

THE CONFERENCE SPEECH.

Introduction.

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1 There has been much sound and fury during the last few weeks. The opposition parties have been at conference offering their easy ways out.

2 There has been a lot of talk of power - we'll spend more if we get power . . . we'll borrow more if we get power . . . we'll pay you more if we get power.

3 There has been a lot of talk of power but there hasn't been much talk of responsibility. Today, I want to speak of our responsibilities, the responsibilities of a Conservative Party that is in power. ~~For while others ask for power, we take responsibility.~~ 11

The Return of National Pride.

The opposition parties have one thing in common. They like nothing better than to knock Britain.

They ^{allege} ~~tell~~ us that the economy is in terminal decline, that we have cut spending on the Health Service, that we can't afford to defend ourselves.

The opposition try to make Britons ashamed of themselves.

When we look back over the last seven years of Conservative government we have nothing to be ashamed of.

First and most important, because we have called on the nation to face up to its responsibilities - to provide a credible defence, to maintain law and order, to provide for the needy, to protect individual rights - and because the nation has responded, there has been a renewal of national pride.

Seven years ago there was very little for the nation to be proud of. Socialism had seen to that. As it always does. Now that we have solid national achievements to our credit we see a return of confidence.

That's why our opponents try to con people into believing their horror stories. They know that national morale has improved enormously under this Conservative government and it doesn't suit their purposes.

Our opponents' vision of Britain bears as much resemblance to reality as the kind of horror film that Messers Hammer are so good at making. You know, the films they show on television late on Saturday nights when the children have gone to bed. The ones that make your hair stand on end.

Our opponents horror stories may excite their followers but they simply aren't credible to the British people. They're not going to be conned into believing all that guff.

New National Prosperity.

Only a nation that is self confident can prosper. Britain is rediscovering its self-confidence and so it is beginning to prosper. Not everywhere. Not in every sector. Not yet. But the economy is on the move. Productivity has increased beyond even our expectations. Small businesses are springing up everywhere. Many companies face the future with far more confidence than ever before.

The government has played its part. By creating a climate in which people can prosper. Inflation is well down. Government finances are under control. Important companies have been returned to the private sector where they belong. Many regulations have been swept away.

Because the economy is on the move we have been able to increase help for the needy.

Lets finally lay to rest the Socialist lie that we have cut spending on the health service. We have not. We have been able to afford to increase it by far more than any Socialist controlled economy would have done. And we have been able to increase the resources available to the police. And, yes, under a Conservative government Britain can afford to defend itself.

The Fundamental Issues.

Our opponents have told lies about the state of the country and made promises that they know they cannot keep but they have not put the fundamental issues before the people.

Indeed they have done everything they can to obscure them. They call Socialism, Social Democracy. They call nationalisation, Social Ownership. They call unilateral disarmament, maintaining a strong defence.

We are not going to let them get away with these deceptions. We intend to see that people have every opportunity to examine the real issues. We are not afraid. Why should we be? If we ask the electorate the real questions we are confident that they will give us the right answer.

The Right to Choose.

What sort of Britain do we want to see? A Britain of free, independent, prosperous, self-reliant, forward looking individuals or a Britain of over-regulated, backward looking citizens, dependent on nanny state for their every need, forbidden to choose or to take responsibility.

This is not just a question of political philosophy. It reaches over political argument to touch every individual.

Conservatives believe that people have the right to choose. To live in their own houses if they want to. To go to work with or without the permission of their union bosses. To spend their money how they like, to save it, what television channels to watch, which papers to read, where to send their children to school, where to take their holidays.

Conservatives also believe in excellence. In science - Britain has the best scientific brains in the world - in sport - we are proud of our great athletes - in the arts, in the caring professions - our doctors and nurses are beyond praise - in the professions, and yes, in commerce.

Giving people the right to choose doesn't just mean allowing a few individuals to make a lot of money.

It means allowing everyone the chance to excel in whatever field he or she chooses.

Choice is a privilege that can only be earned by responsibility.

Defence.

What are our responsibilities? We have a responsibility to defend our country.

For the first time since the war a major political party has unequivocally abandoned that responsibility. I do not say this with any pleasure. I know that there are those who think that Labour's defence policies will lose them the election. They will lose the election anyway. But every democracy benefits from having a responsible opposition. The Labour Party cannot be called responsible now.

Labour have declared that if elected they will scrap Britain's independent nuclear deterrent and tell the Americans to take their nuclear weapons somewhere else.

If they were ever allowed to implement their so called defence policy it would present the gravest challenge since the war not just to the security of Britain but to the security of the free West.

Without our own independent nuclear deterrent we would be increasingly vulnerable to Soviet pressure, unable to protect our troops in Germany from the massive Soviet superiority in conventional forces, without any right to influence disarmament negotiations.

Labour's promise to increase spending on conventional weapons is hollow. It is accompanied by a call to reduce spending on defence. It is also quite impractical. Nuclear weapons are the most cost effective solution to our security needs. Mr Callaghan thought so. That's why he modernised Polaris.

No conventional forces can ever be a credible deterrent to nuclear backed aggression.

Labour's plan to remove all American nuclear forces from Britain is accompanied by a hollow promise to support NATO. The American nuclear weapons in Britain not only guarantee our security, they protect the three-hundred thousand American troops in Europe. Why should we expect any responsible American President to leave his troops unprotected? NATO would wither if the Americans withdrew their troops.

Labour claim that they seek disarmament. Nothing would be more certain to persuade the Soviet Union to hang onto every nuclear weapon it has if it saw Britain disarming unilaterally and NATO breaking up.

Law and Order.

We have a responsibility to maintain the law. You don't do that by allowing massive picketing. You don't do it by encouraging police committees to harass their police officers on political grounds. You don't do it by going on protest marches and sit-ins, however strongly you feel about an issue.

You do it by setting a good example and making sure that the police have the resources necessary for their tasks.

Welfare.

We have a responsibility to care for the needy. It is only by creating a climate where individuals can prosper that the resources can be created to help the needy.

There's another lie our opponents propagate that I want to put an end to. We do not clench our teeth when we provide welfare. This is not a tight-fisted government. It is a prudent government. It has to be. It knows that its resources are finite and that it is spending other peoples' money. It is also a government that gives to the needy because it wants to help them and because it feels responsible for them. Not because it wants to buy their votes.

Conservatives' Unique Contribution.

We are the only party that respects the individual. We are the only party that trusts the individual. We are the only party that has faith in the individual.

We know that only the individual can create and give. Only the individual can produce wealth and offer compassion.

We believe that the individual, if he is given the right to choose, will exercise his responsibilities.

We offer the dignity of choice. We ask people to accept the privilege of responsibility.

We know that if Britons are free to choose and exercise their responsibilities they will begin again to feel that good, old-fashioned feeling - pride in themselves and in their country.

David Hart 2nd October 1986.