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and other Departments in Whitehall

TREASURY WEEKLY ECONOMIC BRIEF

I attach the latest version of this Brief. Changes from the previous Brief, of 15 March, are
sidelined.

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22 March 1982

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A GENERAL ECONOMIC STRATEGY

1. Government's main economic objectives

Main objectives are to achieve, over a period, a sustained improvement in the economy through reduction of inflation and promotion of enterprise and initiative. Reduction of inflation requires maintaining steady but not excessive downward pressure on monetary variables, and complementary fiscal policies. Improvement of supply side depends on restoration of flexible and competitive market economy and better incentives.

2. Relative importance given to inflation and unemployment?

Government is concerned about both. These are complementary not competing objectives; unemployment important economic and social problem. But will not be reduced by relaxing struggle against inflation.

3. Effect of falling oil prices?

Very welcome: in some ways like a cut in indirect taxes or NIS supporting recovery and lower inflation. Does reduce room for manoeuvre through fall in Government revenues, but ~~also need~~ for tax reductions. [IF PRESSED on fiscal implications of continued oil price falls: would be of substantial future benefit to inflation and output. As Chancellor said in Budget Speech, wholly irresponsible to rule out possibility of action to adjust fiscal balance.] (See also Section R).

4. Contribution made by 9 March Budget?

Budget continues Government's medium-term strategy for economy. Designed to make further progress on inflation and restore base for economic growth, improved output and increased employment. Tax cuts and other measures designed to help both business and individuals, within responsible fiscal framework.

5. Reflationary/deflationary/effect on demand?

Oversimple questions. Wrong to talk about what government is 'putting into' or 'taking out' of economy. Ignores links between fiscal and monetary policy and their effects through financial behaviour (interest rates and exchange rate), on economy. Budget's overall effect is to support sustainable recovery.

6. Effects of Budget and December announcements together?

[December announcement provided for £5 billion increase in public expenditure plans for 1982-83 and increased NIC rates yielding £1 billion extra revenue. But total Government revenue in 1982-83 now expected to be some £3½ billion higher than at time of 1981 Budget. Taking account of all these changes, pre-Budget PSBR for 1982-83 about £8½ billion; post-Budget forecast about £9½ billion.]

No simple answer to this question. So much depends on base one starts from, and what counts as a policy change. Overall effect is reflected in PSBR for 1982-83 a little higher than planned in March 1981. But important thing is continuing decline in PSBR, with benefits for interest rates already apparent, plus substantial cuts in taxation.

7. Not enough help for industry?

Main help for industry is in pursuing policies that allow for lower inflation and ease pressure on interest rates. In addition, specific Budget measures aimed at industry and business will cost about £1 billion in 1982-83. Signs of recovery in profits and financial position of industrial and commercial companies. (See also Section N).

8. Does more for industry than for people?

Help to industry is help to people. Higher allowances and thresholds more than compensate for inflation in last year and make up some of ground lost last year. Many other smaller changes (eg on charities) will help particular groups of people.

9. Another Budget pushing up prices?

No. Changes in excise duties slightly less than required for full revalorisation. 12-monthly inflation rate now 11 per cent (February figure published 19 March) - down from 12 per cent in January. Further fall forecast to 9 per cent by November 1982.

10. Effect of Budget on personal incomes, incentives etc?

See Section-D.

11. Fiscal policy should be based on cyclically adjusted/real PSBR?

Some merit in inflation-adjusted measure as indicator of fiscal stance in some circumstances. But there are dangers here: it would be quite wrong to expand PSBR in cash terms in response to an upsurge in inflation merely to keep inflation-adjusted measure constant. Policies intended to eradicate inflation, not to adjust to it.

12. Monetarism dead?

'Monetarism' a much over-used, misused and misunderstood word. Have always maintained that success of strategy - lower inflation and establishment of conditions for sustained recovery - would require responsible attitude towards monetary growth, and Government borrowing and expenditure. That is how we have acted and will continue to do. [IF PRESSED on dogmatic pursuit of MTFs: Medium-term framework provides essential reference point for policy. Nonsense to suggest MTFs is being slavishly and dogmatically adhered to. Only

right to take account of changing circumstances: that is what we have done. But such adjustments do not reflect any weakening in resolve to tackle inflation. Judged by results, policy is succeeding. Inflation has been reduced and is now coming down again.

13. If this is, as claimed, a Budget for output, and employment, how many jobs will it create?

Budget forecast shows continuation of recovery; but it is not the practice to publish estimates of the overall effects of the Budget, or its individual measures, on employment or output.

14. Not keeping to commitments to reduce expenditure?

Increases announced in Budget offset by reductions leaving totals still around £115 billion. FSBR shows declining ratio to GDP in future years. (See also Section E).

15. Armstrong/unified Budget?

[TSCS will be questioning Chancellor on this 5 April].

Proposals have wide implications. Need careful consideration. Government does take account of tax and expenditure when taking decisions on each. Await TCSC report with interest.

16. Labour Party's Plan for Jobs

[Ten-point plan launched 15 March: aims at reducing unemployment below 1 million within a Parliament; using increased Government expenditure, shorter working week, planned industrial strategy, annual national assessment, no formal incomes policy, new Price Commission, import controls and lower exchange rate, exchange controls on movement of capital plus withdrawal from EEC, more progressive taxation action to relieve poverty, end to arms race, increased aid to Third World.

Previous Government's policies did not prevent unemployment from rising to levels exceeding 1 million for three quarters of their term of office. Under social contract with last Labour Government RPI-measured inflation reached nearly 27 per cent and wage inflation over 30 per cent. Subsequent reduction followed by 'winter of discontent'. Withdrawal from EEC and control of imports would cause severe dislocation and inefficiencies.

17. Programmes 'run through Treasury model'

Use of Treasury model to try to quantify effects of Plan for Jobs (or any other suggested measures) does not of itself guarantee accuracy or confer credibility. Results depend on judgments and assumptions fed in more than 'pressing buttons'.

BULL POINTS

As at 22.3.82 (Tape 455)

(i) Signs of recovery

- Total output (GDP) rose in both 3Q and 4Q 1981. Level in 4Q some 1 per cent above 2Q.
- Short time working in manufacturing fell in 1981 to below $\frac{1}{4}$ its January peak;
- 1981 figures show volume of engineering and construction orders up about 17 and 9 per cent respectively on 2H 1980.
- Private sector housing starts in 1981 up by 37 per cent on 2H 1980.
- Most recent major independent forecasts assess low point in activity reached in 1H 1981; prospect of some recovery in 1982.

(ii) Earnings and settlements. Increases halved in 1980-81 pay round. Public sector in line. There is a good deal of evidence that average settlements in private sector are running lower than in the 1980-81 round. [CBI pay data bank for manufacturing settlements suggests average is now around 7 per cent compared with 9 per cent in previous round.]

(iii) Productivity. Output per head in manufacturing rose 10 per cent during 1981. Investment in plant and machinery holding up well.

(iv) Unit labour costs: Pay moderation and higher productivity has meant dramatically low increase in manufacturers unit wage costs over last year - just 2½ per cent in year to 4Q 1981.

(v) Competitiveness. Improved by over 10 per cent during 1981, reflecting pay moderation combined with exchange rate fall.

(vi) Profits: Industrial and commercial companies gross trading profits (net of stock appreciation) rose strongly in 1981, up 28 per cent between 1Q and 4Q 1981.

(vii) Exports holding up well; non-oil export volumes in 4 months to December up 3½ per cent on 1980. 1981 figures (incomplete) show engineering export orders up 20 per cent on 2H 1980.

(viii) Unemployment. Rate of increase in unemployment since mid 1981 about half that in 1H and 1/3 that in 4Q 1980. Vacancies improving since mid 1981. Short-time working in manufacturing reduced by over $\frac{1}{4}$ during 1981 and overtime working has increased.

(ix) Special employment measures. Total provision on Job Release Scheme, Temporary Short-Time Working Compensation and Community Enterprise Programme in 1982-83 now planned to reach over £520 million, with additional £61 million for young worker scheme (starting January 1982). Spending on Youth Opportunities Programme to rise to £700 million in 1982-83. 280,000 unemployed school-leavers last year found places on YOP by Christmas.

(x) Training. Over next 3 years £4 million to be provided to bring training schemes up to date. New Youth Training Scheme for school leavers to be introduced September 1983 represents major step towards comprehensive provision for young people.

(xi) Industrial relations. Number of strikes in 1980 and 1981 less than in any year since 1941 and number of working days lost only a third of average of last ten years.

(xii) Retail prices. Inflation halved since peak in spring 1980 (21.9 per cent). 12 monthly increase in February of 11.0 per cent.

