

TERRITORIAL EXPENDITURE

You said in your speech at Perth last week:

"When it comes to spending taxpayers' money, we spend £450 more per person in Scotland than in England; on education, £108 more per person; on health, £92 more. I had better not go on: English constituencies might notice!"

The Treasury have noticed. Even the electorate in the North of England have noticed. The attached letter to the Daily Telegraph last week argued that one of the reasons for the defeat at Ryedale was the disparity between expenditure in Scotland and the North of England.

The Treasury have come up with two proposals for saving money in Scotland:

- i. A new study of the relative expenditure needs of the various countries.
- ii. Immediate action in the PESC round to cut the Scottish block by adjusting it for population changes since 1979.

A needs assessment study

The savings from a needs assessment study are distant and speculative. The last one, in 1976, took 2 years. There is no guarantee that it would come up with the right result.

Even if it did show that Scottish expenditure was excessive, it would still leave the real problem of actually delivering cuts. There would also be an immediate cost, as any announcement would probably cause a row.

The Treasury argue that we cannot carry on indefinitely with maybe £800m of Scottish over-provision. They believe we could get with a low-key announcement of a review a decade after the previous one, reporting after the Election. I remain wary and reluctantly recommend against a study.

But for tactical reasons, we should not rule out a needs assessment study right at the beginning of the meeting. Instead, the threat of one should be used to get the Scots to concede population-linked cuts now.

#### Adjusting for population now

The Scottish population will have fallen from 11.1% of the total population of the UK in 1979 to 10.8% by 1990. Table III of the Cabinet Office Report shows that if we cut the Scottish block to reflect this, we would save £133m in 1987-88 and £163m in 1988-89. That is a useful contribution to the next PESC round. Moreover, the population adjustment is comprehensible and explicable. I recommend that you go for this option. But there will be two objections.

First, what is the Secretary of State actually supposed to cut? Out of the £7bn in his block in 1987-88, approximately

5 167,000  
5 137,000

£3bn consists of local authority current expenditure, where any cuts he promised might not materialise. That still leaves £4bn under the Secretary of State's control, broken down roughly as follows:

	<u>LA Capital</u>	<u>Scottish Office</u>	£m
Health	20	2,180	
Housing	370	240	
Transport	160	140	
Education	70	250	
(Polytechnics, Teacher-training)			
Other Programmes	<u>180</u>	<u>390</u>	
	<u>£800m</u>	<u>£3,200m</u>	

Especially with inflation falling more than expected, the Secretary of State should be able to find savings here.

The other objection is that the population formula gives Northern Ireland about £35m more. But this problem only arises if we are too tidy-minded. Tom King's objective at the meeting tomorrow will surely be to avoid an unpleasant needs assessment study showing that Northern Ireland is over-provided relative to England. He will not be coming along to demand another £35m of public expenditure. So we can escape having to apply the Scottish population adjustment to Northern Ireland.

*David Willetts*

DAVID WILLETTS

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machines. There is less pride to be affronted when one of the Liberals' by-election wizards descends from London to take over the local organisation Meetings need organising? Leaflets need writing? Canvass cards need preparing? No bother, say the Londoners, we've done it all before.

By-election campaigns seem to be the highest form of political life to Alliance members. For a Labour party activist, paradise is ridding Britain of cruise missiles. For Conservative loyalists, it is privatising the nation's water supplies. But for any self regarding Liberal activist, there is nothing—absolutely nothing—half so much worth doing as simply messing about in by-election committee rooms

By election skills, however, cannot

## Demoralisation at the Tory roots

SIR—You reported recently that Mrs Thatcher had visited Conservative Central Office following last week's electoral disasters and that the Office and particularly Mr Tebbit might be blamed for the reverses.

The Conservative Central Office is for most of us an irrelevance, the only tangible sign of its existence being a publication remarkable for what it does not say

What the Prime Minister should be visiting are branches and Conservative council groups in the country, listening to what they are saying and accepting their criticisms.

They will not be attacking the policies past or present of the Government, they are simply numbed and demoralised by the continuing "own goals" which this administration produces with such consistency and style.

We all make mistakes, the sensible and the humble acknowledge their errors and use the lessons learned to good effect. The hallmark of this government is, sadly, to deny the actual ability to err and to label those who protest as disloyal.

