

# Conservative Research Department

## Labour Briefing

LABOUR PARTY CONFERENCE, BOURNEMOUTH

SEPTEMBER 29th to OCTOBER 4th 1985

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#### ANNEX I

Evidence of Mr Kinnock's equivocation over the miners' dispute.

## LABOUR PARTY CONFERENCE

### A. General

There are three key elements to the 1985 Labour Party Conference:

- Mr Kinnock's leadership;
- Divisions within the Party;
- The nature of the policies on which the Party did agree.

While the miners' resolution, Liverpool and Mr Kinnock's speeches have dominated the headlines, it has been the policies that the Conference endorsed almost unnoticed which illustrate just how far the Party has moved the the Left.

### B. Kinnock's Leadership

The overriding question to emerge from the Conference is whether Mr Kinnock has proved decisively that he is a leader of substance. The following points are relevant:

#### 1. Union Domination

The leader's authority remains in question following the Conference decision to reject Mr Kinnock's advice and support the NUM resolution by 3.54 million votes to 2.91 million. The decisions taken before the debate by the Executive members of the TGWU and NUPE counted for more than the views of the Labour Party's own leader.

#### 2. Past Equivocation

Mr Kinnock's failure to provide clear leadership in the past, placed him in a position where he had no alternative (if the Labour Party was to retain any credibility with the electorate) but to make the stand he did. The eleventh hour denunciation of the tactics pursued by the NUM leadership followed months when Mr Kinnock showed his unwillingness to make a stand (see Annex I).

These failures of leadership helped to ensure his defeat in the miners' resolution. The comparison with Gaitskell, who fought a consistent and principled fight against unilateralism, is therefore inappropriate.

#### 3. Future Prospects

Mr Kinnock's fine words will count for nothing, if they are not followed by decisive action to resist the demands

of the extremists within his Party. There is little prospect of this.

- \* Mr Kinnock claimed that his opposition to retrospective reimbursement was on the grounds that 'people would be confused about our (the Labour Party's) attitude to the rule of law' (Bournemouth, 2nd October 1985). Yet he endorsed the first two elements of the NUM resolution, which called for a judicial review and the re-instatement of sacked miners. That these should somehow be acceptable when reimbursement was not, underlines the Labour Party's ambivalence to law and order.
- \* On Tuesday, Mr Kinnock attacked Liverpool City Council for its tactic of issuing redundancy notices to its workforce. On Wednesday, he became party to a compromise that allowed Derek Hatton to withdraw a motion endorsing those tactics before it could be decisively rejected by Conference. The NEC is now committed to an attempt to find a solution to the council's problems and Mr Hatton has not been forced into any climb-down.

### C. Divisions Within the Party

The message to come from Bournemouth will be the Labour Party is now more united than before. There is considerable evidence to suggest the contrary.

#### 1. Criticism of the Leadership

It is true to say that most of the criticism of Mr Kinnock has come from the Bennite Left, but some criticism has come from sections of the Party whose support Mr Kinnock requires to consolidate his control of the Party, notably the TGWU and the Labour Co-ordinating Committee.

##### \* Members of the NEC

'We have got to tell the leader of this Party that he cannot treat his own supporters in that way' (Eric Heffer, The Times, 2nd October 1985).

##### \* Councillors

'Kinnock is the ruin of the Labour Party' (Derek Hatton, Daily Mail, 2nd October 1985).

'I don't want Kinnock at No.10 Downing Street, if that means that I have got to penalise the very people that put me in office as a Councillor' (Ted Knight, Daily Mail, 2nd October 1985).

\* MPs

'That man is an absolute traitor' (Robert Parry MP, Daily Express, 2nd October 1985).

'Kinnock showed that he is the biggest traitor since Ramsay MacDonald' (Terry Fields MP, Daily Mail, 2nd October 1985).