(xiii) Share Ownership Schemes: Number of schemes has increased from 30 in May 1979 to over 400. Number of employees covered roughly doubled between first and second years in office. Profit sharing schemes alone now cover some 270 thousand employees.

(xiv) Examples of export successes reported in the Press include: £160 million contract for construction of two new colleges in the largest ever such contract between Britain and Nigeria (Mitchell Cotts Group); approved tender for veterinary vaccines to Kampuchea (Hoechst UK); supply of 1000 special gearboxes to Istanbul within five weeks of order (Turner-Spicer Transmission); travelling hoists with exceptionally low headroom (550mm) for use in Danish oil and gas exploration platform in North Sea (Tonnes Force); a profiled metal cladding system for a power station in The Gambia (Ash and Lacy Steel); and glazing for the new Financial Complex in Port of Spain - the biggest ever such gained by a UK glass processor (Clark and Eaton with Pilkingtons). New British-designed, managed and partly funded, domestic water supply project in Jordan was opened by King Hussein on 18 February.

(xvii) UK preferred location: US electronics industry survey reports UK most preferred location for establishing new plants.

(xviii) Overseas debt repayments. Official external debt reduced from over \$13.3 billion at end-1981.

B ECONOMIC ACTIVITY AND PROSPECTS

1. Recent position?

[Q4 1981 figures for GDP (income) and GDP (expenditure) published 22 March]

All three GDP measures were higher in real terms in Q4 1981 than had been earlier in year. GDP (output) in Q4 was nearly 1 per cent up on Q2 - the earlier low point.

[IF PRESSED on apparent weakening of recovery (based on November/December/January industrial production) - see 2 below.

2. Recent manufacturing production figures show resumed decline?

[January figures show further fall in industrial and manufacturing production, now 3 and 4 per cent respectively below October levels, with manufacturing production at lowest point since 1967].

Only to be expected that January's index would show some further weakening. Series of factors (car and rail strikes, bad weather, holidays) have distorted the last three months. Despite this, manufacturing output in Q4 1981 some 2-3 per cent higher than its low point earlier in the year (Q1 1981). Preliminary indications for February suggest a pick up, with steel and car output up 16 and 12 per cent respectively, compared with January.

3. CSO cyclical indicators system shows recovery faltering?

[Coincident indicator, after rising steadily from April to October of last year, has remained broadly unchanged between October and January]

Flattening of coincident indicator reflects effects of strikes and bad weather on industrial production (see 2 above), longer leading indicator has been rising strongly since October.

4. Other evidence of improvement in economy?

Engineering and construction orders and private sector housing starts all well up during 1981 on H2 1980. Productivity (output per head) in manufacturing rising strongly - up 10 per cent in Q3 1981 from Q4 1980. Exports doing well (see K4). (Labour market indicators - see C1).

5. Government assessment of prospects

[FSBR forecast (9 March) assesses recovery to have begun. Main points are:

	per cent increase on year earlier	
	1982	1983 H1
GDP	1½	2
Manufacturing output	3	2
Consumers expenditure	½	½
Investment (private sector and public corporation)	4½	5
Exports	3½	3

Forecast expects some stockbuilding in 1982, Government expenditure flat.]

FSBR forecast sees prospect of some recovery continuing into 1983. (Last two Government assessments of economy were broadly correct). Healthy rise in private sector investment and exports. Inflation well into single figures ($7\frac{1}{2}$ per cent) by mid 1983. Further progress depends on continued moderation in domestic costs and restoration of competitiveness.

6. Outside forecasts

[GDP profile in recently released major forecasts:

	<u>NIESR</u>	<u>LBS</u>	<u>CBI</u>	<u>Phillips & Drew</u>	<u>OECD</u>	<u>FSBR</u>
	(Feb)	(Feb)	(Nov)	(Mar)	(Dec)	(Mar)
Per cent change 1982 on 1981	+1½	+1½	+1	+1½	+½	+1½]

Most recent major independent forecasts assess that low point in activity was reached in first half of 1981, with prospect of some recovery in 1982. As always, a range, with Cambridge forecasts being the more pessimistic. Most outside forecasters have not yet published their post-Budget assessments. Only major forecasters who have (Phillips and Drew) revised their forecasts to show higher output and lower inflation arising from Budget measures and lower oil prices.

C LABOUR

1. Recent unemployment figures?

[March figures to be published Tuesday 23 March. Separate briefing will be supplied to No.10]

2. Effect of Budget on unemployment?

Budget contributes to Government strategy of fostering conditions for sustainable growth. Help to business will lay foundation for more real jobs. Employment will benefit from some further improvement in activity. Proposed new non-profit-making scheme will enable local authorities and voluntary sponsors to provide many new jobs. (100,000 at additional Exchequer cost of £150 million).

3. Unemployment expected to continue rising rapidly?

[Outside forecasters see continued rise in registered unemployment during 1982 reaching about 3 million (UK adults) in Q4. Opinion divided for 1983, some (CEPG, Cambridge Econometrics, ITEM, NIESR) see rise continuing but at a slower rate others are broadly flat (LBS, St James, P+D); only Liverpool foresee a fall (400,000)].

Unemployment forecasts uncertain; independent forecasters encompass differing views for 1983 - several projecting stabilisation, Liverpool some decline. Rise in unemployment drastically reduced since end 1980. Tentative evidence of further slowing down this year - January/February rise just $\frac{1}{4}$ than in Q4 1980. Vacancies, short time and overtime all improved last year. Employment situation will benefit from some further recovery in activity this year.

4. Government forecasts for unemployment

[1982 PEWP uses working assumption of an average level of 2.9 million unemployed in Great Britain (excluding school leavers) in 1982-83 and rest of survey period. School leavers, adult students, temporarily stopped and Northern Ireland imply UK total unemployed of 3.2 million in 1982-83.]

Very difficult to forecast. Following well-established precedent of previous administrations is not publishing. Public Expenditure White Paper figures are planning assumptions not forecasts.

IF PRESSED that PEWP figures show Government planning sustained higher level of unemployment: No. Maintaining constant figure for the Survey period is conventional assumption adopted by previous Administration. PEWP figures consistent with the prospect of some fall in total unemployment before the end of 1982-83. They do not however necessarily imply this. If things go well - eg lower pay settlements, recovery in world trade - then reasonable to hope for fall in unemployment before end 1982-83.

5. Employment continuing to fall?

[Total employment declined 1.9 million or 8 per cent in 2 years to Sept 1981. Q3 figures indicate decline of 150,000 compared with 300,000 per quarter in H1 1981. Manufacturing employment declined by 34,000 a month in Q4, a little more than Q3.]

Third quarter decline in total employment half that in H1 1981. Manufacturing employment statistics suggest that lower rate of decrease was maintained in fourth quarter.

6. Unemployment higher than in other countries?

[On standardised definitions in 3Q 1981 UK employment was 11½ per cent compared with 6¼ per cent OECD rate; a UK doubling compared with an OECD rise of a third since 1979.]

Whole world affected by rising unemployment. In our case we have additional self inflicted wounds of high pay awards and low productivity. Unemployment now rising very fast in some countries eg Germany.

7. Higher Exchequer costs of unemployment. Recent Treasury estimates suppressed?

No 'right' figure. Estimates depend on assumptions and items of 'cost' covered. [IF PRESSED: Estimates have been made of cost of additional registered unemployment (eg for 1980-81 in February 1981 EPR). Attempt made to update to 1981-82 - range of figures has been calculated. But doubts expressed about assumptions used. Work, therefore, continues. No decision whether to publish.] Cannot gross up such figures to produce total cost (in terms of lost taxes and extra benefits) of all the unemployed. Meaningless concept. Implies comparison with an economy with zero unemployment. Can say total expenditure on unemployment and supplementary benefits paid to the unemployed estimated at £4.3 billion in 1981-82 and £5 billion in 1982-83.

8. What is Government doing to provide more jobs?

Illusion to think Government can switch employment off and on like a tap. Government pursuing sensible fiscal and monetary policies to curb inflation and creating conditions for enterprise - only measures that will ensure sustainable increase in employment. Nevertheless Government expanding schemes to meet special difficulties and improve training - eg plan to spend £1½ billion in cash on 1982-83 (40 per cent more than in 1981-82) on special employment and training measures; new Youth Training Scheme costing £1 billion a year from 1983-84; and new measure announced in Budget. (See C2).

D TAXATION

1. Burden of taxation

[Total taxation (i.e including for example income tax, indirect taxes, corporation tax/^{rates} and NIC rates) in 1978-79 was 34½ per cent of GDP (at market prices), 36 per cent in 1979-80, 37½ per cent 1980-81. It is forecast to be 40 per cent in 1981-82 and 39½ per cent in 1982-83.]

