

PENSIONERSQuestionnaire from the Civil Service and Pensions Allowance Group

Candidates who receive this questionnaire may find the following suggested answers helpful.

1. Do the Conservatives support linking the pension to the Retail Price Index?

Suggested Answer

Yes, as we have proved in this Parliament.

The present Government has more than honoured its commitment to protect pensions against rising prices. Between November 1978 and November 1982 pensions rose by 68.5 per cent while prices rose by 61 per cent.

Background

The Social Security Act 1973 introduced by a Conservative Government gave a legislative commitment to link the uprating of pensions to the rise in the Retail Price Index.

2. Do the Conservatives support the release of pensioners from the public services charges (gas, water, telephone etc)?

Suggested Answer

The Conservative party does not support the indiscriminate release of all pensioners from the public service charges. It is our policy to concentrate help to those in greatest need.

The Government has spent £325 m which is more than any previous Government on providing special measures to help those on low incomes - especially pensioners - with heating costs.

The Government has secured agreement with the gas and electricity industries whereby standing charges should be limited to not more than 50 per cent of anyone's bill. It is thought that one million gas consumers and perhaps as many as two million electricity consumers will benefit - 50 per cent of whom will be pensioners.

Background

Since November 1980 the basic heating addition of £1.90 per week has been paid automatically to householders aged 70 or over who receive supplementary benefit and the higher rate of heating additions of £4.65 is payable automatically to the severely disabled receiving the Mobility, Attendance or Constant Attendance Allowance who receive supplementary benefit.

Conservative Research Department

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Do the Conservatives support an increase in the Death Grant to a more realistic figure?

Suggested Answer

In March 1983 the Government published a consultative document on the death grant which suggested proposals designed to ensure that available funds are used to give greater help to those in greatest need. The Government is now considering the public response to this document.

However, special help with funeral costs is already available to families on supplementary benefit by means of a single lump sum payment. The raising of the capital limit disregard on lump sum payment from £300 to £500 in the 1983 Budget should extend the availability of this benefit to more people.

Background

1. The Death Grant was introduced in 1949 at a rate of £20. It is paid as a lump sum on death to every man under 65, and every woman under 60, on 4th July 1948.
2. The present level varies from £9.00 for a child under three to a general rate of £30.
3. Labour's promise to increase the death grant to £200 and to extend it to all deaths - this would cost about £120 million.

Conservative Research Department

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DOG LICENCES

Question

Are you going to increase the annual dog licence fee?

Suggested Answer

No. The Government has no immediate plans to increase the dog licence fee. Consideration is being given to the Report of the Public Accounts Committee published in December 1982.

Background

In response to substantial pressure, the then government set up a Working Party on Dogs in 1974 to examine the problems of dog nuisance, dog control and strays. The main recommendations of its 1976 Report were that the annual licence fee - 37½p since 1878, be increased to £5 and that responsibility for strays in Great Britain be transferred from the police to local authorities who should consider setting up discretionary dog warden services. None of these recommendations has been implemented. The Report also recognised that the situation was separate and more serious in Northern Ireland; in April 1983 Parliament passed the Dogs (Northern Ireland) Order which involves raising the dog licence to £5, and in addition contains a package of proposals specially designed for the Province including transfer of dog control functions from the police to local government, and a system of mandatory dog wardens - this last feature has been specifically and publicly ruled out for Great Britain. The Government has stated that the Order will not serve as a precedent for the rest of the UK.

In Great Britain there has been continuous and increasing pressure on Government to implement the 1976 Report. Lobbying by local government, the public, interest groups, and the media is reflected in the frequent initiatives in Parliament for action, particularly for an increased licence fee to cover the cost of collection. The cost, borne by central Government, of around £3 million for collecting the licence fee now exceeds the fee revenue of £1 million which accrues to the local authorities. In December 1982 the Committee of Public Accounts Report on these financial arrangements estimated that the accumulated deficit so far amounts to some £7 million. The PAC have recommended that the present arrangements be suspended temporarily until a policy decision becomes possible. The PAC Report, which records that the Government has been unable to accord a high priority to consideration of the 1976 Report recommendations, is now itself before the Government for consideration.

Conservative REsearch Department

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IMMIGRATION

Question

What have the Government done to cut down on Immigration? Why are they allowing foreign husbands and fiances to enter?

Suggested Answer

The Government introduced new tougher Immigration Rules in 1980. People coming here for one purpose were no longer to switch to another. Strict limits were put on the entry of parents:- we took away from women merely settled here the right to bring in husbands or fiances and restricted that right to women born here or who had a parent born here. On 1st January 1983 the British Nationality Act creating a new British Citizenship restricted to those with a right of abode here came into force. It was then quite impossible to say that some British citizen women should have the right to bring in husbands i.e. those born here or with a British born parent but other British citizen women should not.

The over-all effect of the changes we have made has been a substantial fall in the numbers of those accepted for settlement. Since 1979 net immigration from the West Indies has ceased: and in 1982 fewer came from the New Commonwealth and Pakistan than in any year since control was first introduced by Conservatives in 1962.

Background

1. Acceptances for settlement: in 1,000's	1976	1979	1982
8 Citizens of New Commonwealth and Pakistan	55.0	37.0	30.3
Total	80.7	70.7	53.8

2. The number of illegal entrants removed was 18% higher in 1981 than in 1978.
3. The number of deportation orders enforced against overstayers had increased by 30% by 1981.
4. Since 1979 the queues of dependants waiting to come here from the Indian sub-continent have got much shorter and there is no reason to think that this trend will not continue.

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ANIMAL WELFARE

Our 1979 Election Pledges

The Conservative Manifesto, after commenting that the welfare of animals was an issue that "concerns us all", went on to promise immediate action "where it is necessary". It then outlined certain specific actions which a Conservative Government would take:

1. The Cruelty to Animals Act 1876 governing the use of animals for the purposes of research would be revised and updated.
2. Full support would be given to the European Economic Community proposals for improving welfare arrangements for animals being transported.

The rules and methods of enforcement relating to the export of live animals would be re-examined. There should be a halt to the export of cows and ewes recently calved and lambed.

3. The recommendations of the 1964 Brambell Committee on the welfare of animals where intensive farming methods were being used would be updated.

Conservative Action

Reviewing the 1876 Act

This Act, passed by Disraeli's Government, provides that experiments on animals must be licensed and carried out in registered premises. The Act states that experiments "may be performed with a view to the advancement by new discovery of physiological knowledge or of knowledge which will be useful for saving or prolonging life or alleviating suffering".

The Act contains provisions to reduce pain and suffering to the minimum with, for example, requirements about the use of anaesthetics, and places special restrictions in the case of experiments on dogs, cats, horses, asses and mules.

The Government has carried out a review of the operation of the 1876 Act and a draft Convention of Europe on this question has been agreed by the Council of Ministers. The Government's proposals were published on 12 May 1983 (see the section on the new White Paper below).

In the meantime, the reconstituted Advisory Committee on Animal Experiments is initiating the use of alternatives to animal experiments wherever practicable; and there is a continuing and welcome fall in the number of experiments with the 1981 figures (the latest available) being the lowest for 18 years.

Transportation of Animals

From June 1979 all cows and ewes that have calved or lambed within 48 hours have been banned from movement or export. From 1981 a consignment of farm animals cannot be exported without a licence from the Ministry of Agriculture, and Government officials supervise and record the loading of each consignment. The Government also introduced a code of practice for the care and feeding of farm animals in approved export lairages.

Mrs Peggy Fenner has said (Hansard 17 February 1983, Col. 256) that the Government would shortly be issuing codes of practice on the care of farm animals and horses during their transport on roll-on/off ferries, and by air. All countries within the EEC now have similar arrangements for the welfare of animals in transit and Britain has banned the export of live food animals to countries outside the EEC.

Methods of Slaughter

All food animals except those used by ethnic minorities for religious reasons, are required under existing regulations to be stunned effectively before slaughter. Conservatives believe that certain slaughter procedures for religious reasons should be permitted, subject to the avoidance of suffering. This matter is currently being reviewed by the Farm Animal Welfare Council.

Intensive Farming

All the codes of conduct governing the welfare of animals under intensive farming are being reviewed and many improvements have been made and apply throughout the EEC. It is hoped shortly to increase through the EEC the minimum size of cage to be used for laying hens. It has been estimated that to return to free-range egg production, an area equivalent to the size of Berkshire would be needed to satisfy present consumer demand. While the Brambell Committee made a number of recommendations for improving the welfare of animals under intensive farming, it concluded that "these (intensive farming) methods do not in themselves necessarily involve cruelty".

Field Sports

The question of field sports is not one on which there should be an official party policy, since it raises matters of personal conscience and cuts across party politics. So the Party allows a "free" vote whenever this question is debated in Parliament. But the Labour Party now favoured banning hunting with dogs, but somewhat inconsistently would not ban angling.

Seals

The Government introduced a voluntary ban on the import to Britain of the products from seal pups, started as from 1 March 1983. The effectiveness of this ban is being monitored. Our partners in the EEC have now followed our example.

Our view is that seal cullings should be carried out in the most humane way possible and kept to the minimum necessary to preserve fish stocks and so protect the interests of our fishing industry. The Conservation of Seals Act 1970 provides that any culling of seals must be carried out under licensing arrangements and specifies that the method used must be a high velocity rifle, on the grounds that this is the most humane means known in the light of the available evidence.

Wildlife

The 1981 Wildlife and Countryside Act provides increased protection for rare species and their habitats.

Pet Animals

The Government facilitated the passage of a Private Member's measure, which has just received the Royal Assent. This Act, in effect, bans the sale of pet animals in street markets.

The New White Paper entitled Scientific Procedures of Living Animals (CMD 8883) which was published on 12 May 1983 contains the Government's proposals for amending the Cruelty to Animals Act 1876. It recognises that experiments upon living animals have to continue in the foreseeable future in order to protect man, animals and the environment, but states that animals must only be used in strictly defined circumstances where there are no reasonable alternatives.

The proposed legislation would enable the British Government to ratify the Convention of Europe on the use of animals for research purposes which is nearing completion. In fact, the new proposals are stricter than the Convention of Europe in a number of respects, particularly in relation to the "pain condition", to which no exception will be permitted in this country.

The White Paper proposals are summarised below:

1. A new Committee would be established by statute to replace the existing non-statutory Advisory Committee on Animal Experiments. It would have wide powers to advise on questions of policy and procedure, including the development of alternatives to animals in experiments. It would also advise on applications referred to it by the Home Secretary as giving rise to special concern. It would advise on all applications for the testing of cosmetics. The Committee would make an annual report which would be presented to Parliament.

2. The 1876 Act only covers experiments. Animals used for procedures such as breeding for physical defects, would be fully protected under the proposed legislation.
3. The proposed legislation would cover establishments which breed and supply animals to laboratories, so animals in these establishments would be fully protected. The use of stray dogs and cats would be prohibited.
4. Statutory protection would be given to animals at all times which they are in a laboratory and not just during an experiment, as at present. The advice of a veterinary surgeon would have to be available.
5. New legislation would provide for rigorous examination of every proposed project using animals in order to satisfy certain criteria. Before the use of animals is permitted, the Home Secretary would have to be satisfied among other things, that the work is justifiable; that no satisfactory alternative to the use of animals could be found; that the minimum possible number is used and that the least possible suffering is caused.

Anaesthetics and analgesics must be used wherever possible.

6. The use of animals for instructional purposes would be permitted for a range of approved professional training, but not in the education of school children or others at the same level.
7. Surgeons seeking to acquire manual skills in microsurgery would be allowed to use animals only under anaesthetic and with a requirement to use analgesia were necessary.
8. The Inspectorate would be strengthened and given enhanced duties in operating the new controls over project and personal licences, laboratories and breeding and supplying establishments.

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INFORMATION SERVICE

This body is asking its supporters to raise a number of questions with candidates. The following suggested answers may be helpful.

Question 1.

Should I not be allowed to spend my post-tax income on education if I wish to in what I consider to be the best interests of my children?

Suggested Answer

Yes.

Question 2.

Do you think a state monopoly of education is desirable?

Suggested Answer

No

Question 3.

Independent education exists in all free countries of the world. Would you be content that this country should be the one exception?

Suggested Answer

No, we believe in freedom of choice.

Question 4

The Pope has said: "A State monopoly of education is not permissible and only a pluralism of school systems will respect the fundamental right and freedom of individuals." Do you agree?

Suggested Answer

Yes

Question 5

The Labour Party plans to abolish all independent schools - in defiance of international conventions. Do you believe that all governments should abide by accepted Human Rights?

Suggested Answer

Yes.

P. T. O.

Question 6.

Hugh Gaitskell said: "to forbid parents under any circumstances to pay the education of their children is to go too far in interfering with peoples' liberty." Do you agree?

Suggested Answer

Yes.

Question 7.

Do you accept that governments should have the power to abolish law-abiding institutions - such as independent schools - just because they don't like what they are doing?

Suggested Answer

No

Question 8.

No country in Europe, other than Hitler's Germany, has ever established a state monopoly of schools. The Labour Party plans to abolish independent schools. Will you comment.

Suggested Answer

The Conservative Party opposes this policy.

Question 9

The Labour Party plans to abolish independent schools. If this is found to be illegal by the Court at Strasbourg under the European Convention of Human Rights, will the policy be dropped?

Suggested Answer

There is no evidence that Labour takes this into account.

Question 10.

The Labour Party plans to make it illegal to charge fees for schooling. What action will be taken against those - and there will be some - who, in defence of their guaranteed Human Rights, defy this law?

Suggested Answer

For Labour to answer.

could.

Question 11.

The majority of independent schools are denominational schools - RC, Jewish, C of E, Methodist, etc. Is it not an attack on religious freedom to seek to abolish these schools?

Suggested Answer

Yes

Question 12

The majority of independent schools are very good schools. Can there be any justification for destroying 2,400 good schools when there is nothing better to replace them?

Suggested Answer

No.

Question 13.

The public opinion polls show that 76% of the electorate is opposed to the abolition of independent schools. Why will the Labour Party not accept this democratic expression of opinion?

Suggested Answer

Because it conflicts with their leaders' ideology.

ASSOCIATION OF UNIVERSITY TEACHERS

Candidates who receive this questionnaire may find the following answers helpful.

Question 1 Do you think that universities have been cut too drastically in recent times and would you favour more resources being given to universities as a result?

Suggested Answer

After decades of expansion, there has been scope for the elimination of waste and the more effective use of resources both in universities and in polytechnics and colleges. Given this fact, and the general need to contain public spending, the Government decided in 1981 that, (in addition to removing indiscriminate subsidies for overseas students), spending on higher education over both sectors should be reduced by about 8½% in real terms over three years. The University Grants Committee - a body composed of independent academics - has made use of this contraction to increase the proportion of science and engineering and encourage the pruning of overlapping courses.

But the period of contraction is now nearing the end. In 1983/4, we will have spent £2.75 billion on higher education; and the intention is to hold the level steady in real terms after 1984/5. The Government is also making £100 million available over three years to create 700 new posts for outstanding young academics, as well as 130 new jobs in information technology; this will serve to protect the standards of our universities in years to come.

Question 2 Why are student numbers being cut in universities at the same time as they are being rapidly increased in the Polytechnics?

Suggested Answer

One of the main tasks of universities is to carry out research: it is therefore important to ensure that university staff do not bear too great a load of teaching. Recognizing this, the Government has taken action to ensure that the contraction in the numbers of academics has been matched by a comparable contraction in student numbers. It has not been necessary to do the same in the public sector, because public sector institutions, including polytechnics, are primarily devoted to teaching rather than to research. Indeed, there has been scope for slightly increasing the teaching load of polytechnic and other public sector lecturers, thereby ensuring an increase in the total numbers of students gaining access to higher education.

P.T.O.

Question 3

Do you think that all qualified school-leavers desiring a place in Higher Education should get one? If not, why not?

Suggested Answer

We do not believe that Universities or public sector institutions should be compelled to accept students who have the minimum qualification of 2 'A' levels; and without such compulsion, it cannot be guaranteed that every student possessing these qualifications will find a place in higher education. But 81.1% of those qualified now find places; and there are over 550,000 students in higher education, as compared with 510,000 in 1979.

Question 4

Universities will lose approximately one in six staff. Do you think that the Government is justified in saying that:

a) standards in universities will not drop?

Suggested Answer

Given our policies to restrict the numbers of university students in line with reductions in the number of academics, there is no reason why standards in universities should drop.

b) that the research base in universities is being supported?

Suggested Answer

Indications of the government's massive commitment to the research base of the universities include:

- i. Provision of over 1 billion pounds per year to the university system.
- ii. Increase in the universities' equipment grant; (the grant has been increased in real terms in each of the last two academic years, by about 2% between 1979/80 and 1980/81 and by about 1½% between 1980/81 and 1981/82).
- iii. Continued commitment to preserving university independence and autonomy through the University Grants Committee system.
- iv. Endorsement of UGC's decisions:
 - to build on strengths in particular universities and departments, relying on the judgements of the academic community;
 - to place emphasis on science, engineering and technology;
- v. Assistance in universities' transition to a lower level of funding:
 - provision of restructuring money - an extra £50 million per annum for two years;
 - agreement to guidelines for redundancy proposed by CVCP:

cont'd.

- planned expenditure of £100 million over three years to create 700 new posts for outstanding young academics, as well as 130 new jobs in information technology.

Question 5 What is your Party's policy on Higher Education?

Suggested Answer As indicated above, our policy is to respect the independence of institutions of higher education, and to offer them all such support as is consistent with the demands of economic prudence.

Question 6 According to the Gallup Poll commissioned by the AUT, 81% of the electorate are in favour of young people over 16 receiving sufficient Governmental financial support to enable them to undertake opportunities in education and training. Do you agree that student loans should be introduced?

Suggested Answer The Conservative Party has at present no intention of replacing any part of the student grant for first degree courses by a loan. We do, however, remain interested in examining the whole system of student support. We believe that student loans might have some part to play in this. But we would introduce any reform only after widespread consultation; the first step would have to be the issuing of a consultative paper.

Question 7 Are you in favour of the University Grants Committee as presently constituted or do you believe that there should be some changes? Do you believe that the UGC were right in giving the greatest financial cut to technological universities who had a close association with industry?

Suggested Answer The University Grants Committee is an independent body composed largely of academics. We believe that a body of this sort has a role to play in the development of higher education, and we would not wish to question its decisions on particular matters such as the funding of individual 'technological' universities. If re-elected, however, we may well wish to review the structure of higher education funding, with a view to increasing the co-operation between the UGC and the NAB.

Question 8 In what way would you like to see Higher Education changed?

Suggested Answer We have no grand designs to change the character of higher education. We would like to see universities attracting more private funds. We wish to seek greater co-operation between Higher Education and industry, and we believe that polytechnics should endeavour to fulfil more effectively their original purpose of preparing young people for our industrial society.

INCLUDED TODAY:-

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WORLD DEVELOPMENT MOVEMENT (WDM)

Candidates who receive questions from this organisation (probably on a postcard) may find the following answers helpful.

Question 1

What is the Conservative Party's Policy on the Second Brandt Report?

Suggested Answer

We regard the Second Brandt Report as a thoughtful, forward looking and practical analysis. Its proposals on avoiding the strangulation that would result from increased protectionism is entirely in line with the views of the Conservative Party. The Government believes that the international community must help the developing countries to tackle the daunting problems which they face as they adjust their economies.

Question 2

What is the Conservative Party Policy on Western Leaders Summit at Williamsburg, USA.

Suggested Answer

- 1 The Conservative Party hopes that the impetus of the Versailles Summit, a year ago, will be carried on at Williamsburg. In Versailles it was agreed that the Summit Countries would seek to strengthen their co-operation with the international financial institutions. In February at a meeting of the IMF under the Chairmanship of Sir Geoffrey Howe, the usable resources available to the Fund were increased by about 50%. We are anxious to see these promising developments continued. (Further details will be circulated to candidates after the summit has taken place).
- 2 We hope that discussion at Williamsburg will lead to the participants taking into account the individual policies of each country. However, the idea of concerting our economic policies over the medium term is something that must be reinforced. For our part we are continuing to give 68% of our overseas aid to the poorest developing countries.

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Background

Despite the continuation of the recession there are a number of promising indications of a recovery.

- (a) Inflation has fallen sharply among the major economies and now averages about 5%, the lowest for about 10 years.
- (b) Progress has been made in a growing number of countries to tackle budget deficits.
- (c) Nominal interest rates have fallen significantly in the USA, Britain and elsewhere, though not alas, France.
- (d) Oil prices have fallen by about 15%, offering a hope for world inflation and world output.

Question 3

What is the Government's attitude towards the meeting of UNCTAD VI (UN Conference on Trade and Development) at Belgrade?

Suggested Answer

UNCTAD VI is an important event in the "North-South Dialogue" which comes at a time of difficulty for the world economy. The UK will be working for a positive and constructive conference which seeks to avoid the atmosphere of confrontation which has sometimes affected such gatherings in the past. The Government's approach will be based upon recognition of the interdependence of the economies of the world and the need for realism in the search for common efforts to revive and nurture growth. It will be important to emphasise the need for a liberal trading system and encourage all countries to play their part in supporting it. We shall be working for an outcome to UNCTAD VI which complements and reinforces the efforts of other international trade and financial institutions to encourage a return to growth and development.

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WORLD DEVELOPMENT MOVEMENT (WDM)

Candidates who receive a questionnaire from this organization (as distinct from their postcard, vide Q ofP 183) may find the following answers helpful.

Question 1.

What is the Conservative Party's policy on separating Overseas Development Administration from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office?

Suggested Answer

Aid relationships with developing countries are often a major part of Britain's overall relationships with these countries and it therefore makes sense that there should be close coordination. The existence of ODA as a separate wing within the FCO, under the overall responsibility of the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary, ensures that development issues are given their full weight at the highest level of Government.

Question 2.

What is the Conservative Party's policy on having a separate Select Committee on Overseas Development?

Suggested Answer

Under the Select Committee system set up in 1979, Committees are organised on a departmental basis. ODA as part of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office is covered by the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs. There is however a subcommittee that deals with Overseas Development matters.

Question 3.

What is the Conservative Party's policy on Development Education?

Suggested Answer

The Government recognises that there is a need in the UK for improved understanding of development issues, and acknowledges the valuable work done in this area by voluntary agencies, Church groups, teachers and the media. However, the Government does not accept that official aid funds should be used for this purpose. The priority must be to spend aid money in developing countries.

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Question 4.

What is the Conservative Party's policy on having the Aid and Trade Provision under the jurisdiction of the ODA and not the Department of Trade?

Suggested Answer

The Aid and Trade Provision (ATP) was established in response to the aggressive use of aid funds by other donors to support their own national firms in winning large contracts in developing countries. The allocation for ATP comes from the aid budget - at present, it represents about 6 per cent of total UK aid. It has always been the Government's policy that the basic criterion in the use of British aid funds, including ATP, is the developmental soundness of the project or programme to be supported. Any separate Department of Trade budget exclusively for export promotion would undoubtedly be at some cost to the aid programme.

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MANIFESTO BY THE CENTRAL COUNCIL FOR PHYSICAL RECREATION

Candidates who receive this document may find the following answers helpful.

1. Immediate relief of the estimated £2,000,000 corporation tax paid by the governing bodies of sport including the British Olympic Association, in order that money earned by non-profit distributing bodies can be ploughed back into the grass roots sporting activity.

Suggested Answer

Corporation tax is a broad-based tax, and such a breach in its base would inevitably lead to pressure for favourable tax treatment from other bodies and associations which contribute to voluntary and recreational activities. Most sporting organisations paying Corporation Tax will benefit from the small profits rate of Corporation Tax, which the Government reduced further this year from 40 per cent to 38 per cent.

2. A nationwide introduction of 50% mandatory rate relief to all local sport and recreational clubs which on a voluntary basis provide sporting opportunities for the young and old. Without the local sports club, town halls would have to provide a costly public service.

Suggested Answer

No. This is a matter for local authority discretion. Each district council must be able to decide for itself its rating policies.

3. An immediate introduction of tax relief to encourage sports sponsorship at national and local level.

Suggested Answer

Sports Sponsorship has reached unparalleled levels. According to the Economist, sponsorship provided some £45 million in 1979-80 (other estimates put the total even higher). There is no evidence that there is any reluctance among businesses to sponsor sporting events.

4. A special exempt status from VAT for membership and subscription of sports clubs, particularly for young people, and the removal of VAT on entry to sports events.

Suggested Answer

No. Value added tax is designed as a broadbased tax: simplicity is a desirable feature if administration costs are to be kept to a minimum. Revenue lost by extending the range of items excluded from tax would have to be recouped by higher taxation elsewhere.

