

LCC/76/137

WELSH POLICY GROUP

A Welsh Manifesto will be substantially dependent upon the decisions taken on other policy subjects, as Welsh Policy will broadly be integrated into that of the United Kingdom as a whole. There are, however, certain specifically Welsh matters which we have considered.

DEVOLUTION

We stand firm in our opposition to an elected Assembly and to the Government's proposals for the separation of executive power. We endorse the development of the Welsh Office and the role of the Secretary of State which enables Welsh needs to be met while responsibility remains with a British Cabinet.

We are committed to the setting up of a Welsh Select Committee which would be free to meet in Cardiff. We are also committed to the enlargement of the Welsh Council so that a majority of its members are nominated by the County and District Councils. We are not in favour of including Members of Parliament on the enlarged Council. The Council would be free to form itself into Committees to produce the kind of reports that have been so valuable in the past or to sit as a Body to debate major issues and the reports of the Nominated Bodies in Wales.

We should continue to develop the Welsh Office structure and enlarge the responsibility of the Welsh Office so that we can respond to individual Welsh needs while sharing major policy decisions with the rest of the United Kingdom. We would wish to see such enlargement of responsibility in the fields of Agriculture and Transport.

PUBLIC EXPENDITURE IMPLICATIONS

Considerably less than existing Government commitments, though there would be additional administrative costs in running an enlarged Welsh Council and in operating a Select Committee, while the transfer of the Welsh Division of the Ministry of Agriculture to the Welsh Office and the creation of a Welsh Agriculture Statistics division in Cardiff would involve some increase in present Civil Service numbers.

INDUSTRY POLICY

We recognize the need for the maintenance of a Regional Policy built on the foundations of our own 1972 Act in order to assist with the major problems of transition facing Wales and in order to give Industry the continuity of policy that it requires. We attach importance to the continuation of a substantial programme of derelict land clearance and to the preparation of industrial

sites and the improvement of infra structure in Blaenau Gwent and other areas confronted with the closures of existing industries. We accept the revised Steel closure programme set out in the Beswick Report but believe an early decision on Shotton is called for.

We consider the prime task of industrial policy should be to create the conditions in which private enterprise can succeed and to assist with the process of change in areas where old industries are in decline. We would retain the Welsh Development Agency but impose limitations on its power to run businesses in competition with the private sector or to acquire private sector companies. We should introduce the safeguards contained in our 1972 Industry Act.

We should concentrate available resources primarily on infrastructure. We consider that there will be a need to build Advance Factories from time to time but only after the most careful examination of the existing programme, as we are determined to avoid a situation where Government factories stand empty for long periods.

We should offer back to the private sector Bristol Channel Ship Repairers if they have been nationalised.

#### PUBLIC EXPENDITURE IMPLICATIONS

While we hope to make savings by not using the Nationalisation Powers of the Agency and by reducing the present Advance Factory Programme, we have to recognise that Steel closures and other changes will dictate substantial infrastructure expenditure and we, therefore, only indicate modest savings.

#### RURAL WALES

Assuming the development of Rural Wales Bill becomes law, we would continue the new Board in existence while tightening up on its power to carry on businesses. We would carry out an urgent review of its present unsatisfactory boundaries and almost certainly extend its remit into the neighbouring rural areas. We would continue the development of the designated towns in Mid-Wales but are hostile to the creation of any further new towns under the powers contained in the Bill. In the event of the Bill failing, we would wish to amend the Development Agency Act to enable the Agency to carry out the functions now proposed for the Rural Board.

## TRANSPORT

### ROADS

We recognise the constraints under which we will be operating but still believe that improved roads are Wales' greatest need. Within the overall programme the priorities remain the completion of the M4 and its links to the West, the A55 project in the North and the completion of the A470 road to Merthyr. The secondary programme should concentrate on key roads, particularly in mid-Wales and abandon much of the quite unnecessary improvement of minor country roads.

We recommend that central Government takes over from the Dyfed County Council responsibility for the Cleddau Bridge which would relieve the intolerable burden falling on the local ratepayers without adding anything to public expenditure.

The proposal is consistent with the suggestion that in other fields some local Government expenditure should be transferred to the broader back of the taxpayer.

