

Insight on Labour

Briefing by Conservative Research Department

This is the second edition of quotations by Labour Party politicians. It is confined to two subjects only. First, the Falklands Crisis, showing the pacifist, pro-Argentinian and defeatist role played by the influential individuals within the Labour party (but contrasted with examples of more responsible statements by Mr. Healey, the Shadow Foreign Secretary). Secondly, "Labour's Programme 1982", which was published in June and debated at the Labour Party Conference at Blackpool.

This document should be read in conjunction with the first "Insight on Labour", circulated at the end of June; the Conservative Research Department Paper "Opposition Economic Policies" (19th July), and the Politics Today on "Labour's Programme 1982".

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INSIGHT ON LABOUR

1. THE FALKLANDS CRISIS

a) QUOTES FROM COMMONS DEBATES

Mr. Denis Healey:

"Others say, as we said in 1938, that the Falkland Islands is a far-away country that is indefensible and that we must accept the geographical and strategic realities. However, I hope that the whole House supports the right of the Falkland Islanders to self-determination and to live in peace under a Government of their own choosing, as they have been able to do for the past 150 years". (Hansard, 7th April 1982 col. 965)

"If we turn our backs on that responsibility the next thing we shall see is an invasion of Belize by the brutal dictatorship in Guatemala, a possible invasion of Nicaragua by her neighbours, an invasion of Grenada or Cuba by their neighbours, and, perhaps, the invasion of Guyana by Venezuela. Indeed, there could be threats to British overseas colonies such as Gibraltar and Hong Kong". (ibid.)

"Perhaps the most dangerous scenario of all would be that of an all-out assault on the Falkland Islands at a time when we were dangerously weak in air power and when the Argentine forces would have had a further two or three weeks to build up their strength and their stores on the island, and would certainly outnumber the forces that we could mount against them. For that type of sea-borne attack a superiority of 3:1 or 5:1 is normally reckoned to be required. (ibid. col. 966)

"I tell the Prime Minister that the hard facts of military reality cannot be swept away by flabby rhetoric or misquotations from Queen Elizabeth 1". (ibid. col. 967)

"Worst of all, an opposed landing would inflict intolerable casualties on the Falkland Islanders" (ibid.)

Mr. Tony Benn:

"If the islanders are first blockaded and then bombarded and then a landing is made, there may be no islanders to consult" (Hansard, 7th April 1982, col. 992)

"To commit Service men in the Falkland Islands at this time of the year - it is winter there - in territory they do not know, against a fleet that is armed with British weapons is to put it to a risk to which it should not be put". (ibid.)

"I tell the Prime Minister that this is an ill-thought-out enterprise and will will not achieve the purposes to which it is put". (ibid. col. 993)

"The Prime Minister must have an astonishing view of her power if she thinks that she can bring 1,800 hostages out of the Falkland Islands with the British Fleet, operating 8,000 miles from home, when Carter had the humiliation of seeing the inauguration of his successor before the Ayatollah Khomeini would release the hostages I shall not give way because I am talking common sense". (ibid. col. 994)

Mr. Tony Benn:

"Now is the time for the Prime Minister to say that we would be prepared to cede sovereignty to a condominium or to the United Nations. Sovereignty is not what we want, it is the welfare of the people". (Hansard, 7th April 1982, col. 994)

"The attempt will fail. What would win support and help the Falkland Islanders would be a decision not to send the task force". (ibid. col. 995)

Mr. Frank Hooley, Labour MP for Sheffield, Heeley:

"If we pursued a policy of war and became involved in hostilities - even assuming that we sank the Argentine ships and dominated the islands by force - I believe a vast coalition in the world would be against us". (Hansard, 7th April 1982, col. 1020)

"The dispatch of a major naval armada with all the unforeseeable consequences that arise from it will not promote the interests of the Falkland Islanders, nor will it promote the interests of this country". (ibid.)