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5. An immediate freeze on the sale by town halls of playing fields and facilities which are, or could be, brought into active community use.

Suggested Answer

No. We know of no evidence that such sales are widespread, but this must remain a matter for local authorities to determine.

6. An expansion of dual use of publicly owned sports facilities, particularly within the schools system, at evenings, weekends and holiday periods.

Suggested Answer

In our manifesto we are committed to this:

"... there are still plenty of sport facilities which could be opened up to the general public. In particular, to reinforce our initiatives for better use of schools and playing fields, we shall urge every local education authority to make school and college premises available for use outside school hours and in the holidays. In all these initiatives, voluntary bodies will be enabled to play a bigger part."

Immediately on return to office we will issue a circular to local authorities, which will be followed, if necessary, by legislation.

7. The repeal of statutory instrument 909 which has reduced by about $\frac{1}{2}$ the amount of playing fields required to be provided for state schools.

Suggested Answer

The Education (School Premises) Regulations, 1981, reduced the amount of playing fields required to be provided for state schools. We believe that the provision of fields has in many cases been unnecessarily lavish. However, local authorities are free to exceed the statutory minimum if they so wish.

8. Greater provision for countryside recreation in terms of transport facilities and information.

Suggested Answer

The Conservative Government has every confidence in the capability of the Countryside Commission and the Regional Council of Sport and Recreation to cope with the provision of facilities

/ Continued . . .

and information for countryside recreation. County Councils also contribute through the establishment of country parks.

9. Improved public access to rivers, lakes, reservoirs and national parks to cater for the growing demand for outdoor activity.

Suggested Answer

Neil Macfarlane has written to the Chairman of each Regional Water Authority drawing his attention to the need for the provision of water based recreation facilities. They are fully conversant with their duties and more provision is being made than ever before. Access to the National Parks is a matter for the appropriate National Park Boards or county councils working in co-operation with the Countryside Commission.

10. An agreement by the next Government that there will be no interference in the autonomy of British sport and full consultation with the CCPR before any Government measures affecting sport are introduced.

Suggested Answer

The Conservative Government stands by the Commonwealth declaration on apartheid in sport. Sporting contact between representative national teams is discouraged but sporting governing bodies are aware that teams for whom they have responsibility are at liberty, as are individual sportsmen, to visit South Africa or entertain visitors from that country.

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FRIENDS OF THE EARTH QUESTIONNAIRE

Candidates who receive this questionnaire may find the following answers helpful:

Question

1. Do you support a national energy policy which excludes any further development of nuclear power?

Suggested Answer

We believe that a prudent energy policy should include nuclear power. We have no commitment either to the particular percentage, or to the type of nuclear generation selected. The safety record of the British nuclear industry is very high indeed, and we intend to ensure that this is maintained in any new developments that are proposed. They will only go ahead if both the independent inspector and the Government are satisfied it is safe.

Question

2. Do you oppose the proposal for the introduction to Britain of the American-type pressurised water reactor (such as that proposed for Sizewell)?

No, see answer to Question 1.

Question

3. Do you believe Britain's transport policies should encourage wherever possible the use of public transport rather than private transport?

Suggested Answer

We believe that transport policy should be directed at getting the best possible service and value for money for the transport user - and that means both private and public transport. I am opposed to discrimination against the private motorist.

Question

4.

- a. Do you believe public transport should be provided with increased subsidies to enable its modernisation and extension?
- b. Do you believe public transport fares should be further subsidised to encourage its use?

/ Continued . . .

a. Under this Government, record levels of public transport subsidies are being allowed. Public Transport operators can if they become more efficient generate more money from their own resources for investment. We believe that more investment is needed - but the money from this should not be in the form of more handouts from the taxpayer or ratepayer.

b. No. Record levels of subsidies are already being given to public transport. However, there is no evidence that higher subsidies would attract people in large numbers away from cars. The last Labour Government in its 1977 White Paper admitted this. It also said that indiscriminate subsidies tend to favour the well off rather than the poor, and a lot of the subsidy is swallowed by increased inefficiency. High subsidies have to be found from ratepayers' or taxpayers' money. This pre-empts money that would be spent more cost effectively elsewhere. Business ratepayers have suffered particularly badly as a result of high subsidy policies of some Labour councils. To find the money to pay high rates they have to cut jobs or move elsewhere.

This Government's Transport Act 1980 has led to a dramatic increase in the number of express coach services; it has also led to a sharp reduction in fares.

Question

5. Do you support proposals for the elimination of lead from petrol at the earliest practical moment?

Suggested Answer

The Conservative Government is already committed to move to lead-free petrol at the earliest practicable date in co-operation with other EEC countries. This was announced by Tom King, Secretary of State for the Environment, when he gave the Government's response to the Ninth Report of the Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution on 18th April 1983.

Question

6. Do you support a ban on the use and manufacture of the herbicide 245-T?

Suggested Answer

The Government is now considering the advice of the Advisory Committee on Pesticides and the Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution. No final decisions have yet been taken. The Commission was fully satisfied that there are no grounds for banning the controlled manufacture or use of 245-T.

/ Continued . . .

Question

Questions of Policy: 186

7. Do you support a ban on all imports of products of endangered or threatened wild species unless they originate from self-sustaining and humanely-run ranches or farms?

Suggested Answer

We already prohibit imports which would threaten the survival of a species. We monitor trade in other species which might become endangered and would not hesitate to impose any necessary further bans of imports in these cases. We shall continue to support the Washington Convention, first signed by a Conservative Government in 1973. Tom King, as the Minister representing this country at the Council of European Environment Ministers personally led the campaign to ban imports of whale products into the EEC, which was the most important step to help save the whale.

Question

8. Do you support the introduction of planning controls over major agricultural, forestry and water authority operations to safeguard the beauty and wildlife in the British countryside?

Suggested Answer

All major agricultural and water authority operations (e.g. buildings over 465 square metres or reservoirs) are currently within planning control. The Forestry Commission too exercise planning control over major felling and planting in consultation with local authorities.

The Government is reviewing other aspects of these matters in its consideration of the Royal Commission's report.

The Conservative Government has taken a strong line on scrutinising applications for new reservoirs, by giving added emphasis to better leak detection to reduce the substantial losses that occur in water systems which lead to demands for larger reservoirs than are really necessary. The Conservative manifesto includes a commitment to establish more control over intensive livestock units near residential areas.

Question

9. Would you support a new Wildlife and Countryside Act to introduce additional statutory protection for all nationally important nature sites and to provide grants for farming activities which promote conservation.

Suggested Answer

Further legislation is not necessary. The present Act introduced by the Conservative Government already provides for strong statutory controls applicable to any nationally important sites which have been notified by the Nature Conservancy Council. The Government took action

/ Continued . . .

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when the NCC requested it to safeguard the three sites at Baddesley Common, Sandford Heath and Tealham and Tadham Moors. Since the Act the NCC has negotiated 65 agreements for the protection of sites. The Ministry of Agriculture are already able to grant-aid conservation elements of Farm Capital Grant schemes and the NCC are also able to provide funds for conservation purposes

Question

10. Do you believe Britain should give a better lead on environmental questions internationally, by working towards the elimination of its own contribution to:

- a. the harmful destruction of tropical rain forests
- b. the production of acid rain
- c. the commercial development of Antarctica
- d. the dumping of nuclear waste at sea.

Suggested Answer

- a. This is a matter where international action is required. A Conservative Government would play a full and constructive part to protect these sensitive environments.
- b. The Government is committed to playing an active part in finding a solution to the problem of acid rain. Already sulphur emissions are being reduced and further developments will take place in the context of the International Convention on Long Range Transboundary Air Pollution which the UK ratified last year.
- c. This country is a signatory of the Antarctic Treaty. It is our policy to remove by international agreement all the obstacles (e.g. sovereignty disputes) which stand in the way of the commercial development of the Antarctic (e.g. its mineral resources). At the same time we are very conscious of the need to provide adequate protection for the Antarctic environment.
- d. Our annual dump of nuclear waste is fully in accord with the principles of the London Dumping Convention, the criteria set out by the IAEA and the surveillance arrangements of the OECD/NEA.

We believe it is safe for such low level radio-activity. If there were any doubt, it would be discontinued; but we propose to participate fully in the scientific survey called for by the recent consultative meeting on the London Dumping Convention.

Conservative Research Department

20.5.83

Printed and Published by Conservative Central Office,
32 Smith Square, London SW1

Water RatesQuestion

Why are the Conservatives not abolishing water rates?

Suggested Answer

After the reviews of different methods of charging for water, all water authorities now offer householders the option of having a water meter installed in their home. Many people feel that this provides a fairer measure of their water use and in turn leads to a fair basis of charging.

In Government we recognised that increases in the cost of water services charges can be a burden to consumers. The Government is pressing the water authorities to reduce their costs and so improve their efficiency. To this end all water authorities have been set performance aims which require them to reduce their operating costs on main services in real terms over the period 1981-2 to 1983-4 whilst maintaining standards of service. The National Water Council has outlived its usefulness, and will shortly be abolished.

Background

We accept that assessing water services charges on the basis of the rateable value of the property only provides a rough and ready link with the actual use made of these services and can be unfair to old people living alone or those with properties with an above average rateable value. The problem is to find an alternative method of charging which is both cheap and easy to administer and which does not give rise to unfairness.

Many different charging methods were studied by the National Water Council in 1976 and again in 1980, when the Council concluded that the best way forward was for all Water Authorities to make optional metering available to their consumers. This facility will not necessarily suit everyone but it provides a way of dealing with the worst injustices of the present system while avoiding the very high costs of universal metering. It also recognises that for the vast majority of consumers the present system, which is cheap and easy to operate, is generally acceptable.

The Government has twice used consultations to look at water authorities' budget proposals to see where savings could be made and there has been a continuing programme of references to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission, which can investigate in depth the costs and efficiency of the bodies referred to it. In the past two years it has reported on the Seven Trent Water Authority and the sewerage arrangements of the North West and Anglian Water Authorities. The Government sees improvements in the performance and efficiency of water authorities as the key to keeping future charges increases to a minimum. The average annual rate of increase in charges has fallen year by year since 1980-1. The average rise in 1980-1 was 24 per cent: in 1983-4 it is 7 per cent.

ASSOCIATION OF BRITISH ORCHESTRAS LETTER

Candidates may be asked by this body for their views on a number of matters relating to the arts. The following answers may be helpful.

a) Public Subsidy for the Arts

The Conservative Manifesto states:

"We shall keep up the level of government support, including a fair share for the regions."

Under the Conservatives, Government support for the Arts has risen from £136 million in 1979-80 to over £207 million in 1983-4, and the grant-in-aid to the Arts Council was increased from £61.5 million in 1979-80 to £98 million in 1983-4.

b) Local Authority Funding

We are in favour of local authority support for the Arts, but believe that the level of support should be a matter for local authority discretion. We do not favour mandatory rate levy.

c) Role and Composition of the Arts Council

We support, as we have done for many years, the 'arms length' policy of funding the Arts through the Arts Council. Any attempt to upset the balance of the council by introducing an elected element into it or by allocating a number of nominated places to the unions would jeopardise the objectivity and independence of the Council.

d) Eighth Report of the Education Select Committee

It is not possible to anticipate the Government response to the Select Committee report which will now be published later this summer. However, it is worth noting, in respect of recommendation 9, that the Conservative Government was able to announce the grants for the arts in December in each of the last three years, earlier than had been the case in earlier years.

With reference to recommendation 55 the Conservative Manifesto also states:

"We shall also examine ways of using the tax system to encourage further growth in private support for the arts and the heritage".

Conservative Research Department

23rd May 1983

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32, Smith Square, London SW1

INLAND WATERWAYSQuestion

What is your policy for the future of inland waterways?

Suggested Answer

The Conservative Party is fully committed to maintaining the waterways. We endorse what the Board said in the 1981 Annual Report - 'The Board's waterways are now an important national resource for leisure and recreation ... (they) offer much with their distinctive and attractive environment, wealth of historical interest and easy access'.

The Party's commitment can be judged from the increase in grant given to the British Waterways Board from £22.6 million in 1979-80 to £40.2 million in 1983-4. Part of the grant is earmarked for reducing the backlog of maintenance work (costed at about £120m) over a 10 to 15 year period.

Any proposal for improving a waterway for freight transport purposes must be judged on its merits, applying normal investment criteria.

Background

The British Waterways Board and the Inland Waterways Amenity Advisory Council (the waterway users' consumer body) are to continue. We rejected the Labour Government's proposal to abolish the British Waterways Board, and merge it with the proposed National Water Authority.

It is worth noting that all inland waterways carry less than 2 per cent of total freight traffic by all modes, and the British Waterways Board waterways carry less than 3 per cent of inland waterways traffic, i.e. 0.06 per cent of total freight traffic. The most important freight carrying waterways are the Thames, Medway and Humber, which are not British Waterways' concern.

Conservative Research Department

24.5.83

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GENERAL ELECTION 1983THE POLICE AND CRIMINAL EVIDENCE BILLQuestion

Isn't the Police and Criminal Evidence Bill an attack upon the rights and freedoms of the individual? Why is the Government planning to increase police powers without proper safeguards for suspects?

Suggested Answer

No. The Police and Criminal Evidence Bill (which the Conservative party will re-introduce if it is re-elected) seeks to rationalise police powers, while at the same time increasing safeguards for suspects. It includes provisions for reforming the police complaints procedure, and a statutory framework for police/community consultation.

The Bill seeks to modernise police powers; in many cases this involves restrictions on current practice, and not increases. The Bill also proposes substantial safeguards. The Philips Royal Commission on Criminal Procedure, from which the Bill stems, also recommended as safeguards the tape recording of police interviews and the introduction of an independent prosecution service. The former proposal is undergoing field trials. As stated in the Manifesto, the Government accept the case for the latter, and if re-elected will consider how best to set it up. A substantial amount of criticism directed at the Bill has been based on misunderstanding of the law as it now stands, and the proposals in the Bill itself.

Background

1. Police powers to stop and search will be rationalised. Lord Scarman considered that the power to stop and search was necessary to combat increased street crime. (Violence against the person - including muggings - increased by 113% between 1971 and 1981). Powers that exist in London and certain other areas will be extended to cover searching, on reasonable grounds of suspicion, for offensive weapons. Safeguards will be imposed. The police officer will have to tell the person being searched what is being looked for, why, and by whom he is being searched, and a record must be kept which will be available on request. The Bill creates no new offences: it simply enables the police to establish by means of quick search, whether the person concerned has on him something whose possession is already of itself an offence.

2. The power on road-checks is defined and restricted. At present, any constable can require any driver to stop, for whatever purpose. The Bill proposes that the power only be used in a defined area for a defined period, in order to secure the arrest of someone wanted for a serious offence, and then only with the authorization of a police superintendent.

3. Powers of entry, search and seizure are modernised. At present, search warrants may be obtained under about 50 Acts for a haphazard range of articles and evidence of various offences - but there are gaps; for instance, there is no provision for the police to obtain search warrants for evidence of serious offences against the person (including murder and rape). The Bill provides the power to obtain access to evidence of the most serious offences, and applies new safeguards to the issue and execution of search warrants - for example, a warrant may not be issued unless the occupier has unreasonably denied the police access, or would have disposed of the evidence if the police had sought access without a warrant. These provisions will apply only to evidence, not to general information; circuit judges and magistrates, who issue search warrants, will not permit 'fishing expeditions' for information. The confidential records of doctors, priests and journalists will be exempt from the provisions of the Bill.

4. Powers of arrest are redefined. In future, only more serious offences (those punishable by at least 5 years imprisonment) will carry a power of summary arrest. Virtually all other existing powers of arrest are to be repealed, in favour of a general provision under which a person reasonably suspected of an offence must be dealt with by way of a summons. 'Helping the police with their enquiries' is abolished. A person may be detained in a police station against his will only if he has been arrested. Currently, powers of arrest exist for offences that do not need them, and vice versa (for instance, at present there is no power of arrest for indecent assault, kidnapping, attempting to pervert the course of justice or assaulting a police officer). There has been criticism of this section of the Bill on the grounds that a person who has committed a minor offence can be arrested if he gives a false name and address or refuses to give one at all. But if an offence has been committed, however trivial, the law is brought into disrepute if an offender can escape prosecution by withholding his name and address; if the law exists, it should be enforceable.

5. Detention. At present, detention is open-ended. The police may detain anyone without charge indefinitely, as the law requires that someone who has been arrested be brought before a court 'as soon as practicable' if the offence is serious - this phrase is undefined, and the test for what constitutes a serious offence is subjective. The Bill proposes an absolute limit on detention without charge of 96 hours, and during this time there shall be firstly a review of detention after 6 hours by an inspector, and a full review by a magistrates' court after 36 hours, at which the suspect is present and may be represented. Habeas corpus is not abolished, but is expressly preserved. At present habeas corpus is the only remedy for a detained suspect who seeks independent judicial review of his detention, and this is exactly what the Bill provides. The police will also be required to keep an exact record of custody, a copy of which must be made available to the suspect.

6. Suspects' rights and safeguards. The present law provides no statutory right for suspects to have legal advice. Judges'

/ Continued . . .

Rules governing questioning are inadequate and vague, and there is insufficient protection for juveniles, the mentally handicapped, and other special groups. In future, there will be a statutory right of access to legal advice, under which the police may withhold such access only in strictly defined cases of serious crime (for example, so that a suspect cannot tip off other suspects, or arrange for evidence to be destroyed). The Judges' Rules will be replaced by a detailed statutory code of practice, which will embody additional safeguards for special groups, such as questioning only in the presence of a parent or other independent adult.

7. Fingerprinting, searching and identification. The Philips Royal Commission recommended compulsory fingerprinting for investigative and identification purposes with a minimum age reduced to 10 years, the age of criminal responsibility. The Bill introduces this. The Police already have the power to conduct intimate body searches without the suspect's consent. The Bill regulates and restricts this power to cases involving serious offences or when there are reasonable grounds for thinking that the suspect has an article with which he might cause injury to himself or others. The suspect will always be asked if he wants the search carried out by a doctor, but the doctor need not do so, though his refusal in the absence of the suspect's consent would not remove the need for the search. The rules governing identification parades and other procedures will be set out in statutory form.

8. Evidence in Criminal Proceedings. Confessions will be excluded if they have been obtained under duress, or in consequence of anything said or done likely in the circumstances to make that confession unreliable. The prosecution will be required to prove that the confession was not obtained under these circumstances.

9. The police complaints procedure will be reformed. The current system will be replaced by a three-tier arrangement, operating according to the seriousness of the case. Minor matters will be dealt with locally by informal resolution, with an element of conciliation. More substantial complaints will be investigated and independently considered, as at present. The most serious complaints will be investigated by a senior police officer, normally from an outside force, under the supervision throughout the investigation of an independent element.

10. The importance of policing with the consent of the community cannot be overestimated. The Bill places an emphasis on making a reality of community involvement in policing. It will impose upon police authorities a duty to make suitable arrangements for public consultation on police matters.

11. Field trials lasting two years have been implemented in a number of areas to test tape recording of police interviews with a view to introducing the practice nationally.

/ Continued . . .

12. The Philips Royal Commission recommended that prosecution be made independent of the police. The Government accepted this in principle, but disagreed with the Commission's proposal that such a prosecution service should be run by locally elected authorities, as this would leave prosecution policy open to political control. The Conservative Manifesto reaffirms the commitment to an independent prosecution service, and that Conservatives will examine the best way to establish it.

Conservative Research Department

20.5.83

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32 Smith Square, London SW1

THE FUTURE OF COMMON LAND

Question

What is your Party's policy with regard to the future management of commons?

Suggested Answer

The last Government continued to give full support to the protection of common land. A Conservative administration will as a matter of policy maintain existing protection in future years.

Conservative Research Department

25.5.83

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32 Smith Square, London SW1

EXTENSION OF AGE ALLOWANCE

Question

Have the Conservatives any plans for extending the Age Allowance tax relief to women between the ages of 60 and 65?

Suggested Answer

As you know, the age allowance is a special, higher tax allowance given to both men and women at the age of 65. Because the woman's retirement age is 60, there has naturally been a demand to pay the age allowance to women at 60.

However consideration must be given to the cost of this proposal, £80-£90 million a year, and the priorities for helping other groups such as the disabled.

The reduction of the basic rate of income tax from 33% to 30% and the raising of personal tax allowances ahead of inflation has eased the pressure of taxation on women in the 60-65 age group as well as all pensioners, disabled and low-income families.

Conservative Research Department

19 May 1983

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EFFECT OF ELECTION ON PENSIONS INCREASE

Question

Will the calling of the election affect the payment of the pension this November?

Suggested Answer

No. The necessary legislation to oblige Governments to review and pay the pension each year taking into account the actual increase in prices recorded in the period May to May - the Social Security and Housing Benefits Act 1983 - is already the law of the land.

The Government has wanted to shorten the period of waiting for pensioners between the fixing of the pension uprating and its payment. That is why in this, and future years, the pension level will be reviewed in June, instead of at the time of the Budget. Higher rate pensions will again be paid this year in the last week of November well in time for the Christmas season, when once again the Christmas bonus will be paid.

Conservative Research Department

25.5.83

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NORTHERN IRELANDQuestion

Why don't British troops get out of Northern Ireland?

Suggested Answer

British troops perform normal garrison duties in Northern Ireland as in any other part of the United Kingdom. They also act in support of the Royal Ulster Constabulary in the battle against terrorism.

Very substantial progress has been made in combating terrorism. It has been possible to reduce the size of the Army in Northern Ireland to about half what it was ten years ago.

It is important to realise that it is the RUC who take the lead; the Army support them when called upon to do so.

The majority of the people living in Northern Ireland want to stay part of the United Kingdom. As part of the United Kingdom the people of Northern Ireland have the same right to protection against terrorism as those in the rest of the United Kingdom.

No constitutional political party in either Northern Ireland or the Republic of Ireland advocates the immediate withdrawal of British troops from the Province.

Tribute is due to the courage, commitment and restraint of those troops who are serving or have served in the Province.

Background

1. Nationalist Parties in both Northern Ireland and the Republic envisage the eventual withdrawal of British troops, but recognise that any precipitate departure could lead to massive bloodshed.
2. As at April 1st 1983 9,558 British troops were serving in the Province.
3. Comparative security statistics.

	1972	1982	1983 (up to 1.5.83)
Deaths	468	97	21
Injuries	4,876	525	85
Shootings	10,628	382	98
Explosions	1,382	219	51

Conservative Research Department

20.5.'83

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CONCESSIONARY FARES FOR THE ELDERLYQuestion

What is the Government's attitude to concessionary fares; will it introduce a National Scheme? Do the Government's proposals for London Transport mean that there will be no more concessionary fares in the capital?

Suggested Answer

We would not introduce a national scheme. We would like local authorities to adopt a more uniform approach, but conditions vary from locality to locality, and so help to elderly people is always likely to be provided in different ways by different local authorities: in some places the help that is given may not involve concessionary fares at all. About 20 per cent of old people cannot use public transport and large numbers do not use it regularly.

London: The new arrangements for transport in London, proposed in the Conservative Manifesto, will not affect the provision of concessionary fares. When the new London Regional Transport Authority is set up, steps will be taken to ensure that concessionary fares will continue.

Background

Local authorities have powers (which they use at their own discretion) to give concessionary fares to elderly and disabled people. This often creates tension between areas which benefit from this and areas which do not.

A national half fares scheme for OAPs as proposed by Labour would cost at least another £100 million a year.

Conservative Research Department

25.5.83

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London, S.W. 1.

FOOTBALL HOOLIGANISM

Question

What have the Conservative Government done to combat football hooliganism?

Suggested Answer

The courts have always been able to give heavy sentences for this sort of inexcusable behaviour. Now they can also order offenders to spend a specified period at attendance centres under police supervision. There are now 120 such attendance centres. Since we came into office an extra 30 Junior and 13 Senior centres have been opened. Sentences can be for up to 24 hours for Junior centres and 36 hours for Senior centres, spread over fortnightly intervals, and can be timed to coincide with important matches and prime leisure time. This makes the punishment more effective and protects law abiding people who want to watch the game in peace.

Alcohol is undoubtedly one of the causes of football violence. In Scotland the Criminal Justice Act (Scotland) 1980 made it an offence to take alcohol to or be in possession of alcohol at a match, or to seek admission when drunk. These measures have met with considerable success.

In England and Wales, controls over alcohol at matches traditionally have been the responsibility of the football clubs, which have the right to refuse admission to grounds, and have responsibility for the sale of alcohol on their premises. The Minister of Sport, Neil MacFarlane, has repeatedly emphasised the role of governing bodies of football in tackling the problem of hooliganism.

