

CONSERVATION LUNCH, 25 NOVEMBER 1985

General Background

Six figures from the world of green policies have been invited to meet you to give you a flavour of their current views. It is the contention of William Waldegrave that these figures can help this Government, either directly themselves or by illustrating certain important public attitudes. So, although there is an SDP parliamentary candidate (Tom Burke) among the six it is expected that you will find all of them congenial, helpful and useful. There is a small caveat beside Sir Arthur Norman. The UK Centre for Economic and Environmental Development started with a great flourish in 1980 with great expectations. It is yet only at ground base in its attempt to bring together the economic and the environmental world.

Politics

This year, the Conservative Party lost considerable ground on the South Coast, southern and western counties in the county council election, because of forceful presentation by environmental groups on conservation issues. The Alliance sees green issues as an area where they will find voters. You will recall our discussion on green belt. Fortunately, this Government can pray in aid of the good record of Conservative

Governments of the past - about 60% of all legislation on the environment has been put through by Conservatives. No-one need make us apologise!

Public Concern

If rural pastimes such as angling (7 million anglers) are added to the bird fanciers (RSPB has 450,000 members) and the National Trust members (1 million), and the pure lobbyists such as the Council for the Protection for Rural England (35,000 members) and the influential Green Alliance (only 400 members), then those directly interested in the environment tot up considerably. These should be added to the traditional environmentalists, the farmers (200 of these plus 400,000 in the agricultural sector) and those who cash in on the environment, namely, the tourist industry (950,000 employed and turnover of 13 billion per year). On top of that, there is a pollution clean-up industry, together with the Government inspectors and professional environmental workers.

Jobs and Conservation

The CBI recently recommended that "tourism depends for much of its resource base on public investment in conserving the environment and the natural heritage". In addition to the lucrative tourist industry and agriculture itself, there is also the growing anti-pollution business. This is now represented by small, medium and large business. We have supported the Department of Environment in plans to link the

market place and the reputation of the Government in conservation, by encouraging a major International Fair in the European Year of the Environment in 1987. This Fair may be mentioned by William Waldegrave, and is the sort of thing that Sir Arthur Norman ought to be doing - but it isn't! You will probably appreciate the splendid work that Colonel Branton does with his conservation helpers who voluntarily go about cleaning ponds and ditches! (Voluntary - but with the aid of Government money - £100,000.)

Likely Subjects of Conversation

I have spoken to one of the guests (Tom Burke) who appears to have spoken to nearly all the others who are attending. He says that there are four likely subjects to be discussed under the general steer given by your letter of invitation.

1. The future use of land coming out of production as a result of alleged future wind-down of the CAP.
2. The role of volunteering in the environmental sector - possibilities and probabilities.
3. The proposal by the Department of Environment that the Pollution Inspectorates be amalgamated.
4. What ought to happen to improve conservation and cleaning up of urban areas.

I expand these four as follows:

1. Nicholas Owen has done a brief which will be attached by the Private Office to this note. William Waldegrave is keen that Government continues its posture that you adopted last January, namely, that grants to farmers to stop harming the environment should be kept to an absolute minimum (Halvergate) and that instead, landscape conservation orders be used. Whether fiscal incentives to environmental responsibility in the countryside are useful, may be touched upon. Some research is being done on this matter. No final view of fiscal incentives has been reached. We are sceptical.
2. The role of volunteering in the present financial year of 1985/6. DoE provided £1.5 million in grants to the voluntary sector in the conservation field (see annex). Some of this went through MSC. We believe there are infinite possibilities, confirmed by our visit to the CATs, for young people to be involved in cleaning up the environment. A dramatic and splendid gesture would be made if you invited a few to do some extra clean-up work in ponds or ditches at Chequers!(?)
3. The amalgamation of the Pollution Inspectorate. This is mentioned in the DoE brief. It is a good idea and is liked by ecologists and conservationists because it is thought the present arrangements are slack on pollution! Hopefully, this practical administrative point will not

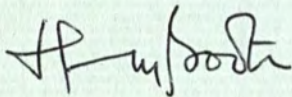
take up too much of the conversation. There is an internal tussle between Departments on this. The Health and Safety Executive is loth to let DoE have the Inspectorates. The relevant sections are fourfold. (HM Industrial Air Pollution - the Radio Chemical and the Hazardous Waste Inspectorates, and the DoE scientists and engineers engaged in pollution work.)

4. Urban conservation. Ever since Blake wrote of satanic mills 200 years ago, industrialisation has been seen as a cause of pollution. Disraeli instigated the Alkali Inspectorate. Between the wars, urban sprawl and since the decay of 19th century industry has left our cities in need of a strong commonsense clean-up. We have found the practical problems being compounded by left-wing councils viewing all industry as pariahs. For example, in Manchester this week, we saw very expensive grassed areas levelled by the ratepayer and central Government with no thought as to how the central deserts could be brought back into productive use. We suggest that flourishing industry is the best guarantee of a good conservation policy.

