

INDUSTRIAL POLICY

(A Paper by Michael Heseltine)

Background:

The proposals advanced in this paper were designed in the light of the following considerations.

1. While it is important that the political and fund-raising sides of the party remain at arms length, there is no doubt that conspicuous political concern for industry encourages companies to contribute to party funds.
2. There is an obvious need to harness the groundswell of resentment on the part of the self-employed, small businesses and management to the Conservative Party. To a large extent this has already been achieved but one group - middle management - still remains somewhat elusive.
3. There are frequent complaints that there is little positive contact between industry and our parliamentary colleagues at constituency level.
4. We have much to gain if industry will start educating the public and their employees. The more articulate the representatives of the numerous industrial pressure groups become, the clearer the arguments for our policies will be heard. I have already made contact with the larger companies about the standard of their communications with employees.
5. Tory candidates in marginal constituencies might find it easier to establish a positive relationship with local industries if they had a specific initiative to discuss.

Proposals:

Against this background I offer three suggestions.

1. As a result of my letter to Company Chairmen I now have probably the best collection of employee communications available. I am arranging with the CBI to mount a public exhibition of these. I hope this will have the effect of introducing a degree of comparison and competitiveness into this general field because, for the first time, Chairmen and management can see what other companies are doing. The best are very good. But there is a long way to go and it is important to encourage companies to recognise this.
2. I propose to publish a list of the fifteen to twenty key areas of policy investigation in the industrial field and organise a wide range of consultations. Obviously all the political instruments of our party, Bow Group, YCs, CPC - even the Tory Reform Group! - would be involved but I would also ask colleagues and candidates to use this initiative as a basis for approaching companies, local trade associations, etc., to get them thinking about the answers they felt important. I believe at constituency level this could be helpful to both colleagues and candidates. I would undertake that all ideas and suggestions would be carefully considered as part of our policy probe.



3. I propose to organise a national conference with the help of the Central Office called "Conservatives for Industry". It would be held in the Midlands in the late spring of next year and it would be designed to attract groups of people at the moment on the fringes of the party - e.g. trade unionists, middle management.