Conservative Research Department

25.5.83

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32 Smith Square, London SW1

ELECTRIFICATION OF RAILQuestion

What is the Government's attitude to electrification?

Suggested answer

We want to see productive investment in the railway system and we are committed in principle to electrification. However, like our predecessors, we believe that British Rail's freight and Intercity businesses should run commercially, so each electrification project must be assessed on its commercial merits. As electrification is expensive, we must be sure of the financial benefits it would bring. These financial benefits are linked with plans for the future of these businesses, which the Railways Board and the Government are developing.

Background

On 22nd June 1981, the Government announced approval in principle for a programme of mainline electrification based on better business performance and improved productivity. On 23rd December 1981, the Government gave the go-ahead for a £30 million scheme to electrify the main line between London and Ipswich, Norwich and Harwich. Progress elsewhere has been slow, as BR have not provided forecasts for their Intercity business demonstrating a path to profit by 1985, a condition laid down by the Government for approval of further schemes.

Conservative Research Department

20.5.83

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32 Smith Square
London SW1

VEHICLE EXCISE DUTYQuestion

Why don't you abolish Vehicle Excise Duty and aren't road users taxed too much?

Suggested answer

If we abolished Vehicle Excise Duty, it would mean that to get the equivalent tax we would have to increase the price of a gallon of petrol by over 30p. This would be very hard on people who travel a lot, particularly those living in rural areas, travelling salesmen and businesses generally.

It is true that the amount collected in vehicle excise duty and fuel taxes more than covers the cost of the road programme, but in no area of Government taxation are tax revenues specifically allocated to particular spending programmes. If taxes on motorists were reduced, other taxes would have to increase to compensate.

Background

In 1979, the Government reviewed Vehicle Excise Duty but decided that it should not be transferred to a tax on petrol as this would unfairly penalise people in rural areas and businesses.

Car VED has been raised since May 1979 from £50 to £85.

Petrol duty has increased from 30p to 74p a gallon.

Conservative Research Department

20.5.83

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London SW1

INCLUDED TODAY:-

- 7 Enclosed is Question of Policy No. 7 - National Insurance Surcharges.
- 24 Enclosed is Question of Policy No. 24 - Private Medical Insurance.
- 41 Please Replace Question of Policy No. 41 - Heating and Fuel Costs with Question of Policy No. 41 dated 26.5.83.
- 46 Please Replace Question of Policy No. 46 - Invalidity Pension Amendment with Question of Policy No. 46 dated 26.5.83.
- 48 Please Replace Question of Policy No. 48 - Mobility Allowance with Question of Policy No. 48 dated 26.5.83.
-
- 199 Sporting Links with South Africa
- 200 Issues raised by the "Universe"
- 201 Cyprus
- 202 Friends of Cyprus Questionnaire
- 203 Royal College of Nursing Questionnaire
- 204 British Insurance Brokers Association
- 205 The Self Employed
- 206 Occasional Licences
- 207 World Development Movement
- 208 MPs' Pay
- 209 Questions on Disarmament
- 210 People and Work Unit Review
- 211 Overseas Development
- 212 Abortion
- 213 Medical Research
- 214 Firearms Certificates - Fees

NATIONAL INSURANCE SURCHARGE

Question

When will the NIS be abolished?

Suggested Answer

NIS was introduced by Labour at 2% and increased by Labour, with Liberal support to 3½%. We are well on the way to abolishing NIS, with successive cuts last year and in this year's Finance Bill, which reduce the rate to 1 per cent from 1 August this year. These reductions in the rate are worth almost £2 billion to private sector employers in a full year. The benefit to them of abolishing the remaining 1 per cent, and the cost to the Government, would be nearly £800 million in a full year. As the Chancellor said in his Budget Statement this year, "We are now well on the way to abolishing" NIS. The operation will be completed as soon as the cost can be afforded without endangering the Government's economic strategy.

Conservative Research Department

26.5.83

PRIVATE MEDICAL INSURANCE

Question

Will the Government introduce tax relief on premiums paid for private medical insurance, eg subscriptions to BUPA:

- (i). generally; or
- (ii). for those over 65?

Suggested Answer

We want to encourage the growth of private provision for health care, but a general tax relief would conflict with another important aim of ours: to have a wide tax base, so that tax rates can be as low as possible. Tax relief for subscriptions to private medical insurance would do nothing to help the least well-off because they do not pay tax. Rather than spend money in this way, we prefer to spend it on those in need of health care, particularly the elderly.

Background Note

A general relief might well encourage a much greater number of people to subscribe to private medical schemes. The latest estimates available suggest that the cost to the Exchequer of relief at marginal rates for all existing subscribers could be of the order of £55 million in a full year.

HEATING AND FUEL COSTS

Question

What will you do to help with the problem of fuel bills?

Suggested Answer

The Government is very concerned with helping people in need with their fuel bills. This is why the heating additions, payable to large numbers of people dependent on supplementary benefits, have been substantially improved. Expenditure on help with heating costs is now substantially higher in real terms than when Labour was in office.

We will, of course, continue to concentrate assistance on the most needy in the future. Furthermore, our promise to protect long-term benefits like retirement pensions against rising prices (which, as measured by the retail prices index, includes fuel prices) means that millions more people will have living standards fully safeguarded.

Background

1. In 1982-3 the Government spent about £325 million on help with fuel bills for poorer users. This compares with only £124 million in 1978-9.
2. The level of heating additions, which can be claimed only by recipients of supplementary benefit, have been substantially improved. The basic heating addition has been doubled from £0.85 per week under Labour to £1.90 per week today. A higher heating addition rate of £4.65 per week is also available.
3. The present Government has ensured that the basic heating addition is now paid automatically to supplementary benefit householders with children under 5 and to supplementary benefit householders aged 70 or over.
4. The rules governing gas and electricity standing charges have been changed so that they do not amount to more than half anyone's total electricity or gas bill. It is estimated that the change will benefit about one million gas consumers and probably two million electricity consumers, about half of them pensioners.

Labour Policy

"The New Hope for Britain" (p.18) pledges to "reduce energy costs, for pensioners, both through support for Conservation and by introducing new fuel allowances." What those fuel allowances would be has not been specified.

INVALIDITY PENSION ABATEMENT

Question

Why has the Government attacked the disabled by abating invalidity pensions by 5 per cent? Will you give a pledge to restore that abatement?

Suggested Reply

The Government abated invalidity pensions by 5 per cent because they were non-taxable, which put them at an advantage compared with many other benefits, and to achieve a sensible programme of public expenditure which the country could afford.

For example, retirement pensions, widows pensions (national insurance) and unemployment benefit are all treated as taxable income, and invalidity pensions ought to be treated similarly.

The Chancellor has promised to restore the 5 per cent abatement when the invalidity pension is brought into tax.

Background

1. The invalidity pension is a national insurance benefit for sick people unable to work. It is normally payable after 6 months of illness and the weekly rate for a single person is £31.45 (£50.30 married).
2. Under the Social Security (No 2) Act 1980, a number of non-taxable benefits, like national insurance invalidity pensions and unemployment benefit, were raised by 5 percentage points less than the rate of inflation. (N.B. The 5 per cent abatement did not apply to non-contributory invalidity pensions, which are paid at rates lower than the national insurance invalidity pensions).
3. Unemployment benefit was brought into tax last year and the 5 per cent abatement of unemployment benefit will be restored in November 1983.
4. The Government has not been able to provide a definite date as to when invalidity pensions will be taxed. The cost of restoring this 5 per cent abatement (without taxation) would be about £60 million a year.

MOBILITY ALLOWANCE

Question

Would a Conservative Government continue to refuse mobility allowance to people over 75?

Suggested Answer

Disabled people under the age of 66 who are unable or virtually unable to walk can claim the mobility allowance. (Those who become disabled after 66 cannot claim it).

All who are eligible can continue to draw it up to the age of 75 when, under rules laid down by the last Labour Government, it will be withdrawn from them.

The cost of abolishing the 75 age limit for existing recipients would be about £2m - £3m in the first year, at the current benefit rate. However no existing recipient will reach the age of 75 until 1989 and therefore the Government will consider the whole issue very carefully nearer the time.

The Government has an outstanding record in this area. The mobility allowance has been made tax-free and some 40,000 people have benefitted from this. Furthermore, the mobility allowance has been increased from only £10 per week under Labour to £18.30 today, an increase of 83 per cent and well ahead of the rise in prices.

Background

1. The mobility allowance is paid to people unable or virtually unable to walk because of physical disablement. It was raised to £18.30 per week in November 1982 (compared with £10 per week in November 1978) and in 1982-3 was received by 265,000 people at a cost of £240 million.

2. The cost of allowing all disabled people over 66, including those over 75, to claim mobility allowance for the first time would be prohibitive - probably around £450 million a year.

Labour Policy

The Labour Party is committed to paying the mobility allowance to existing recipients after the age of 75.

Viz. "We will ... continue to pay mobility allowance to existing recipients as they reach the age of 75" (Manifesto, p.18).

SPORTING LINKS WITH SOUTH AFRICAQuestion

What is the attitude of the Conservative Party towards the question of British sporting links with South Africa?

Suggested Answer

We have always supported the Gleneagles agreement which discourages contact or competition by national sporting teams or sportsmen with sportsmen or teams from South Africa or any other country where sports are organised on the basis of race or ethnic origin. It is a matter for individual sportsmen and the governing bodies of sport to decide whether or not to participate in sporting activities in South Africa. We do not accept blacklists of sportsmen who have competed in South Africa and will not act upon them.

Background

The 1977 Commonwealth Statement on apartheid in sport - commonly known as "The Gleneagles Agreement" - was agreed by Commonwealth heads of government at their biennial conference in 1977. It was reaffirmed in 1981. The statement is not a formal signed agreement but is an agreed declaration of intent by the Commonwealth heads. It says -

"They accepted it as the urgent duty of each of their Governments vigorously to combat the evil of apartheid by withholding any form of support for, and by taking every practical step to discourage contact or competition by their nations with sporting organisations, teams or sportsmen from South Africa or from any other country where sports are organised on the basis of race, colour or ethnic origin.

They fully acknowledged that it was for each Government to determine in accordance with its laws the methods by which it might best discharge these commitments."

Thus, the Government has made the governing bodies of sport aware of the Commonwealth Statement and of its support for it. The Minister for Sport also advises governing bodies of the Government's opposition, in accordance with its commitments under the Commonwealth Statement, to particular contacts.

The governing bodies are entirely independent and it is for them, or individual sportsmen and women, to decide whether or not to compete with South Africa. The Commonwealth's initiative was however preceded by the actions of many international governing bodies of sport e.g. Olympic games, association football, swimming, athletics, cricket in suspending South Africa from international competition.

Conservative Research Department

20.5.83

ISSUES RAISED BY THE 'UNIVERSE'

The 'Universe' newspaper has raised a number of issues relating to Catholics and education. Candidates may find the following suggested responses useful.

1. ISSUES PARTICULAR TO CATHOLICS1. The Dual SystemIssue Raised

That nothing will be done, directly or indirectly to upset the Dual System as it was enshrined in the 1944 Education Act and has since evolved.

Conservative Response

Conservatives are firmly committed to maintaining the independence enjoyed by Church schools since 1944. Nothing will be done, directly or indirectly, to compromise that independence.

2. School TransportIssue Raised

That the provisions of the 1944 Education Act should be mandatory on all Local Education Authorities.

Conservative Response

The provisions of the 1944 Education Act governing school transport are at present mandatory on all LEAs, and Conservatives have no plans to change this position.

3. De La Salle College, Middleton, ManchesterIssue Raised

That Teacher Training there be restored to the pre-November 1982 position, irrespective of the forthcoming High Court decision.

Conservative Response

Due to the rapid fall in the number of school children over recent years, there is now a considerable surplus of training places. Some colleges had to cease providing places. There were no easy choices. For a whole variety of very good reasons, including regional considerations, De La Salle was selected to be one of those to cease initial teacher training. It would be improper for the Conservatives, or any other Party, to make commitments on the future of De La Salle while the High Court case is pending.

/ Continued . . .

4. Historic Share of Teacher-Training places:

Issue Raised

That the 9.33% historic share be restored with an assurance of realistic and meaningful consultation before decisions are made which affect the future of our colleges.

Conservative Response

The Catholic Church's 'historic share' of teacher training places is one of the questions at issue in the High Court case on De La Salle. It would therefore be improper to make any further comments upon the matter at present.

II. GENERAL ISSUES

1. Sex Education

Issue Raised

The right of parents to be involved in the content of sex education which should be given in schools only with their consent and solely in the context of preparation for marriage and parenthood.

Conservative Response

Conservatives have always taken the view that parents have a right to be consulted about the form of sex education given to their children. Under our 1980 Education Act, schools have to provide parents with full information about such education. We are also concerned to ensure that sex education is directed explicitly towards preparing pupils for marriage and parenthood.

2. Voucher System

Issue Raised

How to finance any proposed system.

Conservative Response

The Conservative Party is not in any sense committed to a voucher scheme, however financed. No such scheme would be introduced without widespread consultation followed, if appropriate, by pilot projects on the part of those LEAs that expressed a wish to conduct them.

/ Continued . . .

3. Peace Studies

Issue Raised

Distinguishing their role as not synonymous with Political Studies.

Conservative Response

Conservatives believe that there is a great difference between 'Peace Studies' and such 'Political Studies' as are designed to provide unbiased information about the constitution and administration of Britain.

4. Independent Schools

Issue Raised

Their continued existence and the right of parents to choose.

Conservative Response

The Conservative Party is wholeheartedly committed to the preservation of independent schools.

5. R.E. and Religious Assembly

Issue Raised

A continuance of the provisions of the 1944 Education Act.

Conservative Response

Conservatives thoroughly support the provisions of the 1944 Education Act governing religious education and religious assembly.

Conservative Research Department

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CYPRUS

Question

What is the Conservative Party's policy on Cyprus?

Suggested Answer

It is one of the frustrations and tragedies of Europe and the Mediterranean that Cyprus should remain divided with foreign troops still stationed on the island. The presence of U.N. forces in Cyprus to keep the peace is a constant reminder of the suffering of the people, and the potential for a much more serious situation. It is the Conservative Party's fervent wish that a settlement should be achieved.

We believe that the intercommunal talks under the auspices of the Secretary-general of the United Nations must continue. It would not be in the interests of either the Greek or the Turkish communities if the talks were to break down. It would be most regrettable if recent statements by the Turkish-Cypriot leaders were to lead to an ending of the dialogue. At this stage, understanding not rhetoric is the path to a lasting settlement.

The Conservative Government has taken its responsibilities very seriously. Both through the channels of the EEC and the UN, we have sought to break the impasse and set Cyprus on the road to a long term reconciliation. We are the largest single contributor to the cost of the UN peace-keeping force in Cyprus, providing 24 million a year.

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QUESTIONNAIRE FROM THE FRIENDS OF CYPRUSQuestion 1

Should the Republic of Cyprus be reunited in accordance with United Nations resolutions?

Suggested Answer

Yes

Question 2

Do you think Britain has an obligation, as a guarantor power, to play a leading role in the search for a settlement of the Cyprus problem?

Suggested Answer

Yes

Question 3

What action do you think Britain should take? (Please tick one or several options as you wish.)

- (a) continue to support the intercommunal talks, which have been going on for many years
- (b) propose a new international initiative through
 - (a) the United Nations
 - (b) the NATO powers
 - (c) the EEC
 - (d) any other group
- (c) call for a conference of the Cypriot communities and the guarantor powers (Britain, Greece and Turkey)
- (d) exert diplomatic pressure on Turkey to withdraw its troops from Cyprus - and in what way?
- (e) take steps to promote rapprochement between Greek and Turkish Cypriots
- (f) take no independent action, but endorse the efforts of the UN Secretary-General
- (g) take no action
- (h) any other steps (see answer to Q4)

Question 4

Do you think Britain should continue to provide personnel and support for the UN peacekeeping force in Cyprus?

Suggested Answer

Yes. We are the largest single contributor towards the cost of the UN peace-keeping force in Cyprus, providing £24 million a year.

/ Continued . . .

Question 5

Do you think that all those who left Cyprus as refugees after the 1974 war and are now in Britain should be allowed to remain here indefinitely?

Suggested Answer

Yes, for all who were displaced in 1974 and have complied with U.K. immigration regulations. Other individual cases will be looked at sympathetically on their merits.

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Nine Questions for the 9thRoyal College of Nursing QuestionnaireQuestion

1. The National Health Service is based on the principle that there should be a comprehensive system of health care available to all who require it, which is free at the point of delivery. The present Government has seriously questioned the internal structure and funding of this service. What assurances has your Party made that it does not intend to erode the internal ideals of the Service?

Suggested Answer

Speaking at the Party Conference last year the Prime Minister said for the Conservative Party.

"Let me make one thing absolutely clear. The NHS is safe with us. As I said in the House of Commons on December 1st last: 'The principle that adequate health care should be provided for all regardless of ability to pay, must be the foundation of any arrangements for financing the Health Service'. We stand by that" (Brighton, 8th October 1982)

A clear demonstration of our commitment to the NHS is the fact that expenditure on the National Health Service will have doubled from £7,750m in 1978-9 to £15,500m in 1983-4. Even after allowing for the rise in prices, this is an increase in real terms of 17.5%. The Government is not only maintaining the ideals of the NHS but also believes that existing resources must be used more effectively. A number of measures have already been taken, which have improved patient care, and further steps will be taken to make the NHS as efficient as possible.

Question

2. There has been a major expansion of private health care schemes in recent years. What are your Party's policies with regard to the relationship between the NHS and the development of the independent sector? What steps would you take to ensure that development is complementary rather than parasitic?

Suggested Answer

Conservatives believe that private health care has a role to play in contributing to the provision of total health care. Private medicine relieves NHS hospitals of burdens that would otherwise fall on them. It also yields valuable resources which the NHS can use to further expand patient services; the estimated revenue from pay beds in England in 1981-2 was £52.5 million. The

/ Continued . . .

Government's policy is to build on the partnership already existing between the two sectors and especially on the exchange of facilities and ideas.

Mr Fowler, Secretary of State for Social Services has said,

"We do not accept for one moment that to support the private sector is to attack the public sector."

Question

3. What is your Party's position in relation to privatisation within the NHS and proposals to 'contract out' ancillary services? Should cost-effectiveness be the only criterion when patients and NHS employees are likely to be affected by such proposals?

Suggested Answer

The Government believes that the use of private contractors in the NHS provides a useful element in allowing hospitals to maintain standards whilst at the same time reducing costs. The proposals which the Secretary of State for Social Services put forward in a draft circular require health authorities to test the cost-effectiveness of their domestic cleaning, catering and laundry services by putting them out to tender. Whichever contractor, whether the in-house service or a private, can deliver the cheapest service whilst maintaining standards, should be used. Any money saved will be spent on nursing staff, medical equipment and other forms of direct patient care.

Question

4. What commitment has your Party made to the principle that there should be total equality of access to, and delivery of, health care services for all, and what policies has it proposed to remedy the current inequalities (as demonstrated by the Report published in 1980 by the DHSS working group on inequalities in health, Chairman Sir Douglas Black)?

Suggested Answer

It has already been stated in question 1 that Conservatives believe the ideals of the NHS should be preserved. The Government is committed to reducing as far as possible disparities between different regions.

The recommendations of the Resources Allocations Working Party (RAWP) have been accepted as the best measure of deciding the needs and subsequent resource allocation of each region. During the period of office of this Government the disparities between regions have been reduced. In 1979-80 the individual regional

/ Continued . . .

health authorities ranged from 13% above to 8.8% below their target share of expenditure; by 1983-84 these will have been improved to 10.7% and 6.4% respectively.

Our Manifesto pledges

"We shall continue to make extra provision for those parts of the country in the North and Midlands which have always been comparatively short of resources." (p.27)

Question

5. Given the commitment to preventive health care, what policies has your Party adopted to improve primary health care services, in particular in the inner cities?

Suggested Answer

The Government's policy is to promote the development of primary health care services. Compared with 1978, we now employ 6,500 more doctors and dentists in England, including some 1,700 general practitioners and 1,400 general dental practitioners, and the average list size of GPs has been reduced. I am also glad to see that, in 1981, about 375,000 more people were visited in their own homes by district nurses compared with 1978 under Labour.

We are also making special finance - more than £3 million - available for the development of primary care in the inner cities. The initiative is the result of our consideration of the Acheson report on primary health care in inner London and of the Harding report, both of which were published last year.

Question

6. Last year the nursing profession accepted a two year pay agreement which was substantially less than the original claim, on the understanding that a new method of determining pay through a pay review body would be operational by April '84. What is your Party's commitment to implementing this review body?

Suggested Answer

The Government gave a clear commitment as part of the two year settlement of the 1982 NHS pay dispute to establish a review body to report on the pay of nurses and other allied professions by April 1 1984. This pledge is confirmed in the Manifesto.

/ Continued . . .

Question

7. The last available set of statistics (MSC September 1982) showed that the number of unemployed qualified nursing staff was 10,793. By contrast, a recruitment freeze imposed by cut-backs in funding has resulted in severe staff shortages and even ward closures in some areas. What steps would your Party take to resolve this anomaly?

Suggested Answer

The Government is proud of its record in employing 45,000 in England (56,000 in Great Britain) more nurses and midwives in 1982 than in 1978. The employment of those extra nurses has alleviated staff shortages throughout Great Britain. However, no Government can guarantee there will be no ward closures. Such decisions depend on the changing needs of localities, the budgeting of resources as well as the level of staffing. It is worth noting that about 70% of NHS expenditure goes in staff pay.

Question

8. Demographic changes will mean that the number of people over 65 will have increased to more than nine million by the end of this century. What plans has your Party made to meet the extra demands this will inevitably make on the NHS?

Suggested Answer

The Government recognises the increasing burden imposed on the NHS by the growing number of elderly. We have doubled expenditure on the NHS (Question 1) and we have increased services by about 7.5%, more than matching demographic needs. The requirements of old people will, of course, continue to be one of our priorities.

Question

9. All Parties have paid tribute to the 'no strike' pledge of the Royal College of Nursing. What policies has your Party actually adopted to translate this 'lip service' into tangible reaction to this commitment?

Suggested Answer

I refer to the question 6 on the Nurses Pay Review Body. The Government promised to establish such a body in recognition of the special position and dedication especially exhibited during the NHS dispute last year.

BRITISH INSURANCE BROKERS ASSOCIATION

Candidates who receive a letter (containing two questions) from this Association may find the following answers helpful.

Question 1.

Invites candidates to agree/disagree that, in considering how best to ensure high standards in the financial world, the interests of the consumer should be paramount.

Suggested Answer

It is clearly important that the interests of the users of financial services should be safeguarded particularly where, as in the case of many insurance policies, large sums are invested over long periods.

Question 2.

Invites candidates to agree/disagree that an important step to achieving this would be to require by law that all insurance intermediaries should meet standards at least as high as those laid down for insurance brokers.

Suggested Answer

Further self-regulation is an alternative to statutory regulation. The principal insurance associations (the British Insurance Association and the Life Offices Association) have issued Codes of selling practices for non-registered intermediaries. The Life Assurance Association last year proposed a self-regulatory licensing scheme for life insurance salesmen which is currently being considered by the industry.

The Department of Trade has commissioned Professor Gower to carry out a review of investor protection; his report, which will cover the selling of life insurance, is expected later this year.

Background

1. With the exception of insurance brokers, insurance intermediaries are not subject to statutory regulation. The Insurance Brokers (Registration) Act 1977 created a voluntary system of statutory regulation supervised by the Insurance Brokers Registration Council (the only insurance intermediaries who are required to register with the Council are those who choose to call themselves insurance brokers).

/ Continued . . .

2.

2. A Green Paper issued in 1977 envisaged further legislation to limit insurance selling to a) registered insurance brokers, b) insurance companies or their employees and c) agents of named insurance companies. This would mean that all intermediaries who are not agents of an insurance company would have to register or go out of business. The drawbacks of this approach are:-

- the inflexibility of statutory regulation;
- the cost of additional regulatory machinery;
- restriction of competition;
- contraction of the services available to the public.

3. Self-regulation is an alternative route, and is being considered carefully as part of the Gower review.

Conservative Research Department

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THE SELF-EMPLOYED

Guidance Note

This note sets out the main financial measures, taken by this Government, which assist the self-employed.