This has inevitably increased during a time when the recession has been adding to public spending. Changes proposed in Budget will reduce burden next year compared with 1981-82.

2. Burden of tax has risen since 1978-9 for most households?

[Comparisons given in Parliamentary Answers to Mr Straw 17 Feb and 18 Mar]

Slow growth of output and difficulty of restraining public expenditure have inevitably meant higher tax burden. But real personal income after direct taxes still higher than under last Government.

3. Burden has fallen for the rich?

Only because of abolition of absurdly high marginal rates and raising of thresholds in 1979 Budget.

4. Burden has risen most for the poor?

Proportion of income paid in income tax and NICs will fall next year (82-3) for the lowest paid.

5. Personal tax burden increased by the recent Budget - when NICs taken into account?

[Full explanation given in Parliamentary Answer 11 May DO col 955].

The real increase in personal allowances and tax thresholds will reduce income tax as a percentage of income at all levels of incomes. **[IF PRESSED:** percentage paid in income tax plus NIC will rise for most people. But it will fall for the lowest paid (below ½ average earnings (married) and below about 1/3 average earnings (single)). Those over pension age who are taxpayers will benefit from income tax changes and will be unaffected by NIC rise, and, of course, State pensions be^hing uprated from November (see F1).]

6. Budget failed to compensate for last year's non-indexation?

Impossible to finance - without grave risks to interest rates and present recovery - the additional £3 billion cost.

7. No improvement in incentives?

There will be 1.2 million fewer taxpayers than if allowances had remained at 1981-82 levels, and $\frac{1}{2}$ million fewer higher rate taxpayers. For the substantial number taken out of tax or with reduced marginal rates, incentives will improve.

8. Income tax cuts only help highest paid?

Not true: those who will gain most are lowest as well as highest paid i.e. gives greatest proportionate benefit to highest and lowest paid taxpayers, who did worst in last year's Budget.

9. No help on poverty trap?

Numbers in Poverty Trap should not be exaggerated. Increases in income tax allowances have a beneficial impact. [IF PRESSED: overall, small increase in numbers in poverty trap (10,000) as result of FIS uprating. But this helps low paid and generally makes employment more attractive than unemployment.]

10. Reduction in NIS not enough?

Cut welcomed by CBI and industry generally. Provides substantial help on business costs. 1 per cent reduction maximum possible without risks for PSBR: outright abolition too costly. And other measures to help business directly - energy, construction, innovation and enterprise packages plus helpful - and welcomed - improvements in capital tax regime (see also Section N).

11. Excise duties increases inflationary/harmful to industries

Increases in excise duties as a whole slightly less than broadly compensate for past year's inflation. Variations between duties take account of industrial considerations e.g. supplementary increase last July on tobacco/Scotch whisky industry/help for industry by smaller increases on e.g. derv - mainly used by industry.

12. Petrol/derv/VED increases anti-motorist/industry?

These three duties not singled out; increases as a whole no more than broadly compensate for past year's inflation. 2p smaller increase on derv further shields industry and distribution costs by increasing differential with petrol (10p a gallon) introduced last July.

13. Reduce VAT?

Reduction in standard rate not appropriate. Nearly half consumer expenditure zero-rated or exempt (including necessities like most food, housing, domestic heating). Applies equally to

home production and imports. Assistance provided for whole of UK private sector through reduction in NIS.

14. Why no VAT relief for charities?

Not possible: high revenue cost; serious definitional and administrative difficulties; would have repercussions in other areas, which could seriously erode VAT revenue base.

15. Not enough to encourage (existing) small firms?

Substantial measures in enterprise package - full year cost about £80 million. (see also N7-8). Many of latest measures (e.g increase in 'small companies' Corporation Tax profits limits, VAT registration thresholds, purchase of own shares) benefit existing small businesses.

16. Government take from North Sea Oil too high?

See R1.

E PUBLIC EXPENDITURE AND FINANCE

[Public Expenditure White Paper (Cmnd 8494) published 9 March. Gives planning totals of £115.2 billion in 1982-83, £121.1 in 1983-84 and £128.4 in 1984-85. About £5 billion higher than last White Paper in 1982-83 and £7 billion in 1983-84. Net effect of changes announced in Budget is to reduce totals to £114.9 billion, £120.4 billion and £127.6 billion].

1. Public expenditure too high?

Spending in 1982-83 planned to be about £5 billion (4½ per cent) lower than intended by last Government even if higher than planned when this Government first took office. Decisions to increase spending represent flexible but prudent response to changed circumstances e.g. additional spending to help young unemployed. Drive for to improve management in public sector and reduce administration expenses continues.

2. Ratio of public spending to GDP is getting back to the peak levels of the mid 1970's?

Ratios in 1980-81 (43½ per cent) and 1981-82 (45 per cent forecast) remain below the level of 1974-75 and 1975-76 (46 per cent in both years). Rise in ratio in 1981-82 mainly reflects higher expenditure on social security at a time when real GDP falling. Ratio expected to fall in next few years: assumptions in MTFs would mean figures of 44½ per cent in 1982-83, 42½ per cent in 1983-84 and 41 per cent in 1984-85. Reflects assumed GDP growth and curbing of public expenditure.

3. Increase spending in recession?

No good trying to spend way out of recession. Any benefits would be short-term, and would soon lead to more inflation and higher interest rates and inflation. We are responding, within limits of prudence, to needs of current circumstances.

4. Real terms comparisons

No volume equivalents of cash plans. But cash increase in plans between years is 9 per cent in 1982-83, 5 per cent in 1983-84 and 6 per cent in 1984-85 (and projection of GDP deflator in MTFs is rather lower than this in 1982-83, rather higher in 1983-84 and about the same in 1984-85). So in cost terms [i.e. cash inflated/deflated by the general movement in prices] there is an increase in 1982-83, a decrease in 1983-84 and a small decrease in 1984-85.

5. Does Government accept figures for expenditure changes in real terms in Sir Leo Pliatzky's article?

[Financial Times 15 March]

The article uses a different definition of total public expenditure [net debt interest is included, whereas public expenditure planning total in Cmnd 8495 excludes it]. Figures in

Table 1 of the article for future years seem to be 'cost terms', that is cash figures deflated by the GDP deflator. Cost terms figures are not in general an indicator of the level of service provided.

6. Plans unrealistic, given e.g overspending in 1981-82/future rates of inflation?

Total spending in 1981-82 was expected to be only a little [NOT FOR USE: 0.4 per cent] higher than planned a year ago. Major reason for overspending is present level of spending by local authorities; this has been taken into account in plans. Realism, particularly in respect of local authorities and nationalised industries, is one reason why plans for future years are higher than in previous White Paper. Large Contingency Reserves due to greater uncertainty in later years and designed to give realistic planning totals.

7. Higher inflation than allowed for in PEWP may raise public spending?

True that inflation assumption in FSBR slightly higher than in PEWP, but:

- for 1982-83 confident that planning total including Contingency Reserve will hold;
- for later years inflation assumption in FSBR a little higher than cost factors used in building up cash programmes;
- in due course, will consider adequacy of cash provision on programmes.

Meantime, uncertainties due to, for example, inflation, are one reason for large Contingency Reserves in later years; makes for realistic planning totals.

8. NIS reduction: effect on public expenditure?

[Programmes will be reduced to reflect reduction in NIS paid by public sector. First estimates of effect (included in post-Budget revised planning totals) is some £360 million in 1982-83 and £450-500 million in later years.]

Government's intention in reducing the NIS is to help private industry, not public sector. Effect of clawback on public sector will leave its position broadly unchanged. (See also P2).

9. Not enough capital expenditure?

Government prepared to give priority to worthwhile capital projects wherever this can be done within overall spending totals. Plans do allow for changes between 1981-82 and 1982-83 as follows:

- public sector spending on new construction increased by 14 per cent;
- nationalised industries investment to rise by 26 per cent;
- increase in housing investment output [NOTE: if LAs take full advantage of receipts from sales, gross new investment can be as high as £3 billion next year];

- slight increase in work done on water and sewerage projects even though provision reduced).

10. Cuts in capital

Some reductions in cash provision necessary, but recent falls in tender prices (following sharp increases between 1978 and 1980) will mean that programmes mainly affected (roads, water, local environmental services) should be carried out as planned. Planned capital expenditure also reflects decline in needs since early mid-1970s (e.g roads, schools). Planned spending should not jeopardise future standards and availability of public amenities and services.

11. Cash planning means concentration on first year, not enough on services in later years?

Government recognise case for medium-term planning. But planning must be related to availability of finance as well as prospective real resources. Cannot accept unconditional commitment to forward plans for services. Volume plans formerly had to be cut when conflicted with financial constraints - e.g after IMF intervention in 1976.

