

POLICY-MAKING, 1975

[Paper by Sir Keith Joseph]

1. Both the 1945 and the 1965 policy-making operations were preludes to electoral success. But they were quite different in character. The former was impressionistic and highly selective: the latter detailed and more comprehensive.
2. There is now, as there was on both previous occasions, a strong demand for a reformulation of policy. The economic and social issues have become both more controversial and more difficult: the frontiers of freedom have been forced back, and we need now to counter-attack rationally and articulately. If we are to do this we need to have agreed among ourselves an acceptable philosophy within which all our policies can be developed.
3. We can expect to take office in difficult times. We shall not necessarily be expected to spell out answers in a massive manifesto on every problem. What we shall be expected to have is a clear and understandable set of attitudes - practical and humane - and specific policies on some key issues. Of course the more subjects on which we have studies, the better, but let us take first things first.
4. The proposal therefore that Angus Maude and I put to colleagues for discussion falls between the 1945 and the 1965 examples. It is that we should set ourselves two over-riding tasks:

First, to discuss and agree a coherent approach to policies - a framework of understanding and purpose within which we can hope to tackle problems new and old.

Secondly, to select a small number of subjects or clusters of subjects on which we must have clear policy if we are to win the election and govern effectively.
5. If colleagues agree, Angus and I will circulate a draft paper on an approach to policies for discussion at the 11th April meeting.
6. The draft list of subjects for study is attached. Perhaps colleagues will consider this for early discussion.
7. When we have chosen the subjects then we shall need to agree working groups to study them mainly based on MPs with invited volunteer experts from outside - under the chairmanship of the relevant Party spokesmen. Each working group will no doubt spawn sub-groups to tackle particular aspects of the subject.

8. It is important that the working groups should preserve security though it will be known that we are preparing policy on a number of subjects. There may, however, be particular aspects of policy on which we shall wish to work in full public view, inviting evidence from those interested. This may be particularly suitable on subjects where we need to be seen to be concerned and where the Government is not winning much credit and where departmental boundaries are concerned. Perhaps we can try to identify one or two such subjects when we agree the list.
9. It will of course be open to Party Committees to study unlisted subjects as they think fit and to make proposals for inclusion in policy.
10. We shall need to decide the time-scale to which we are working. Are we to assume that we have about four years till the next election? On this assumption, ~~should we work~~ towards a mid-term manifesto for the 1976 Party Conference or should we adopt a different assumption and a different schedule? For any emergency manifesto during the next few months we shall have to improvise, relying upon work in progress.
11. With the present severe financial constraints CRD will have far less staff than would be ideal. It will have to give priority to the day-to-day needs of Party Committees in connection with business of the House. Beyond this it will only be able to serve the selected working groups and their sub-groups.
12. Each working group will need a quota of outside volunteer experts. While it will be the responsibility of the chairmen to recruit them, we will try to help from known allies in universities, industry and the professions. We shall hope to have a small fund for travelling expenses and for, very rarely, indispensable desk-research that has to be paid for.
13. It is proposed that at the centre of the policy-making mechanism should be an Economic and Social Strategy Committee working direct to Margaret Thatcher and Willie Whitelaw, chaired by myself with Geoffrey Howe as alternate chairman. This group will keep contact with the other working groups and will give guidance where necessary.
14. Margaret Thatcher will wish to set up a system for considering the reports of working groups and for assembling those that are accepted into an overall policy.

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POLICY SUBJECTS

1. Economic and Social Strategy Committee: inflation, taxation, public spending, rates, social service, benefits, poverty.
2. Foreign Affairs/Defence/Europe cluster: colleagues concerned will know whether they wish to consider a policy group in the light of the increasing threat to us and the alliance.
3. Labour cluster of subjects: employment, unemployment, redeployment, redundancy, training and retraining, wage bargaining, overmanning, preparation for work, sit-ins, trade union law, secret ballot for union elections, benefits for strikers' families, tax rebates.
4. Government and private industry: government and nationalised industry: monopoly and mergers; small businesses; innovation; conditional aid; NEB; regional policy; company law.
5. Home Office cluster: including police, immigration, indecent display, film licensing, broadcasting.
6. Education: including quality, school-leaving age, preparation for work, possible voucher experiment, the arts, universities.
7. Social services: including urban problems, pensions, children, poverty, abuse, possible contingency plan for breakdown of NMS.
8. Housing and land
9. Energy policy
10. Transport and roads
11. Local government organisation coupled with finance in association with (I).
12. *Legal Committee*
Consideration of the need for a Bill of Rights.

No reference has been made to devolution (because work is in hand), Northern Ireland, agriculture or such subjects as the disabled because it is assumed that a case will be made for them if one is necessary and that otherwise work will be done within Party Committees.