Suggested Answer

1. Retirement annuity Relief: the 1980 Budget relaxed the limits on the amount of money that could be put aside through self-employed retirement annuity premiums. The percentage of net relevant earnings was increased from 15 per cent to 17½ per cent and the overriding limit of £3,000 p.a. for relief was removed altogether. Limits for older age groups were also raised by 2½ per cent.
2. Capital Gains Tax: retirement relief doubled to £100,000 in 1983 which helps self-employed small businessmen who sell their own businesses on retirement.
3. Self-employed national insurance contribution rates have been held back below the level derived from the conventional formula in both 1982/83 and 1983/84
4. As a result of a UK initiative, since July 1982 the European Community's social security regulation has applied to self-employed people and extends to them the right to health care and social security benefits when living, working or staying in other European Community countries.
5. Lower rates of income tax on higher earnings have helped the better-off self-employed, as has the cutting of the top marginal rate on investment income which helps people who sell their businesses in order to retire and live on the proceeds.

Conservative Research Department

25.3.'83

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OCCASIONAL LICENCES

Question

Has the Conservative Government given clubs, voluntary organisations, etc., the right to apply for an occasional licence?

Suggested Answer

The Licensing (Occasional Permissions) Act 1983 received Royal Assent on 9th May 1983. This measure was a Private Member's Bill proposed by Conservative MP, David Atkinson. It states that voluntary organisations and their branches should be permitted to apply for a maximum of 4 occasional licences a year for the legitimate sale of alcohol.

Background

The law as it applied previously was felt to be very confusing. Voluntary organisations were not permitted to sell alcohol at their functions; the practice followed was to sell raffle tickets or the like to cover costs and then supply drinks which were nominally free. Although technically this was not allowed under the law, normally this was thought acceptable. The Licensing (Occasional Permissions) Act will not affect public house trade; its effect is to put current practice onto a legal footing.

Conservative Research Department

24.5.83

WORLD DEVELOPMENT MOVEMENT

Candidates who receive this questionnaire (which differs from other sets of questions circulated by this group) may find the following answers helpful.

Question 1.

Do you believe that the next British Government should reach the UN target of providing 0.7% of our GNP as official aid to developing countries by the end of five years of office?

Suggested Answer

See Q. of P. 135 (first answer)

Question 2.

What changes ~~to~~ do you support to improve the quality of Britain's aid to ensure that it provides more help than at present to the poorest people in the Third World?

Suggested Answer

In the last four years there has been an improvement in the quality of our aid. This is particularly the case with bilateral aid to the poorest countries. This enables us to work more closely on a Government to Government basis and thus have a better understanding of an individual country's problems.

Questions 3.

What changes in British policy would you like to see introduced to enable the poorest people in the Third World to increase their food production?

Suggested Answer

The Conservative Party hopes to see a shift away from direct food aid to agricultural aid, except in the case of emergencies. Only by this process will the underlying reason for hunger be eradicated.

Question 4.

What policy do you think Britain should pursue on importing more manufactured goods from, (a) all Third World countries; (b) the poorest countries within the Third World?

/ Continued . . .

WORLD DEVELOPMENT MOVEMENTSuggested Answer

The Conservative Party policy is to pursue the aims of a fair and free trading system. Import controls, as advanced by the Labour Party, would prove most damaging for the 3rd World. Even if selective, their very arbitrary nature would introduce uncertainty into the minds of the poor countries and thus lessen their chances to plan these trading strategies. We do need also to give a measure of protection to some of our own industries (e.g. textiles) which may come under very heavy pressure from low cost supplies, made possible by low wages in developing countries.

Question 5.

What steps do you think Britain should take to stabilise the price of commodities sold by Third World countries or to compensate for loss of earnings resulting from lower prices?

Suggested Answer

Q. of P. 135, Question 3

Question 6.

How can we ensure that British-based Multinational Companies apply the same ethical standards in the Third World as they do in this country?

Suggested Answer

We ensure that Multinationals operate ethically by providing domestic legislation that is appropriate. This attempts to achieve a balance between what is beneficial for the Third World Countries and what is not restrictive to trade.

Question 7.

Do you believe that Britain should sign the Convention on the Law of the Sea and so ensure that the resources of the World's oceans remain the common heritage of mankind?

Suggested Answer

A simple yes/no answer (which is requested) is inappropriate.

1. The Convention is open for signature for two years from December 1982. Some parts of it, e.g., on navigation, the continental shelf and pollution, are helpful, but the provisions on deep sea mining, including the transfer of technology, are not acceptable to us, as they fail to safeguard our interests. While we wish to see generally agreed provisions for regulating marine matters, we could not join in a sea bed regime on the present terms.

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WORLD DEVELOPMENT MOVEMENT

2. Our aim is to obtain satisfactory improvements in deep sea mining. We are working with other industrialized countries (including those who have signed) to this end. So far, 123 delegations, mainly from the developing world, have signed it. We and a number of other industrialized countries have not. We believe that signature now would not be helpful to the chances of achieving the necessary changes if a workable mining regime is to be achieved.

Question 8.

Do you believe that the International Monetary Fund should lend money to Third World countries on less stringent terms than at present?

Suggested Answer

A simple yes/no answer (which is requested) does not suffice:

The IMF is correct in applying certain conditions to loans it makes. They take into account the economic situation and are aimed, not at hindering, but helping countries in need. In most cases they are aimed at correcting the reasons for the economic difficulties. Britain was in this position under the Labour Government when it had to borrow from the IMF. The poorest countries have the additional facilities supplied by the World Bank, IDA (International Development Association) and STABEX (for poor commodity producers).

Question 9.

Should developing countries have a larger voting power in International institutions like the International Monetary Fund at the expense of industrialised countries like Britain?

Suggested Answer

The existing arrangements have proved entirely adequate. As the 'industrialised' countries increase their contributions to the 'Bretton Woods' institutions, it is not unreasonable for them to retain their voting power. The OECD countries make voting decisions on the basis of what will benefit the Third World.

Question 10.

Do you support the resumption of a government programme for funding development education projects in the UK?

Suggested Answer

See Q. of P. 184 (third answer)

MPs' PAYQuestion

How is it possible to justify the proposed increase of Members of Parliament's salaries by 30.9%?

Answer

By long-standing tradition, salaries of Members of Parliament are determined by MPs themselves on a free vote: though the Government of the day expresses a clear view about the size of the increase which it regards as appropriate. Neither the House of Commons nor the Government has endorsed the increase of 30.9% which has recently been proposed by the wholly independent Top Salaries Review Body. On the contrary, Mrs Thatcher commenting on their recommendations (which also proposed large increases for members of the Cabinet) has said: "So far as the proposed salaries of Cabinet Ministers are concerned, members of the Cabinet take the view that the increases proposed are of a magnitude which they could not possibly accept, and trust that Members of Parliament will take a similar view about recommendations affecting their own salaries" (Hansard, 12th May 1983, WA col. 434-5).

Background

1. An MP's current annual salary is £14,510 supplemented by an allowance of £8,820 for research and secretarial expenses, and a number of other allowances. (For full details see Campaign Guide, p.326).
2. Under the last Government the real value of the MP's salary declined sharply; only a small increase took place during that period of very high inflation. At the start of this Government, MPs accepted a report from the Top Salaries Review Body, recommending a salary of £12,000. However, this new salary was introduced in three stages, the last of which was held back until June 1981. The further increases which have taken place under this Government have not been sufficient to compensate for the effects of inflation.

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QUESTIONS ON DISARMAMENT

ARMS CONTROL AND EAST/WEST RELATIONS

Candidates who receive questions along the lines of the following may find the suggested answers helpful.

Question 1

What is your position on the question of "no first use" of nuclear weapons?

Suggested Answer

I support NATO's pledge never to use any of its weapons, nuclear or conventional, in Europe, except in response to attack.

Question 2

Do you support the Soviet proposal that the NATO and Warsaw Pact powers should sign a treaty of mutual non-aggression?

Suggested Answer

It is important to remember that we and our NATO allies are already committed to non-use of force, except in self-defence, through the Charter of the United Nations, the Helsinki Final Act and through NATO's pledge referred to in the previous answer. How, in the light of these treaties (of which Russia is also a signatory) can the Soviet Union justify the invasion of Afghanistan?

Question 3

Do you support the immediate ratification of the SALT II treaty?

Suggested Answer

There is no immediate prospect of the SALT II treaty being ratified. The priority at present, so far as control of strategic weapons is concerned, is to secure an agreement in the current Strategic Arms Reduction Talks (START).

Question 4

- a) Are you in favour of the inclusion of British nuclear weapons in the Geneva negotiations?
- b) If elected to Parliament will you support a nuclear-free-zone in Europe?

Suggested Answer

- a) No. The British nuclear deterrent, which is an independent, strategic force of the last resort, is not appropriate for inclusion in the present negotiations on intermediate range weapons.

- 2 -

- b) No. This is an entirely unrealistic concept in existing circumstances.

Question 5

- a) Are you in favour of freezing plans to deploy new nuclear weapons in Europe?
- b) If elected to Parliament will you oppose the building and operation of Cruise missile sites in Britain and the deployment of Trident missiles by Britain?

Suggested Answer

- a) I support the 'zero option', which would mean no Cruise missiles, no Pershing missiles and no SS20s. But if the Soviet Union will not agree to this, then I support the deployment of Cruise and Pershing missiles.
- b) No.

Question 6

Are you in favour of accepting the Soviet proposal for an all-embracing ban on nuclear weapon tests?

Suggested Answer

The Conservative Government has continued to seek a comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. It has taken an active part in the examination of the issues of verification and compliance, which the 1977/80 trilateral negotiations failed to resolve. We will maintain our efforts to negotiate an international detection and identification system which will guard against the possibility of covert nuclear weapon tests.

Question 7

- a) Are you in favour of closing down all foreign military bases?
- b) If elected to Parliament will you oppose American military bases in the UK? Will you support the recall of British forces from all overseas bases, including bases in West Germany, other than those forces belonging to UN peacekeeping contingents?

Suggested Answer

- a) No.
- b) No.

Question 8

The foreign ministers of NATO recently issued a communique declaring that "mutually advantageous trade with the East on commercially sound terms contributes to constructive East-West relations".

- 3 -

- a) Do you agree with this?
- b) If elected to Parliament will you work for the extension of such East-West trade?
- c) Will you work for the extension of mutually advantageous East-West links in the cultural, sporting and scientific fields, as a contribution to the renewal of detente?

Suggested Answer

- a) Yes. But see next answer.
- b) and c)

The extension of East-West links in the trading, cultural, sporting and scientific fields cannot fail to be affected by the future conduct of the Soviet Union. Soviet aggression in Afghanistan and Soviet support for the repression of Solidarity in Poland have had a severe effect on East-West detente. Nor will we supply goods or technology to the East which will increase strategic/military capabilities.

Question 9

If elected to Parliament will you work, as a matter of urgency, for the full inclusion of nuclear weapons within the prohibitions of legal instruments, such as the Hague Conventions of 1907, the Geneva Conventions of 1949, the Geneva Protocols of 1977 and the Nuremburg Principles of 1950?

Suggested Answer

No. The priority is to secure practical multilateral arms control agreements at Geneva.

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PEOPLE AND WORK UNIT REVIEW

Questionnaire to Parliamentary Candidates in Wales

Question 1. Relates specifically to Gwent, and should be answered from Wales.

Question 2. Unemployment involves more than losing your job. The demoralising loss of personal dignity and independence are often caused more by the poverty people face whilst unemployed than the lack of paid work. The payment of benefits is designed to enable people to survive between jobs and it could be said that, with over 1 million people currently unemployed for over a year the system is not equipped to deal with the present situation. There is already a generation growing up on supplementary benefit. What priority would you want to see given to the revision of the benefits system in the light of the ever-increasing numbers of long-term unemployed?

Suggested Answer

The Conservatives are deeply concerned about the present level of unemployment. The Government's aim has been to achieve a balance in their policies so as to extend adequate help to those without work as well as creating the conditions for economic recovery so that industry can create real jobs for the future.

Any reform of the benefit system would inevitably incur great expense. After a year, those who are unemployed become eligible for supplementary benefit. To extend unemployment benefit beyond one year would cost about £450 million (based on 1982-3 levels).

Question 3. Do you believe there is any hope of a return to what we used to know as full employment?

Suggested answer

a) Real and lasting jobs depend on customers, not Government; and customers depend on management and workforce making products which people want to buy. Yet for over twenty years, relatively high inflation, overmanning, restrictive practices, strikes and pay which bore no relation to productivity, had steadily eroded the competitiveness of British industry. British goods were priced out of markets, and British workers out of jobs.

/ Continued . . .

- b) Under this Government, industry has become more competitive. Inflation is at its lowest level for 15 years. Common sense has returned to pay bargaining. There are fewer strikes than at any time since the war. Overmanning and restrictive practices have been rooted out. Productivity in manufacturing has risen 16 per cent since the end of 1980. Labour's tax on jobs - the National Insurance Surcharge - has been cut by 2%, helping company cash flow by about £2 billion a year. Bureaucracy has been cut back - 5 million forms are being scrapped.
- c) The Government has also acted to help those hit hardest by this process of economic transformation. Over £2 billion is being spent on Special Employment and Training measures this year, bringing help to three quarters of a million people.

Question 4: How desirable do you regard local control of economic development, eg. through County Councils, voluntary organisations etc. and how do you think it could be effected?

Suggested Answer

1. This Government has strongly favoured local initiatives to encourage economic development. We have greatly increased Government funding of the Regional Development Agencies, made contributions to Enterprise Agencies tax-deductable, set up Enterprise Zones in unemployment blackspots, and introduced over 100 measures to help small businesses. We have increased expenditure on Regional Development Grants, and used selective assistance and the Government's many schemes for innovation to help the regions to diversify and broaden their economic bases.
2. Conservatives utterly reject the kind of rigid, bureaucratic control favoured by Labour.

Question: 5 Two barriers that still exist to prevent women achieving real equality are:
a) lack of nursery facilities
b) official insistence on the status of women as dependents, especially relating to financial matters such as State Benefits, taxation laws and pension rights.

Do you feel that significant changes could and/or should be made in these two areas?

/ Continued . . .

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Suggested answer

- a) The Government recognises the importance of pre-school provision. It helps the child and the working mother. Under the Conservatives between 1978-1982 there has been an expansion in the number of full-time and part-time pupils under 5 years of age in maintained nursery schools and nursery classes in primary schools of some 34,000. To promote day-care provision for the Under 5's the Department of Health and Social Services is providing £2 million in each of the next three financial years for voluntary schemes and projects aimed at helping families with pre-school children. The Government will continue to encourage the present variety of provision.
- b) The present Government has tackled a number of fundamental issues relating to the status of women in both the social services and taxation matters.

In particular changes under the Social Security Act 1980 recognises that it is not uncommon for women to go out to work as the breadwinner of the family. Under this Act a married woman will by November 1983 be able to draw additions to a wide variety of social benefits on the same basis as a man.

The Conservatives recognise the income tax system probably offers the most serious outstanding example of inequality between men and women in Britain. In the Green Paper on 'The Taxation of Husband and Wife' (December 1980) the problems were thoroughly examined. The varying responses to it are now being considered. If the party is re-elected, it will publish a consultative document setting out the implications of the various reforms.

Conservative Research Department

24 May 1983

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OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Question: 1. Why has our spending on foreign aid fallen? The foreign aid budget for 1982/83 represents 0.86% of UK Government spending. In 1978/80 it was 1.1%. Do we as a party think this is an adequate figure?

Suggested answer

No one single standard exists by which the adequacy of aid can be measured. The bare ODA figures should not be taken in isolation. Under the Conservative Government, Labour's exchange controls were lifted, thus allowing much needed investment to flow to the Third World.

Question: 2. How much aid is in a bilateral (Government to Government) form?

Suggested answer

Approximately 67 per cent of our total aid budget is bilateral. It is regarded as particularly effective because it can be directed towards the needs of the country in question. It also draws Britain closer to the countries of the Third World with the result that we increase our understanding of their problems.

Question: 3. Why is so much aid spent on grandiose schemes rather than small developments?

Suggested answer

The ODA seeks to achieve the most effective balance. In the Least Developed Countries (LLDCs) we provide assistance for small cottage industries, but in the Less Developed Countries (LDCs) that have gone beyond the first stage of development we give aid to more advanced schemes. An example of the latter would be Hydro Electric Power.

Question: 4. Why has the Development Education Fund been abolished?

Suggested answer

The Government recognises that there is a need in the UK for improved understanding of development issues, and acknowledges the valuable work done in this area by voluntary agencies, Church groups, teachers and the media. However, the Government does not accept that official aid funds should be used for this purpose. The priority must be to spend aid money in developing countries.

GENERAL ELECTION 1983

Question of Policy: 211

Question 5. The Brandt Report

Suggested Answer

See Q. of P. no 183 (first answer)

Conservative Research Department

25.5.83

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ABORTION

Questionnaire from the National Abortion Campaign

- Question:
1. Do you support the recommendation of the Royal Commission on the National Health Service that health authorities should aim to increase their NHS abortion facilities to cover 75% of the abortions carried out on resident women in each region? If yes, will you make a commitment to implementing this in your election campaign?
 2. Do you support a change in the abortion law which would make abortion facilities mandatory on the NHS, provided by sympathetic staff, and with self-referral by women to reduce the unnecessary delays in obtaining an NHS abortion?
 3. Do you support a woman's right to decide to have an abortion, and will you change the law accordingly? Will you oppose restrictive legislation?
 4. Do you support the extension of the abortion law in Britain to Northern Ireland?
 6. Do you support Government-funded, independent research on safer methods of birth control, including contraception, abortion and sterilisation methods?

Abortion is a subject on which we do not have a Party Policy as it is a matter for individual conscience. Candidates should draft their own replies.

- Question:
5. Do you oppose any cuts in the provision of family planning clinic services on the National Health Service?

Suggested answer

We believe that family planning provision and family guidance are very important, and that the NHS should continue to provide adequate services in the future.

Background

There were in 1981 (the latest year for which figures are available) 1744 family planning clinics in the NHS. Since 1977 there has been a decreasing trend in those services which reflects a drop in demand. It has been suggested people prefer to seek family planning advice from their own doctor and from independent clinics.

/ Continued . . .

Question: 7. Do you support the decision of the current Minister of Health to refuse a long-term licence for and wider availability of Depo Provera?

Suggested answer

It is quite right as a matter of principle that whereas a Minister may take advice on any matter from a variety of sources it is his or her ultimate responsibility to exercise a judgement in the widest public interest. The Minister had no objections to the opening of a hearing against the decision. His final decision will be taken when the appeal panel has reported.

Background

- 1) Depo Provera is an injectable long-term contraceptive which gives protection for up to 3 months.
- 2) It is used in British hospitals at the moment, for example, new mothers who are found to be susceptible to German Measles.
- 3) Upjohn Ltd, the manufacturers of the drug demanded a public hearing (the first of its kind to be held under the Medicine Act 1968) into their appeal against the decision of the Minister of Health to refuse a licence for long-term contraceptive use.

Question: 8. Do you support the provision of funds for interpreters for women whose first language is not English in all NHS facilities?

Suggested answer

We believe that all patients, whether male or female who have difficulties with English, using NHS hospitals or who visit a GP should be assisted as far as is practical so that doctors can properly understand their needs. However, it would be impossible, except at prohibitive costs, to provide comprehensive translation services for all the many languages of those using our hospitals.

Question: 9. Will you make a commitment to initiate training courses in provision of all safe birth control methods for GPs who are supposed to provide those services?

Suggested answer

over the page . . .

Suggested answer

There is already a legislative commitment for general practitioners to train in family planning and family guidance as part of their vocational training before registration. There is an additional course available to all registered GP's on contraceptive and counselling methods which lead to a certificate from the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists.

Question: 10. Will you make a commitment to stop cuts in National Health Service hospitals and facilities and support better NHS provision, without charges?

Suggested answer

The Government has greatly increased spending on the NHS. In 1978-79 revenue spending on the NHS was £7750 million; by 1983-84 it is expected to total £15,500 million. This will represent an increase of 17.5% in real terms. This is more than adequate to cover the extra costs of caring for a rising number of elderly people and for medical advance.

However the service still has to evolve to match changes in the pattern of population and in the provision of medical services. This will lead - as it always has in the past - to the closure of older hospitals and their replacement by newer ones. Some areas have a surplus of facilities for some services and a shortage in others so that for example, funds can be released by closing surplus beds in acute surgical wards and devoted to improving services for the mentally ill or the aged. There always have been closures of hospitals in the NHS and there always will be as the service develops but no single closure is any evidence of a 'cut'.

The changes referred to are assumed to be prescription, dental and optical charges. These charges have increased under this Government but there are very wide exemptions for anyone who cannot afford to pay so that 70% of all medicines dispensed by chemists are free of all charges. Large categories of people are exempt from prescription charges including children under 16, pensioners and those in receipt of supplementary benefit. The Prime Minister has made clear that no responsible Government can give a definite reassurance that charges will never be increased in the future. However the Conservatives have no plan to introduce new charges such as for visits to hospitals or to the doctor.

Background

For a note on charges see Question of Policy No 38

Conservative Research Department

25 May 1983

MEDICAL RESEARCH

Question

Why have the Conservatives failed to increase spending on medical research?

Suggested Answer

The Government has kept spending on Science at a level sufficient to ensure that major programmes of advanced research can proceed. A large part of the 'Science Budget' is used to support the work of the Research Councils. In allocating the substantial funds involved the Government has broadly followed the advice of the Advisory Board for the Research Councils.

Spending on the Research Councils in 1982-3 amounted to £464 m. Of this, the Medical Research Council received over £107 m. In addition to the large sums coming from the DES science budget, the Department of Health and Social Services spent £76 m between 1979-80 and 1982-3 funding medical research projects, specifically related to the provision of health services in England and Wales.

Conservative Research Department

25.5.83

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Firearms certificates - fees

Question

Are the fees for firearms certificates, especially those for shotguns, going to be increased?

Suggested Answer

There are no immediate proposals for an increase in the fees charged for firearms certificates.

Background

Working on the basis that fees should recover the full costs of operating the licencing system, the Home Office proposed to increase firearms certificate fees in 1982. Following representations, the Home Secretary decided that, as a result of the differences in costings of administration of the issue of certificates between different police forces, further work was needed to examine the issue fully. A joint working party of the Home Office and the Association of Chief Police Officers was set up on 28th July 1982, and any decision upon the level of fees will be considered in the light of their report.

Conservative Research Department

25.5.83

INCLUDED TODAY:-

- 175 Please Replace Question of Policy No. 175 - South Africa dated 21.5.83 with Question of Policy No. 175 dated 27.5.83.
- 215 The Unification Church (Moonies)
- 216 The Horticultural Industry
- 217 Voting Rights for EEC Citizens
- 218 Widows and Tax
- 219 Transport Subsidies
- 220 Seat Belts
- 221 "Fares Fair" in London
- 222 London Regional Transport Authority
- 223 Railway Investment
- 224 Commuter Services
- 225 Heavy Lorries
- 226 Israel
- 227 Official Secrets and Freedom of Information

SOUTH AFRICAQuestion

What is the Conservative Party's policy on relations between Britain and South Africa?

Suggested Answer

1. Our policy towards South Africa is directed towards encouraging peaceful change there, both for its own sake and to promote and protect British interests as well as those of the people of Southern Africa generally.
2. We condemn apartheid and the repressive measures used to enforce it. We fully comply with certain internationally agreed constraints on our relations with South Africa, notably the UN Arms Embargo and the Gleneagles Agreement on sporting contacts. We wish to see progress towards a form of government in South Africa based on the consent of the South African people as a whole.
3. We believe in a positive policy of contact and of using our extensive links with South Africa to foster peaceful change. We are opposed to ostracism and the isolation of South Africa through wider sanctions, which we believe to be ineffective in securing such change.

Background

We export over £1 billion worth of goods to South Africa a year, and 75,000 jobs are dependent on this trade.

Conservative Research Department

27.5.83

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THE UNIFICATION CHURCH (MOONIES)

Candidates may be asked for their opinion on the charitable status of the Unification Church. The following may be helpful as background to the issue.

Background

The Moonies have set up two charitable trusts, "The Holy Spirit Association for the Unification of World Christianity" and "The Sun Myung Moon Foundation". Much publicity has been devoted to aspects of the Moonies' activities which many people think are incompatible with the principles of charity. These views were expressed by the Daily Mail. The Unification Church brought proceedings against the Mail, but lost its action in both the High Court and the Court of Appeal.

The Charity Commissioners have taken the view that it was not appropriate, within the existing law, for the Commission to take action against the two trusts of the Unification Church. It is felt that there is nothing illegal about the way that these trusts are drawn up.