12. End-year flexibility?

Possibility of end year flexibility is being looked at again. There could be some managerial advantages in such a scheme. But we also have to consider the question of cost.

13. Cash limits 1982-83 and public sector pay?

(See J9-12).

14. Cut public sector pay bill/administrative costs of central government?

Only one third of current expenditure is on wages and salaries and much of that is for nurses, teachers, members of armed forces, police and so on. Provision for public service pay increases next year limited to 4 per cent. Administrative costs are not far short of 10 per cent of total public expenditure. We are determined to reduce that proportion, and to maintain the drive for more efficient management throughout the public sector.

15. Cut staff numbers in public services?

Civil Service has been reduced by nearly 8 per cent to 675,400. This is smallest for nearly 15 years. We are well on target to achieve our aim of having 102,000 fewer staff in post in April 1984 than when Government came into office; this will be smallest Civil Service since the war. Local authority manpower has been reduced by nearly 75,000 (over 4 per cent).

But manpower reductions are key to achieving long-term savings, and bigger reductions required to achieve Government's targets for LA current expenditure.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

16. Spending plans for 1982-83? Too tough? Too weak?

In order to set local authorities reasonable and realistic targets, we have increased the plans by £1.35 billion. But substantial economies will still be required as plans only allow about 2 per cent more cash spending than latest budgets for this year. [IF NEEDED: Future year's plans allow less cash growth, to get expenditure back on track].

17. Large rate increases this year are Government's fault?

[CIPFA forecasts of 15 per cent reported in Press 17 March]

Not at all. If local authorities budget to spend in line with Government's plans, rate increases should be very low. Where they are high, it is because local authorities have chosen to overspend. [NB. FSBR quotes 12 per cent rise in rate income but this takes account of information so far received on actual rate increases.]

18. Effect of NIS reduction on local authorities?

As Chancellor announced in Budget the lower NIS payments by local authorities will be offset by a reduction in RSG. This will mean that local authorities overall are neither worse nor better as a result of the decrease in NIS. [IF PRESSED: we shall be consulting the local authorities about the details.]

19. Control of rates paid by industry

We certainly share the concern about harmful effect of high rates on business. But, unless local authorities cut their spending, any limit on rates has to be paid for by domestic taxpayer generally. However, we will be considering this further in context of longer term future of domestic rating system. Meanwhile, Government's continuing pressure on local authorities to reduce expenditure should help all ratepayers.

20. Green Paper on Domestic Rating System: rules out change?

No, reaffirms our long-standing commitment to reform which we want as quickly as circumstances allow. Issues are complex and highly important to domestic ratepayers. Green Paper sets out requirements of any alternative source of revenue, and describes advantages and disadvantages of alternatives, in order to present the best basis for consultation.

F SOCIAL SECURITY

1. November 1982 uprating?

[Chancellor in Budget statement announced that most benefits are to be uprated by 11 per cent next November - 9 per cent for price protection and 2 per cent to restore shortfall. Social Services Secretary gave details in statement 10 March.]

We have provided for benefits usually uprated to maintain their purchasing power and get back shortfall of 2 per cent which occurred at last uprating. This includes those benefits where we have given no pledge of full price protection. Uprating of benefits next November will cost £1 billion in 1982-83 (nearly £3 billion in full year).

2. Why not restore November 1980 5 per cent abatement now that unemployment benefit is to be brought into tax?

Decision to abate^{UB} was not simply taken as a proxy for tax but to reduce public expenditure and to improve incentives to find and keep work. (Chancellor's Budget statement in March 1980 made that perfectly clear.) Those reasons remain valid. Any improvement on rates announced would seriously worsen incentives. Cost too would be high - £60 million in a full year [net of reduced claims for supplementary benefit, but gross of tax.]

3. Increasing supplementary benefits by less than forecast movement of prices hits at poorest of the poor, and breaks an election pledge?

The benefits will retain their value in real terms. Beneficiaries receive not only their scale rate entitlement but a cash payment to cover their housing costs in full. By uprating scale rates in line with RPI which includes housing costs, there has been some double provision. The change corrects that. The abatement of $\frac{1}{2}$ per cent represents a broadly based adjustment for the likely relative movement of housing costs to November 1982. [NOTE: we do not want to make public a forecast of a housing index.]

4. Increase in capital disregard should have been greater?

[Increase in capital disregard for supplementary benefit from £2,000 to £2,500 announced 10 March.]

Change represents 25 per cent increase in level of disregard since it was set in November 1980; this more than restores its value. No reason to suppose that operation of the disregard causes any general hardship or that it has led to people deliberately disposing of capital in order to qualify.

5. Child Benefit increase too low?

[Increase of 60p to £5.85 in November.]

Uprating will maintain real value of the benefit since November 1980. Not as high in real terms as level set in April 1979, but the increase then is generally recognised to have been out of line - a pre-election move by last Labour Government.

6. Earnings Limit

Earnings limit for pensioners has been increased from £52.00 to £57.00. It remains our intention to abolish the limit entirely. But so far we have not been able to do so; it has been essential to give priority to maintaining purchasing power of benefits.

7. Death grant - increase to realistic level?

[Social Services Secretary announced 10 March intention to publish a consultative document on the death grant.]

Social Services Secretary would welcome comments on his consultative document on death grant which is to be published shortly. As we have always made clear, our aim is to redistribute the resources now devoted to death grant in a more sensible fashion - we cannot afford to add to those resources.

8. Why cut child dependency additions to unemployment benefit?

[In line with practice in recent years, uprated level of child dependency additions to unemployment benefit (but not Supplementary Benefit) has been abated by amount of increase in Child Benefit. In consequence, CDAs will be reduced from current level of 80p to 30p next November.]

The child dependency additions to unemployment benefit are being phased out, and will eventually be replaced entirely by Child Benefit. In this we are following practice adopted by last Labour Government.

G PUBLIC SECTOR BORROWING

1. PSBR in 1981-82 and 1982-83

[1982-83 FSBR published 9 March shows an estimated 1981-82 PSBR outturn of £10½ billion, and a forecast 1982-83 PSBR of £9½ billion.]

PSBR in 1981-82 in line with 1981 Budget forecast and PSBR reduction in 1982-83 broadly in line with 1981 MTFS.

2. Effect of Civil Service dispute on PSBR?

PSBR in both years affected by Civil Service dispute. In 1981-82 some £½ billion of receipts delayed from March 1981 were collected but some £1 billion of receipts due in 1981-82 will now be collected in 1982-83. Debt interest cost of the strike some £½ billion in 1981-82.

3. CGBR April-Feb press notice implies odd CGBR for March?

[CGBR April-February £8.1 billion - PSBR estimates 1981-82 £8.75 billion.]

The borrowing figures in the red book are consistent with the outturn information available so far this year.

4. PSBR should be higher/lower?

The PSBR reduction in 1982-83 is broadly in line with 1981 MTFS. [IF PRESSED: PSBR 'broad brush' concept. Cannot adjust for every factor. Swings and roundabouts. Main criterion for judging appropriate size is scope for financing it without undue strain on interest rates.]

5. Government seeking credit for fall in PSBR from year to year by over-stating likely 1981-82 outturn?

No. £10½ billion still the best estimate for 1981-82 PSBR. There is normal^{ly} a surge in borrowing in last quarter of financial year (LA's borrowing, other spending up)

H MONETARY AND FINANCIAL POLICY

1. Lower interest rates?

[Bank base rates reduced by $\frac{1}{2}$ per cent to 13 per cent from 12 March. Have come down by 3 per cent from peak of 16 per cent last autumn. Market rates generally eased in early March but steadied mid-month.]

Interest rates have fallen significantly since the New Year, in the face of rises in the United States, reflecting the markets' confidence in Government's monetary and fiscal policies. However, must proceed cautiously if we are not to jeopardise progress on inflation.

2. Will high and unstable US rates affect UK rates?

US rates not sole determinant of UK rates, but high US rates certainly an adverse development and in September were a key factor in driving our rates up. Recently, however, sterling has remained reasonably firm, probably helped by improved prospects for wage round, and good trade figures. UK rates eased against US trend; but cannot insulate ourselves from difficult international background. UK rates have steadied recently while US rates have turned up.

3. Recent fall in interest rates incompatible with strategy

Taking account of all evidence, present levels of interest rates are consistent with policy of continuing downward pressure on inflation.

4. MTFS being quietly shelved?

[3rd MTFS states Government's objectives 'to reduce inflation and to create conditions for sustainable growth in output and employment', by 'steady but not excessive downward pressure on monetary conditions'. Key financial indicators are the monetary aggregates and exchange rate. Target range for growth of M1, £M3, PSL2 in 1982-83 of 8-12 per cent. Illustrative path of 7-11, 6-10 per cent in 1983-84, 1984-85. Targets for later years to be set nearer the time.]

