Labour's campaign.'

(Mr Gordon McLennan, General Secretary of the Communist Party of Great Britain, *Morning Star*, 25th May 1983)

10. LABOUR AND THE TRADE UNIONS

Labour's entire legislative programme is deliberately designed to enhance trade union power in government, business and the community. Labour's Manifesto frankly admits:

'At the heart of our programme is Labour's new partnership with the trade unions. Our policies have been worked out with them.'

It is not in fact a partnership at all; it is a capitulation. The Labour Party has acceded to every one of the unions' demands without securing

anything in return. This is not surprising. The Labour Party was founded as the political wing of the trade union movement, and is still almost exclusively reliant on union funds. This parasitical relationship with the unions has absolved the Labour Party from the need to recruit a mass membership, allowing militant and unrepresentative cliques to take over constituency parties. The organised power of the British trade union movement has become allied to a political party which is, ideologically, far to the left. The outcome is an array of policies which are vindictive, partisan and extreme. If ever put into practice, they would do great damage to the British economy and to our free society.

The Labour Party has long since given up any pretence of political independence. The 1969 White Paper *In Place of Strife* was dropped at the behest of the trade unions. The Labour Government of 1974-9, with Mr Foot as Employment Secretary between 1974 and 1976, made the trade unions a virtual arm of government. Now Labour plans to extend union power and influence into virtually every facet of our national life, and to give the trade union leaders what has been described as 'a formal constitutional role' (*Spectator*, 2nd May 1983).

At national level, trade union leaders will be intimately involved in the formulation of economic policy in the annual National Economic Assessment (NEA), the quinquennial National Plan, and the tripartite National Planning Council. At local level, trade union representatives will be co-opted—rather than elected—on to council committees. At company level, trade union officials will be given statutory rights to information, consultation and representation, throughout the business, right up to Board level. The union role in health and safety matters will be enhanced and 'New Technology Agreements'—a euphemism for union resistance to new technology—will be extended. Union officials will even be given the right to turn a firm into a co-operative, apparently without the consent of the owner. Trade union representatives will also be given half the seats on the controlling bodies of pension funds and the right to monitor their investments via a tripartite investment monitoring agency.

The Manifesto specifically rejects policies of wage restraint: the trade unions have been given greatly increased influence in the running of the economy, but accept no responsibility in return. The solutions are not even corporatist; they are syndicalist. As Mr Foot himself once said:

'You cannot say to a Labour Government, "You must plan investment to expand the health services, plan for housing, plan for the major programmes we want, plan to deal with all those things but have no plan at all for any collaboration between the Government and the trade unions on the question of wages and these matters." Of course you cannot. Everyone who stops to think about it knows you cannot plan in that way' (Blackpool, 29th September 1975).

Has Mr Foot stopped thinking about it?

11. THE TRUTH AND THE LIE

'The National Health Service is safe with us.'

(Mrs Thatcher, Brighton, 8th October 1982)

'She is preparing to scrap the National Health Service.'

(Mr Gerald Kaufman, *Financial Times*, 24th May 1983)

12. LABOUR ON THE LORDS

The Labour and Communist Manifestos pledge their parties to the abolition of the House of Lords, thus threatening to end centuries of distinguished service to the country. Labour's Manifesto declares:

'We have set out our policies in *Labour's Programme, 1982*. We shall . . . take action to abolish the undemocratic House of Lords as quickly as possible' (p.29).

Labour pledges that in the first session of Parliament (i.e., by 1984), a Labour Government would introduce a Bill to remove the 'legislative powers (of the House of Lords)—with the exception of those powers which relate to the life of parliament'. The powers that Labour want to remove are those to delay, to amend, and to improve legislation. Clearly, the later abolition of the House itself would remove even the Lords' final legislative check on the power of the House of Commons to extend itself. There is no suggestion in either the Manifesto or *Labour's Programme, 1982* that when the Lords was abolished any other safeguard against arbitrary extension of the life of the Commons would be introduced.

