

SECRETIMPLEMENTING OUR STRATEGY

1. I was asked to suggest ways in which my earlier paper could be translated into action during the first half of next year.
2. This paper suggests the themes and subjects on which we should concentrate, and indicates some obvious ways in which we can communicate what we have to say. The first annex sets out a proposed political diary for the year; the second notes some election tasks which should be put in hand now; the third makes some proposals about the Leader's speeches.
3. I have not based this draft on elaborate calculations about the timing of the election. Whether it comes in June or October 1978, or Spring 1979, does not seem to me to make very much difference to the arguments put forward here. Presumably, however, we agree that the main reason for an early election, whatever the pretext, would be Labour's desire to take advantage of a drift in the opinion polls before the economy starts to hiccup too violently later in 1978. If this is so, then for the time being we should add to our theme the line that Labour may well be contemplating a quick dash for the polls before the rate of price increases picks up again. The more this is said now, the more difficult it will be for Labour to fight this sort of campaign. We must narrow their options.

THEMES

4. Negative

(a) Labour's record is appalling. What has happened is their own fault. They cannot blame us, or world factors. They've virtually doubled prices, more than doubled unemployment, doubled the tax burden and doubled public spending? Why? Because when they came in they gave us a double dose of Socialism.

(b) That would happen again if they won. A Labour Government with a majority would be a very different animal from one without a majority. A vote for Callaghan is a vote for Benn - is a vote for nationalisation, high taxation and big spending. Look at Labour's official party policy. ("Why look in the crystal ball", as Nai Bevan said, "when you can read the book".) It would mean bigger taxes, fewer jobs, higher prices and less freedom.

(c) We are still living in an invalid economy. Nothing fundamental has been done to put us back on the road to recovery. Compare Britain with competitor countries.

5. Positive

(a) We are approaching a watershed election. Who will shape Britain in the last quarter of the century? What sort of country do people want to live in? Conservatives want more freedom, more incentive, less bureaucracy, more control for

individuals over their own lives. We think people can achieve more than Governments, or nationalised industries or state boards. We believe that Britain can regain its standing in the world if the people of this country are given the chance to get on with the job. We're backing Britain, backing the British people. "We choose freedom".

(b) Labour have been forced by their bankers to do the negative things that were essential to save the country from bankruptcy. We want to do the positive things to get Britain moving again - cutting taxes, giving small businesses a square deal, encouraging ownership, giving people a stake in success, getting value for the taxpayer's money.

(c) Labour seem happy enough with their present economic performance - indeed they say we are all living through a miracle. They have settled for third or fourth best for Britain. We want the best for Britain. The oil has given us what may be our last chance - a breathing space. We would use it to release the energies of the people.

(d) What Conservatives say is in tune with what more and more people want and think. "Conservatives want the same Britain as you". The voters are Tory at heart. They do not want to live in Mr. Benn's Britain.

6. Subsidiary Themes

(a) We should stop saying that we can get on with the unions. This is too defensive. We must change the question from "Could Conservatives get on with the unions?" to "How can the Labour Party and union leaders go on justifying to their members policies and attitudes which have left their members so much worse off than their counterparts abroad?"

(b) More and more people are switching to the Conservative Party - Prentice, Thomas, Beloff, etc. We are winning the political argument across the whole front.

(c) We can now compare the so-called "wasted" 13 years of Conservative Government with the 13 years since then during which Labour have been in Government for nearly ten. Which period was better? Which party has the better record? (Remember the standard of living comparison - under Conservative Governments since the war, real take-home pay has gone up seven times faster than under Labour Governments). Socialist rule is linked with the decline of Britain, and the decline of certain areas of Britain - the places with the worst problems are those where Labour has been in control for the longest period (e.g. Glasgow).

(d) We are not extremist. What we are saying should be done is the Government policy in other countries which have done much better than us. If we are extremists then so are Helmut Schmidt and Jerry Brown.

(e) We might take the offensive over the "whose team is better?" argument. Without Jenkins, Crosland and even Wilson, just how distinguished does this Cabinet look? (Should we make any special effort to build up individual members of our team?)

(f) The intellectual bankruptcy of the Social Democrats means that the Left in the Labour Party are going to be able to win the policy battles and go on dragging their Party to the Left.

(g) Liberal voters do not have anything in common with Labour's leaders. We - and they - are opposed to collectivism; we both believe in the free society; we have much more in common than there is dividing us.