The current position is that it is for the Attorney-General to decide whether in his opinion the Moonies constitute a charitable organization. If he concludes that the current law makes the removal of the Moonies from the Charities Register possible, he will take action through the courts to do this.

Otherwise, the Government will need to consider whether abuse of charity law by the Moonies and perhaps others is sufficiently well established to justify a change in the law.

Conservative Research Department

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London SW1

AGRICULTURE

THE HORTICULTURAL INDUSTRY

Guidance Note

Apple and Pear Sector: In the late 1970's, the French apple industry was taking a steadily increasing share of the UK market. Through the efforts of Peter Walker, Minister of Agriculture, in 1980 the Apple and Pear Development Council launched the 'Kingdom Cox' campaign for quality apples with the aid of a £400,000 grant from the Government. This campaign has been extremely successful.

In 1982, a grant scheme was introduced by the Government for a five year period to enable owners to replant their apple and pear orchards (22.5 per cent for apples and 32.5 per cent for pears).

The Dutch fuel problem: Dutch horticulturalists have had an advantage over other European growers for many years because of the low cost of their fuel (North Sea Gas) for heating purposes.

Agreement was reached in April 1982 in the Council of Ministers for Dutch fuel prices to be brought up to the EEC average by April 1983. The Dutch sought a postponement of this increase but as a result of the pressure exerted by Mr Peter Walker, it came into effect on 1 April this year. In the meantime, the Government has given aid of £6.2 million to the UK industry to offset this advantage hitherto enjoyed by the Dutch.

Heating conversion grants: The 1982 Budget, the Chancellor announced aid worth £25 million for the horticultural industry to convert its boiler heating systems to coal firing.

Conservative Research Department

27.5.83

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London SW1

VOTING RIGHTS FOR EEC CITIZENS

Question: What is the view of the Conservative Party on the extension of voting rights to EEC citizens resident in the UK for three years or more?

Suggester answer

It would not be appropriate to consider conferring voting rights on the citizens of other EEC countries resident here for elections to the European Parliament until agreement has been reached on a common electoral system. As regards internal, domestic elections, decisions must await the outcome of the negotiations now being conducted within a working group of the EEC Council of Ministers. Major changes in electoral law have traditionally been preceded by discussions between the parties. For its part, the Conservative Party has made clear that it is in favour of extending the right to vote in Britain itself to all British citizens resident outside the UK.

Conservative Research Department

27 May 1983

WIDOWS AND TAX

Question: What is the Conservative policy towards the taxation of widows?

Suggested answer

In 1980, to help all widows who face financial difficulties in the period after bereavement, the Government introduced a new allowance by which the married tax allowance continues to operate for the remainder of the fiscal year in which a widow has lost her husband. In 1983, this allowance, the Widows' Bereavement Allowance, was extended to cover the whole of the fiscal year after the husband's death.

In addition, the Labour Government, under pressure from the Conservatives exempted half of the War Widows' Pension from taxation. This Government went further. In the 1979 Budget, War Widows' Pensions were entirely exempted from tax.

Supplementary points

Widows have benefited, as have other elderly people from above inflation increases in pensions. Pensions under the Conservatives have increased by 68 per cent compared with price increases of 61 per cent.

The £10 Christmas bonus has been paid each year under the Conservatives.

Heating additions have been increased in real terms and are paid automatically to householders aged 70 or over who are in receipt of supplementary benefit.

Gas and electricity standing charges have been limited to not more than half anyone's total bill.

Conservative Research Department

27 May 1983

TRANSPORT SUBSIDIESQuestion

Is the Government against Transport subsidy?

Suggested answer

No. We accept the need for reasonable levels of financial support, and our Transport Act 1983 gives legal protection to reasonable subsidy levels. Record levels of subsidy are being paid under this government to urban bus and underground services. However, we do not believe that local authorities should be unfettered in their ability to spend whatever they like of their ratepayers' money in subsidies to travellers. Extravagant policies of this sort do not in practice attract people in larger numbers away from cars, and tend to favour the better off, who travel more, at the expense of the poor. Rate rises bear particularly heavily on hard pressed business ratepayers who may have to lay off staff to pay their rates bill. That is why we have made it clear in the Transport Act, that local authorities risk legal challenge if they spend above protected levels. The Act will also provide stability for transport operators and enable them to plan sensible investment programmes.

Background1. The Transport Act 1983:

- i) requires subsidies to be justified in plans which set out costs and benefits and give proper regard to the ratepayer;
- ii) gives protected levels of expenditure to influence local authorities' proposals for subsidies.

2. Labour's Transport White Paper (Cmd 6836) argued:

"Subsidy should be paid only where there is a clear requirement for it to meet social needs in transport that would not otherwise be met".

In 1976 when South Yorkshire refused to cut its spending plans, the Labour Government gave them only £291,000 in TSG for 1977-8 instead of £4 million.

3. REVENUE SUPPORT OF BUS AND UNDERGROUND, GLC AND METROPOLITAN COUNTIES £m

75-76	76-77	77-78	78-79	Four	79-80	80-81	81-82	*82-83	Four
164	140	111	119	Years'	134	219	275	382	Years'
				Total					Total
				532					1010

Revenue support to bus and underground accepted for TSG is £230 million in 1983-4 compared with £187 million in 1982-3.

* Including fares Fair

Conservative Research Department

27.5.83

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SEAT BELTSQuestion

Why has the Conservative Government made seat belts compulsory and why are there so few exemptions.

Suggested answer

Legislation was not introduced by the Government but was added to the Transport Act 1981 during its passage through Parliament and passed on a free vote. Votes for and against the legislation cut across party lines.

Except in very few cases, people will be safer wearing a seat belt than not wearing one. It is important that the law should be fair in its application; too many exemptions could bring the law into disrepute and make it difficult to enforce.

Background1. Reduction in casualties.

No official figures available but an example (amongst many) is:

- Doctors at Bristol Royal Infirmary reported on 24th March that there had been no deaths from car accidents in February compared with 3 in February 1982. There was only one facial injury - to a person not wearing a belt - compared with 40 in February 1982. The number of passengers needing treatment at the hospital accident and emergency department fell from 45 to 15 and the number of drivers from 42 to 24.

2. Main exemptions: Seat belts do not have to be worn:

- when reversing
- with a valid medical exemption certificate
- if making local deliveries or collection rounds using delivery vehicles
- if the seat belt has become defective on the journey
- by taxi-drivers

Conservative Research Department

27.5.83

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London SW1

'FARES FAIR' IN LONDON

Question

Do the new lower fares in London mean a defeat for the Government?

Suggested Answer

No. The Government has had substantial success in driving the GLC off their ruinous 'Fares Fair' policy. The GLC wanted a return to 'Fares Fair'. They have not achieved it. We have succeeded in getting them to lower their sights by £180 million a year - equivalent to an extra 9.5p in the pound on the rates bill of London's ratepayers.

Of course we welcome lower fares: they should be achieved by increased efficiency and lower costs. But we believe that the interests of the traveller, the ratepayer and taxpayer should be balanced. In the wake of the Fares Fair fiasco, fares on outer London routes rose in real terms way beyond levels inherited by the Labour GLC. As a result LT lost passengers. We recognised and we have always made clear that we considered these fares to be too high.

Background

On 24th May 1983 London Transport fares were cut by an average of 25 per cent with the larger cuts on outer London routes. This required more subsidy than allowed for under the Government's guidelines (£350 million instead of £242 million). the guidelines are not compulsory, but the GLC risks legal challenge if spending is way outside the guidelines.

Supplementary point to make

Labour's commitment to low fares is hollow in view of their intention to reimpose licensing on inter city coach services. In the wake of the delicensing provisions of the Transport Act 1980, fares have come down and about 100 new services have begun.

Conservative Research Department

27.5.83

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LONDON REGIONAL TRANSPORT AUTHORITY

Question: Why is the Government intending to abolish the GLC and establish a regional Transport Authority?

Suggested answer

There is a very powerful case for putting all rail, underground and bus transport under one management. The GLC under its present administration has grossly mismanaged London Transport. Its 'Fares Fair' policy was an expensive fiasco that left both rates and fares too high. The GLC has presided over rapidly increasing inefficiency in London Transport and inadequate investment. It has condoned and encouraged overmanning. A Parliamentary Select Committee Report recommended that with this record a new Transport Authority should take responsibility for transport from the GLC. The Government has accepted this as a basis for the future. The new London Regional Transport Authority will take over responsibility for public transport in London and BR's main commuter lines. It will not have responsibility for roads, and will not be allowed to precept London's ratepayers. It will enable public transport to be planned with greater efficiency and will be able to examine the scope for greater private sector involvement.

Conservative Research Department

27 May 1983

RAILWAY INVESTMENT

Question

Has the Government cut investment in the railways?

Suggested answer

No. The Government has maintained the investment ceiling at the same level in real terms as it inherited from Labour. The ceiling is £460 million a year. If British Rail is not investing up to the ceiling, that is because they are failing to control other costs and tailor services to demand. The fact is that this Government is giving record levels of financial support to British Rail, enough to enable BR to spend up to its investment ceiling, provided they take a grip on costs and productivity. It is certainly not the case that the railways are being starved of investment. Investment under Labour between 1974 and 1979 totalled £1100 million. Between 1979 and the present, British Rail have invested £1600 million.

Background

Record levels of financial support: In 1982, Government grants were 14 per cent above the level of 1975 after allowing for inflation. The grant ceiling for 1983 is £860 million. Serpell identified scope for cost savings on the railways of more than £200 million. BR underspent its investment ceiling by 23 per cent in 1981 and 37 per cent in 1982.

Conservative Research Department

27.5.83

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COMMUTER SERVICESQuestion

Does the Government intend to cut commuter rail services or raise commuter fares?

Suggested answer

No. We want BR's plans to reflect commuters' own priorities. This means keeping down fares, better punctuality and reliability and cleaner trains. We have made it clear that the Railways Board should not plan for fares increases beyond the general level of inflation, and BR has announced that there will be no fares increases this year. There is considerable scope for paying for service improvements through efficiency gains in the running of commuter services - which now cost some £600 million a year. This would include better matching of service levels to demand and further productivity improvements.

Background

Before the publication of the Serpell Report, it was alleged that Serpell recommended increases in commuter fares of 40 per cent. It recommended nothing of the sort, and the figure of 40 per cent was not mentioned anywhere in the Report. The Majority Report did note that commuter fares do not cover the costs of the service and suggested that the size of discounts on season tickets should be reviewed. But as the Minority Report of Serpell pointed out, the scope for raising fares is limited because "This would have effects on road congestion and possibly in the longer term on the role of London and Westminster as employment centres."

Conservative REsearch Department

27.5.83

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HEAVY LORRIESQuestion

Why is the Government in favour of heavier lorries?

Suggested answer

We have insisted upon strict limits on the length, width and height of lorries. These are laid down clearly in our new regulations which will also make lorries quieter and safer. By increasing maximum allowable lorry weights in line with our European competitors, each lorry can carry more goods, and therefore fewer lorries and lorry journeys will be needed to carry a given quantity of freight. Combined with other measures the Government has taken, this means less congestion, less noise and pollution, less danger and less wear and tear on our roads. At the same time, we reduce industry's costs by over £150 million a year; and that will help our competitiveness and protect jobs.

Background

The Government's lorry proposals (published on 4th November 1982) provide for:

- Increase in maximum weight of heavy lorries from 32.5 tonnes (on four axles) to 38 tonnes (on 5 axles), so no more damaging.
- New controls on lorry dimensions.
- Sideguards, rearguards and better braking standards to be compulsory and spray suppression equipment compulsory probably by 1984.
- Lorries to be quieter by 3 decibels in April 1983 - a further reduction in 1984.
- Taxation to reflect road track costs.
- Greater priority to be given to bypass schemes - more than 80 communities already bypassed since 1979; 220 more to be given bypasses in next 4-5 years.
- More vigorous use of local authorities' powers to control lorry routeing - already 850 schemes in operation.
- Encouragement for alternative freight transport - with higher levels of grants to rail freight and waterways.
- More spending on weighbridges, and enforcement of safety and weight rules. 41 new weighbridges already built. 17 more to be established by 1984. More traffic examiners recruited.

Conservative Research Department

27.5.83

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ISRAEL

Question

What is the attitude of the Conservative Party towards Israel's right to secure borders?

Suggested Answer

In the words of the Prime Minister:

"The fundamental principle of Israeli policy is the security of the state of Israel. We - and not just Britain but all the members of the European Community - are equally committed to that principle. Our resolve that Israel should live in security and peace will not weaken. It is indispensable to our approach to the problems of the area" (London, 15th December 1981).

The Foreign Secretary stated more recently that Israel:

"has a right to live in peace and security behind recognised borders. This is what all concerned on the Arab side have to accept. This is what we constantly press them to accept" (Speech to Jewish leaders of the Commonwealth, 30th November 1982).

Background

See also Question of Policy No. 168

Question

Will the Conservative Party, if returned to power, return the British Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem?

Suggested Answer

The Government has no plans to do this. The status of Jerusalem has been in question for many years. It would not be appropriate to move the British Embassy, until the status of Jerusalem has been settled by international agreement.

OFFICIAL SECRETS

Question

Would you support the abolition of section 2 of the Official Secrets Act and its replacement by a Freedom of Information Act?

Answer

We do in principle favour fresh legislation to replace section 2 of the Official Secrets Act. However there is no general agreement either in Parliament or the country as a whole about what should replace it. We are not in favour of creating a statutory right of access to official papers and records through a freedom of information act because:

- i) it would erode and undermine our traditional parliamentary system, damaging the twin principles of ministerial responsibility (under the Crown) and ministerial accountability to Parliament.
- ii) it would put at risk the confidentiality that must be preserved by ministers and the civil servants who work for them if good government is to be provided;
- iii) it would involve the courts in highly controversial matters in ways that would almost certainly create severe constitutional problems for both Parliament and the judiciary;
- iv) it would mean an increase in bureaucracy, a profusion of new record offices and a substantial additional burden on public funds.

In our view, the scrutiny and analysis of official information is best conducted in Parliament. Members of Parliament are now able to carry out that task much more effectively than ever before as a result of the establishment under this Government of a new, comprehensive Select Committee System, through which the actions of all the principal government departments are kept under constant scrutiny.

Background

1. Section 2 of the Official Secrets Act covers all official information, whatever its nature. In 1972 the Franks Committee recommended its replacement by new legislation which would protect a more limited range of information.

/ Continued . . .

2. In 1979 the Government introduced a Protection of Official Information Bill, based broadly on the Franks Report. It would have protected information relating to: defence, essential national interests in foreign affairs, security, intelligence and a number of specific matters concerned with protection of the realm. The Bill obtained a Second Reading in the Lords but attracted considerable criticism in Parliament and the press, particularly because of the blanket protection given to information relating to security and intelligence (issues which were then very much in the public mind as a result of the Blunt scandal). It was eventually decided that the Bill should be withdrawn.

3. In the absence of general agreement on the character of fresh legislation, the Government has concentrated on making the conduct of administration more open and accountable by providing an enormous body of information to Parliament. It has set new standards of frankness and openness in its dealings with the House. As Mr Barney Hayhoe has said:

 'The Government's record on providing information has been extremely good ... The development of the Select Committee system has been carried through in tune and in harmony with our parliamentary traditions. It buttresses rather than undermines the principle of ministerial accountability. It reinforces parliament and makes parliamentary scrutiny more effective' (Hansard, 6th February 1981, Col.555).

4. In February 1981 a Labour M.P. introduced a Freedom of Information Bill, but it failed to secure a Second Reading.

Conservative Research Department

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- 232 Professional Association of Teachers - Questionnaire
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Conservative Research Department

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SEAL CULLING IN SCOTLANDGUIDANCE NOTESEALS

The question of killing seals is one on which feelings tend to run high - there are those who say that it is wrong to kill such creatures in any circumstances, and there are those who see seals as yet one more hazard affecting their livelihood.

CANADIAN/EC ACTION

There has been particular and widespread concern about the Canadian hunt of harp and hooded seals and the method of killing, by clubbing to death. Allied to this has been a measure of uncertainty about the precise size and population dynamics of the hooded seal, and to a lesser extent, the harp seal. It is these factors which have led the EC - the UK and her partners - to impose a ban on the import of pelts from harp and hooded seal pups.

GREY SEAL MANAGEMENT IN SCOTLAND

In Scotland the main question has been the killing of grey seals. There is no doubt that the grey seal population in Scottish waters is increasing - probably at 3 - 4 per cent a year. For example, in 1963 when action was recommended by the Consultative Committee on Grey Seals and Fisheries to reduce the grey seal population by a quarter there were some 29,000 seals. In 1977 when there was a plan to reduce their numbers by about 1/3 there were 50,000. Now there are over 70,000.

The main question is whether reducing the grey seal population would have a significant effect on the quantities and catches of fish on which our fishermen depend for a living. This Government has attached a good deal of importance to seeking to ensure that any management plan, (eg to contain seal numbers) is scientifically based. We have, therefore, held regular meetings with fisheries and conservation interests. We have also commissioned a three-year research programme with the Sea Mammal Research Unit of the Natural Environment Research Council. This is designed to get more detailed information on seal diet, the extent of seal movement, and the impact of seals on local fisheries. It is the Government's intention that the results and methodology of the research will be made available to the fisheries and conservation interests for discussion before any decisions are taken.

In the meantime an annual pup hunt is authorized to let a limited number of largely Orkney and other island-based people take grey seal pups. A quota is set in the light of scientific advice which will enable the local population to rise. Licences to kill seal pups contain conditions, eg that they be shot by a specified kind of gun. The Orkney operation is witnessed by DAFS Fisheries Inspectors with facilities offered to the SSPCA and, in 1982 for the first time, to a representative of certain conservation bodies. All were satisfied that the operation was carried out humanely. Comparisons with the Canadian hunt are misleading.

/ cont.

CONCLUSION

There is no question of the Government allowing the grey seal population to be put at risk nor of allowing culling or the management of the seal population to be conducted in an inhumane way. We shall make available scientific evidence and hope that practical and informed discussion will ensue leading to a scientific and logical management plan.

Conservative Research Department

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EFFECT OF NEW STATUTORY SICK PAY SCHEME ON EMPLOYERS

Question

Will small businesses be out of pocket because they will have to pay National Insurance Contributions on the sick pay benefit they pay to their employees?

Suggested Answer

All those consulted accepted and welcomed the principle underlying the new statutory sick pay scheme - namely that sick pay should be brought into tax.

Nearly 90% of all employees are already covered by some form of occupational sick pay scheme. This was payable in addition to State sickness benefits, resulting in over half the workforce - who received full pay from the employers when sick - earning more when sick than at work, and in unnecessary duplication of effort between State and employer.

The Government fully responded to the wishes of employers on how they should be compensated by providing that the full amount of sick pay could be deducted by employers from their monthly NI and PAYE contributions.

Conservative Research Department

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SPASTICS

Questions to Parliamentary Candidates

Question A What will we do on handicap prevention?

Suggested answer

The Government recognises the importance of prevention and health education to combat handicap. This year the Government are giving over £9 million to the Health Education Council.

Question B What will we do about providing resources and monitoring the implementation of the 1981 Education Act so far as the disabled are concerned and ensuring handicapped children receive their legal right to education up to 19?

Suggested answer

We are of course committed to the successful implementation of our own 1981 Education Act. We believe, however, that particular decisions about the funding required for such implementation are best left to Local Authorities.

Question C What is our Party's view on a comprehensive income and allowance and how would such a scheme be financed? Would our Party end the discrimination against married women on ICA and Housewives' Non-Contributory Invalidity Pension?

Suggested answer

This Government has an outstanding record of support for the disabled and handicapped. Expenditure on cash benefits to the disabled is 21 per cent higher than under Labour after allowing for rising prices. We certainly want to see the system of administration of benefits and allowances simplified; but a comprehensive cash benefit for the disabled would be extremely expensive.

The Government recognises the household duties test causes much concern. The Conservative Government promised and has carried out a review to find ways of overcoming this problem including a study of practice abroad. We are still waiting for the outcome of the official report. Although we are determined to find a solution those who press for an immediate change have to recognise the cost

/cont

of abolishing it is £275 million. It would cost a further £60 million net to extend Invalid Care Allowance to married women. We have already extended the benefit to non-relatives benefiting some 2,000 non-relatives.

Question D What is our Party's view of the future of the disabled quota scheme? How could it be effectively enforced? Do we believe that positive incentives to employers might help disabled people in finding employment?

Suggested answer

Following a review of the statutory quota scheme by the Manpower Services Commission, the Government is considering how the scheme might be made more effective.

Background

The Statutory Quota Scheme was established by the 1944 Disabled Person (Employment) Act. It has been regulated by the Manpower Services Commission since 1976. The Act requires employers with over 20 employees to employ at least 3 per cent of registered disabled people.

Question E What is our Party's view on more resources and effective implementation of the CSDP Act?

Suggested answer

We have always supported the principles of the Chronically Sick and Disabled Pensions Act 1970. However it is up to local authorities to assess priorities within their statutory functions and with the resources available to determine the level of services accordingly.

Question F What is our Party's view on anti-discrimination legislation? How do we think further integration could be promoted?

Suggested answer

The Minister for Social Security (with special responsibility for the disabled) Mr Hugh Rossi during a Parliamentary debate on the Disablement (Prohibition of

/cont

Unjustifiable Discrimination Bill) defined Government policy as having "no truck with discrimination, but concentrates on the promotion and integration of disabled people. That approach acknowledges that serious problems still exist and that, while public awareness of the problem is increasing, there is still much to be done through education and persuasion so that people may be judged by their abilities, rather than by their disabilities.

I believe that our approach builds on the fundamental goals of the IYDP (International Year of Disabled People), which were to promote integration and participation. That has been, and will continue to be, the cornerstone of Government policy" (Hansard, 11th February 1983, Col 1281).

Question G Would we support moves to end the financial burden of VAT on charities?

Suggested answer

The Government has given a great deal of consideration to granting charities VAT relief on their purchases. The Government firmly believes in providing support for the voluntary sector in general, and charities in particular; and the greatest care has been taken to see whether or not a practical way forward on this issue could be found. But the Government's conclusions are that a VAT refund scheme would be expensive to operate and indiscriminate in its effects. In each of the last four Budgets there have been important direct measures to help charities, and the level of cash grants has been steadily increased (see also Q of P, 12).

Conservative Research Department

25 May 1983

HAZARDOUS WASTE

Question: What are you proposing to do about the control of hazardous waste?

Suggested answer

The Conservative Manifesto includes a pledge to "tighten up the controls on the disposal of hazardous waste".

A Hazardous Waste Inspectorate is being set up. A major review of the Special Waste Regulations is to report shortly. The Government has announced its intention to introduce legislation to provide a new discretionary power for waste disposal authorities to deal with materials not currently defined as "waste", as though they were waste. Waste disposal licences will be subject to charges, and the legislation concerning the storage of hazardous waste is to be tightened up.

Planning for hazardous waste disposal at the regional level is being improved; consultative groups involving authorities, waste disposal contractors and producers are being established.

Background

The principal controls on the disposal of waste to land are contained in Part I of the Control of Pollution Act 1974. This provides for both the planning control and licensing of the disposal of all domestic, commercial and industrial wastes. In addition, the Control of Pollution (Special Waste) Regulations 1980 covers the movement of the most difficult or dangerous waste.

In 1981 the House of Lords Select Committee on Science and Technology reviewed Hazardous Waste Disposal under the Chairmanship of Lord Gregson. It recommended tighter controls to reduce the risks.

PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATION OF TEACHERS

Questions for Parliamentary Candidates

Question 1

What objections are there to the proposition that a trade union should be required to ballot its members before embarking upon industrial action.

Suggested Answer

This issue was discussed at length in the Government's Green Paper on Trade Union Reform. As that document acknowledged, such a requirement does present some practical difficulties. However, we feel very strongly that it is extremely important that employees who are asked to take part in strike action, are fully consulted beforehand by union leaders. For that reason we make clear in our Manifesto that we intend to curb the legal immunity of unions in cases where strikes are called without the prior approval of those concerned having been obtained through a fair and secret ballot.

Question 2

What measures do you propose which would mean teachers and their employers working together in such a way as to make disruption of schools a thing of the past.

Suggested Answer

Disruption and strikes will become 'things of the past' if all teachers act in accordance with the high ideals which should inspire their profession. Clearly, it is the duty of LEAs to encourage and foster those ideals. But the relations between teachers, their unions and LEAs are matters for joint negotiation.

Question 3

Would you support the view that the teaching profession should take responsibility for its own condition? If not, why not? If yes, would you support the creation of a General Teaching Council?.