Conclusion

Government spends taxpayers' money on the environment through nearly all Departments, but principally through MAFF, DoE, Energy and D/Tp. With a little care, we should get considerable credit for the work done. We set out in the

annex some of the ways in which Government supports volunteers in this sector. The ideas you may wish to support - more conservation volunteers and jobs, a British conservation/pollution Fair, 1987 and conservation at Chequers?

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Hartley Booth'.

HARTLEY BOOTH

Annex

Government Help to Voluntary Sector With
Special Reference to Conservation

The Government gave special grants of £1.5 million to conservation groups 1985/6. The British Trust for Conservation Volunteers received £100,000, the Green Alliance £13,000, the RSPB urban schools programme £8,000.

Total given by the Government to the voluntary sector was £222 million, which is a real rise of 56% over the last five years. The British Trust for Conservation Volunteers (BTCV) was founded in 1959, made a charity in 1970 and is the largest United Kingdom body of its kind. It has 389 groups and 190 school members. It produced 1.6 million work days from its 0.25 millions volunteers last year.

The MSC produced 6.25 ^(million) man and woman work days during the last year with 36,500 participants.

If you add together the community programme, the BTCV work and the Youth Training Schemes, there are 36 schemes on conservation in 1984/5. ?



BIOGRAPHIES

SIR DEREK BARBER

Chairman of the Countryside Commission since 1981. Farm-owner, writer and environmental consultant to Chartered Surveyors. Joint author of "Farming for Profit" (1961); served 30 years in MAFF National Agriculture Advisory Service; Chairman (until 1980) of BBC central agricultural advisory committee; founder member of Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group. 1976-81 Chairman of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds.

MR WILLIAM WILKINSON

Chairman of Nature Conservancy Council since 1983. Ex-merchant banker; former Director Kleinwort Benson; Ex-Council Member of Royal Society for the Protection of Birds. Ex-Council Member and Vice-Chairman of Game Conservancy. Founder, member and former Chairman of Ornithological Society of the Middle East. Member of several County Naturalists' Trusts.

LORD BLAKENHAM

Chairman, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds. Chairman Pearson PLC; the Financial Times; Madame Tussaud's. Director, Lazard Brothers. Previously with English Electric, Standard Industrial Group, Royal Doulton.

LT COL IAN BRANTON

Director, British Trust for Conservation Volunteers - a major body concerned with organising voluntary work in the wider countryside.



MR TOM BURKE

Director of the Green Alliance since 1982. Currently Chairman of the Planning and Environment Group of the National Council for Voluntary Organisations and a member of its Executive Committee, Honorary Press Officer and Policy Adviser to the European Environment Bureau, Member of the Board of Directors of Earth Resources Research, Honorary Visiting Fellow at Manchester Business School. Formerly Vice-Chairman, Executive Director and Local Groups Co-ordinator of Friends of the Earth, member of the Waste Management Advisory Council, member of the Packaging Council, author and/or editor of several books and pamphlets on environmental policy matters. SDP Parliamentary Candidate for Surbiton.

SIR ARTHUR NORMAN

Chairman, UK Centre for Economic and Environmental Development, (CEED) since 1984; Chairman, the De La Rue Company, since 1964, Vice-Chairman, Sun-Life Assurance Society, since 1984; President, Confederation of British Industries 1968-76; Ex-Chairman World Wildlife Fund, UK 1977-84, Member of Nature Conservancy Council since 1980, Board Member, International Institute for Environment and Development. CEED grew from the launch of the World Conservation Strategy in 1980. A non-governmental organisation established in 1984, it aims to promote a productive partnership between conservation and development.



PRIME MINISTER'S LUNCH WITH CONSERVATIONISTS: 25 NOVEMBER 1985

DISCUSSION TOPICS

1. Does Government policy adequately address the key issues in UK environment policy?

- "Green growth". Conservation need not be anti-growth; developments consistent with the sustainable use of the world's resources will be more efficient as well as being environmentally benign or productive. New pollution control technologies offer new markets to be won.

The UK will be represented at Ottawa in 1986 when progress on implementing the "World Conservation Strategy" will be reviewed. Sir Arthur Norman may wish to describe how CEED has promoted the partnership between developer and conservationist in the short and long term.

- Acid Rain. The UK has achieved more than 40% reduction in sulphur emissions since the 1970 peak. We hope to achieve 30% down on 1980 by the late 1990s (24% already). Can we justify expenditure of some £300m to bring that target forward a few years to meet the arbitrary goal set by the 30% Club? Cost effective reductions in SO₂ and NO_x emissions are being achieved: fuel substitution, nuclear power programme, reduction in emissions from motor vehicles (and UK still leads on removal of lead from petrol). In 1985/86 DOE research programme includes £3.4m on research into air pollutants. £10m + per annum is being spent by CEGB and others on control technologies.