Mr. Tam Dalyell, Labour MP for West Lothian:

"I take it on my responsibility - every hon. Member is responsible for his statements - to say that some Chiefs of Staff advised that the task force was not a feasible operation. The House is entitled to know what the Chiefs of Staff said to the Government on this issue. Some of us believe that the Fleet should turn round and come back to Portsmouth and Rosyth as soon as possible". (Hansard, 7th April 1982, col. 1037)

Mr. Alexander W. Lyon, Labour MP for York:

"The idea that we should shed blood over this issue tends to transcend the principles inherent in it I have thought for years that for us to assert that the issues of a number of islands, the remainder of our colonies around the world, are to be determined simply by the will of the inhabitants of those islands is a wholly unrealistic principle". (Hansard, 7th April 1982, col. 1179)

" ... I do not believe that we can reoccupy the islands and drive the Argentines back to Argentina". (ibid. col. 1181)

Mr. Tam Dalyell:

" was any fleet sent out with quite such purposes since Agamemnon set out to rescue Helen of Troy?" (Hansard, 14th April 1982, col. 1186)

"Are we not antagonising the entire Hispanic world?" (Hansard, 19th April 1982, col. 25)

Mr. Denis Healey:

"To withdraw the task force now, as some have asked as part of an unconditional ceasefire, would nullify all the efforts of the Secretary-General to get the withdrawal of Argentine troops, as required under mandatory resolution 502, and hand the Falklands to General Galtieri on a platter. It would encourage other Governments to use force to create a fait accompli.

"The reality of this danger was shown by yesterday's report that Venezuelan troops had entered the Essequibo region of Guyana. The House would be unwise to ignore the consequences of allowing the Argentine Government to get away with the consequences of their aggression with impunity". (Hansard, 13th May 1982, col. 959)

Mr. Tam Dalyell:

"The Argentines have a very tough marine corps of at least 6,000 officers and men who are highly regarded by professional marines in this country. The conscripts will fight as if they are fighting a holy war. There will be massive casualties; that fact should be faced". (Hansard, 13th May 1982, col. 983-4)

Mr. Michael Meacher, Labour MP for Oldham West:

".... it is clear that if we won the battle it would only be with outrage to world opinion, which has hitherto largely supported us.... When the carnage inexorably mounted, as it would, it would not be without strong opposition from the majority". (Hansard, 13th May 1982, col. 1004)

Mr. Tony Benn:

".... we must assume that an invasion is imminent A tragedy is unfolding, the magnitude of which is not apparent from the speeches that have been made". (Hansard, 20th May 1982, col. 494)

"Those of us who opposed the sending of the task force from the outset, as my hon. Friends and I did, have found all our warnings confirmed". (ibid. col. 497)

Mr. Andrew Faulds, Labour MP for Warley East:

"I intend to make an unpopular speech I think that I am right in my interpretation of the lunacy of what the Government are presently embarked on". (Hansard, 20th May 1982, col. 510)

"We have given foolish endorsement to the islanders' determination to insist on their British ties. We cannot, and we must not, be held to ransom by the self-determination argument". (ibid. col 512)

"We have come to a near unbelievable and tragic situation in a mad wave of patriotic misjudgement, fostered by the appalling irresponsibility of the popular press. I refer to the jingoistic jibberish of sappy, hysterical scribblers such as Jean Rook and the mystic nonsense of the recent article in 'The Times' by that silly sage from South Down (Mr. Enoch Powell) ..." (ibid. col. 513)

"What psychological maladjustment lies behind the Prime Minister's shrill toughness? I ask in all seriousness, how many young men must die in this unnecessary war to prove her mettle and to provide justification for the dispatch of the task force? It is a tragic misjudgement which the leaders of my party misguidedly endorse". (ibid.)

Mr. Stuart Holland, Labour MP for Lambeth Vauxhall:

"With modern missile technology an invasion now will not be in the style of the raid on Entebbe not least because we lack the element of surprise. It may be a minor Gallipoli". (Hansard, 20th May 1982, col. 533)

Mr. Tam Dalyell:

"An hon. Member's duty is to warn, to warn of loss of lives and - I take no joy whatsoever in saying this - to warn of a possible defeat of the first magnitude. This is not a matter of hindsight, because on 4th April I said to West Lothian CLP that sending the expedition was the most unwise decision since the Duke of Buckingham left for La Rochelle in 1627". (Hansard, 20th May 1982, col. 533)

"We may be faced with, God help us, something of the order of the 1905 Russo-Japanese war in which we are in the role of the Russians. Because we are in entrenched positions, we could be faced with Dieppe 1942 or worse ..." (ibid.)