The achievements of this government are enormous and undoubtedly have saved the country from disaster but they are forgotten by the electorate in a stream of nonsenses such as Westland, Austin Rover, Sunday opening, the incredible bungling of the rate support grant and the attempt to slash (but not in the end) the list of National Health Service approved drugs, to name but a few.

This has enabled the opposition, particularly the Alliance, to dispense with such niceties as policies and solutions to problems; all they have to do is sit back and capitalise on the latest government *faux pas*.

What Conservative workers want are competent Ministers who behave like human beings and are not continually surrounded by an aura of smug self-satisfaction. It is their arrogance

to be the most swiftly dismissed as a temporary aberration, but should not be. Liberal and SDP candidates usually attract a substantial number of Tory protest votes from people wishing to fire a mid-term warning shot over Mrs Thatcher's bow, safe in the knowledge that her majority in Parliament remains secure.

This might be considered as a second kind of "tactical" vote. Both kinds of people have in common an underlying wish to see "their" party — Labour or Conservative — form the next government. But for the moment both find reason to put their cross against the name of the Alliance candidate.

Thus unilateral nuclear disarmers make common cause with enthusiasts for Trident: and fans of Arthur

and "we're always right" attitude which has so damaged the morale of the party.

The real Conservatives of this land are those who do the work which is so soon forgotten after every General Election. The Government must listen and heed, for to ignore the warning bells that are ringing could lead our country into a catastrophe from which we might never recover

K. J. PEERS  
County Councillor,  
Bewdley, Worcs.

## Unwise choice

SIR—As one who lived for 40 years in the North Yorkshire area I offer the Conservative party three reasons for the loss of Ryedale.

First it was inept to choose a merchant banker and Euro-MP as candidate. No Yorkshireman likes an "incomer" and to offer North country farmers someone from the EEC was unwise. This was an area which needed a "knight from the shires."

Secondly Northerners feel that the affluent south and the Conservatives will only help the vociferous Scots and Irish and don't bother about the North of England.

Thirdly, although many parents are annoyed with the teachers, they are even more annoyed with the Tories sitting back and playing politics for the future, rather than doing something for their children now.

DOROTHY FOX  
Newbold Verdon, Leics.

## Male pregnancy

Sir—The reports you have published on speculations about induction of male pregnancy have emphasised once again the need for urgent legislation to enable proper research to take place in the field of human in vitro fertilisation, and to prevent all abuses.

The two "experts" you quoted are both relative newcomers to IVF with limited experience, both of whom in their own submissions to the Voluntary Licensing Authority are not engaged in pre-embryo research.

only the vaguest public image terms of what they stand for or what if by some miracle they were chosen as the country's government, they would do with power.

A Harris Poll in London shortly before last week's borough election found that a clear majority of Alliance supporters agreed that "It is hard to say what the policies of the Liberal/SDP Alliance really are". Other polls in other places at other times have reached similar conclusions.

From this it is but a short step to the assertion that the Alliance really does have no common political purpose or fully worked-out policies. This is unfair. The Gang of Four are prolific writers.

As for policies, Jo Grimond used to remark that the Liberals' problem

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Any attempts to induce pregnancy in a man would not only be dangerous to the poor fellow, but also entirely lacking in proper medical motivation, and contrary to the Hippocratic principle of "doing no harm." It is to be hoped that no woman will allow her body to be invaded by any person for the recovery of eggs from her for such a witless purpose. I hope that no medical practitioner in this country will be allowed to carry out such an invasion nor would he or she ever agree to do so.

Women who donate eggs for any purpose should be satisfied that they are only to be used for the treatment of infertility, for improvements in such treatment, for research to enable reductions and preventions of handicaps, and the development of new treatments of sick people.

Legislation on these lines is needed not only to encourage advances in medicine but also to reassure a concerned public.

PATRICK STEPTOE  
FRCOG  
Cambridge.

## Library economies

SIR—I would like to reassure Professor Wells (May 10) that when he visits the British Library in London he will almost certainly be able to refer to the books and journals he requests.

A real decline in Government funding has forced the British Library Board to look at every possible economy, and choose those which are least damaging to the integrity of our collections. One of these is to take fewer duplicate copies.

I agree that this means some material—mainly foreign serials and monographs—will do joint duty for

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