Suggested Answer

The Conservative Party fully supports the view that teachers, like the members of any other profession, should take responsibility for their own condition. To take such responsibility is one of the duties - and joys - of being a professional. The idea of a General Teaching Council (on the Scottish model) has been seriously considered. We shall want to consult widely on this issue after the election.

Question 4

Are you prepared to recognise and listen to organisations holding views with which you disagree?

Suggested Answer

Conservatives are always open to representations from responsible bodies.

Conservative Research Department

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TRADE WITH JAPAN

Question

What have we actually done to reduce our trade deficit with Japan?

Suggested answer

Britain is running a substantial deficit on visible trade with Japan. This was nearly £2 billion last year. Ideally the right course would be to correct the position by increasing British exports to Japan and Britain along with other EEC countries has been conducting negotiations with the Japanese authorities. These have centred upon the dismantling of import barriers by Japan. A number of steps have been taken by the Japanese to lower tariffs (eg. on some food products, tobacco and agricultural machinery) and to remove some non-tariff barriers. In March 1983 the Japanese Government agreed to abolish many certification and testing requirements for imports.

The European Community has also taken action - with our full support - under Article XXIII of the GATT on the ground that we are being denied fair access to the Japanese domestic market.

The Government is well aware of the problems that are being caused by excessive import penetration by Japanese products. Voluntary arrangements have been made to restrict imports of cars, video tape recorders, shoes and other items.

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IMPORT CONTROLS

Question Would general import controls save jobs?

Suggested answer

No. In the very short term they might give some protection in particular industries, but they would do nothing to eradicate the root cause of Britain's unemployment: a lack of competitiveness caused by low productivity and relatively high wage and price inflation. They would prop up declining industries at the expense of growth industries; reduce incentives for management and labour to contain costs; they would raise prices and lower consumption in the longer term, and that would destroy jobs, not protect them. We cannot raise quality and keep tight control over costs by opting out of the world market. There is also a very serious danger that import controls would produce immediate retaliation - thus leading to severe loss of jobs in our expanding industries.

But we do take action to protect vulnerable industries threatened by low cost imports (eg textiles and footwear) and we do take vigorous action when goods are dumped.

Background

1. The Labour Party's Manifesto promises "direct action" on imports. Labour politicians have argued against this on the basis that import controls would destroy jobs. Mr Callaghan has said that import controls would: "benefit some home industries at the expense of the livelihood of everyone working in exports. We would be robbing Peter to pay Paul" (Woolwich, 30th January 1976).
2. We export 30 per cent of our total output of goods and services. The jobs dependent on the provision of these would be jeopardised by import controls.
3. Low quality: Classic examples of over protected economies are the Soviet Bloc economies. The result; bad service, poor quality, shortages, queues and lack of choice.

Conservative Research Department

27 May 1983

MENCAP QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Question

Will your Party commit itself to make the provision of better services for mentally handicapped people in education, in health and personal social services, in employment and housing an officially declared priority?

Suggested Answer

It has been - and will continue to be - our priority to provide better quality health services. We do not believe that is necessarily only achieved by increasing levels of expenditure even though Health Service spending has been increased by over 17 per cent between 1978-9 and 1983-4. Ministers have made the provision of care for mentally handicapped and mentally ill people a specific priority, and our Manifesto makes it clear that we would continue to do so.

2. Question

If the answer is in the affirmative how will the financial resources be provided to translate this intention into reality?

Suggested Answer

It is not sufficient simply to declare that more resources should be provided. It is essential to build the strong wealth-creating industrial and commercial base that makes spending possible. To do this we intend to continue the successful economic policies of the last four years, policies which have made it possible to increase Health Service resources significantly and at the same time to control inflation.

3. Question

Will your Party advocate that relevant authorities should be under a statutory duty to provide these services, without cost to the client, and support the passing of appropriate legislation where this is necessary?

Suggested Answer

No. Our policy is to encourage the greatest flexibility in the provision of services - and to provide them in a manner which best suits each individual in need. Rigid statutory frameworks are not the best way to achieve this. We are seeking to promote closer partnership between statutory, voluntary and family support. We have made more flexible the regulations under which resources can be transferred from the Health Service to local authority budgets to care for individuals in the community.

/cont.

MENCAP QUESTIONNAIRE4. Question

Will your Party commit itself to the introduction of a general disability payment which would provide all disabled and handicapped people by right with a basic income to compensate them for the additional expenses they have on account of their special needs, replacing the present confusing, complicated and often unfair system of allowances and concessions?

Suggested Answer

This Government has an outstanding record of support for the disabled and handicapped. Expenditure on cash benefits for the disabled and long-term sick has been raised by 21 per cent in real terms. We certainly want to see the system of administration of benefits and allowances simplified. But a comprehensive cash benefit for the disabled as has been suggested would cost between £3 and £4 billion. Resources on that scale are not available.

Question

Will your Party commit itself to either exempt organisations like MENCAP from Value Added Tax as for instance, local authorities are exempted, or introduce other measures which would relieve these organisations from this burden?

Suggested Answer

The Government has given a great deal of consideration to granting charities VAT relief on their purchases. The Government firmly believes in providing support for the voluntary sector in general, and charities in particular, and the greatest care has been taken to see whether or not a practical way forward on this issue could be found. But the Government's conclusions are that a VAT refund scheme would be expensive to operate and indiscriminate in its effects. After exhaustive study the obstacles have been shown to be insuperable. In each of the last four Budgets there have been important direct measures to help charities, and the level of cash grants has been steadily increased.

Question

Will your Party appoint a (Shadow) Minister with the sole responsibility for Disablement and a seat in the (Shadow) Cabinet?

Suggested Answer

The Minister of State at the DHSS responsible for the disabled (Hugh Rossi) has had an outstanding record of success in supporting the disabled. But to create a new Cabinet Minister with a Department to serve him would simply increase bureaucracy and reduce resources available for care and support.

/cont.

MENCAP QUESTIONNAIRE7. Question

Will your Party press for immediate improvements in the provision of pre-school facilities for children with mental handicap (answer also question 2 above)?

Suggested Answer

We would certainly improve the position as our resources allow.

8. Question

Will your Party commit itself to putting into effect the Warnock Report proposals for better Teacher Training Programmes by providing the necessary funds?

Suggested Answer

The Conservative Government has implemented the most important recommendations of the Warnock Report in its 1981 Education Act. We are also committed to ensuring that adequate training is given to those teachers who will be dealing with handicapped children. However, any claim for special funding must be balanced against the many other pressing calls on scarce resources.

9. Question

Will your Party commit itself to provide the financial resources to fully implement the 1981 Education Act?

Suggested Answer

We are, not surprisingly, committed to the successful implementation of our own 1981 Education Act. We believe, however, that particular decisions about the funding required for such implementation are best left to Local Authorities.

Question

Will your Party commit itself to make special funds available to help children and adults with profound and multiple handicap (special care)?

Suggested Answer

Under this Government, the rise in the value of the attendance allowance has been greater than the rise in prices, and the number of people receiving it has risen by 30%. We are certainly concerned about the problems referred to in this question, and will examine the best means of providing assistance in these cases.

11. Question

Will your Party commit itself to direct local education authorities to fulfil their statutory duty to provide full time education to all pupils who request it until at least they reach the age of 19?

Conservative Research Department

27.5.83

MENCAP QUESTIONNAIRESuggested Answer

The Conservative Party does, of course, expect to see Local Education Authorities fulfilling their statutory duties in this, as in all other, respects. The Secretary of State would only issue a directive where the local authority was failing to carry out its statutory duties.

12. Question

Will your Party commit itself to mandatory legislation to provide free further education courses for mentally handicapped young people from the age of 19 if this is requested?

Suggested Answer

The Conservative Party understands that mentally handicapped people may well benefit from education beyond the age of 19. But we believe that it is for Local Education Authorities to decide to what extent such education can be provided in the light of the resources available and the many competing social claims on those resources.

13. Question

Will your Party commit itself to impose a statutory duty on local authorities to provide in Adult Training Centres for mentally handicapped people full time education by the supply of suitably qualified teachers?

Suggested Answer

No. Local Education Authorities are at liberty to provide for full-time education for handicapped people in Adult Training Centres, if they so wish; and the Conservative Party believes that LEAs should cooperate with the social services to provide facilities for such handicapped adults as resources allow. But we do not believe that this is a matter for legislation.

14. Question

Will your Party commit itself to special programmes and schemes which would offer mentally handicapped young people equal opportunities for employment?

Suggested Answer

If a mentally handicapped person is registered as 'disabled', he will qualify to be included in the 3% quota under the 1944 Disabled Persons Employment Act.

A mentally handicapped person may also benefit from the Sheltered employment provided by the Government in Remploy factories or in Sheltered workshops funded through rate support grants to local authorities.

/cont.

MENCAP QUESTIONNAIRE15. Question

All Parties seem to agree that long-stay hospitals are unsuitable for mentally handicapped people and in particular for children and young people to live in. Will your Party commit itself to shift these people into the community within 2 years as far as those under 20 years of age are concerned, and those remaining, within the shortest possible time thereafter?

Suggested Answer

We do believe that it is right to encourage a shift from hospital to local community care and to provide support services necessary to give mentally handicapped people the chance of reaching their full potential. We launched a major initiative to get long-stay children out of hospitals into smaller homelike accommodation in 1981. We are pressing health authorities to make progress with this.

16. Question

If the answer is in the affirmative, will your Party vigorously press for a co-ordinated programme to enable health, local social services and voluntary organisations to carry out this transfer with speed and provide the necessary capital and revenue funds?

Suggested Answer

We made £3 million available in 1983-4 (and plan similar provision to 1985-6) to help health authorities with special problems to move children needing health care out of hospitals. The response has been good. A development team is available on request to advise authorities on their plans for children.

17. Question

Will your Party commit itself to abolish without delay the household duties test for married women in order to qualify for the non contributory invalidity pension?

Suggested Answer

Q of P already available (43).

18. Question

Will your Party commit itself to extending the Invalid Care Allowance to all married or cohabiting women?

Suggested Answer

Q of P already available(43)

/cont.

MENCAP QUESTIONNAIRE

19. Question

The present system of Social Security benefits is unsatisfactory (see question 4 above) and one of its shortcomings is the low take-up rate. Even if claimants were aware of their rights - many are not - wrong and misleading advice is frequently given by DHSS staff. How will your Party overcome this deficiency?

Suggested Answer

The Conservative Government has vigorously campaigned to improve levels of take-up benefits. Take-up of attendance allowance and mobility allowance has notably improved. We welcome that trend. Naturally we are working to improve the efficiency of service. Staff have a very difficult job to do; and it is understandable but regrettable, that mistakes should occur. Over a longer period we intend to implement our social security operational strategy which will invest in the application of advanced new technology to the service of the public through local offices. This will not only provide immediate access to accurate information; by releasing staff from unnecessary paperwork it will free them to spend more time on the human side of the job. It will mean more satisfying jobs for staff, more satisfactory service to the public.

20. Question

Many Housing Association Schemes for small hostels in the community in which all major capital and revenue costs can be met from standard sources, cannot be put into effect because of a refusal by Local Authority or Health Authority to guarantee the comparatively small amount of topping up finance required. Will your Party support the automatic topping up by whatever system is most appropriate of hostel schemes which had received Department of the Environment approval?

Suggested Answer

The resources of individual local authorities will determine their ability to contribute to these schemes. We are reluctant to introduce further mandatory obligations for councils, believing that they must be in the best position to determine local priorities.

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GOVERNMENT ASSISTANCE TO EXPORTERSQuestion

Is it true we give less to our exporters than other Governments?

Suggested Answer

This is not true. In addition to the extensive facilities provided by the Export Credits Guarantee Department, the Government spends directly about £90 million a year to assist UK exporters. This is spent on the official export services provided by the Department of Trade and the British Overseas Trade Board, together with the Commercial departments in UK embassies and High Commissions and Consulates overseas. They include a wide range of market advice and specific services designed to help exporters however big or small.

Background

In 1982, the British Overseas Trade Board was reorganised in order to give the BOTB a stronger market orientation; to establish specialist divisions; to develop the important network of regional offices within the UK and to concentrate in one place the export promotion staff of the Department of Trade, including a new projects and policy export division.

The Export Credit Guarantee Department provides substantial help to Britain's exporters. In 1981 a rapid matching facility was set up to match exceptionally soft terms of credit provided by overseas competitors. In 1981-2, record levels of payments were made by the ECGD, of £303 million.

Other help to exporters

Aid and Trade provision provides a top-up source of funds when British companies are in competition with foreign companies offering aid as part of their financial package. Allocations from this source have increased from £25 million in 1977-8 (of which £12 million was disbursed) to £66 million in 1983-4.

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INCLUDED TODAY:-

- 237 Disablement Mobility Housing and Access
- 238 The Machine Tool Industry
- 239 Civil Defence
- 240 Amnesty International - Political Killings by Governments
- 241 Ipswich Housing - Action Group Questionnaire
- 242 NALGO - Questionnaire
- 243 British Telecom - Questionnaire

Conservative Research Department

1.6.83

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DISABLEMENT

The following Question of Policy was prepared to deal with a series of questions that were recently put before a Conservative Candidate. Other Candidates might find this material helpful.

Education1. Question

Will you press for central Government funds to help LEA's implement the Act properly (eg. for teacher training, access facilities, support services)?

Suggested Answer

We are, not surprisingly, committed to the successful implementation of our own 1981 Education Act. We believe, however, that particular decisions about the funding required for such implementation are best left to Local Authorities.

2. Question

Will you press for legislation on further education to ensure provision for disabled school leavers?

Suggested Answer

Disabled school-leavers may well benefit from further education. But we believe that it is for Local Education Authorities to decide how and at what cost such education should be provided.

3. Question

When the Youth Training Scheme starts in September, will you use your influence to ensure that disabled young people receive adequate training opportunities?

Suggested Answer

I shall certainly attempt to ensure that the Youth Training scheme provides such opportunities for disabled young people as are compatible with the successful working of the scheme in general.

4. Question

Will you press for extension of the NCIP payment to young people continuing their education in ordinary schools, as well as schools with special facilities?

Suggested Answer

The Conservative Government has protected and raised the level of the Non-Contributory Invalidity Pension. To extend the NCIP to young

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people continuing their education in ordinary schools, would require considerable additional expenditure of taxpayers' money. Conservatives do not at present have any plans to introduce such an extension.

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MOBILITY

1. Does the panel think that the Mobility Allowance (£18.30 per week, to very severely disabled people who are "unable or virtually unable to walk") should be paid at a sufficiently high rate to enable this group to both buy and run a small car?

No - the Mobility Allowance is paid to over ¼ million people. To increase the allowance to enable the recipients to buy and run a small car would be very costly.

2. The medical criteria giving entitlement to Mobility Allowance are very tightly-drawn. If elected, do you believe that these should be broadened in scope allowing 'borderline' cases to definitely be awarded Mobility Allowance, and will you work towards this?

Where there are any criteria there will always be borderline cases, Conservatives believe that criteria are necessary so as to ensure the maximum help available is concentrated on those most in need.

ATTENDANCE ALLOWANCE

3. Since May 3, 1979 the criteria for Attendance Allowance have not been amended, nor made harder for people to qualify, but figures show that the number of awards made has decreased sharply. If elected, will you support a more liberal interpretation of the Attendance Allowance Act?

The facts presented in this question are wrong. In fact the figures show since 1979 there has been a steady increase in the number of recipients from 279,000 in May 1979 to 364,000 in March 1982, the latest date for which figures are available.

SOCIAL SECURITY

4. In 1980, the link between pensions and other long-term benefits with the rise in earnings was broken. Invalidity Pension was cut in value by 5%. All parties support a 'disablement costs allowance' in principle, yet none have produced detailed proposals.

Are you committed to maintain the value of all benefits?

During the 1979 General Election the Conservatives pledged price protection for pensions and linked long-term benefits over the Parliament. That pledge has been more than redeemed. We are pledging in the Manifesto to protect retirement pensions and linked benefits against price increases in the next Parliament.

Will you press to restore the 'earnings link'?

The problem of linking pensions to earnings or prices whichever is the greater is that the system leads to a 'ratchet' effect whereby benefits in the long-run increase faster than either earnings or prices. This would place a growing burden on the working population.

Will you support the immediate restoration of the 5% cut in invalidity pension?

We are committed to restoring the 5% abatement on invalidity pension when it is brought into tax.

Will you press for a Green Paper on a Disablement Costs Allowance during the first year of the new Parliament?

This Government has an outstanding record of support for the disabled and handicapped. Expenditure on cash benefits for the disabled and long-term sick has been raised by 21 per cent in real terms. We certainly want to see the system of administration of benefits and allowances simplified. But a comprehensive cash benefit for the disabled could cost between £3 and £4 billion per annum. Resources on that scale are not available.

Will you press for the abolition of the extra 'household duties test'?

We recognise the concern caused by the household duties test. Both the Housewives Non-contributory Invalidity Pension and the Non-contributory Invalidity Pension are presently being reviewed. We are still waiting for the outcome of the review. However those who press for immediate change have to face the fact that the cost of abolishing the test completely would be £275 million.

Will you support legislation making non-contributory benefits (NCIP and HNCIP), now only 60% of the value of contributory benefits, equal in value?

See above.

Will you support legislation to abolish charges for home helps and other vital services?

We brought forward legislation to encourage the greatest flexibility in the provision of services - and to ensure that they are provided in a manner which best suits each individual in need.

In Sunderland, the home help service is free; what is your attitude to charges for this service?

We believe that those who can afford to pay for the home help service should do so, as this increases the resources available for improving the service.

GENERAL ELECTION 1983Question of Policy: 237

Will you take up cases where the council is falling to meet needs under the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970 with the Secretary of State for Social Services?

We have always supported the principle of the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970. However it is up to local authorities to assess priorities within their statutory functions and with the resources available to determine the level of services accordingly.

Would you support the earmarking of part of the RSG for services to and for disabled people?

RSG is a general grant from Central Government to local authorities - it is up to local authorities discretion to decide their own local spending priority.

EMPLOYMENT

Do you believe that any Quota Scheme should remain statutory and enforced in order to be effective?

Following a review of the statutory quota scheme by the Manpower Services Commission, the Government is considering how these arrangements for the disabled might be made more effective.

Do you believe that the proposed alternative, a Code of Practice, should be backed by law if it is to be effective?

The Code of Practice was originally suggested in the report of the Manpower Services Commission's review. The Government has asked the Commission to continue its work on drafting a code in consultation with interested bodies.

Will you use your contacts with local employers to encourage them to employ more disabled people, and to put into effect their policies on the employment of disabled people?

Up to the candidate to answer.

Conservative Research Department

25 May 1983

HOUSING AND ACCESS

Disabled people are far more dependent than others on council housing, which has suffered heavy cuts in recent years.

Question 1.

If elected, will you use your influence as an MP to ensure that as many new homes as possible, both council and private, are built to 'mobility' standards, i.e. with basic design features needed by many disabled people?

Suggested Answer

Yes. We believe that there is need for continued public sector provision for people with special needs, including the elderly and the disabled, but we also emphasise the need to build for sale to the many disabled people who want to buy.

Question 2.

If elected, will you use your influence as an MP to ensure that the needs of disabled people are taken into account in the development of housing policy both locally and nationally?

Suggested Answer

Yes.

Question 3.

Will you encourage co-operation between housing and social service agencies over adaptations to existing housing and the provision of alternatives to institutions?

Suggested Answer

Yes.

The Government is considering incorporating the BSI Code of Practice into building regulations.

Question 1.

Will you support the fewest possible exclusions from Building Regulations?

Suggested Answer

Yes.

Question 2.

Will you use your influence, on building owners, both public and private, to adapt existing premises?

Suggested Answer

Yes.

Conservative Research Department

26.5.'83

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THE MACHINE TOOL INDUSTRYQuestion

What is the Government doing to help the Machine Tool Industry?

Suggested Answer

The Government recognises the problems which the machine tool industry is facing. In the recent report on "Machine Tools and Robotics" by the Industry and Trade Committee of the House of Commons (published 19 May) it is stated that the Department of Industry assistance available for machine tools, robotics and flexible manufacturing systems from 1979 to date was over £215 million.

Background

The report referred to above, stated:-

"We consider it totally unrealistic to expect a further 'major investment programme' particularly as the majority of the evidence we received expressed satisfaction with the level of assistance provided by the Government"(para 27)

The Committee had particular praise for the launch of another "small engineering firms investment scheme". Under the earlier SEFIS scheme, the allocation of £30 million was exhausted in a matter of weeks. So the scheme has been relaunched with an allocation of £100 million to assist in the purchase of advanced capital equipment by firms with up to 500 people. The report said:

"We believe that the Government should be congratulated on introducing such a well targeted scheme which should provide a much needed spur to technological innovation" (para 21)

The report gave a warm welcome to the way in which the Department of Industry schemes have been directed not only to machine tool manufacturers but also to users of their products.

The Government stands ready to consider support for product development under any scheme of rationalisation put forward by the machine tool industry. We would also look sympathetically at other proposals for financial support under the existing rules.

On 18th May the Secretary of State, Mr. Patrick Jenkin, met the Chairmen of three of the leading companies in the machine tool business. Mr. Jenkin reiterated the Government's readiness to provide support for viable projects.

The Engineering Employers Federation has recently forecast output in mechanical engineering to increase by 7% from the middle of 1983 to the end of 1984 and a 22% increase in the volume of investment over the period of 1983-85.

CIVIL DEFENCEQuestion 1.

Is not Civil Defence pointless?

Suggested Answer

No. Civil Defence is concerned with the savings of lives. In the event of any emergency, whether nuclear or conventional attack, or a civil emergency such as fire or flooding, sensible plans made in advance could save millions of lives. As such it is a clear humanitarian duty to make such plans.

Question 2.

Won't it just increase the risk of nuclear war if our opponents think we are prepared to take such a war seriously enough to plan for it?

Suggested Answer

The fact that we are prepared to make arrangements for civil defence against the possibility of nuclear attack reduces rather than increases the danger of war, because it is likely to convince the Soviet Union of our determination to stand firm in support of our nuclear deterrent. The Soviet Union for its part clearly recognises the strength of such arguments, since it has committed resources on a massive scale to civil defence. Possession of nuclear weapons themselves would act as no deterrent unless a potential aggressor believed that they might be used. The existence of civil defence plans, made to save lives, cannot constitute a threat and therefore would not increase the chances of Britain being a target.

Background

1. Civil defence expenditure has been increased by 60% since 1980, to reach a planned £45 million in 1983-4.
2. The United Kingdom Warning and Monitoring Organization is being improved; the Home Defence College has been expanded.
3. A Conservative Government would re-lay the recent Draft Civil Defence regulations before Parliament. These propose to oblige local authorities to maintain the necessary equipment, provide training and ensure that volunteers are provided with an effective role in Civil Defence.

Conservative Research Department

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CAMDEN GROUP OF AMNESTY INTERNATIONALQUESTIONNAIRE ON 'POLITICAL KILLINGS BY GOVERNMENTS'

(It will be obvious that questions from left-wing groups on this subject should be treated with great caution)

Question 1

Do you know what Britain provides in the way of military, security or police (MSP) training and equipment to governments responsible for political killings? Do you know whether these transfers are used by repressive security forces to increase their capacity for murder?

Suggested Answer

Of course I condemn absolutely political killings wherever they occur. All arms sales require export licences and a licence would not be issued for the export of equipment to countries with bad records on human rights in cases where such equipment is likely to be used for internal repression.

Question 2

Do you agree that (i) the responsibility for equipment and training provided to repressive regimes should be subject to parliamentary control? (ii) MPs should be told what equipment and training Britain is providing, and to which governments; and that Parliament must decide on the basis of full information, what may be exported and to which countries and security agencies?

Suggested Answer

- (i) All arms sales require export licences and are monitored with particular care. Ministers, of course, are ultimately responsible to Parliament for the existing arrangements.
- (ii) The supply of arms and military assistance is often an important element in promoting security and regional stability.

Question 3

If elected on June 9, will you be prepared to take action in Parliament to press for full parliamentary control over MSP transfers to repressive regimes?

Suggested Answer

The sale of arms from the UK can promote political friendships and create new ones. So our policy enhances regional stability. As to the details of arms contracts, it is not the practice of the Government to provide information on individual contracts.

Background

It is relevant that the Soviet Union is only too ready to use arms supply to gain influence to our disadvantage. In this country all sales require export licences. These are judged against various criteria, including the possibility of the use of arms for internal repression in countries with poor human rights records.

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IPSWICH HOUSING ACTION GROUP QUESTIONNAIRE

Question 1.

The number of homeless people has increased rapidly over the last ten years but the vast majority of single people and childless couples are still denied effective rights under the Homeless Persons' Act. Would you support the extension of the Act to give homeless single people the right to be rehoused?