Mr. Denis Healey:

"We recognise that a change in the balance between military and diplomatic action is required because of the failure of negotiation in the latest phase, but a balance must still be maintained". (Hansard, 20th May 1982, col. 551)

b) QUOTES FROM OTHER SOURCES INCLUDING PRESS REPORTS ON SPEECHES

Mr. Tony Benn:

"There is clearly an inherent right to take up arms against tyranny or dictatorship, to establish or uphold democracy, on exactly the same basis, and for the same reasons, that the nation will respond to a call to arms to defeat a foreign invasion, or repel those who have successfully occupied a part of our territory" (Marx Memorial Lecture, London, 16th March 1982, printed in Marxism Today May 1982)

Mr. Tam Dalyell:

"It is becoming a war of Mrs Thatcher's face. It is about preserving the reputation, the pride and the careers of politicians far more than the defence of the real interests of the Falkland Islanders". (The Times, 14th April 1982)

"The purpose of our meeting is to show what Margaret Thatcher and our ambassador in Washington are saying about a united country and a united House of Commons is just not so It is a deeply divided country". (BBC Radio 4, quoted Guardian, 14th April 1982, referring to a meeting called by the Labour critics of the decision to send the Task Force)

Mr. Kevin Ramage, Chair(sic) of the Labour Party Young Socialists:

"If the threat of war is to be averted, the only forces that can do that are the British Argentine working classes by overthrowing their own regimes". (Labour Weekly, 16th April 1982)

Mr. Tony Benn:

"Men and Women of good will from all political Parties and I hope including senior religious leaders should combine to stop the war machine the time to mobilize against this is now before the first shots are fired". (Speech at Bristol, quoted Morning Star, 23rd April 1982)

Mr. Tony Benn:

"We are living with a muzzled press Yet I know from hundreds of letters that there is a clear majority who oppose the war We shall build a campaign. There will be growing pressure for a ceasefire. The Government will have to stop the war". (Speech at Eastbourne, quoted The Times, 26th April 1982)

"The use of force will isolate Britain more and more". (Morning Star, 26th April 1982)

Dame Judith Hart:

She referred to the Task Force as "Thatcher's bloody little Armada". (The Sun, 26th April 1982)

Mr. Ken Livingstone and Mr. Ted Knight:

'South Georgia, like the Malvinas, is part of the colonial spoils amassed by British imperialism in the last century. Britain has no justifiable claim to sovereignty there, any more than it has a justifiable claim to the Malvinas. Regardless of the political hue of the Argentine regime, the only consistent position the Labour Party can take is to demand that the Task Force turns back, Britain recognises Argentine sovereignty and negotiates an acceptable settlement for the islanders In particular, the call which has been raised for the United Nations to arbitrate in the dispute is irrelevant. If there was a genuine dispute over sovereignty there might be something to arbitrate over. But there is not. The Malvinas are a colony, over which Britain has no right to sovereignty (Joint editorial statement, Labour Herald, 30th April 1982)

Mr. Tam Dalyell:

"My local Labour Party straight away gave me a free hand to oppose hook, line and sinker the idea of sending the task force. It should never have started out, and I said that it should have stayed in Portsmouth harbour Sovereignty should be transferred to the Argentine, but I would like to see certain rights safeguarded for the islanders Those who want to emigrate to Scotland or New Zealand or wherever should be able to do so, with compensation". (Morning Star, 30th April 1982)

Dame Judith Hart:

"Mrs Thatcher is responsible for taking Britain into real war, with all its dangers of escalation - tactical nuclear weapons, possible Fascist Chilean and Communist Cuban and Russian involvement and what a crazy prospect it is". (Daily Telegraph, 3rd May 1982)

"We are planning to hold a rally each weekend in London until the war is over". (Sunday Telegraph, 9th May 1982)

Mr. Tony Benn:

"We demand an immediate and unconditional ceasefire before more lives are lost - and the transfer of sovereignty of the Falklands at once to the United Nations. We represent a majority of people in this country who do not want to see any more killing". (The Sun, 10th May 1982)