7. Battle of the themes

These are good arguments, which merit repetition, but we should recognise the difficulty of making very much stick in a relatively short time. Our simple message has to meet the Labour Party's election argument which is likely to be this - "We have pulled the country through difficult times, largely caused by our predecessors and world conditions. Now we have the chance of rebuilding Britain on the proceeds of North Sea oil. We want fair shares for all. We would use this wealth responsibly to reverse the de-industrialisation of Britain and to refurbish our Welfare State. The Tories would fritter it away in tax cuts for the rich and property speculation. What is more they would probably pick a fight

with the unions, they are a threat to the stability we have created." Our counter argument is probably this - "Labour have spent the last year/18 months/2 years cleaning up some of the mess they made in their first two and a half years. They have acted better because they have not been able - no majority, no credit - to go on acting worse. But with a majority, they would move smartly to the Left again - because there is nowhere else for them to go. So the choice at the next election is crucial: less freedom or more, steady impoverishment or the road back to recovery. We believe that Britain is doing badly and will go on doing badly unless the people are given the opportunity to make the most of their energies and talents. That is why we want big tax cuts for everyone. Our policies are the only way of getting things going again, of shaping a society of which we can all be proud. Our policies will work because they are based on commonsense. They are in tune with what people want. We want the same Britain as the people".

SUBJECTS

8. The themes we develop should be constantly repeated throughout the run-up to the election. But I suggested in my earlier paper that, in addition, we should run campaigns on four subjects. The best candidates are tax, housing, education and law and order.

9. In addition, we should give special attention to a number of other subjects - partly through trailed speeches - e.g. unemployment, prices, immigration, small businesses, defence, agriculture, the need for fresh thinking about the social services, etc. I have not mentioned pay, but it may be that following discussions on Adam Ridley's paper, we will have something relatively new to say. We should also continue to promote our strategy documents, "The Right Approach" and "The Right Approach to the Economy".

THE LEADER

10. To a considerable extent, the leader must provide the cutting edge for this strategy, above all through speeches which are carefully prepared and planned and "sold" to the media in advance (wherever possible!) A series of speeches on specific subjects is essential and will help to destroy the myth that we do not have any policy, without at the same time offering a regiment of hostages to fortune.

11. We need at least 3 or 4 major speeches on general themes -

(a) A speech early in the New Year, pointing out Labour's election strategy, setting out our own main arguments and indicating some of our main objectives in the election run-up. (This should presumably either just precede or just follow a speech to the 1922 Committee telling MPs how we intend to run the pre-election campaign).

(b) A speech setting out in terms the sort of society Conservatives want; it should show what conditions our general philosophy creates.

(c) A couple of across-the-board, all-purpose campaign speeches - one more negative, the other more positive.

12. Each of the subject campaigns will require a key-note speech from the Leader - that means speeches on tax, housing, education and law and order. A speech on agriculture is already planned for late January. In addition, I believe that we should aim for speeches - at the very least - on prices (what would we do about inflation?), unemployment (what would we do?), immigration and race relations and the need for a re-think about the social services.

13. The third annex considers drafting arrangements, and marketing arrangements are dealt with in the paragraphs later on the Party machine. But one point worth raising at this stage is that many of the most suitable occasions for major speeches are on Saturdays. Could we attract greater coverage of Saturday speeches by having more journalists out for the day? Could the Leader (if she is speaking in the morning), or the Party Chairman, or some other suitable host invite the Sunday lobby, the industrial correspondent or which ever group of journalists is appropriate, to lunch or drink or two or three of the Saturdays in question, so that we can at least generate press attendance and therefore, perhaps, coverage.

THE SHADOW CABINET

14. Clearly it is important that the colleagues should discuss, agree and understand any plan prepared for the pre-election period.
15. During the subject campaigns, the relevant Shadows will have vital roles, filling in some of the details after the Leader's speech, writing articles, giving interviews. The colleagues should also concentrate on the main themes in all their speeches. But there are two ways in which it would seem sensible to direct particular Shadows at particular areas or topics:
 - (a) We are bad at systematically running stories or ideas in the papers. Could not a group of the colleagues be asked to cultivate particular journalists? We could then periodically plant the same story with different writers.
 - (b) To some extent, it would be appropriate for different Shadows to concentrate on a particular theme or themes, e.g. -
 - (1) Jim Prior has a sufficiently strong reputation as "a friend of the unions" to say some more critical things about them now. He is the right person to take the lead in changing the union question (see 6(a)). Willie Whitelaw could also make this sort of speech.

Messrs. Prior and Whitelaw, with Norman St. John Stevas and Geoffrey Howe, might be the best people to play for the Liberal vote. (We might also prepare an anti-Liberal briefing kit which would be available for those constituencies that wanted it.)

(ii) Keith Joseph will continue to be the Labour Party's bogey man. There must be some advantage in him shifting his argument from the more painful consequences of a different approach to wealth creation, to the reasons for such a new approach and the benefits that would flow from it. In other words, speeches about creating new jobs and new prosperity for the social services, and about the way we are falling behind other countries, have more obvious political appeal than speeches about wastage and redundancy.

(iii) Ian Gilmour is making something of a corner out of attacking Social Democracy. He should be encouraged to keep up the attack.

(iv) We do not seem to have as good a Labour-basher as Tony Barber was in the 1960s. We should discuss this.

(v) This list is not exclusive, it only raises some possibilities. It does not cover, for example, the constitutional field where one or two of the colleagues might be encouraged to roam, particularly given the Labour commitment to abolition of the House of Lords.