No. Updated MTFS is realistic and flexible, describes how monetary policy operated in practice. MTFS serves useful purpose. Right to retain and adjust in light of experience.

5. Monetary targets discredited?

Monetary targets have important role in defining medium term direction of policy. But short term movements in monetary aggregates not always reliable guide to monetary conditions. Policy decisions based on assessment of all available evidence.

6. Increase in target ranges

Ranges in past MTFS were purely illustrative. Did not take account of structural changes. Right to take account of current rate of growth in setting new targets, to avoid unduly sharp brake on monetary growth. 8-12 per cent still implies deceleration from current growth rate ie continued downward pressure on monetary growth.

7. What if aggregates' rate of growth diverge?

Will examine factors underlying divergence. Policy decisions will continue to take account of all available evidence with a view to restraining inflationary pressures.

8. Overshoot of 1981-82 target

[£M3 was little changed during banking February; rate of growth over past 12 months was 14.4 per cent. M1 fell by about $\frac{1}{2}$ per cent in banking February; grew by 8.7 per cent over past 12 months; PSL2 rose by about $\frac{1}{2}$ per cent in banking February; grew by 12.1 per cent over 12 months.]

Growth in £M3 was above top end of 1981-82 target range, even allowing for effects of Civil Service strike. At least part of excess reflects increasing share of banks in housing and consumer lending. Also reflects longer term effects of institutional changes such as ending of corset, abolition of exchange controls and changes in savings behaviour. These factors imply higher monetary growth permissible for same increase in nominal incomes.

9. Monetary conditions too tight?

Behaviour of exchange rate and money GDP as well as monetary aggregates suggest financial conditions have been moderately restrictive as intended. But bank lending still high, despite level of interest rates. Companies' financial position much stronger than a year ago. (See N 4)

10. Bank lending

Still very strong. Part at least is substitution for lending by building societies and other forms of consumer credit. To extent that it is additional, it adds to inflationary pressure, so we must avoid premature relaxation of interest rates.

11. Why more indexed gilts?

[Bank announced new index-linked gilt available to all investors on Budget Day. Restrictions on eligibility to hold existing indexed gilts removed.]

Issue of indexed gilts demonstrates Government's confidence in strategy of reducing inflation. Will allow direct access to indexation benefit to individual investors.

12. Giving money away by derestricting existing stock?

No: price rises not a cost to Exchequer. Over time, broadening of market should benefit Exchequer through reducing yields on new derestricted stocks.

J PRICES AND EARNINGS

1. When will single figure inflation be achieved?

[Year-on-year rate of inflation 11 per cent in February, compared with 21.9 per cent in May 1980 and lowest recent level of 10.9 per cent in July 1981.]

Budget forecast is for year-on-year rate of inflation of 9 per cent by Q4 1982, falling to 7½ per cent by mid-1983.

2. Inflation still higher than when Government took office?

[Average year-on-year rate of inflation between February 1974 and May 1979 was 15.4 per cent; average level of inflation since May 1979 has been 14.1 per cent.]

Average level of inflation will be lower under this Government than under its predecessor. This will be the first Government since the war that has achieved a lower rate of inflation than its predecessor.

3. What reason is there to expect a further decline in inflation?

Over the next year or so, moderation in unit labour costs should continue to exert downward pressure on the rate of inflation, as should weak commodity prices. Competitive pressures on firms to limit price rises are also likely to remain strong.

4. Effect of 1982 Budget on RPI?

Compared with full indexation of excise duties, effect of Budget is RPI reduction of 0.1 per cent (or an increase of 0.1 per cent including also the effect of the 2 December measures). [IF PRESSED on non-indexed basis: effect is 0.8 per cent increase in the RPI (or 1.4 per cent including also 2 December measures).

5. Effect of 1982 Budget on TPI?

Compared with full indexation of excise duties, effect of Budget is TPI reduction of 0.4 per cent (or increase of 1.1 per cent including also effect of 2 December measures). [IF PRESSED on non-indexed basis: effect is 1.6 per cent reduction (or a 0.3 per cent increase including also 2 December measures).]

6. Nationalised industry prices

Nationalised industry price rises have been due in part to the ending of the previous Government's policy of artificial and distortionary price restraint. Rate of nationalised industry price rises is now coming more closely into line with the RPI. [See P12]

7. Current level of pay settlements?

In economy generally, settlements in last pay round averaged 8-9 per cent. Negotiators seem to be settling up to about a third lower in this round than they did in previous. And almost all settlements seem to be in single figures.

8. Private sector pay - the CBI's 7 per cent?

[CBI figures published 17 February suggest that manufacturing settlements monitored since 1 August are averaging around 7 per cent.]

Settlements have been lower in recent months, reflecting an increasing sense of realism about pay. But the need is continuing low settlements which are consistent with maintaining economic recovery and improving employment prospects.

9. Public sector pay

Government's approach to pay in the public services must take account of what the taxpayer can afford. Pay negotiations in the nationalised industries and local authorities are a matter for the parties concerned, as are the financial consequences of any settlements reached.

10. 4 per cent pay factor unrealistic/unfair?

Real incomes had risen to unsustainable level and public service pay increased relative to private sector since 1979. 4 per cent is broad measure of what Government thinks reasonable and can be afforded as general allowance in fixing the programme from which public service pay bill has to be met.

11. Nurses broken through the 4 per cent?

The 4 per cent factor is not a norm. Government recognises need for pay settlements to take account of market factors, including effect on recruitment and retention of expensively trained staff in NHS.

12. Government offer to civil service unreasonable?

In framing its offer the Government has placed much more emphasis on market considerations and management objectives than on compability and the cost of living. The unions' emphasis is on the latter two aspects. [Arbitration Tribunal to hold hearing in April.]

13. Average earnings index

[Year on year growth 10.8 per cent in January compared with 10.1 per cent in December, though (unpublished) underlying increase slightly less than in previous 5 months at just under 11 per cent.]

Recent buoyancy of earnings partly reflects increase in hours worked, which is an effect of the emerging revival of activity, particularly in manufacturing. Change over the 12 months to January straddles two pay rounds - not useful indicator of recent trends.

14. Comparison of TPI and index shows that real take-home pay has fallen over the past year

Yes. But follows growth of 17½ per cent in personal living standards in three years 1977-80.

15. Movement in TPI

Fact that has been increasing faster than RPI (roughly 3½ per cent faster over year to February 1982) reflects measures taken to restrain Government borrowing - essential if inflation is to be controlled.

16. Government aiming to cut living standards?

[Latest (revised) RPDPI figures suggest no further fall between Q2 and Q3 1981.]

Government seeking to create conditions for sustained improvements in living standards. This requires creation of more competitive and profitable industrial sector. Means that less of increase in nominal incomes should be absorbed by higher pay. The lower the level of settlements, the greater the headroom for output and employment to expand.

17. Incomes Policy

Proposals for incomes policies, including recent refinements, do not avoid many of the familiar problems of norms, evasion, administrative cost, and interference with market forces. Experience gives no encouragement to the idea that incomes policies can be made to work on a permanent basis. They always succumb to the distortions they create.

18. Index-linked pensions and the Scott Report?

The Government is considering the whole question in the light of the Scott Report. Our aim is to ensure that public servants' pensions are fair to taxpayers, as well as to current employees and pensioners and their dependants.

K BALANCE OF PAYMENTS

1. Balance of payments Q4 1981

Current account established to have been £1,541 million in surplus in Q4, including a visible trade surplus of £623 million. Total 1981 current account surplus £8 billion.

2. Invisibles

Q4 invisibles surplus in Q4 1981 is put at £918 million compared with £400 million in Q3. This reflects EC receipts totalling £531 million, including budget refunds of £118 million. Increase in the invisibles surplus for 1981 as a whole largely due to 18 per cent increase in interest, profit and dividends surplus to £1,148 million - demonstrating benefit/^{from} investing abroad.

3. Capital flows

Identified capital inflow in Q4 of £70 million. But the large 'balancing item' (£2,100 million) means that all Q4 figures should be treated with caution.

4. Trends in exports

Non-oil exports were 3½ per cent higher in volume terms than in 1980. Exports of intermediate and capital finished manufactured goods are now higher in both value and volume terms than in 1979 and 1980 despite loss of competitiveness. DoI survey of engineering industry suggests export deliveries will continue to rise in 1982, as does CBI Industrial Trends Survey.

5. Trends in imports

December import figures are in line with the average for the previous 3 months. The recovery in imports is across the board, including basic materials and manufactures used by UK industry. This is consistent with view that destocking is coming to an end and the economy picking up.