Mr. Tam Dalyell:

"The Malvinas, for such it is, belongs to a Latin American state 400 miles away and not to a European state 8,000 miles away". (Morning Star, 10th May 1982)

Mr. Tony Benn:

"A real assault on the islands or the bombing of the mainland or the sinking of a big ship - at that moment Britian's isolation would be complete. There is a possibility this could escalate into a nuclear conflict". (Daily Mail, 12th May 1982)

Mr. Ken Livingstone and Mr. Ted Knight:

"As a party of big business, the Tories nevertheless rely on the votes of the petty capitalists and the middle classes to keep them in power. Many of these are happy to send workers to their deaths in order to satisfy their wish to roll back the clock to the days when Britain was a great power We have said that the only credible claim to the Malvinas is that of Argentina." (Statement by the Editors, Labour Herald, 21st May 1982)

Mr. Reg Race, Labour MP for Wood Green:

"The truth is that the task force should never have been sent. The presence of the Fleet challenges the military men who run Argent to respond in kind; it challanges their military honour; it makes what was once negotiable, unnegotiable. We have been used to assuming that the task force gives us strength in negotiations. It does nothing of the kind. Its presence has undermined negotiations at every stage". (Labour Herald, 21st May 1982)

Mr. Tony Benn:

"We are already seeing democracy being threatened in Britain by Government control of the media and by the censorship of news" (Daily Mail, 24th May 1982)

Dr. Gavin Strang, Labour MP for Edinburgh East:

"I believe the decision to invade the Falklands was politically and militarily wrong. I wish to be free to argue for the earliest possible end to this unjustified sacrifice of young British and Argentine lives". (On his resignation as Labour Agricultural spokesman; Daily Mail, 25th May 1982)

Mr. Tam Dalyell:

"You've sacked the wrong man - you should have sacked your Shadow Defence Secretary, John Silkin, instead!" (After his dismissal as a Labour front bench spokesman; Daily Mail, 25th May 1982)

Mr. Andrew Faulds:

"It is a very minor thing to lose a marginal job in a shadow Ministry when one happens to be right on the major issue of the day". (After his dismissal as Labour front bench spokesman; Daily Mail, 25th May 1982)

Mr. Ken Livingstone and Mr. Ted Knight:

"Michael Foot has now swallowed his last qualms about abject repetition of Thatcher's jingoistic cretinism". (Joint editorial, Labour Herald, 27th May 1982)

Labour Herald Comment:

"Her (Britain's) determination to impose unconditional surrender on the Argentine people is intended as a signal to all anti-colonial struggles that imperialism is prepared to use maximum force to re-establish exploitation and oppression. That is the way the Labour Herald has from the beginning rejected the Tory argument of sovereignty over the islands and has declared its stand firmly on the side of the Argentine people in their rightful claim to the Malvinas". (Labour Herald, 4th June 1982)

Mr. Tony Benn:

"We have seen the media become the mouthpiece of the military, making money out of bloodshed, drowning out the voices of peace and threatening democracy itself". (Morning Star, 7th June 1982)

2. LABOUR'S PROGRAMME 1982

The following are a selection of the Programme's proposals

Basic Philosophy

"We believe it is wrong that private individuals should, through ownership of the means of production, reap the benefits of the collective effort of others and exercise unaccountable power over the lives of ordinary people. Our social and economic objectives can be achieved only through an expansion of common ownership substantial enough to give the community decisive power over the commanding heights of the economy."

General economic

"The next Labour government will ... introduce a substantial reflationary programme ... financed by public sector borrowing."

"We must be careful to prevent the pound falling too far."

"Labour rejects the idea that reducing inflation is a precondition for ... economic growth and high employment."

"Labour will introduce a flexible but comprehensive system of price controls ... We have ... made clear our opposition to any policies of wage restraint."

"The next Labour government will introduce an annual tax on personal wealth ... No exemption is proposed in respect of owner-occupied houses ... The discounted value of future pension rights would be assessable for wealth tax but only above a high exemption limit which would remove from such assessment the entire pension rights of the great majority of the working population".