Suggested Answer

No. We have no proposals to extend the scope of the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act. The Government has consulted on the Act and minor changes will not require primary legislation. It has been decided not to give young and able-bodied single people who leave their home towns and arrive homeless in London and other cities, the right to be immediately rehoused, because this would displace other needy groups at the top of the waiting lists and not unnaturally cause a good deal of resentment. Our hostels initiative has increased the funds available to the Housing Corporation to provide hostel accommodation and about 7,000 places have been approved by the Housing Corporation under this Government.

Question 2.

Shelter estimates that the national housing shortage has now grown to over 800,000 dwellings, causing more over-crowding and sharing and an ever-increasing number of homeless people. The biggest demand is for homes to rent. Would you support a major increase in investment programmes to provide ordinary rented accommodation?

Suggested Answer

The Shelter estimate is incorrect. There is in fact a surplus of housing accommodation over households, taking the country as a whole; but there are serious local housing problems. This estimate of households requiring accommodation is based on council housing waiting lists which are notoriously inaccurate. We believe that there is great demand for owner-occupation in preference to renting. Low cost home ownership initiatives, like shared ownership building for sale, improvement for sale and homesteading are a more cost-effective way of providing homes for people and are more likely to provide a satisfactory environment than more council housing. A major cause of the shortage of rented accommodation has been the rigidity of the Rent Acts which have dried up the supply of private lettings. This Government has taken a number of measures with the aim of encouraging more privately rented homes: but because of Labour threats to repeal them, these measures have not had as beneficial effect as we would

Question 5.

Would you support the maintenance of high spending programmes for basic services if this meant reductions in rate support grant and therefore a further increase in rates.

Suggested Answer

High spending is no guarantee of quality of service. Local authorities should always be conscious of the need to ensure that their services are being run efficiently and effectively. They should never forget that they are spending other people's money.

Question 6.

Do you think that the image, put forward by some politicians, of local councils as overstuffed and inefficient compared with the private sector, is fair or unfair.

Suggested Answer

According to the survey prepared by Boase Massimi and Pollitt, for NALGO in January 1983, many people "felt it was about time public services were cut - because they were seen to be inefficient and mismanaged and that if cutting back involved depleting an overmanned work force and a top heavy administration then this was to be welcomed". Some local authorities run their affairs efficiently and well, while at the same time reducing their staff. Their example could well be followed by other authorities, many of them Labour-controlled. The Government itself has shown what can be done by reducing the size of the civil service by 11% since 1979, making it smaller than at any time since 1966.

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NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT OFFICERS

Questionnaire to Parliamentary Candidates

(There may be some variation in the questions raised by this body in different parts of the country, but much the same ground will be covered by their questionnaires).

Question 1.

Do you support or oppose policies to reduce local government spending?

Suggested Answer

Public spending (including local government spending) is higher today than in 1979. There have been no cuts. What has happened is that the Government has taken action to moderate the steadily rising trend of local authority expenditure - not least in order to prevent an ever increasing rate burden.

Question 2.

If you do support such policies will you seek a more vigorous programme of cuts?

Suggested Answer

Local government should continue its efforts to get better value for money. Economies can be made in local government without cutting services. Local authorities should use modern management techniques to provide existing services more efficiently.

Question 3.

If you oppose cuts and you are elected will you try to prevent further cuts and restore services already cut?

Suggested Answer

See Answer to Question 2.

Question 4.

Do you support privatisation of any services? If so, in which areas do you believe that privatisation should be carried out?

Suggested Answer

Yes. Privatisation or contracting out services is a legitimate option for local authorities trying to secure the best value for money for the ratepayers. There are a number of services which might be suitable for privatisation, not only refuse collection, street cleaning, office cleaning, building maintenance and gardening, but the work of architects, planners, engineers, surveyors and valuers as well as housing management and the management of recreation facilities.

have liked. However, with the re-election of a Conservative Government, such measures as the Shorthold scheme and assured tenancies would be more flexible than council housing for single mobile people needing rented housing. There are also instances where council housing remains unoccupied for unacceptably long periods, and we would expect local councils to ensure that this does not happen.

Question 3

One of the pieces of legislation lost because of the election being called was a Private Member's Bill designed to enforce minimum standards of fire safety, repair, amenities and management in multi-occupied housing like bedsits, lodging houses and hostels. Would you support this Bill being reintroduced in the new Parliament?

Suggested Answer

This government made very substantial progress in strengthening the law to deal with houses in multiple occupation, in both the Housing Act 1980 and the Criminal Justice Act 1982. In view of the opposition of the local authorities associations to the Private Member's Bill in question, we can give no commitment to supporting it if it was reintroduced.

Question 4

Although the Rent Acts are supposed to protect private tenants, most lettings by private landlords now are under loop-holes in the Acts, like licences, holiday lets, company lets and so on, which means that tenants do not have security of tenure. Would you support legislation to close these Rent Act loop-holes?

Suggested Answer

The Rent Act has been responsible for the loss of nearly half a million dwellings available for letting between 1974-1979. We are anxious to secure an increased supply of private rented housing which meets the needs of people who do not wish to buy, but for whom council housing is insufficiently flexible. This is why we have promoted both shorthold and assured tenancies. I would wish to make the operation of the Rent Acts a good deal more flexible.

BRITISH TELECOM

Questionnaire to Parliamentary Candidates

(This questionnaire clearly reflects the political and trades union opposition to the privatisation of British Telecom.)

Question 1.

Would you have supported the Telecommunications Bill, which was before Parliament when this general election was called?

Suggested Answer

Yes.

Question 2.

Would you have supported part of the Bill? If so, which part or parts?

Suggested Answer

As the answer to (1) above is yes, this question is inapplicable.

Question 3.

The Conservatives have said they will re-introduce the Telecommunications Bill. Will you support them if elected?

Suggested Answer

Yes. This is a manifesto commitment.

Question 4.

Do you think services that lose money, such as kiosks, rural services, the emergency services, and the operator and directory enquiry service, could be maintained if BT were privatised?

Suggested Answer

Yes. The Telecommunications Bill, for the first time in telecommunications history, placed a specific duty on the Secretary of State to see that the rural services, kiosks and 999 services are maintained. This will be a condition of the licence under which British Telecom will operate after it is privatised. A new Office of Telecommunications is being set up to ensure that BT fulfills its obligations and this Office will have much stronger powers to deal with consumer problems than the Post Office Users National Council used to have. So the provisions of the Bill actually strengthened the safeguards for these services.

Question 5.

Do you think a privatised BT would invest in these uneconomic services in the future? Or do you think it would invest instead in highly profitable services?

Suggested Answer

British Telecom will have to maintain these services and invest in them so that they may be run as efficiently as possible.

Question 6.

What legislation, if any, would you like to see introduced in the field of Telecommunications?

Suggested Answer

The Telecommunications Bill.

Question 7.

Do you think British Telecom should remain as a single entity?

Suggested Answer

There is no proposal to split up BT in our manifesto and to do so would postpone for several years the prospect of privatisation.

Question 8.

What would your views be of a proposal to take British Telecom out of the Public Sector Borrowing Requirement definition?

Suggested Answer

If BT remains a state owned enterprise then its borrowing, from whatever source, must by definition be part of the PSBR. If it is desired to take it out of the PSBR it must cease to be public.

Question 9.

Do you think British Telecommunications should have a manufacturing role?

Suggested Answer

This will be a question for the management of British Telecom Plc. There will be no restriction in the Bill.

Question 10.

What other comments, if any, would you like to make about the future of British Telecom and the Telecommunications Industry?

Suggested Answer

The field of telecommunications is an expanding and rapidly changing market, and the greatest benefit to Britain, the consumer and the industry itself will come from the fuller and fairer competition that will develop when British Telecom is transferred to the private sector.

UN PEACE KEEPING FORCES

Question

What is the Conservative Party's attitude towards the proposals made by the Palme Commission on the role and scope of UN Peace Keeping Forces.

Suggested Answer

1. The Conservative Party gives its whole-hearted support to the UN Peacekeeping forces, which enable the UN to perform its central function of preventing wholesale conflict. The Conservative Party takes the view that Britain as a permanent member of the UN Security Council, has a special responsibility in this matter. We have therefore supported the creation of such forces.
2. The Conservative Party has some sympathy with those who support the suggestions by the Palme Commission in its report on Common Security. However the Party believes that the introduction of an enforcement capability (as recommended by the Commission) into their role would not be practicable. One example where such action would have led to an escalation is the Lebanon.

Background

Britain provides manpower for UNIFICYP (UN Force in Cyprus) and logistical assistance for UNIFIL (UN Interim Force in Lebanon.) The Palme Commission, whose report was published last year, contained recommendations on a wider range of security issues.

Conservative Research Department

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INCLUDED TODAY:-

- 250 Royal Institute of British Architects Questionnaire
- 251 Assistant Masters' and Mistresses' Association
Questionnaire
- 252 Construction Industry
- 253 Medical Practitioners
- 254 Transport 2000 Questionnaire
- 255 National Union of Licensed Victuallers' Questionnaire
- 256 Bus and Coach Council Questionnaire
- 257 British Maritime League Questionnaire
- 258 Child Poverty Action Group
- 259 Campaign for Middle East Peace
- 260 The Williamsburg Summit
- 261 Disablement Income Group Questionnaire

ROYAL INSTITUTE OF BRITISH ARCHITECTSQuestionnaire to Parliamentary CandidatesQuestion

1. Public investment in the country's basic infrastructure (roads, water, sewerage) has been allowed to slip far below national needs: what would you do about it ?

Suggested Answer

The Labour Government slashed capital expenditure. Under this Government high priority has been given to the maintenance of the country's infrastructure. Expenditure on motorway and trunk road maintenance has risen dramatically from £86.9 million in 1978-9 to £209 million in 1982-3. Between 1980-1 and 1982-3 spending on reconstruction of older motorways and other structural maintenance increased by 80 per cent in real terms. The Government has increased provision for local authority capital expenditure on roads. The agreed expenditure level for 1983-4 is £619 million compared with an agreed expenditure level of £306 million for 1978-9. Capital expenditure on water and sewerage services under this Government has been £2,392 million.

Question

2. The national housing stock is decaying more rapidly than it is being maintained and replaced: what would you do about it ?

Suggested Answer

Over 194,000 dwellings were improved in England in 1982 compared with 131,000 in 1978. This dramatic development is the result of a number of steps to encourage the improvement of the housing stock. First, the Housing Act 1980 extended repairs grants to all houses built before 1919 in need of substantial and structural repairs. Secondly, we have made 90 per cent grants available for repairs for the whole of 1982-3 and 1983-4. Thirdly, we have provided improvement grant funds without limit for the remainder of 1982-3. Fourthly, we have given councils an assurance of additional allocations for 1982-3 if their expenditure on improvement grants is more than the indicative figure in their HIP allocations. Fifthly, we started in December 1982 the national enveloping scheme for all local authorities. This will enable councils to carry out external improvements of whole streets. But the Government cannot compel recalcitrant Labour authorities to take advantage of those opportunities.

Question

3. Construction can be the biggest single contributor to rapid relief of unemployment. How would you use it for this purpose?

Suggested Answer

The construction industry is well placed to benefit from the success of the Government's policies to create the climate for sustained economic recovery in the private sector - as measured

/ Continued . . .

in particular, by the reduction of inflation and interest rates. On the public sector side, the public expenditure White Paper provides for public capital expenditure on new construction to rise from an estimated out-turn of £9.4 billion in 1982-3 to £10.4 billion in 1983-4. (This figure does not include repairs and maintenance, which now account for about 40% of public sector expenditure on the construction industry.) The industry is also benefiting from the Government's initiatives to extend cooperation between the public and private sectors, particularly in the regeneration of our inner cities.

Question

4. The Government has been making local authorities spend on a year-on-year basis which is an impossible way of planning efficient expenditure on construction, which has long lead time: what are you going to do about this?

Suggested Answer

The Conservative Government has been able to give local authorities a measure of assurance about their future levels of capital expenditure on housing. John Stanley announced in December 1982 that housing authorities in England could count on receiving housing allocations in 1984-5 of at least 80 per cent of the figures already announced for 1983-4. The scope for giving early notice of capital allocations more generally will be limited by the availability of resources.

Question

5. How would you improve the physical environment in inner urban areas?

Suggested Answer

The Conservative Government has already launched a number of initiatives to restore economic activity and private sector investment to inner city areas, which is a prerequisite for the improvement of the physical environment. We have maintained the partnership and programme arrangements of previous Governments and we have increased expenditure under the Urban Programme from £165 million in 1979-80 to £348 million in 1983-4. We have set up two Urban Development Corporations, in London Docklands and Merseyside. We have also announced the start of a new Urban Development Grant which is intended to give incentives to the private sector to invest in projects which they might not otherwise undertake in inner cities.

Question

6. What are your views on the future of the Metropolitan County Councils in England?

Suggested Answer

We have said in our Manifesto that we consider the metropolitan counties and the GLC to be a wasteful and unnecessary tier of Government, and that we shall abolish them.

/ Continued . . .

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Question

7. Half the nation's primary energy is consumed by buildings and much of it is wasted: what improvements do you recommend in national energy conservation policy ?

Suggested Answer

The most effective way of ensuring conservation is through a realistic pricing policy. Apart from that we are already spending substantial sums of money on conservation measures. The Government with local authorities, health authorities, and nationalised industries is spending about £100 million per year. The results are showing. Energy efficiency in Britain is improving at a rate which is quite respectable in relation to that achieved in other countries and in its most recent study, the International Energy Agency has concluded that "the United Kingdom's conservation achievement reflects a high level of success in policy measures adopted thus far". The signs are that a continuation of present policies is the most effective solution.

Question

8. VAT on the repair and maintenance of buildings is a tax on good stewardship: will you press for its removal ?

Suggested Answer

There are two difficulties in the way of abolishing VAT on repair and maintenance of buildings. First, VAT is intended to be a broadly-based tax, and exemptions can be made only in the most exceptional cases. Second, the Exchequer would lose around £1 billion per annum and tax would have to be increased elsewhere.

Question

9. Present tax provisions encourage low initial spending on buildings and high running costs which does nothing to encourage either good architecture or efficient building: what would you do to change it ?

Suggested Answer

The present arrangements do contain anomalies: running costs are tax-deductible, while construction costs generally are not (exceptions being industrial, buildings, hotels to a limited extent, and plant and machinery). We are not, however, aware of evidence that this is a significant problem in practice.

/Continued . . .

Question

10. Many people are saying our planning system is a costly burden on development and is not making the country any more beautiful: what will you do about it ?

Suggested Answer

We have already taken steps to streamline the operation of the planning system through the elimination of overlapping planning functions. We have also issued advice in circular 22/80 which encourages local authorities to secure a general speeding up of the system without compromising on the protection of the countryside and the containment of urban growth.

Question

11. The law on liability is in a mess and benefits nobody: what would you do to change it and when ?

Suggested Answer

The Lord Chancellor has referred the problem of latent damage to the Law Reform Committee who have issued a consultation document as a basis for discussion.

Question

12. What measures would you want to see introduced to improve the quality of architecture ?

Suggested Answer

Michael Heseltine, when he was Secretary of State for the Environment, pointed the need to improve the quality of architecture on important sites and advanced the case for using architectural competitions to achieve this. Competitions have already been held for the designs of buildings in a number of important sites including the National Gallery extension on the Hampton site and the controversial Vauxhall Cross development.

Conservative Research Department

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ASSISTANT MASTERS AND MISTRESSES ASSOCIATION QUESTIONNAIRE

Question 1

What will you do to re-assert the proper relationship between central and local Government, and to ensure that authorities enjoy the democratic autonomy they were created to exercise, with full consultation on all parliamentary measures which will affect them?

Suggested Answer

I believe that the present relationship between central and local Government is in most respects satisfactory, and do not know what needs to be reasserted. Conservatives have repeatedly stressed the need for consultation between central and local Government on all appropriate occasions; local Government is playing a full part in the new technical education initiative.

Question 2

Will you press to ensure that important decisions affecting education take account of the professional judgements of the teachers who will have to operate them?

Suggested Answer

I shall certainly attempt to ensure that those making important decisions about education, take account of the views of the teaching profession. But weight must also be given to other interested parties, notably parents.

Question 3

If elected, will you regularly visit the schools and colleges in your constituency, talk to classroom teachers and monitor for yourself the adequacy of staffing, buildings, maintenance, books and equipment?

Suggested Answer

It is assumed that candidates will give a simple reply in the affirmative.

/ Continued . . .

Question 4

Are you committed to campaign for the best possible education for all the children and young people in your constituency, and how will you do so?

Suggested Answer

I will certainly press for improvements in our educational system, particularly as regards standards, as far as our resources allow.

I will naturally take account of the views of teachers, parents and employers in my constituency.

Question 5

What steps will you take to raise the morale of a profession under pressure?

Suggested Answer

I shall press for continued recognition by both local and central Government of the professional status of teachers, and for the provision of initial and in-service training, designed to foster the teacher's professional development. I believe that the proposals put forward in the Government's recent White Paper on teacher training constitute an important step in this direction. However, the morale of the teaching profession ultimately depends not upon Government, but upon the efforts of teachers themselves to live up to their high ideals.

Question 6

How will you work to achieve a highly qualified, trained and adequately rewarded teaching force?

Suggested Answer

Conservatives are determined to build upon the achievements of the last 4 years. All new recruits to the teaching profession are now graduates; and we have insisted that all those entering teacher training, should have the minimum qualifications required for Higher Education. We shall wish to ensure that any future reviews of teachers' pay take account of a teacher's knowledge and experience, as well of supply and demand; and I shall press for due rewards to be given to teachers of high quality. Conservatives are also seriously interested in the possibility of establishing a General Teachers Council (on the Scottish model) in England and Wales.

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CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY

The following Q of P was prepared to questions raised by the Chartered Institute of Building (South Wales Region). Candidates may find it helpful to have this information in their possession.

Question 1

What level of activity over a 5 year parliamentary period do you envisage being accorded to the following expressed in manning requirements:-

- (a) Public Sector new construction (roads, sewers, schools hospitals, etc)?
- (b) Public Sector new housing construction (Council housing, Housing Associations etc)?
- (c) Private Sector new housing construction?
- (d) Other Private Sector new construction works (Shops, Offices etc)?
- (e) Public Sector Maintenance (Council housing and other works)?

Suggested Answer

It is not possible to answer these questions in any detail. The Government's latest public expenditure White Paper (Cmd. 8789) shows that public capital expenditure on new construction is planned to rise from an estimated outturn of £9.4 billion in 1982-3 to £10.4 billion in 1983-4. This figure does not include repairs and maintenance, which now accounts for about 40% of public sector expenditure on the construction industry.

In particular provision has been made in 1983-4 for public expenditure on construction work to rise as follows:

Housing:	by over £250 million to £2,274 million
Transport:	by over £150 million to £1,585 million
Health and Personal social services	by over £50 million to £857million
Water services	by £35 million to £745 million

Information in terms of manning requirements is not available. The Government generally reckons that £1 million spent on construction creates about 40 man-years of work.

Question 2

If, in the event of some national monetary crises, what degree of priority would you use to insist on the equal use of other industries as economic regulators?

Suggested Answer

The purpose of our policy is to bring about a steady economic recovery and so avoid the occurrence of a national monetary crisis. I would certainly agree, however, that when these crises have occurred in the past, particularly under Labour Governments, the mistake has been to cut capital spending rather than current public spending. That is why this Government has been changing the emphasis from current to capital spending, and has recently been urging both local councils and the nationalised industries to use their full allocations of capital expenditure which had been underspent.

Question 3

What degree of priority would you attach to reforming public housing budget procedures so that they can be accorded the same advantages as other industries who enjoy 5 year Roll-On Budgets where surpluses or deficits of one year can be rolled on the the succeeding year?

Suggested Answer

In order to help local authorities and the Construction industries resolve there difficulties, the Government has been able to give local authorities an assurance that their 1984-5 housing and Other Services capital expenditure allocations will be at least 80% of those for 1983-4, thus introducing a valuable measure of certainty into authorities' forward programmes.

MEDICAL PRACTITIONERS

The following Q of P was prepared in response to specific questions put to an individual candidate by a medical committee in his constituency. Other candidates may find it useful to have this information.

Question 1. Expenditure on the Health Service

What is your commitment to the level of resources allocated to the NHS and in particular the proportion of these resources directed towards primary care?

Suggested answer

Conservatives are totally committed to the NHS. A clear demonstration of our commitment to the NHS is the fact that expenditure on the NHS for Great Britain will have doubled from £7,750 million in 1978-9 to £15,500 million in 1983-4. The proportion of planned expenditure on the Family Practitioners Services (in England) has more than doubled from £1.4 billion in 1978-9 to £2.9 billion in 1983-4. This has enabled us, for example, to employ 1,700 more GPs and 1,400 general dental practitioners with the corresponding effect that the average list size of GPs has been reduced.

Provision for adequate health care to all regardless of the ability to pay will remain a Conservative commitment in the future.

Question 2. The Independence of Family Practitioner Committees

Mr Kenneth Clark stated in the House on Wednesday 11th May that the Conservative Government was convinced that the Family Practitioner Services would benefit most from being administered by, and under the aegis of, independent free-standing committees whose sole concern and objective is to develop the primary care services.

Do you think that FPCs should be granted independent status?

Suggested answer

I deplored the fact that the Government's proposed legislation in the Health and Social Security Adjudication Bill to confer greater independence to the Family Practitioners Committee had to be dropped at the opposition's insistence, in order for the Bill to be passed before the General Election. The provision would have cut out unnecessary bureaucracy by delegating important decisions on primary care to local levels.

Background

1. In 1981 the Government announced after consultation with interested bodies/to make its intention FPCs fully responsible for their own administrative arrangements. An appropriate clause was included in the Health and Social Services and Social Security Adjudication Act (see below). The broad objectives were to reduce bureaucracy, to enhance opportunities for improved patient care and to improve patient care and to improve efficiency and accountability. It is believed that a strong focus for the family practitioner service will, in collaboration with the efforts of DHAs, benefit primary care within the NHS as a whole.

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/Continued . . .

2. The Health and Social Services and Social Security Adjudication Act only recently received the royal assent. Like the Finance Act 1983 the bill was in the middle of its Parliamentary progress when the Election was called. To pass the Bill quickly, the Government reluctantly agreed that Clause 8, and the related Schedule 4 which conferred authority status on FPC should, for the most part, be left out of the Bill.

Question 3. Maintenance of the Independent Contractor Status of GPs

We realise that none of the major parties are committed to changing this, but would be interested to know whether you would like the situation to continue as it is or whether you favour the idea of a salaried service.

Suggested answer

I think the Government would be quite right in keeping the status quo.

Conservative Research Department

1 June 1983

TRANSPORT 2000

Questionnaire to Parliamentary Candidates

Candidates are likely to find that questionnaires from this body raise both general issues and particular local or regional matters. This Question of Policy was prepared in response to a questionnaire from Wales. It should be remembered that Transport 2000 is a pro-rail, anti-road pressure group which is heavily influenced by the NUR.

Question 1.

The Serpell Report was limited to financial considerations alone. Do you think this is a sensible basis on which to decide the future of railways in Great Britain?

Suggested Answer

The Report did not limit itself to financial considerations alone. We believe that decisions should be taken on the basis of likely future performance and by social need for public transport.

Question 2.

Part II of the Report contains policy options for the future size of the railway network, which have severe implications for Wales. Do you think the size of the present network is: Too large... About right... Too small...

Suggested Answer

About right. But of course some lines do have to close from time to time where there is very little or no use for them and which are too expensive to maintain. This has happened under all Governments.

Question 3.

Do you think the present level of investment in railways is: Too great... About right... Too little...

Suggested Answer

Too little. Regrettably money that might have been used for investment has been directed to other purposes, because of losses due to strikes and poor efficiency. But we have maintained the BR investment ceiling in real terms.

Question 4.

Great Britain is at present undergoing a trade recession, which is affecting the level of business on the railways. Do you think it is sensible to base future policy on the present financial performance of the railways?

Suggested Answer

The problems of the railways are not due primarily to the recession, but to poor management and failure to restrain costs. Future policy must take account of likely future performance (which is heavily affected both by wider economic factors and by the level of efficiency achieved on the railways) and by social needs for public transport.

Question 5.

Should possible future energy shortages be taken into account in deciding the future of the railways?

Suggested Answer

Britain is more self-sufficient in energy than any other industrial country.

Question 6.

The Report makes very little mention of electrification of the railways. Do you think electrification is desirable?