L EXCHANGE RATE AND THE RESERVES

1. Policy towards the exchange rate

[Since last autumn sterling has remained broadly stable and is currently over 12 per cent below its effective rate peak early last year. Recent lows have been \$1.77 on 14 September, DM4.07 on 20 October. Highs were \$1.97 on 30 November, DM4.407 on 9 February. Rates at noon on 19 March were \$1.8020; DM4.297 and an effective rate of 91.08. Reserves at end February stood at \$23.4 billion, compared with \$23.2 billion at end January.]

As Chancellor again made clear in his Budget, the exchange rate normally gives useful information on monetary conditions. While we have no target for the exchange rate, its effect on the economy and therefore its behaviour cannot be ignored.

2. Has the Bank intervened to support the rate?

The Bank intervene to smooth excessive fluctuations and preserve orderly markets. They do not seek to maintain any particular rate.

3. Concerted intervention to reduce the value of the dollar?

All the experience in recent years is that exchange rates for major currencies cannot be manipulated by intervention alone. Intervention can help to steady markets, but not counter major exchange rate trends. That takes changes in real policies, affecting interest rates, monetary conditions and fiscal policies. Lower US inflation is in everyone's interest: the matter for real concern is the US fiscal/interest rate mix, a problem all countries are familiar with.

4. Sterling should join the EMS?

[See M8-9]

5. Exchange rate and competitiveness?

I welcome the improvement in UK cost competitiveness of over 10 per cent in 1981. This has been partly due to a decline in the exchange rate; more importantly because there are signs that our domestic unit labour costs are now growing more slowly than those of our major competitors.

6. Debt repayments

We have made excellent progress with our plans to reduce the burden of external debt substantially during this Parliament. We aimed to reduce official external debt to \$14 billion by end of 1981. This has been more than achieved - external debt is now around \$13½ billion, compared with over \$22 billion when the Government took office.

M EUROPEAN MATTERS

MEMBERSHIP OF EUROPEAN COMMUNITY

1. 'Mandate negotiations'

It has not been possible hitherto to reach agreement. The main obstacle has been the view of a number of other Member States that refunds to the UK should be arbitrarily and automatically reduced over time, regardless of the scale of the problem. There has also been disagreement about the duration of the new refunds arrangement. Foreign Ministers are considering these problems further at their meeting on 23 March, when they will hear a report from the Presidents of the Council and the Commission.

2. Net UK contribution to community too high?

A lot lower than it would have been without the refund agreement of 30 May 1980.

3. Lower Commission estimates of net contributions in respect of 1980 and 1981?

The most recent Commission estimates suggest that our net contributions in respect of 1980 and 1981 will be significantly lower than expected at the time of the 30 May Agreement. That is very satisfactory. For we remain one of the less prosperous Member States. The problem of 1982 and later years remains to be solved.

4. Budget refunds reduced if net contribution less than originally estimated?

The UK is clear that the minimum net refunds payable under the 30 May agreement are 1175 million ecus (European Currency Units) for 1980 and 1410 million ecus for 1981.

5. Do supplementary measures grants lead to additionality?

There is additionality in that refunds enable public expenditure in the regions and elsewhere to be higher than would otherwise have been possible.

6. Policy for CAP reform

Key measures are price restraint, curbs on surplus production and strict control of the growth of guarantee expenditure.

7. Costs of CAP to UK consumers

The Minister of Agriculture has dealt with a number of questions on this. Costs to consumers of the CAP as such depend on nature of alternative support system that is

envisaged. Arrangements leading to a reduction in the cost of food to the consumer could well involve increased costs to taxpayers.

EUROPEAN MONETARY SYSTEM

8. What is the current attitude of the UK Government?

We fully support the EMS, and acknowledge the contribution which it has made to stability in the exchange markets. However, we do not yet feel able to join the exchange rate mechanism. We must wait until conditions are right for the system and for ourselves.

9. When will the conditions be right?

Sterling is an international financial currency and is also particularly affected by oil market factors. These mark sterling out from other Community currencies, and add to the difficulty of the decision on the timing of sterling's participation. The balance of advantages, risks and disadvantages is constantly changing, so that the question of participation remains complex.

N INDUSTRY

1. Budget does not do enough for industry?

Budget measures directed at helping business and will cost £1 billion in 1982-83. On indexed basis over 2/3 of Budget's net revenue cost will go to help businesses. But main help for industry is in pursuing policies that allow for lower inflation and ease pressure on interest rates.

2. Industry's response to Budget?

[Sir Raymond Pennock, CBI President - 'welcome fillip' to business confidence. Sir Terence Beckett, Director General CBI - 'moves in the right direction'. ABCC - 'insufficient and misconceived'. Saturday 13 March Financial Times Marplan survey of industry's reaction reports 77 per cent though it 'fairly good' for the economy and half those polled thought would reduce inflation.]

Have noted the Association of British Chambers of Commerce's adverse comments, but pleased with the generally favourable response from industry, including CBI.

3. Prospects for industry-recovery?

Fall in output has now come to an end. Industrial production in Q4 1981 1/2 per cent up on Q3 and some 2 per cent up on H1. Budget forecast suggests there may be 3 per cent increase in manufacturing output in 1982 as a whole.

4. Company sector finances improved?

[Gross Trading Profits of industrial and commercial companies (ICCs) net of stock appreciation rose strongly in H2 1981 (up 23 per cent between H1 and H2) and were 10 per cent higher in 1981 than in 1980. Borrowing requirement of ICCs has improved over year to Q3 1981, and financial deficit turned into surplus. DOT's latest survey of company liquidity (published 4 December) shows further marked improvement in third quarter (particularly in manufacturing) bringing liquidity ratio back to 1979 Q3 level. NB figures difficult to interpret, however, particularly because of uncertain impact of CS dispute.]

Figures encouraging. Company financial position is in any case confused by effect of civil service dispute. After adjustment for stock appreciation and excluding North Sea, ICC profits have stabilised since mid-1980. Improvement in financial position partly reflects destocking and action to reduce overmanning.

5. Rate of return still too low?

[Real pre-tax rate of return of non-North Sea ICCs rose marginally to 2 1/2 per cent in 1981 Q3 compared to 2 1/4 per cent in Q2 (a record low).]

Yes, but Government can only help in limited ways such as reducing burden of NIS and creating the climate for lower interest rates. Further improvements in ICC's profits and

real rates of return can be expected, provided recent productivity gains and trend towards moderate settlements continue.

6. High interest rates damaging for industry and investment?

[Each 1 per cent in interest rates raises interest payments on industry's borrowing by around £250 million.]

Budget measures should ease pressure on interest rates. But Government believes best way it can help industry and promote investment is to create a climate in which business can flourish. Essential to get rate of inflation down so as to create a stable environment for business decision-taking. Continuing relatively high level of interest rates must be seen in context of priority attached to reducing inflation and need to control growth in money supply underlying the MTFs. (See brief H).

7. Government help for small firms

Budget provided further help for small businesses in addition to 75 measures taken previously. Enterprise package included further reduction in weight of corporation tax; further increases in VAT registration limits; increase in global amount available for loans under Loan Guarantee Scheme this year (see below); and doubling of investment limit under Business Start-Up Scheme to £20,000 a year. New measures will encourage start-ups and existing firms.

8. Response to Loan Guarantee Scheme?

Scheme operating successfully. We have already issued more than 2,700 guarantees - well over half to new businesses. Total lending under scheme is just under £100 million. Ten new banks were admitted to the Scheme in November 1981: a total of twenty-seven financial institutions are now participating. Budget provided for the lending ceiling - in year to May 1982 - to be raised from £100 million to £150 million. A further £150 million will be made available in following year.

9. Progress with setting up Enterprise Zones?

Excellent progress being made. Ten of the eleven zones are already in operation. We expect the final zone - Isle of Dogs - to come into operation early in April 1982.

10. Response from private sector?

Response has been very encouraging. Many new firms are setting up in the zones, existing firms are expanding their activities and vacant land has been brought into use. Too early to assess success of zones.

P NATIONALISED INDUSTRIES

EXTERNAL FINANCING LIMITS

1. EFLs for 1982-83 and future years?

Nationalised industries' total external finance increased by £1.3 billion in 1982-83, £1.7 billion in 1983-84, £1.2 billion in 1984-85 - a total of over £4 billion over the three years of the Survey. Government has given full recognition to problems faced by the industries in a period of recession. Increase in 1982-83 was roughly half what the industries bid for.

2. Unreasonable to reduce EFLs following NIS cut?

Reduction in the National Insurance Surcharge was designed to benefit private sector; not the intention that public sector should gain from it. Reduction in EFLs will simply offset the addition to the industries' internal resources following the NIS cut. No industries will be worse off than previously, and their plans should be unchanged.