Nationalisation

"The next Labour government will provide a statutory right and mechanism for workers in private firms - subject to government consent - to convert their enterprise into a workers' co-operative by acquiring the assets of the firm, and provide assistance for this purpose".

"To plan effectively we shall need public ownership in electronics; pharmaceutical and health equipment; the construction industry and building materials; the private road haulage industry; major ports, forestry and timber. We are committed to taking a majority stake in all existing and future North Sea Oil fields".

"GEC which occupies a pivotal position in the British electronics and electrical engineering industries, will form an integral part of our public ownership programme".

"We will ... return all industrial assets sold off by the Tories into public ownership at the earliest opportunity; we will restore the public monopoly in the field of post and telecommunication".

"Among the proposals being considered are ... a public stake in the banking system to be established by taking one or more major clearing banks into public ownership .. (and) .. powers to acquire other financial institutions ...".

Trade Union Powers

"Labour will create legal rights for unions to organise effective industrial action without being subject to legal challenge".

Agriculture

"The demand for the public ownership of agricultural land is, and always has been, an integral part of the Labour Party's philosophy .. Our priority is to bring tenanted land into public ownership...".

Health

"(We shall remove) all pay beds within the first two years of the next Labour Government. We shall also take into the NHS those parts of the profit-making private sector which can be used to meet local health needs and reduce waiting lists ... (we shall) prohibit further development of new private hospitals".

Education

"A Labour government will immediately introduce a ... bill to repeal the Tories' Education Act 1979 and forbid LEA's to continue secondary school selection on the basis of attainment".

"(The Labour aim is) ... to abolish all private schooling - with the exception of special schools for the handicapped - within a period of not more than ten years".

"We will introduce an Education Bill which would ... end the Assisted Places Scheme and terminate the fee remission for all pupils in assisted places at the end of the academic year in which the repealing legislation is introduced".

Local Government

"...(Local authorities') decisions should not be judged simply on the narrow consideration of the immediate financial repercussions on ratepayers".

"Labour ... will significantly extend the powers of local government to engage in industrial and commercial activities ... to cut through the present legal restrictions on local authorities that wish to set up their own companies and use commercial initiatives. We shall also act to repeal the restrictions on trading undertakings and DLOs, and we shall make new powers available to allow local authorities to supply goods and services to other organisations".

Housing and Construction

"We will relieve public landlords of any statutory obligation to sell".

"We will actively encourage the transfer of all property owned by absentee private landlords into the public rented or owner occupied sectors ... Local authorities ... should therefore take the lead in acquiring privately rented property".

"(Labour propose) the establishment of a National Construction Corporation based on the acquisition of the one or more major contractors the extension of public ownership into such sectors as glass, plaster, cement, bricks, tiles ... and other building materials industries ... Outright nationalisation of mineral rights .."

The Police

"We will create elected police authorities with statutory responsibility for the determination of police policy. They, not the Chief Constable, will be given responsibility for the appointment, promotion and dismissal of senior police officers".

"The London Special Patrol Group and local SPGs should be disbanded ... (anti-riot) equipment has been shown to be indiscriminate, dangerous and ineffective in operational terms".

Immigration

"The repeal of the 1971 Immigration Act and the 1981 British Nationality Act will be among the highest priorities for the next Labour Government".

House of Lords

"It is ... our intention to abolish the House of Lords in the lifetime of the next Parliament".

Northern Ireland

"At the heart of our programme ... is a long and deeply held belief in the Labour Party that Ireland should, by peaceful means, and on the basis of consent, be united".

Defence

"Britain should adopt a non-nuclear defence strategy and by becoming the first nuclear weapons state to renounce unilaterally such weapons, breath new life into world-wide disarmament negotiations ... We will close down all nuclear bases, British or American, on British soil or in British waters".

"We shall discuss with the TUC the introduction of full trade union and negotiating rights for all servicemen and women".

Europe

"The Labour Party and the labour movement in general, is now firmly committed to Britain's withdrawal from the European Economic Community"

South Africa

"The next Labour Government will as a priority work towards the imposition of comprehensive and mandatory United Nations sanctions against South Africa".

"(The Labour Party) will therefore give direct financial and military aid to the liberation movements".