

# Briefing Note

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## THE QUEEN'S SPEECH

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The legislative programme for the Fourth Session of this Parliament shows clearly that the Government's resolve and determination to restore prosperity and stability to this country are undiminished.

Themes of the Speech. The dominant themes of the Queen's Speech on 3rd November were continuity and consolidation. On the economic front, public spending will continue to be restrained; and fresh opportunities will be found to give individual members of the community a greater stake in the wealth and property of the country. Elsewhere in the domestic sphere, the Government will continue with its work of reshaping our system of criminal justice which it began in the last parliamentary session with its major Criminal Justice Act. More will be done to cut back bureaucracy: the water industry, which has been much criticised, will be overhauled, and the preservation of some important parts of our national heritage will pass from Government to expert hands. In foreign affairs, the Government will continue, in the same spirit that it has demonstrated hitherto, to honour our commitments throughout the world and defend far-flung British territories.

The Economy. A continuing fall in the rate of inflation is a prerequisite for the achievement of a sustainable growth in output and a reduction in the numbers out of work. The Government will therefore maintain the monetary and fiscal policies necessary to achieve these ends.

Unemployment. The wide range of special measures to help the unemployed (costing a billion pounds a year) will be maintained. Next year they will be supplemented when the carefully-prepared new Youth Training Scheme comes into being. Thereafter, every young school-leaver without a job will have an opportunity to gain a full year's real vocational training. No Government has ever before given such a guarantee to the unemployed youngsters of this country.

Industry. The legislation dealing with British Telecom will turn it into a public limited company, 51 per cent of whose shares will be available for sale to private investors, though probably not before the next general election. Shipbuilding is now marked out for similar treatment; it too will become able to attract private capital. The principle of privatisation will also be applied to the generation of electricity, for the statutory provisions which stand in the way of private undertakings in this field will be abolished. As regards broadcasting by means of cable systems, proposals are now being drawn up in the light of the recently published Hunt Report.

Housing. Some 50,000 more secure council tenants in England and Wales, along with 80,000 Housing Association tenants, will become potential homeowners through the extension of the 'right to buy' legislation to cover those whose landlords do not own the freehold of their dwellings. The construction industry will also benefit from a new, simplified system of building control.

Water Authorities. The National Water Council has outlived its usefulness, and will be abolished. The regional water authorities will all

have fewer members, but local authorities will for the first time be able to nominate their own candidates for membership.

Police and the Community. An even closer relationship between the police and the community they serve will be fostered by the provisions of the Government's Police and Criminal Evidence Bill. It will lay a statutory obligation on the police in each police area to establish arrangements through which the views of the community can be obtained, and its support more effectively harnessed than ever before. The Bill will also confer fresh powers on the police to stop and search, as well as introducing a new complaints procedure under which really serious complaints against the police will be investigated under the supervision of an independent assessor.

Data Protection. Under the Government's forthcoming Data Protection Bill, unauthorised use of personal information stored on computers will become a criminal offence, bringing this country into line with its European partners. A wholly independent Registrar will oversee the new arrangements, which will confer on all individuals a right to inspect data held about them.

Transport. Much tighter control is to be placed on the transport authorities in London and the metropolitan counties. They will be required to submit three-year plans, showing in details how the need for subsidy arises. Under this system a maximum level of subsidy will be laid down.

Health and Social Services. There will be legislation to make it easier to provide care and treatment at home rather than in hospitals and institutions.

European Community. British interests will be firmly safeguarded, and a serious, fresh attempt will be made to reach a long-term solution to the community's deep-seated budget problem.

Falkland Islands. The Government has pledged itself to encourage the development of the Islands, whose security will be protected by a defence force sufficient to deter any future threat.

Completing the Task. In her speech on the Address on 3rd November, the Prime Minister said:

"By the end of this session, the Government will have completed nearly all of the programme which it placed before the British people three and a half years ago; but there will still be plenty of work to do before this Parliament runs its full term.

"The programme contained in this Gracious Speech will continue on the consistent course which the Government has followed since 1979:

- The restoration of honest money and sound finance
- The control of public borrowing, lower interest rates and inflation
- A realistic link between earnings and output
- The creation of conditions in which Britain will become competitive again
- The introduction of private capital into the public sector
- Freer and fairer world trade
- Replacing monopoly by competition
- The extension of home ownership
- An unrelenting war on crime
- A determination to strengthen our defences and to stand up for British interests throughout the world."