Labour have attempted to persuade the public that their hostility to the House of Lords arises from a conviction that it is 'overwhelmingly anti-Labour' and that it contains an eternal Conservative majority in the House. But this 'belief' is patently false. Even Mrs Thatcher's Government with its strong Commons majority suffered almost 50 defeats in the Lords.

Labour's real objection to any second chamber is that it might water down full-blooded Socialist policies. Indeed Labour's programme, declared in the Manifesto to be a statement of Labour's official policies, makes it quite clear that there would be no place for a second chamber in a Labour Britain. It rejects as 'seriously defective' every proposal for a revised second chamber. Labour's policymakers declare that 'there is little doubt that some of those who argue for an 'improved' second chamber do so because they see it as a more effective back-door way of blocking radical change than the indefensible House of Lords'. Labour's position is clear. There should be one chamber and one chamber only—the House of Commons. That chamber should be unchecked by any parliamentary balance. Under such arrangements, a Labour government, elected on a

minority of votes cast, and with a majority of only one in the Commons could claim a 'mandate' to force through an extremist Socialist proposal that had been buried in the small print of its election Manifesto. This is the classic road to what Lord Hailsham has eloquently described as an 'elective dictatorship'.

Abolition of the House of Lords has been a long-cherished personal objective of Michael Foot. In 1977, he commended a resolution of the Labour Conference, which voted by 6,248,000 votes to 91,000 to abolish the House of Lords. (The Labour Party had about 300,000 members at that time.) **Mr Foot** said then:

'I have been left in no doubt that such a step would enjoy considerable support' (*Hansard*, 21st November 1977, Col. 1094).

Mr Foot's perception does not, however, accord with most tests of public opinion. The House of Lords is generally and justly regarded as performing an important—indeed indispensable—constitutional role. In October 1980 in an NOP poll, 84 per cent of those asked wanted the House of Lords to continue. On few issues do opinion polls produce a clearer result. *The Times* reflected public opinion accurately when it stated on Labour's Manifesto *New Hope for Britain*:

'It is in the vision of the TUC as a kind of surrogate for an abolished House of Lords that Labour's proposals are most far-reaching and most alarming' (Editorial, 25th May 1983).

The Conservative Party reaffirms its commitment in the 1983 Manifesto to defend the role of the House of Lords:

'We will ensure that it has a secure and effective future. A strong Second Chamber is a vital safeguard for democracy and contributes to good Government.'

Conservatives have never opposed constructive reform of the House of Lords to assist it to work better. Indeed, most such constructive reforms have been introduced by Conservative governments—including the creation of Life Peers in 1958, admission of women into the House as Life Peers and Peeresses in their own right, and the right to renounce a peerage. It was this last change which allowed Mr Tony Benn to be elected to the House of Commons. From that base, Mr Benn has made his notorious calls that a Labour government should demand from the Queen the creation of a thousand Labour peers in order to speed up the pace at which the House of Lords could finally be destroyed.

The Conservative Party sees no need for any revolutionary change. The House of Lords has created none of Britain's problems. Nor would its abolition solve them. In considering any further reforms, the important objective is to seek the widest range of agreement within the Party. Agreement across party lines has traditionally been seen as the proper way to pursue constitutional change; but the venomous hostility of the Labour Party to the very idea of a second chamber now seems to rule such agreement out. As **Baroness Young**, Leader of the House of Lords, has stated:

'Lack of agreement within the Conservative Party and other parties would . . . be fatal to any attempt at reform . . . If major reform is rejected in the future, we shall continue to search for smaller internal improvements. The House of Lords that we have now is infinitely better than no House at all' (Brighton, 7th October 1982).

13. A COMPREHENSIVE WIN

A mock General Election among sixth-formers at Myers Grove School in Sheffield resulted in a landslide victory for the Tories who got 71 per cent of the vote, compared with 20 per cent Labour and 9 per cent SDP.

(*Yorkshire Post*, 25th May 1983)

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