\* Unions

'I want a Socialist government, but I will not betray the National Union of Mineworkers to get it' (Ron Todd, General-Secretary of the TGWU, Bournemouth, 2nd October 1985).

\* Party Groups

'The Party cannot be led by a series of Rambo-style edicts from on high, whether over the miners' resolution, black sections, or the contents of the next manifesto' (Labour Co-ordinating Committee, Bournemouth, 30th September 1985).

'We find it a gratuitous insult to councillors in Liverpool, Lambeth or any other authority, to talk of them playing at politics without being interested in power' (Campaign Group Statement, Bournemouth, 1st October 1985).

2. Defeats for the Leadership

Mr Kinnock was defeated on the NUM resolution and the resolution calling for compensation of councillors, but his authority was further undermined by other significant defeats.

a. NUM resolution

The resolution called on the next Labour Government to immediately legislate to provide for the:

- conduct of a complete review of all cases of miners jailed as a result of the dispute;
- guarantee the re-instatement of all miners sacked for activities arising out of the dispute;
- reimburse the NUM and all other unions with all monies confiscated from it as a result of fines, sequestration, receivership, legal and other costs etc.

This result was particularly humiliating for Mr Kinnock

as he lost the vote because of the decision taken by the TGWU to support the NUM; he is sponsored by that union.

b. Local Government

The Conference carried by acclaim a resolution congratulating councillors who voted not to set a rate earlier this year and seeking to commit the next Labour Government to compensate fully those representatives of the Labour movement who have suffered personal loss, bankruptcy, disqualification as a result of non-compliance with the rate-capping laws.

This was a considerable snub for Mr Kinnock who had previously declared:

'I am not prepared to defend retrospective reimbursement for anything, to anybody' (TVAM, 29th September 1985).

c. The Police and Courts

Conference passed by 3.63 million votes to 2.68 million votes a resolution calling on a Labour Government to introduce democratic control of police authorities by locally elected representatives, with the authority to influence and direct local policing policy and practice.

It further demanded an independent body to investigate complaints against the police and to determine disciplinary action, a review of police selection and training, and an end to all forms of jury vetting. The Government would be given power to oversee the activities of magistrates' courts and their sentencing.

While the NEC opposed the motion on the grounds that it implied operational control of the police, leading Party figures did little to stem the flow of anti-police sentiment.

Mr Kaufman accused some Chief Constables of making 'party political interventions' and said 'if you want conclusive proof then go to Orgreave' (Bournemouth, 30th September 1985).

d. Nuclear Power

Conference ignored the advice of the NEC and voted by 3.9 million votes to 2.4 million in favour of a motion calling for a halt to Britain's nuclear power programme and closure of all existing reactors.

e. Reproductive Rights

A motion that seeks to remove the right of Labour MPs to invoke conscience clauses under the rules of the Parliamentary Labour Party or to have a free vote on the issue of womens' reproductive rights was carried overwhelmingly by 5.5 million votes to 611,000, underlining the illiberal tendencies within the Labour Party.

D. Policy Agreements

The Left-wing nature of the Labour Party is clearly revealed by the resolutions which were approved by Conference without divisive argument.

1. Nationalisation

Conference accepted almost unanimously a motion calling on the Labour Party to campaign vigorously and openly for public ownership - 'without its substantial extension, the economic and social objectives that we want cannot be achieved' - and for the re-instatement of assets sold off by the Conservative Government on the basis of no speculative gains over the initial share price.

British Telecom and British Gas were identified as priorities for re-nationalisation.

2. Economy

Conference approved two NEC statements, 'Investing in Britain' and 'A New Partnership. A New Britain'. These documents have already been subjected to widespread criticism. These documents include:

- plans to control pensioners' savings by forcing pension funds to sell overseas assets and provide finance for a state controlled National Investment Bank;
- proposals that would hand over considerable power to trade unions;
- policies to massively increase state intervention through a new system of planning.

