

Manifesto

PERSONAL AND  
CONFIDENTIAL

9th March 1983

Many thanks for your letter of 2nd March.

So far as I am concerned I am quite content that the response to enquiries about Policy Groups, the Manifesto, etc., should be along the lines suggested in your Note.

IAN GOW

The Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey Howe **HC** MP

cc. The Rt Hon Cecil Parkinson **MP**  
Ferdinand Mount Esq



Treasury Chambers, Parliament Street, SW1P 3AG  
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2 March 1983

Ian Gow Esq., MP.  
10 Downing Street  
LONDON  
SW1

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Ian Gow".

Thank you for your letter of February 28th. As Adam Ridley will by now have mentioned to you, there are perhaps one or two inviting flanks in the form of words you and Ferdy Mount have proposed using in response to queries about the Manifesto and Policy Groups. Is there really much advantage at this stage in, for example, our telling the world that the Chairman and I have been invited to coordinate Manifesto work, that colleagues have been asked to submit ideas, or in admitting at this stage that we even have a document in preparation - still less in tying our work to any (question-provoking) time-table? Any such information we volunteer can only stimulate outside interest further and offer more people and issues to latch onto! Equally important, there is an opportunity for us here to make it clearer that the nine policy groups are looking primarily at the policy agenda in their areas for the next five years, which, though relevant to a Manifesto, is a far broader issue. On top of that, we might take the opportunity of such inquiries to remind people how broad and rich a range of consultation is in train at all times, of which this is but one element. I wonder therefore whether the best thing might not be to draw on the points set out in the attached note when dealing with queries from outsiders. The position may not be tenable for ever, but with determination on our part it should last a good while.

I am reinforced in my instinctive preference for this approach by a feeling that any further information we reveal could be the starting point for yet more unwelcome public debate about the CPRS study, the FPG etc., none of which will help our cause generally at this juncture.

Copies of this letter, like yours, go to Cecil Parkinson and Ferdy Mount.

GEOFFREY HOWE

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Geoffrey Howe".

POINTS TO MAKE IN RESPONSE TO QUERIES ABOUT POLICY GROUPS, MANIFESTO PREPARATION, ETC.

1. Recent public discussion of these issues has been somewhat confused. One major misapprehension has been over the role of the nine policy groups set up at the PM's request by the Chairman and Chancellor last September (see Central Office Press Release of September 27th, 1982) which have to report at the end of March.

2. The policy groups were not set up specifically to work on a future Manifesto, but to:

"review selected areas of policy and identify programmes and measures for the second term of office of the present administration." [Press Release of September 27th]

Thus, while their proposals will clearly be of relevance to any Manifesto, the groups' main purpose is, as stated, simply to recommend an agenda for a future government in the areas they are studying.

3. This Government has from the start encouraged as wide as possible a range of activity in policy making. As well as launching extensive internal work on big issues of long-term importance within Departments, it has welcomed studies, suggestions from outside and a dialogue with individuals, groups and organisations. Some are part of, or closely identified with the Conservative party, such as Backbench Parliamentary Committees, or the Conservative Political Centre (CPC) and Research Department (CRD). Others - the CBI, the Institute of Directors and Centre for Policy Studies, voluntary organisations and so on - quite plainly are not. So the reports of the nine policy groups are only a part, albeit important, of a more continuous process of consultation and dialogue, whose purposes go far beyond Manifesto preparations.

4. In the Conservative Party the Election Manifesto is prepared by the leader of the Party in consultation with her frontbench colleagues (and the Party organisation).



10 DOWNING STREET

PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL

28th February 1983

Ferdy Mount is receiving a number of enquiries from the media about our Election Manifesto.

I have had a word with Ferdy. He and I suggest that he might give the following response, in answer to such enquiries:-

"The Prime Minister has asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer to coordinate preliminary work on a draft of the Conservative Election Manifesto.

Nine Policy Committees under the Chairmanship of a Member of the House of Commons or the House of Lords are currently at work and will be making their reports to Sir Geoffrey at the end of March.

Ministers have also been asked to submit their recommendations for inclusion in the draft Manifesto."

Could you please let me know whether you are content with this formula?

IAN GOW

The Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey Howe QC MP

cc. The Rt Hon Cecil Parkinson MP  
Ferdy Mount Esq