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Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey Howe QC MP
Chancellor of the Exchequer
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Great George Street
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Dear Sir Geoffrey

I am responding on Norman's behalf to your letter of 8 February requesting information for consideration in drawing up the Manifesto. I attach a variety of items below, which we have outlined as succinctly as possible. I am sorry that this letter is a day late.

1 Green Paper - 'Democracy in Trade Unions'

Legislation to implement the changes outlined in our Green Paper, which are designed to ensure that the activities of a trade union truly represent the interests of its ordinary members.

- a) Periodic, fair and secret ballots of union members for the election of governing bodies of trade unions.
- b) Enforcing the voluntary basis for trade union political donations by a return to 'contracting in' to the political levy.
- c) Periodic, fair and secret ballots of union members to approve the objectives of the Union's political fund.
- d) Removal of legal immunity from strikes called without prior approval through a fair and secret ballot of those concerned.

2 Further re-definition of immunity for strike action

Legislation to reduce further the impact of irresponsible strikes on competitiveness, output and jobs by:

- a) Considering the removal of legal immunity from strikes which have been called in breach of agreed procedural agreements.
- b) In particular, considering the removal of legal immunity from strikes which have been called in breach of a 'no strike agreement' with the employer.

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3 Wages Councils

Renunciation of the ILO Treaty covering Wages Councils at the earliest possible date in 1985 in order to allow the repeal of all Wages Councils which fall under DE authority, so that jobs can be protected in the areas covered and to allow more unemployed people to be priced back into jobs in those fields.

4 Employee Involvement

To pursue greater measures of employee involvement by further encouraging good management practices, profit-sharing and employee share ownership schemes, and other means of improving the identification of the employee with the success of his firm or employer. We shall resist rigid measures which the European Commission may seek to impose on employee/employer relations, such as outlined in the 5th Directive and Vredeling Directive, which bear little relevance to industrial relations practice in this country.

5 Training

We shall continue to improve our training measures, such as we are pursuing through the Youth Training Scheme, reform of Industrial Training Boards and our Technical Education Initiative, to ensure that both the young and those in mid-career have ample opportunity to equip themselves to meet the growing demands for trained personnel. We shall continue to provide for the special training and employment needs of the disabled. We shall continue to ensure taxpayers' money is well used, in particular by ensuring that skill shortages are swiftly identified and rapidly satisfied regardless of outdated practices and vested interests.

6 Special Employment Measures

While continuing high levels of unemployment exist, to ensure that the Government continues to offer a variety of special employment schemes which will assist those groups most harshly hit by unemployment, such as the long term unemployed and the disabled, and also to encourage greater flexibility in the job market by promoting job splitting, early retirement and other schemes.

You asked about priorities. Clearly points 1 and 2 are of a high order of priority, with points 3 and 4 coming not far behind. Points 5 and 6 are less important for inclusion as they tend to refer to the continuation of existing measures in these areas, although they clearly have a beneficial cosmetic effect on improving the tone of the manifesto.

Yours ever,

Michael.

MICHAEL DOBBS
Special Adviser to the
Secretary of State

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