



Econ. Pol.

Prime Minister

HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

27 October 1982

Rt Hon Cecil Parkinson MP
Conservative & Unionist Central Office
32 Smith Square
London S W 1

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Dear Cecil

POLICY WORK

You may find it helpful to see the attached letter. This both sets out where we've got to with the exercise, describes the arrangements we hope to create for Parliamentary liaison, and suggests how we should handle the delicate issue of publicity. Now that the Groups are about to begin their work I have suggested to each Chairman that he or she should get in touch with the Ministers in charge of the Departments whose responsibilities concern him to arrange for early input to each group of advice, ideas and any background information which may be relevant to the group's work.

I am copying this letter to the PM, Chief Whip and other Cabinet colleagues.

[Handwritten signature]

GEOFFREY HOWE

27 October 1982

As you probably already know, the Prime Minister has decided to set up a small number of Policy Groups and has asked Cecil Parkinson and me to co-ordinate them. I am therefore writing to you to tell you what is intended and to ensure that the policy groups, our Backbench Committees and the Party's groups on the Select Committees are all "on net".

The need at this time is not, as you will understand, for the kind of comprehensive (and sometimes leisurely) review which we customarily undertake in Opposition, but rather for a selective and fairly swift examination of key areas of policy, which complements the work already in hand in Departments. I attach for your information a list of the nine groups which are being created (there may be one or two more) and their chairmen. As always their membership (which has to be reasonably small and workmanlike) will reflect the interests of Conservative members of both Houses, the European Parliament and of the Party at large, as well as drawing on some outside expertise. (You may like to know, by the way, that Lord Beloff is Vice Chairman and Lord Thomas a member of the Advisory Board of the Research Department, appointed by the Prime Minister).

I am asking all Policy Group Chairmen to get in touch as soon as is practicable with the Chairmen of Backbench Committees and the Chairmen or Conservative leaders of Select Committees which deal with matters relevant to their policy groups. The main purpose of these consultations will naturally be to ensure that the agenda of each group is established in the full knowledge of the views of Select or Backbench Committees, and that arrangements are made for Policy Groups to consider any suggestions the Committees may want to make. Backbench Committees (and their officers) of course remain free, as ever, to bring forward their own ideas through the customary channels.

This activity may, of course, be the object of some curiosity and publicity. It is clear that the line we all take should be the same as it has been with such work in the past. The Press have been informed already in general terms of the decision to set up the policy groups, by means of the attached Central Office Release of September 27. It would not be appropriate to go further and make generally available details of the subjects for study or the names of Chairmen and members. The business of the policy groups themselves must, of course, be confidential and I have no doubt that you and other Parliamentary colleagues will wish to exercise appropriate discretion over this.

PERSONAL AND CONFIDENTIAL

The arrangements I am proposing will, I hope, make for good liaison and thus contribute importantly to the value of this initiative. Please do not hesitate to get in touch with me if you have any queries about what is proposed.

Copies of this letter are going to Backbench Committee Chairmen and Chairmen or Conservative leaders of Select Committees.

GEOFFREY HOWE

POLICY GROUPS AND CHAIRMEN

UNEMPLOYMENT	Tim Renton
ENTERPRISE	Keith Wickenden
FAMILY & WOMEN	Lady Young
EDUCATION	Lord Beloff
INNER CITIES	Tim Sainsbury
POVERTY TRAP, WHY WORK ETC.	Terence Higgins
EUROPE	Lord Thomas
NATIONALISED INDUSTRIES	Tim Eggar
URBAN TRANSPORT	John Lee

NEWS SERVICE

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POLICY GROUPS

The Conservative Party is setting up a series of Policy Groups which will review selected areas of policy and identify programmes and measures for the second term of office of the present administration.

The Groups will in the main be chaired by back bench members of the two Houses of Parliament. Membership of the Groups will be drawn from all sections of the Party and will include academics and technical experts.

The subjects to be covered include employment, the promotion of enterprise and new business, inner cities, the interplay of tax and social security, the quality of education and problems of urban transport.

Coordination of the work of the Groups is being undertaken by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Rt. Hon. Sir Geoffrey Howe QC MP and the Party Chairman, the Rt. Hon. Cecil Parkinson MP. Secretarial back-up to the groups will be provided by the Conservative Research Department.

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