Suggested Answer

Yes, it is desirable. We are committed to electrification in principle. But investment in electrification on Inter-City lines will be based on a sound financial case being made for each project.

Question 7.

The Report suggested for Inter-City trains either progressive closure, or grant aid, although the supposedly viable network Option A, includes most of what would now be called Inter-City services. Do you agree that progressive closure should occur? Do you believe grant aid should be made available?

Suggested Answer

(a) No

(b) No. Inter-City services are commercial services. Our view is that they should therefore be commercially viable and we have made prospects for commercial viability a criterion for approval of future main line electrification projects.

Question 8.

Most of the railway passenger services in Wales come into the

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category of Other and Provincial Services. The Report states a belief that these services provide poor value for money. Do you agree?

Suggested Answer

No, not in all cases. However, some services do cost a great deal of money and have few passengers. It may be the case that local transport needs on these lines would be better served with more bus transport or new and less costly forms of rail transport. Wales would get better value for money with better efficiency.

Question 9.

The Report suggests the replacement of railway services in some areas by buses. Do you agree that this would be sensible?

Suggested Answer

It may well be sensible on some lines. However, as Serpell points out, guarantees would have to be given that the bus service would continue. It is certainly an option that should be considered in certain circumstances.

Question 10.

The Report suggests that British Rail should possibly purchase railway equipment from abroad. Do you agree?

Suggested Answer

British Rail should get the best equipment at the most competitive price for the customer, ideally British.

Question 11.

The Report makes no comparisons with railways and railway policy in other countries. Do you think this should have been done?

Suggested Answer

No. Transport needs of other countries are in nearly every case not comparable with those of Britain. International comparisons have to be treated with great care.

Question 12.

There have been suggestions following the publication of the Report that a case exists for creating a separate Authority for railways, although British Rail's Management reorganisation includes a withdrawal of divisional management from Wales. If so who should be responsible?
Who should provide the funds?

Suggested Answer

We believe that a case exists for decentralisation of the railways for good management reasons. We do not believe in adding an extra layer of bureaucracy or a 'separate authority for the railways'.

Background

For general comments on the Serpell Report, see Question of Policy No. 140.

Conservative Research Department

3.6.83

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NATIONAL UNION OF LICENSED VICTUALLERS

QUESTIONNAIRE

Question 1. Opening Hours

Since 1976 proprietors of public houses in Scotland have been able to apply for an extension of opening hours so that they can be open from 11.00 a.m. to 11.00 p.m. Experience has shown that this has not resulted in any increase in alcohol abuse or alcohol related offences.

Would you support similar legislation for England and Wales with the proprietors of public houses having sole discretion as to their opening hours?

Suggested Answer

Home Office research into the extension of Scottish licensing hours and its consequences has yet to be completed. The Government feel that on an issue such as this, on which very different opinions are held, any change in the law which might lead to increasing problems of alcoholism and alcohol abuse must be examined very carefully.

Question 2. Under-age Drinking

We believe that under-age drinking is reaching alarming proportions and is a social problem. Licensees are very conscious of their responsibilities in this respect but are often at a complete disadvantage to detect and prevent the primary offence of illegal consumption. It is virtually impossible for anyone to judge with certainty the age of an adolescent, and young persons determined to obtain alcoholic liquor will adopt all kinds of devious methods to gratify their desire.

Would you support legislation along the following lines?

1. That the penalty against a person under-age obtaining and consuming alcoholic liquor, or any person obtaining alcoholic liquor for consumption by a person under 18 years, should be made more severe?
2. That the responsibility in law should be on the person or persons who are under the statutory age purchases or consume alcoholic liquor and not on the person making the sale.

Suggested Answer

1. We share the widespread concern about the increase in excessive drinking among young people. It is our view that penalties must be kept under review to ensure that inflation does not lessen unduly the severity of fines.

2. Changes made in the Criminal Law Act 1977 in the structure of fines reflect alterations in responsibility. A person who knowingly sells alcohol to an under-age person is liable to a maximum fine of £50; someone who is under-age who buys alcohol from a licensed premises is liable to a maximum fine of £500. There are no plans to change this existing law.

Question 3. Clubs

In view of the unfair trading conditions in favour of Registered and Members Clubs, would you support legislation which would require:

1. Rating of club premises to be in relation to turnover.
2. Parity between the type of 'fruit machine' installed in both Clubs and public houses.

Suggested Answer

1. There are no proposals for change in this area.
2. This is a matter for the licensing authorities.

Question 4. Grant of Licences

If districts become over-licensed standards would fall. A great many public houses would close down, and this would be detrimental to the public interest. Public need should still be the principle test of whether new licences are required in any area.

Would you support proposals which would provide that in considering licence applications, Licensing Justices' should continue to have regard to the requirements of the public, and the number of licensed premises in their respective areas?

Suggested Answer

The granting of licences is a matter for local decision. In taking a decision, Licencing Justices must take account initially of two factors - the suitability of the applicant, and that of the premises. In examining these two matters, the Justices therefore have regard to the requirements of the public. Each case must obviously be judged on its merits; the right of appeal to the Crown Court acts as a safeguard.

Question 5. Rating

Would you support legislation for the abolition of the present system of rating based on hypothetical property values in favour of the introduction of a more equitable system based on the ability to pay?

Suggested Answer

Following lengthy consultation on rates reform, the Government concluded that the alternatives to the present system all pose large problems. Proposals for relieving excessive rates burdens are set out in the Conservative Manifesto. (see also Q of P 131)

Question 6. Violence

Having regard to the increase in violence and vandalism which is threatening the personal safety and property of the large sections of the law abiding public, would you support legislation for a referendum as to whether both corporal and capital punishment be introduced?

Suggested Answer

See Questions of Policy No. 145

BUS AND COACH COUNCIL

Questionnaire To Parliamentary Candidates

Candidates are advised to take the opportunity provided by this questionnaire, to stress the expansion (and much reduced) cost of coach services made possible by the Government. This might be done in a note attached to the completed questionnaire. (For details see Campaign Guide p184).

Question 1

What priority do you give to the provision of good bus services in this area ?

Suggested Answer

It is assumed that most candidates will feel that good bus services are essential.

Question 2

Do you support policies for long-term consistent investment in bus services ?

Suggested Answer

This is a matter for the bus companies themselves to determine.

Question 3

Do you consider that Central Government should be responsible for financial support to ensure the provision of adequate bus services throughout the Country ?

Suggested Answer

The Government already supports local bus services, through grants to local councils; and this will continue. But clearly the need for a bus service has to be established.

Question 4

Do you consider that Local Government should be able to provide additional support for local bus services without such support being taken into account in the allocation of Central Government support ?

Suggested Answer

Local Government is able to provide such services, but penalties for reckless overspending must be enforced.

Conservative Research Department

BRITISH MARITIME LEAGUE

Questionnaire to Parliamentary Candidates

Facts

In a lengthy preface to its questionnaire, the League makes a number of 'factual' statements which ought not to pass unchallenged. It asserts:

- that the navy has been steadily weakened. In fact the Government is totally committed to the retention of a strong navy. In 1981-2 it spent more in real terms on ships and their weapons systems than any other Government during the last 19 years, and almost 50% more than in 1978-9.

- that manpower in shipbuilding has been reduced by 55% when in fact the reduction has been substantially less. No reference is made to the Government's efforts to secure a viable future for the industry. Since 1979 the industry has received £700 million by way of government support to help it survive a period of great difficulty during which the world's major shipbuilders have all suffered severely.

- that 'our fishing fleet has been decimated', whereas in fact the total number of fishing vessels in the UK is now greater than at any time since the war.

Question 1.

Do you agree that urgent solutions must be found to these problems?

Suggested Answer

You have not presented the position accurately (see above). We will continue to give full support to our navy, to our shipbuilding industry and to our fishing fleet, maintaining the firmly established policies begun by the present Government.

Question 2.

Do you agree that positive and co-ordinated national maritime policies must be agreed on an all-party basis and endorsed by the relevant public and private sector businesses and other interests concerned?

Suggested Answer

A prerequisite of all-party agreement would have to be the abandonment by the Labour Party of its proposed 'maritime strategy' which calls for the extension of nationalisation and protection in both our shipping and shipbuilding industries. Both industries rely on open markets and free trade. Protectionism would invite retaliation which would harm our trade and increase industry's

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costs. The Government understands the formidable problems faced by both our shipbuilding and shipping industries. They must be met and overcome by improving our competitiveness. This Government has done all it can to help, and to see them through a difficult period. A further obstacle in the way of all-party agreement is the fact that the Labour Party's proposed cuts in defence expenditure are incompatible with a strong navy.

Question 3.

Do you support the immediate establishment of a Maritime Affairs Committee of the Cabinet under the Prime Minister to initiate, co-ordinate and direct these policies and their implementation?

Suggested Answer

The membership and terms of reference of Cabinet Committees are matters for the Prime Minister. Policies are those of the Cabinet as a whole.

Conservative Research Department

3.6.83

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CHILD POVERTY ACTION GROUPQuestions 1 and 2

Do you agree that the married man's tax allowance should be phased out?

If 'YES' to Q1: do you think that the bulk of the savings on the married man's tax allowance should be redistributed in the form of increased child benefit?

Suggested Reply

Phasing out the married tax allowance and using the revenue to increase benefits would mean lowering the tax threshold for all married couples, yet CPAG has itself emphasised that:

'Over the past 15 years taxation has become a major cause of poverty /because/ successive governments have allowed the tax threshold to fall, so many more poor families are paying tax" (Poverty Briefing May 1983).

This is why the Government published a consultative paper ("The Taxation of Husband and Wife") and, before reaching any conclusions, it will consider both the representations from interested bodies like CPAG and the forthcoming report of the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee which has been covering much the same ground. After the election a consultative document will be issued, setting out the implications of the various suggested changes.

Question 3

Would you support the introduction of a means test for child benefit?

Suggested Reply

No. Child benefit will have been fully protected under the Conservatives, with the increase to £6.50 per week in November this year expected to put child benefit at its highest ever real value.

It is very important to families and to the low-paid, and there are no plans to introduce a means test for it.

Question 4

Would you support a national minimum wage?

Suggested Reply

No. I believe that the establishment of a national minimum wage would increase industrial costs and add to unemployment,

particularly young people. Even the support of the trade unions would not be forthcoming as Mr Duffy, President of the AUEW, has made clear:

'The reason we are against a national minimum wage is that we will not accept any government interference in wages.'
("Morning Star 1st October 1982).

Question 5

Do you agree that the long-term rate of supplementary benefit should be extended to the long-term unemployed?

Suggested Answer

I believe that the Government is right to have concentrated instead on virtually doubling the supplementary benefit rate for children under 5 in the four years to November 1982 and in raising the ordinary rates of supplementary benefit ahead of the rise in prices.

The extension of the higher rate of supplementary benefit to the long-term unemployed would be very expensive, costing over £325 million each year.

Question 6

Do you agree with those who say that benefit levels create a disincentive for the unemployed to seek work?

Suggested Answer

Under the Conservatives the net income of working families with children will have increased in real terms between 1978-9 and 1983-4. This improvement applies to families on three-quarters average earnings (as well as those on average earnings) and means that work incentives have been improved by this Government.

However, there is no doubt but that some people on low earnings, usually with children, are better-off on benefits and this means that obtaining work can be financially disadvantageous. Sir Geoffrey Howe has emphasised that:

"(Child Benefit) plays a major part in easing the unemployment trap and so in our strategy for improving incentives for everyone"
(Hansard, 15th March 1983).

Question 7

Would you support the introduction of a statutory educational maintenance allowance - equivalent to that paid under the Youth Training Scheme - for young people remaining in education at school or FE colleges?

/ Continued . . .

Suggested Answer

No. I see no case for spending hundreds of millions of taxpayers money on providing 16-19 year olds with mandatory grants. Many pupils remain in full-time education beyond the age of 16 without grants: indeed over the last two years the number of pupils remaining in post 16 education has increased significantly. These pupils often derive long-term financial benefits from extending their education.

Question 8

Would you support the introduction of

- (a) the duty to provide school meals?
- (b) nationally fixed prices for school meals?
- (c) national minimum nutritional standards?

Suggested Answer

Our Education Act 1980 compels LEAs to provide free meals for children whose parents receive supplementary benefit or family income supplement.

I believe that a statutory duty on LEAs to provide meals for all children is unnecessary and that this, together with details of pricing and nutritional content, are best left to Local Authorities.

Conservative Research Department

3.6.83

CAMPAIGN FOR MIDDLE EAST PEACEQuestions for Parliamentary Candidates

PLEASE TICK THE APPROPRIATE ANSWER

Question 1.

Do you believe the Camp David Accords were:

- a) A positive step to a negotiated peace?
- b) A negative move in the Middle East conflict?
- c) A betrayal of the Palestinian people?

Suggested Answer

Tick Question 1 (a)

Question 2.

Do you think the PLO is:

- a) The sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people?
- b) Unrepresentative of the Palestinian people?
- c) An undemocratic organization committed to terrorism?

Question 4.

Do you believe that the PLO should be a party to a negotiated peace?

YES/NO

Suggested Answer to both 2 and 4A tick would be totally inappropriate

I do not accept the PLO's claim to be the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people and I know the Government does not accord the Organisation or its London representative any official status. But we and our partners in the Ten consider that the PLO will have to be associated with negotiations, because of the support they undoubtedly enjoy among the Palestinian people.

Question 3.

Do you believe that the West Bank:

- a) Should be returned to Jordan?
- b) Should be administered by Israel?
- c) Should be part of an autonomous Palestinian State?

Suggested AnswerA tick would be totally inappropriate

The provisions of Security Council Resolution 242 apply to the West Bank. Israel should put an end to the territorial occupation she has

maintained there since 1967. The future status of the occupied territories will have to be settled in negotiations between all the parties concerned. The comprehensive peace settlement should put the Palestinian people in a position to exercise fully their right to self-determination.

Question 5.

Do you think the recent illness of West Bank school girls reported in the press was:

- a) Israeli poisoning?
- b) Mass hysteria?
- c) PLO organised?

Suggested Answer

I am aware of the report on this incident, but I am not in a position to express a judgement of my own.

Question 6.

Do you think the PLO should change its national covenant?

Suggested Answer

YES

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3.6.83

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THE WILLIAMSBURG SUMMIT

Question

What progress was made at the Summit of Industrial Nations which took place in Williamsburg?

Suggested Answer

The Summit endorsed the thrust of financial and economic policies of the kind we ourselves are following. There was general agreement that there are now positive signs of recovery in the world economy, and that this needs to be sustained by disciplined monetary and fiscal policies conducive to low inflation. There was also strong support for the maintenance of free trade, and the avoidance of protectionism.

Background

The leaders of the main industrial nations met in Williamsburg in order to discuss the best approach on sustaining recovery and what to do when growth does take place.

The Key proposals were:

1. Budgetary Policies that will be conducive to low inflation.
2. The promotion of convergence of economic performance and greater exchange rate stability, while retaining the freedom to operate independently.
3. The avoidance of protectionism.
4. Greater cooperation in order to alleviate the problem of 3rd World debt - including the early ratification of the increases in resources for the IMF and the General Arrangements to Borrow.
5. The Ministers of Finance, with the IMF, should define the conditions for improving the international monetary system.
6. The reaffirmation of our commitments to the International Development Association (IDA), Overseas aid and access to markets for 3rd World producers.
7. The encouragement of new technology.
8. An improvement in the relationship between the oil importers and the producers with the aim of achieving greater oil price stability.
9. East-West economic relations must be compatible with security interests.
10. Agreement was reached on the protection of the environment.

Conservative Research Department

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DISABLEMENT INCOME GROUP

QUESTIONNAIRE TO PARLIAMENTARY CANDIDATES

Question 1 and 2

If elected will you work towards the introduction of partial pension for disabled working people whose disabilities have drastically reduced their capacity to earn?

Will you work towards the introduction of a disablement costs allowance payable to all disabled people irrespective of age and regardless of cause of disability, sex and marital and working status?

Suggested answer

The Government has concentrated on improving many existing benefits for the disabled rather than introducing either a partial pension or a comprehensive allowance for the disabled, both of which would be extremely expensive. For example, both the mobility allowance and the attendance allowance have been increased in real terms and hundreds of thousands more people now draw them. The Government will continue, as before, to give priority to the disabled and long-term benefits like the attendance allowance will continue to be fully protected against prices.

Question 3

If elected will you work towards the abolition of the 'household duties test' for married women?

Suggested answer

Questions of Policy No 43

Question 4

If elected will you work towards the extension of the invalid care allowance to married women?

Suggested answer

Questions of Policy No 43

Question 5

If elected will you work towards the payment of a basic-rate invalidity pension to all disabled people who are of working age but unable to work, regardless of their contribution record?

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/ Continued . . .

Suggested answer

There is already a non-contributory invalidity pension payable to persons of working age who are incapable of work and who are unable to establish title to a contributory benefit. It is not possible to increase NCIP to the level of invalidity pension at the moment as it would cost a further £60 million.

Question 6

If elected will you work towards the restoration of the 5% cut in the real value of invalidity pensions, to bring these back into line with retirement pensions?

Suggested answer

Questions of Policy No 46.

Conservative Research Department

3 June 1983

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Conservative Research Department

4.6.83

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COPYRIGHT

Question

What is the Government's current policy on reform of the Copyright Act 1956?

Suggested Answer

The Government recognises the need to reform and modernise copyright law and is working towards this objective. In the meantime the Government has shown its willingness to respond urgently to immediate, serious problems that arise in copyright by its support for two Private Members' Bills dealing with video and record piracy in the past two Parliamentary sessions.

Background

1. Following the publication of the Whitford Departmental Committee Report in 1977, the Green Paper entitled "Reform of the Law relating to Copyright, Design and Performer's Protection" was published in July 1981. A large number of comments and representations is now being actively considered.
2. The two notable areas where reform of the law is under consideration are functional designs (should e.g. car spares be protected from copying by spares manufacturers), and home taping (should a levy be imposed on blank audio and video tapes). Primary legislation would be needed.
3. The Copyright Act 1956 has been amended twice recently (once last year following Lord Fletcher's Bill, and once this year by Sir John Eden's Bill). Both these amendments were in respect of criminal offences relating to film (including video) and record piracy. The Private Members' Bills in question were both supported by the Government.

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ROAD BUILDING

Question

Why doesn't the Government spend more on road building and maintenance?

Suggested Answer

Road Construction. We are already spending more on the roads programme even after allowing for price rises. We have made excellent progress with our roads programme, and we have increased spending from levels inherited from Labour. Our spending on trunk road construction and reconstruction in 1982-3 was over 29 per cent more in real terms than the previous Government spent in 1978-9. Since 1979, we have completed nearly 300 miles of new motorway and trunk road and renewed the equivalent of nearly 200 miles of older motorway to modern standards. We have bypassed more than 80 communities and some 140 bypasses are in our active forward programme. All the major remaining road schemes are due to start early in the programme for the next 5 years. The M25 orbital road is on target for completion by 1986. We would like to make faster progress but we must protect the rights of individuals affected by road schemes and produce safe, environmentally sound proposals.

Road Maintenance. Expenditure on trunk road and motorway maintenance has more than doubled since we took office. An estimated £213 million was spent in 1982-3, compared with just £89 million in 1978-9 under the previous Government. Within this total, expenditure on motorway maintenance has quadrupled from £19 million in 1978-9 to £82 million in 1982-3. In the last two years, spending accepted for Government grant for local authority road maintenance increased by 22 per cent.

Background

It is a fallacy to suppose that we could immediately and dramatically increase spending on roads. The time it takes from when planning begins to the time when money is paid to the contractor is usually about 10 years or more. So dramatic increases in actual spending on new construction would not be possible within the life of one Parliament.

SHIPPING

Question

How are we protecting the British Shipping Industry?

Suggested Answer

The UK Shipping Industry depends crucially on the opportunities offered to it by a world open trading system. Over two thirds of our international earnings come from cross trading (ie between countries other than the UK) - these earnings and the jobs they sustain depend on the willingness of other countries to keep their ports open to British Shipping and they would not be so willing if we closed our ports to theirs.

Whilst rejecting protectionism, the Government has helped the industry in its efforts to become competitive (partly by tackling resolutely the problems of overmanning) and has pressed in international forums for fairer and more open trade. We have cut regulatory burdens on our merchant navy and we are examining further measures to help the merchant navy cut costs.

In 1981 the UK Shipping Industry earned £3.6 billion gross from international trade.

Background

The Labour Party Manifesto states that a future Labour Government would nationalise shipbuilding and shipping. Such measures would destroy jobs, not create them.

Conservative Research Department

3.6.83

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CIVIL AND PUBLIC SERVICES ASSOCIATION

Civil Service Pay

Question 1

Would you please advise me of the method of determining Civil Service pay you would most prefer to see agreed between the next Government and the Trade Unions.

Suggested Answer

Our manifesto states: 'We are committed to fair and reasonable levels of pay for those who work in the public services' and that we shall 'continue to seek sensible arrangements for determining pay in the Civil Service'. Our aim is to secure agreement with the trade unions on a new ordered pay determination system based on the recommendations of the report produced last year by the independent Megaw Committee. The trade unions have been (and will continue to be) given every opportunity to express their views before the new system is finally established.

Question 2

Do you agree that, subject to satisfactory probation in the grade, all officers should receive the agreed rate for the job (i.e. scale maximum)?

Suggested Answer

It is the whole of the scale, not the maximum, which represents the rate for the job for Civil Servants on incremental scales. The latter are designed to reward skill and experience, and are widely used in the public and private sectors.

Question 3

Do you agree with the Low Pay Unit that two thirds of average earnings should form the basis of a National Minimum Wage for full time adult workers?

Suggested Answer

The Government believes that a minimum wage would tend to help the incomes of some at the expense of the jobs of others, particularly people in vulnerable groups. The figure of $\frac{2}{3}$ average earnings is arbitrary. In countries with minimum wages, the levels are generally well below the $\frac{2}{3}$ average earnings suggested.

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Civil Service Pensions

Question

Do you agree that the Civil Service pension scheme is a fair and proper one and no increase in funding by employees is necessary?

Suggested Answer

The Manifesto said that "Public sector pensioners will ... continue to be protected (against rising prices) on the basis of realistic pension contributions". As the Government explained in the debate on 22 October 1982, we believe that Civil Servants should make a proper contribution to the costs of their pension scheme - the costs of index-linking should not be met by taxpayers generally. Following the Scott and Megaw Reports, the misapprehension that Civil Servants do not pay for their pensions is now much less widespread and the Government's proposal that the Civil Service pension scheme should be changed from a non-contributory basis has been widely welcomed. The important thing is to ensure that the level of contributions, which is related to the level of benefits, is right and fair both to the Civil Servant and to the taxpayer.

Staffing Levels

Question

The Government set an arbitrary staffing target of 630,000 for the Civil service by April 1984. The Government has now asked Departments to identify further areas for staff cuts up to 1988 including further scope for automation and privatisation. Pressures of work in the Civil Service are increasing and morale is very low. What steps would you like to see taken by the next Government to ensure that all Civil Service Departments have adequate complements of staff to discharge their duties effectively?

Suggested Answer

The target of 630,000 was not an arbitrary one. It was fixed after a most careful examination of the manpower requirements of Government departments, and of the possibilities for introducing better management and greater efficiency. All departments have now been asked to review and report on their manpower prospects from 1984 to 1988. Our aim will be to match departments' staffing levels with the work which Departments have to do, taking into account the scope that exists for increasing efficiency.

New Technology

Question

Do you agree that New Technology should only be introduced in the Civil Service with agreement with the Trade Unions with no job loss guarantees and benefits for Civil Servants such as a shorter working week?

Suggested Answer

The Government's policy is to introduce New Tehnology into the Civil Service where possible with the co-operation and agreement of the Trade Unions concerned. However, departmental management must preserve its right under the overall authority of Ministers to implement particular new technology projects without Trade Union agreement if this proves necessary. Against the background of the Government's commitment to reduce Civil Service numbers it is not possible for any guarantee to be given that no jobs will be lost as a result of the introduction of New Technology. New technology will bring benefits to staff by making jobs less boring and repetitious and more satisfying and interesting. But Civil Servants cannot fairly expect to receive as of right more pay or shorter hours just because the taxpayer has invested money in better equipment.

Privatisation

Question

Do you agree that the duties charged to Government Departments are better performed by the Civil Service, with its emphasis on maintaining proper uniform standards of service to the public, than by private contractors whose emphasis may be profitability at the expense of such standards?

Suggested Answer

The Government's policy is to contract work out to the private sector where this is cost-effective. The aim is to achieve greater efficiency and to improve the quality of service to the consumer.