(vi) In order to make more impact, the colleagues should be encouraged, and helped, to make more effort to get on radio and television.

MACHINE

16. The publicity and research departments will need to service the overall campaign as it develops. They will need to know what is going on and what is expected of them. Each subject campaign will be serviced to some extent by the Research Department Officer, and it might be sensible to attach a press officer to each one. That raises the question of how the six weeks or so of each campaign will be run. Presumably the Shadows concerned will want to set up a steering group in each case. We might look now, before we launch any initiatives, at whether there are any small things which could be done to improve performance. I suspect, for example, that the distribution of press releases could be improved.

17. Publications

(a) The Campaign Guide Supplement should come out after Easter. A series of leaflets (on housing, education, taxation, and law and order) are to be published shortly. Attempts to produce a short version of "The Right Approach to the Economy" have not met with great success, partly because of the very nature of the document. But we do need a short pamphlet (about 2000 words) summarising our criticisms of Labour policy, and setting out our own. I have done a first draft ("We Choose Freedom") and will aim to get something agreed and published in January/February. A Capital Tax Green Paper is planned for January, and another version of "Words for Eating" for February.

(b) We aim to get work on "The Right Approach to Social Policy" off the ground in the New Year. The aim should be to have this ready for publication in the summer, if there is no June election but an autumn election looks likely, or at the Party Conference, if there is no autumn election.

(c) The Leader's main strategy and subject speeches should be produced rapidly in leaflet or pamphlet form. We should also relate our normal information publications - e.g. Briefing Notes and Politics Today - to the subject campaigns.

(d) We should produce a leaflet and/or pamphlet on Labour's Programme for Britain 1976. The Research Department Political Section are keen to try to draft a spoof Labour Manifesto, giving on the left side of the page what the manifesto will probably say, and on the right what this actually means (e.g. left - "We will consider the flow of investment to British industry in the light of ^{the} recommendations of the Wilson Committee": right - "We will nationalise the banks and insurance companies"). This might not work, but we can see how it goes. It would certainly draw attention to the wool-pulling nature of much of Labour's Manifesto. Perhaps both these documents should be produced with the help of a team of MPs specially set up to make a fuss about the Labour Programme in the House of Commons; the candidates for such a team are pretty obvious (e.g. Messrs. Gow, Tebbit, Adley, etc.).

(e) It might be useful to get the main four or five Labour/Liberal defectors to contribute to a CPC pamphlet giving their reasons for leaving their original party.

18. Broadcasting

(a) We have an allocation of five PPBs for the year. Presumably we will want to concentrate four of them before mid-summer, leaving one for August/early September in case of an October election or for the late autumn if there is no election. The PPB content is an essential part of our strategy. We could use two out of the four as part of the subject campaigns, and the other two for dealing with themes. Possible candidates for theme broadcasts are -

(i) "switchers" - the well-known and the less well-known with, say, Reg Prentice attacking the Labour programme (using "switchers" to attack the Labour programme is probably more effective than using Front-Bench Spokesmen); (ii) a snappy outline of our economic argument to coincide with publication of our popular pamphlet - the programme could actually advertise the pamphlet; and (iii) a programme showing how in tune ^{with} Conservative policy is/what people think and want; we could create a news event by getting ORC to ask five or six questions on subjects like tax and law and order, and build the programme around the fact that people agree with Conservative policy.

(b) Can we make all these PPBs well? Could we easily make five elections PPBs? And are we in a position to produce posters or slogans or advertisements? It must be at least worth considering whether we should appoint an advertising agency to look after, among everything else, our television broadcasts. The main reason why the broadcasts made by political parties abroad are so much better than ours is that they are made by advertising agencies.

(c) For use in briefing for radio and television interviews, we should prepare the sort of cards for Shadows that we had for the October 1974 Election. We prepared a series of cards on the main issues which set out the principal facts, arguments and phrases. This was found helpful as a way of co-ordinating argument and of prompting memories.

19. Events

(a) We should organise a high-powered seminar on the use of North Sea oil revenues. We must not let Labour make all the running on this. If this seminar went well, and the election was delayed, we could organise further seminars.

(b) We need to relate some events to the subject campaigns - for example, during the education campaign, the Leader could have a publicised working dinner with head teachers.

(c) Some subjects could be "covered" by similar social gatherings. Why not organise now 3 dinners/receptions/discussions - one with sportsmen and women, one with people from the theatre, one with people from voluntary services.

20. ORGANISING A CAMPAIGN

The paragraphs above probably do no more than scratch the surface. Yet any sort of programme - even one smaller than this, let alone larger - is going to take a lot of organising. We should see this as a campaign, and have a group or an individual responsible for running it as such.

21. The Annexes are self-explanatory. The limited aim in the first is to suggest ways in which the introduction of some of the ideas in this paper could be timed.

CHRIS PATTEN

CFP/RME

21.12.77