3. Employment

An NEC statement on employment rights was approved unanimously by delegates. It confirmed that a Labour Government would repeal Conservative trade union legislation.

It also promised a review which would formulate a policy to examine the means by which a Labour Government could secure:

- the return of funds seized or extracted from trade unions under this legislation;
- the means by which re-instatement or financial compensation could be achieved for those dismissed as a result of their trade union activities;
- a review of all cases of those imprisoned as a result of activities in industrial disputes.

The NEC hoped that this formula would avert their defeat on the NUM resolution.

#### 4. Defence

After seven years of dispute, the victory of the unilateralists is now complete. The Conference re-affirmed its commitment to unilateral disarmament, the cancellation of Trident and the withdrawal of Cruise missiles.

A motion calling for the withdrawal from NATO was decisively defeated, although Conference carried by 4.1 million votes to 2.3 million a resolution calling for the 'democratisation' of the armed forces. This was against the wishes of the NEC.

Denzil Davies, Shadow Defence Secretary, promised stronger conventional defence.

#### 5. Rural Policy

A rural policy calling for the re-introduction of rating on agricultural land and buildings and the extension of planning controls to agriculture, forestry, horticulture and fish farming was adopted.

### E. Other Issues

#### 1. Welfare State

Three resolutions attacking the Government review of social security and demanding that its provisions be overturned by an incoming Labour Government were approved unanimously. They called for a comprehensive social security system including a pension of 50 per cent of average earnings and child benefit indexed to average earnings.

2. Housing

Conference approved an NEC statement 'Homes for the Future' which accepts the 'right to buy'. But recalcitrant Labour councils would be offered a loophole. Replying for the NEC, Mr Eric Heffer said local councils would have the right to stop the sale of council homes in areas where there were special problems.

3. Education

A motion approved by Conference, commits a Labour Government to a new Education Act. The new Act would introduce mandatory provision of nursery education for the under-fives, limit class sizes to 25 pupils per teacher and full comprehensive education up to 16.

In the debate, Shadow Education Minister, Giles Radice, pledged that a Labour Government would immediately settle the teacher's pay claims and set up an inquiry into the future of teachers' pay.

Mr Kinnock's Past Equivocation over the Miners

On Wednesday Mr Kinnock condemned the NUM tactics, the reliance on picketing and the lies told during the strike. This contrasts with the positions he has taken to date:

- \* He failed to intercede with the miners' leadership over their conduct of the strike. He claimed:  
  
'The Labour Party can't make demands of affiliated authorities like the NUM' (Sunday Times, 27th May 1984).
- \* He bolstered the credibility of Mr Scargill, despite the lies he told, saying 'Arthur Scargill's legitimacy is not in any sense in doubt' (TV Eye, ITV, 19th April 1984).
- \* He did not condemn the tactics of mass picketing, he preferred to say 'Mass picketing by itself, the collection of large numbers of people at a picketing site is not intimidatory' (TV Eye, ITV, 19th April 1984).
- \* It took Mr Kinnock almost three months to issue an unequivocal condemnation of picket violence during the strike, and even then he took refuge in generalised condemnation of violence at the 1984 Labour Party Conference, making no clear distinction between the legitimate and illegitimate use of force.
- \* He showed his readiness to turn his back on the miners of Nottingham, despite the intimidation they faced during the strike, urging them to stay within the NUM and treat with Mr Scargill, who would deny them their democratic rights. He made it clear that if they did establish an independent union, he would do little to assist them to affiliate to the Labour Party. He said, putting procedure before principle: 'I can't play ducks and drakes with the constitution' (Newsnight, 17th July 1985).
- \* There is no doubt that had Mr Kinnock been Prime Minister during the miners' strike, he would have capitulated to Mr Scargill's demands. During the strike he said:  
  
'If we could elect that Labour government next Thursday the coal mining dispute would be over by next Sunday' (News of the World, 29th April 1984).