- Radioactive discharges and waste disposal. Public confidence is essential to the safe management of the nuclear power programme. Strict controls over discharges and use of the best practicable environmental options (BPEO) for managing radioactive wastes must be believed to work. Emerging conclusions of a study of BPEO, expected



early next year, indicate that an optimum strategy would involve early use of all disposal options (Mr Burke has seen a draft). A positive approach is needed from environmentalists regardless of their views about nuclear power - shutting off options one by one will not eradicate the need to provide for the storage and eventual disposal of radioactive waste. Given an expanding nuclear power programme - environmentally clean in itself - and the other sources of radioactive waste materials, how would the participants plan for the safe management of these wastes?

- HM Pollution Inspectorate. Environmentalists agree with ^{Industry} ~~the CBI~~ in wanting the Industrial Air Pollution Inspectorate, transferred from DOE to HSE in 1974, to be returned to DOE as part of a unified pollution inspectorate. Industry presently has to go to many different bodies for consents. It has not yet been publicly confirmed that the Government is looking into this.

2. Do we have the right powers over land use? Is the conservation/farming/development balance right? How will we plan the use of land coming out of agricultural production? (Sir Derek Barber's suggestion).

- Planning system. Both development and conservation are served by a planning system which plans change efficiently and effectively. The use of land for agriculture is excluded and many buildings and engineering operations on agricultural land are permitted under the GDO. Certain limited and focussed new controls are being considered as a fall-back where voluntary co-operation is inadequate eg for intensive livestock units, or the external appearance of developments in National Parks. But farmers have been generally responsible guardians of the countryside and their co-operation in conservation is essential.

General
Development
Order



- Landscape change. Since 1981 the NCC has been involved with over 1000 management agreements, the keystone in the voluntary approach to countryside management endorsed by the House of Commons Environment Select Committee. New schemes providing incentives for environmentally-conscious farming methods were a great achievement for MAFF in Brussels. A recent MAFF survey showed that many farmers were actively planting trees and hedgerows and creating ponds.

- CAP reforms. The EC Commission's Green Paper on perspectives for the CAP recognises growing concern about the consequences of financial incentives to maximise agricultural output. The UK has taken a lead in Europe on this issue. It may lead to conflicts of interest as land comes out of production - between forestry, commerce, industry, housing, tourism and leisure activities. But it will not happen overnight. What should Government be doing to anticipate?

- Rural economy. The voluntary approach recognises the importance of a thriving farming community to rural life. The Development Commission and COSIRA have helped to bring new life to rural communities through small industry and tourism opportunities. There have been calls for a comprehensive statement of the Government's rural strategy - what should it contain? What opportunities - especially employment opportunities - could be developed further?

3. What are or should be the roles of the voluntary sector, the statutory agencies, the Manpower Services Commission in conservation?

(British Trust for Conservation Volunteers)

- BTCV study. Lt Col Branton has been involved with Dartington Institute in producing a DOE funded study of the scale, type and effectiveness of environmental work by volunteers and MSC projects. He may wish to discuss some of the conclusions, yet to be considered by Ministers.



£1.5m grants were provided in 1985/86 for DOE-related activities. The statutory agencies - NCC and Countryside Commission - will receive £50m in 1986/87, some of course going to the voluntary sector. The Government wishes to encourage this activity - what are the priorities? The MSC supports some environmental work - is there scope for better links with the conservation movement? Where do participants see the major opportunities for job creation in this field?

- Business sponsorship. The Government's 1983 initiative is to be re-launched next year. Sir Arthur Norman has a keen interest. Does sponsorship of volunteer work act as conscience money, detracting from an environmentally-conscious corporate approach? How can it be directed to produce the greatest effect?

4. Key issues in the urban environment? Why so much unused land and derelict buildings? How should that be tackled?

In England 100-150 ha. of urban land is being reclaimed for housing each year, enough for 3-4000 houses that would otherwise need greenfield sites. 5-600~~0~~ ha. per annum are being made available to industry. £82m was spent on derelict land grants this year. But still 44,000 ha. lie unused in public land registers, at least half of which has high or medium potential for development although much of it is in areas where market demand is weak.

Urban Programme; Groundwork on the urban fringe (Sir Derek Barber is Deputy Chairman); National Garden Festivals; city farms; all provide opportunities for involving the MSC in projects providing unemployed youth with work to improve their environment. How far are voluntary groups organised to involve local communities? What scope is there to achieve more than environmental improvement from greening the cities?