3. Pay assumptions?

Government has not set pay or any other assumptions for the industries. Moderate pay settlements - and restraint of current costs generally - essential if investment programmes to be maintained and prices to consumers kept down.

4. External financing outturn for 1981-82 way over original limits?

During 1981-82, five industries had their external financing limits increased by a total of £0.5 billion, met from the Contingency Reserve. In granting these increases, Government recognised problems faced by some industries in a period of recession, and that, in some circumstances, EFLs could not be immutable. Not yet possible to make full assessment of ASLEF strike, but three industries in particular - National Coal Board, British Steel Corporation and British Rail itself - have been adversely affected in short term.

INVESTMENT

5. Investment plans for future years?

Overall, industries' investment plans on a rising trend. [CAUTION: Not true for each individual industry.] Increase in total planned expenditure on fixed assets since last White Paper is £200 million in 1982-83, £600 million in 1983-84 and £700 million in 1984-85, ie an increase of £1.5 billion over the three years. This implies total investment of no less than

£24 billion over the three years. 1982-83 plans allow for 26 per cent more investment than in 1981-82, and 40 per cent more than in 1980-81.

6. How robust are the forecasts of nationalised industry demand/contributions to public expenditure, given the recent track record?

Plans just published are considerably less optimistic than those published last year, when the industries' plans assumed a return to near-total self-financing by 1983-84. In particular, in increasing substantially the external finance available to the industries in each year of the Survey the Government has recognised the effect of lower demand on the industries' internal resources, which are now expected to be well below the levels in last year's White Paper - by about £2 billion in each of the years 1982-83 and 1983-84. The industries' external financing needs are still expected to decline over the Survey period, but from a higher base and at a more gradual rate than forecast last year.

7. Investment plans unlikely to be attained?

No Government can unconditionally guarantee a level of investment by the nationalised industries. Approved levels set out in White Paper are consistent with the industries' agreed external financing requirements, on the basis of the internal resource forecasts they have prepared. But perfectly possible that the plans might need to be revised, for example if the industries fail to restrain their current costs, including pay.

8. But shortfall in capital spending 1981-82?

[Figures in FSBR imply shortfall of £½ billion.]

Not easy to establish firm reasons after the event. Such evidence as we have suggests a mixture of reasons. Most important has been a cut in investment in response to changed circumstances such as lower market demand. These cuts have been extraneous and have not borne any direct relationship to EFL pressures. Other cuts have been for wholly beneficial reasons, such as lower than expected inflation and cost savings.

9. Take nationalised industry investment out of PSBR?

Real problem of pressure on resources cannot be solved by changing statistical definitions. Since nationalised industries are part of public sector, their borrowing - for whatever purpose - must be definition form part of public sector borrowing requirement.

10. Private finance for NI investment?

[NEDC Working Party's study of nationalised industry investment was discussed at Council's 5 October meeting: agreed there should be review of progress to be completed by June 1982.]

We have indicated our willingness to consider new financing proposals. But direct market finance can only be justified if there is a genuine element of performance-related risk for the investor, in order to improve incentives to management efficiency, and if new forms of saving are tapped, so as to avoid adverse monetary consequences. Market financing does not of itself lessen burden on financial markets.

11. Does the Government propose to sell shares in BT?

[Front page FT Monday 15 March.]

Recent press reports are speculative. As the Chancellor announced in his Budget statement, detailed work is proceeding on the Buzby bond. The Government continues to examine ways in which market pressures could be brought to bear on nationalised industries, including BT.

12. Finance more nationalised industry investment by cutting current spending?

Yes. As in private sector moderate pay settlements and control of other costs are essential. Ability to finance new investment in nationalised industries is bound to diminish if excessive pay settlements agreed. Each 1 per cent off wages saves about £140 million this year; and each 1 per cent off total costs saves £330 million this year.

NATIONALISED INDUSTRY PAY AND PRICES

13. Nationalised industries' prices

Nationalised industries' price rises have been due in part to ending of previous Government's policy of artificial and distortionary price restraint rises in 1974 and 1980. But since middle of 1980-81, gap between NI price increases and RPI has narrowed. Artificial price restraint would result in unacceptable increased burden on taxpayer and distortion of market forces.

[CAUTION: gap between NI and 'all items' RPI could widen again in near future. Factors include LT fare increases in spring, winter electricity discount scheme ending, dropping out of RPI of last year's double revalorisation of excise duties.]

14. Action in Budget to help industrial energy users?

Total benefit to industry estimated at £150 million in 1982-83 from measures in Budget (combined effect this Budget and last is £250 million over two years 1981-83), namely freeze on industrial gas prices from 1 April to end-1982; new tariff arrangements for largest electricity users (and continuation of arrangements on electricity prices announced last year); standstill till next winter on list prices for foundry coke; extension of boiler conversion grants scheme.

PRIVATISATION

15. What further sales expected?

Special sales of assets in 1982-83 are forecast at around £700 million and around £600 million in each of the later years. These figures are well above those in last White Paper. This reflects primarily very large sales of energy assets - Britoil and the British Gas Corporation's major offshore oil assets - which are to be made possible by Oil and Gas (Enterprise) Bill currently before the House.

16. Net figure for special asset sales this year?

[Public Expenditure White Paper showed net sales of only £50 million in 1981-82; latest estimate published in FSR is -£100 million - ie £100 net purchases.]

The low net figure is the result of decision not to proceed with a further programme of advance oil sales in a weak market. The gross figure expected to be in line with the £500 million target included in the last White Paper, and will include the proceeds from Cable & Wireless, the sale of Amersham International Limited and the National Freight Company Limited, the sale of the Government's shareholding in the British Sugar Corporation, and further sales of motorway service areas long leases.

17. Government simply selling valuable national assets to achieve PSBR target?

Of course the cash is welcome, but benefits run wider than that. Not only will any future borrowing by these undertakings be outside the PSBR, so reducing burden on taxpayers, but the organisations concerned will be made more responsive to market forces and thus have greater incentives to improve efficiency.

18. Government running into heavy weather over sale of Wytch Farm?

The British Gas Corporation is complying with the Government's direction to sell its interest in Wytch Farm. It is too early to say when the sales will take place.

19. Special disposals programme just a subsidy for speculators?

[Heavy oversubscription for British Aerospace, Cable and Wireless, Amersham International, followed by large increases in prices where shares first traded.]

Not in Government's interest to see shares underpriced, given the loss to the PSBR, but also risks in pitching price too high. Getting balance right not easy - especially where company's shares have not previously been traded. Government will continue to consider alternative forms of sale eg tender, but critics should note that sale by tender could make it harder for small investor to buy shares.

R NORTH SEA AND UK ECONOMY

1. In view of recent falls in price of oil, why did HMG not reduce tax burden on North Sea oil producers?

[Budget tax changes included abolition of Special Petroleum Duty, increase in Petroleum Revenue Tax rate from 70 per cent to 75 per cent, and new system for advance payments of PRT (all from 1 January 1983), plus smoothing of PRT payments from July 1983 (this improves HMG's cash flow at companies' expense). Changes reduce the marginal rate of tax (from 90.3 to 89.5 per cent); involve slight fall in Government 'take' (no change 1982-83, costs £70 million 1983-84).]

Recognise need for tax structure robust to both falling and rising prices. Detailed study showed us that under new structure, levels of profitability should still be sufficient to make exploration and development attractive. Hope that new tax structure will provide more secure and stable regime.

2. Government has missed opportunity to simplify North Sea fiscal regime?

The oil industry has made it clear that it would not welcome a structural upheaval. Would create serious uncertainty and major transitional problems.

3. Impact of falling oil prices on Government revenues and Government strategy?

[PM warned in 23 February speech that limited room for manoeuvre in Budget.]

Other things being equal, lower oil prices will reduce Government revenues from the North Sea. Treasury has estimated that each \$1 off the price directly reduces revenue, other things being equal, by £250 million in first year and £350 million in full year. But falling world oil prices are good for the world economy. We will benefit from that - not only from impact on activity, but also lower oil prices will help in reducing inflation. Latest revenue projections already incorporate fall to \$31 a barrel for Forties oil.

4. Implications of OPEC production limitation agreement for North Sea oil prices?

Remains to be seen whether the agreement will hold.

5. Benefits of North Sea should be used to strengthen the economy?

[FSBR projections (in money of the day) of Government revenues from North Sea: £6.4 billion in 1981-82, £6.2 billion in 1982-83, £6.1 billion in 1983-84, and £8.0 billion in 1984-85. Lower than last year's projections, principally because of downward revision to oil price expectations. Contribution of North Sea to GNP estimated at 4 per cent of GNP in 1981. Not projected to rise before 1985.]

