

Statement by the Rt. Hon. Sir Geoffrey Howe

The statements which Mr. Kinnock has made upon the basis of the NEDC paper (83)14 are totally false and recklessly misinformed.

It is quite untrue to suggest that a paper about prospects for the British economy has been suppressed by the Government or anybody else. The paper which NEDC considered on 2 March was on the subject of "Britain's Industrial Performance". All members of the Council agreed that publication of that paper would be unhelpful to British industry and helpful to our competitors. As the minutes clearly showed, Mr. Len Murray for the TUC suggested that publication should be deferred for a couple of months. It was agreed that the paper should receive further staff consideration.

Mr. Kinnock's wilful fantasy may be based upon his recollection of reports - not all accurate - of another NEDC paper (83)18, discussed at the Council's April meeting. That was published in the usual way immediately after the meeting - although NEDC's Director General was invited at the same time to note that the NED Council could not accept the view of the future contained in that paper.

There is absolutely no justification whatsoever for the mischievous suggestion that the timing of the election had anything to do with the agreed decision to defer publication of the March paper.

Mr. Kinnock's attempt to identify any link between these two matters is a measure of the Labour Party's desperation. His failure to discover the true facts is a measure of Labour's incompetence.

Labour spokesmen including Mr. Kinnock are apparently willing to resort to any device to distract attention from the fact that every Labour Government left office with a higher level of unemployment than that which existed when they came into office.