

24 June 1981

PRIME MINISTER

EMPLOYMENT DEBATE: OPPOSITION RESPONSE - TACTICS

We discussed briefly how to handle different responses from the Opposition.

1. If they are silent. No comment called for, provided the quality of the speech and its duration are adequate. If you wanted to provoke a response, perhaps you could say something on the lines of: "I am glad to see that the Opposition understand at last that the unemployment problem calls for thinking and listening, not for shouting slogans".
2. If they are boisterous. A comment on the lines; "It is sad that the Opposition, having spent so much time demonstrating their concern about unemployment, seem unable to translate that concern into serious discussion of a serious problem".
3. If they talk amongst themselves. A comment on the lines: "It is surprising that, after all the rhetoric from the Opposition benches, they seem to be quite uninterested in one of the most difficult and intractable problems this country faces".


Despite Michael Jopling's warning, it seems inherently unlikely to us that they could in fact be anything but noisy or boisterous in a debate about such a sensitive issue, on which at least some of them must feel genuine concern.

JOHN HOSKYNS

Mr. Gow
Mr. Whitmore
Mr. Lankester
Mr. Walters
✓ Mr. Hoskyns

PRIME MINISTER

The text of the Opposition amendment, tabled in the names of Messrs. Foot, Healey, Varley, Walker, Grant and (Barry) Jones is as follows:

 /That this House/ "condemns Her Majesty's Government for pursuing economic policies which have destroyed great sections of British industry and spread mass unemployment on a scale unprecedented in the last 50 years."

M. A. PATTISON

23 June 1981