Yes. Government's strategy derives greatest possible long-term benefit from North Sea. Revenues ease task of controlling public borrowing. This will help to achieve a lower level

of interest rates to the benefit of industry and the economy as a whole. Without North Sea revenue other taxes would be higher or public expenditure lower. But keep revenues in perspective. Less than 6 per cent of total General Government receipts in 1981-82.

6. Government revenues from the North Sea should be used to finance cheap energy for industry?

It would be inequitable and inefficient to use the benefits of North Sea oil to subsidise some users. The age of cheap energy is past. Energy prices should recognise the cost of marginal supply and reflect the competitive position of industrial fuels. Only then can consumers receive reliable signals on which to base their energy consumption and investment decisions.

7. North Sea revenues should be channelled into a special fund to finance new investment, particularly in energy?

North Sea revenues are already committed. Setting up a special Fund would make no difference. More money would not magically become available. So the money for this Fund would have to come from somewhere else. This would mean higher taxes or lower public expenditure, if public sector borrowing is not to rise. If borrowing did rise, then so would interest rates. Not obvious that net effect would be good for investment.

S WORLD ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENTS AND INTERNATIONAL FINANCE

1. Government will have no choice but to reverse policies now unemployment has risen to post-war record levels in many Western countries?

[Unadjusted unemployment exceeded 10 million in USA and 1 million in Canada in January. It exceeded 2 million in Italy in September, 2 million in France in October, and 1.9 million in Germany in February. Highest ever unemployment levels in Canada, France, Italy and UK and highest in USA and Germany since 1935.]

No indication of a widespread departure from consensus achieved last year (eg Ottawa Summit, IMF Interim Committee) about need for prudent fiscal and monetary policies to bring down inflation.

2. Anti-inflation policies not working?

[Year on year consumer price inflation in major countries fell to 8.9 per cent in January. Underlying rates falling in US. OECD and IMF expect some decline in 1982.]

Takes time to squeeze inflation out of system. Year-on-year consumer price inflation in major economies down from peak of 13 per cent in April 1980: some decline expected 1982.

3. Governments' policies have failed or worsened situation?

No. Adjustment to second oil shock better than to first. Investment has performed better, impact on wages better contained and dependence on oil reduced. But these gains must be reinforced by continued firm policies.

4. Other countries giving priority to reducing unemployment rather than inflation?

No. All major countries agree that lasting reduction in unemployment can only be achieved when inflation brought down. France, an exception till October, is now acting to curb inflation. This best way to secure lower interest rates, encourage productive investment and achieve better rates of economic growth and employment.

5. Other governments not following such stern policies as UK?

[Most major countries (US, Japan, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Belgium, Australia, Sweden) have recently announced measures to cut planned public spending. France has announced the deferral of FF15 billion (£1½ billion) of capital investment. Belgian government has used its special powers to freeze prices temporarily and severely curtail wage increases for rest of 1982.]

Most governments persevering with firm policies to lay foundations of renewed non-inflationary growth. In particular, continuing with their efforts to control monetary growth, offset effects of recession on budget balances, and keep public spending in check.

6. UK is alone in Europe. Even Germany announced investment/employment scheme?

UK far from alone. Almost all European governments working to curb public spending, budget deficits and monetary growth. French government has set limit on its budget deficit for 1983 of 3 per cent of GDP. German government plans to reduce its borrowing in 1982 Budget even in nominal terms by almost 30 per cent. Unlikely investment/employment scheme will entail any significant increase in borrowing - increase in VAT (by 1 per cent to 14 per cent) part of the package from 1 July next year. Impact on employment remains to be seen.

7. Prospects for UK economy worse than for other countries?

No. Treasury and most independent forecasters expect UK growth this year of about 1½ per cent rising to an annual rate of 2 per cent by early next year. This is very closely in line with the OECD's forecast for OECD Europe. Unemployment is expected to rise in all major countries except Japan. UK inflation (GNP deflators) likely to be around the OECD average and below that in France, Italy and Canada.

8. Prospects for US economy?

[Industrial production rose 1.7 per cent in February after falling 2.5 per cent in January. Inflation in January was 8.4 per cent compared with a year earlier. Three-month interest rates slower than in February.]

Things are looking a little brighter in the US both on output score and, with lower interest rates, an improving outlook for inflation. And on the industrial relations front, there have been some encouraging settlements in which unions have clearly accepted lower wage increases in exchange for improved job security. [CAUTION: Not too much should be made of this: some upturn in US economy in the spring was expected.]

9. Even US using fiscal deficit to stimulate economy?

True US deficit is larger than anticipated. It is planned to fall but present level carries risk of prolonging period of high interest rates which could delay a European recovery. We strongly support the determination of the US authorities to combat inflation. But we believe fiscal and monetary policies must work together to that goal.

10. Recent international interest rate developments?

True that US interest rates rose earlier this year. But prime rates are well below their peak of 21½ per cent last summer. [currently 16-16½ per cent]

11. Prospects for international interest rates?

Always difficult to fore^{cast} interest rates with certainty, but firm and balanced policies should over a period bring lasting reduction in both inflation and interest rates.

PRESENT SITUATION

Most recent major outside forecasts (NIESR, P&D, CBI, LBS, St James) assess fall in output ended in H1 1981, with some recovery thereafter (in range 1-1½ per cent for 1982). ITEM and OECD are more pessimistic; seeing further falls of output into 1982. Year-on-year inflation is forecast by most groups to fall further to a range of 9-10½ per cent in 1982 Q4. Most groups see little possibility of further substantial reductions in 1983; inflation forecast to remain around 10 per cent in 1983. The March FSBR forecast, of a 1 per cent rise in output in 1982, and 10 per cent inflation in Q4 1982 is broadly in line with this consensus for 1982. FSBR sees 2 per cent rise in output in year to H1 1983; 7½ per cent inflation by Q2 1983. Unemployment (UK adult seasonally adjusted) forecast to reach around 3 million by end 1982, with some groups (P&D, LBS, Simon & Coates) expecting stabilisation in 1982, others expecting some further rise.

GDP output estimate rose in both Q3 and Q4 1981. Level in Q4 some 1 per cent above Q2. Recent months' industrial output figures affected by bad weather, car and rail strikes. Nevertheless, Q4 1981 manufacturing output some 2-3 per cent above low point in Q1 1981.

Consumers' expenditure rose about 1 per cent in Q4 1981: the overall level in 1981 was the same as in both 1980 and 1979. Retail sales were virtually unchanged in the 3 months to February 1982. The volume of visible exports in Q4 1981 was at a higher level than at any time since early 1980. The volume of visible imports in Q4 1981 was back to the level of the first half of 1980 and 21 per cent higher than Q1 1981. DI investment intentions survey conducted in October/November suggests volume of investment, by manufacturing, distributive and service industries (excluding shipping) will rise by about 2 per cent in 1982 following a fall of about 5 per cent in 1981. A large rise is tentatively expected in 1983. Investment by manufacturing (including leasing) is expected to rise during 1982, but for the year as a whole it is likely to be 1 per cent lower than 1981. An appreciable rise is expected in 1983. Manufacturers', wholesalers' and retail stocks dropped by £25 million (at 1975 prices) in Q4 1981 the smallest quarterly fall in the last two years of continuous destocking.

Unemployment (UK, seasonally adjusted excl, school-leavers) was 2,836,000 (11.7 per cent) at February count, up 7,000 on January. Vacancies were 113,500 in February.

Wholesale input prices (fuel and materials) rose ½ per cent in February; however the year-on-year increase fell to 12 per cent. Wholesale output prices rose ½ per cent in February and are 10½ per cent above a year ago. Year on year RPI increase fell to 11.0 per cent in February. Year-on-year increase in average earnings was 10.8 per cent in January. RPDI was flat in Q3 1981 following falls in the previous two quarters and a

17.5 per cent rise over the 3 years 1977 to 1980. The savings ratio rose 1 per cent to 14½ per cent in Q3 1981.

PSBR £9.7 billion in the first three quarters of 1981-82 and CGBR (unadjusted) £8.1 billion in eleven months to February 1982; but both distorted upwards by the civil service dispute. Underlying PSBR for '81-82 believed in line with 1981 Budget forecast (£10½ billion).

Sterling M3 was little changed in banking February.

Visible trade showed a surplus of £0.6 billion in Q4 1981. Current account surplus of £1.5 billion in Q4 1981; likely surplus of £8 billion in 1981 as a whole. Reserves at end-February rose to \$23.4 billion. At the close on 19 March the sterling exchange rate was \$1.7995: the effective rate was 91.1.