### RAILWAYS

Railway policy will represent an immensely difficult and sensitive political issue. We must commit ourselves to the maintenance of the two major railway systems through South Wales to Milford and Fishguard and through North Wales to Holyhead; but at this stage should avoid commitment on the Mid-Wales line, the Cambrian Coast line and the Whitland-Pembroke Dock line.

### AIRPORTS

Before we prepare a Manifesto we shall have to further consider the position of Rhosneigla Airport.

### RURAL TRANSPORT

The need for an integrated service, incorporating the use of school buses, post buses, social car schemes etc, and a more flexible licensing policy is an urgent priority.

### PUBLIC EXPENDITURE IMPLICATIONS

Maintenance of the current road programme contained in the Public Expenditure White Paper; but some reduction in subsidies if existing rural railway lines are discontinued.

## AGRICULTURE

Apart from organisational matters referred to under Devolution, we emphasise the importance to Wales of policy in connection with:-

### Less Favoured Areas

It is essential that the existing community aids should be maintained and there is need for revision of the upper limit on hill cattle grants.

### Marketing Boards

We will robustly defend the existing Marketing Boards.

## EDUCATION

We will encourage local authorities in Wales on whom the responsibility rests, to provide the widest possible opportunity for children to be taught through the medium of their mother tongue whether English or Welsh and to learn a second language Welsh or English if they wish. Wherever it is practical to provide the choice, we believe that parents should be free to choose whether their children learn Welsh in school, but we recognise that reasons of efficient organisation and cost will sometimes make it impossible to provide an alternative for a small minority of the children of the area.

We believe that so far as is possible bilingual policies should be developed in a way that avoids separation of Welsh and English speaking children. While in some areas it may be impossible to avoid concentrating Welsh teaching in a single monoglot school we hope that in the vast majority of cases children of both languages can be taught side by side.

We wish to see the use of Welsh in our schools fostered and developed while maintaining genuine parental choice.

We shall seek to ensure that widest possible opportunities are available for teachers whether or not they speak Welsh.

## PUBLIC EXPENDITURE IMPLICATIONS

No significant changes.

## THE WELSH LANGUAGE

We shall continue to do everything that lies within the power of Government to enable people to choose which language they wish to use.

### PUBLIC EXPENDITURE IMPLICATIONS

No change

## BROADCASTING

The first priority remains the extension of UHF coverage to the rest of Wales. We shall proceed with the Crawford Scheme for a fourth TV Channel as soon as economic conditions permit. We shall urgently examine the possibility of a modified scheme so that a start can be made in a period of economic stringency.

We would encourage the opening of a commercial radio station in Cardiff.

### PUBLIC EXPENDITURE IMPLICATIONS

It is hard to envisage that even for so politically sensitive a matter it will be possible to find the capital cost of £8.85 million and the additional operating costs of £5 million for several years.

## HOUSING

We attach special importance in Wales to the use of resources for improvement of our large stock of older housing.

### PUBLIC EXPENDITURE IMPLICATIONS

As per housing paper.

## LOCAL GOVERNMENT

The other political parties are in some degree committed to a further reduction of local government. We are anxious to avoid any similar commitment.

### PUBLIC EXPENDITURE IMPLICATIONS

NIL.

## E.E.C.

Wales has received substantial assistance from EEC funds. We would like to appoint a permanent Welsh Office representative in Brussels.

### PUBLIC EXPENDITURE IMPLICATIONS

Very small indeed.

## ARTS AND SPORT

We are sympathetic to the efforts now being made to establish the Welsh National Opera at the Capitol Cinema which offers a more realistic proposal in present conditions than the construction of a new Opera House.

There will be a need for continued public assistance for the development of sports facilities in Wales.

### PUBLIC EXPENDITURE IMPLICATIONS

We see little scope for reduction of present Public Expenditure White Paper Expenditure Plans in this field. The cost of the Capitol Cinema scheme is £4 million for which some Government contribution would be required.

## WATER

We favour partial equalisation of charges but retention of the existing organisation and boundaries of the W. N. W. D. A.

### PUBLIC EXPENDITURE IMPLICATIONS

No change.

## TOURISM

We recognise the vital role of Tourism to the Welsh economy and would continue Government assistance at least on the existing scale. We would in some areas like to switch some assistance from industrial aid to Tourism. We do not believe that the special project scheme should be confined to Development Areas

### PUBLIC EXPENDITURE IMPLICATIONS

No change.