

PARTY STRATEGY, POLICY AND ORGANISATION

1. Our object is to win power, at the earliest opportunity: not for its own sake - but with a plain commitment to the vital cluster of policies that are essential to the restoration of national self-confidence and success. Power must be achieved on terms that have been plainly spelt out in advance. This is the only way to ensure that we have the authority to carry through our policies over a period of years. We must have won the understanding and consent of an electorate that understands our intentions, and has been in no way misled.

PROSPECTS

2. On present form, there is a reasonable chance of success at the next Election even if we omit to tackle any underlying weakness in our position. But by how much should we win? And on what terms? And would we have the authority to carry through what has to be done? And would we win the Election after that?
3. There is a gloomier prognosis. Some people compare our situation to that which Crosland and others described as facing the Labour Party in 1960: with the Party's support resting upon a narrowing class base, and without convincing clarity about our policy objectives. Crosland identified Labour's need to "come to terms with affluence", to get rid of the "cloth-cap" image, to correct an impression of ceaseless wrangling, to adopt any organised, professional approach. Above all, he stressed the importance of the whole tone and content of Labour propaganda if it was to be seen as a broadly-based, national, people's Party. And he identified the need to select a limited number of vital issues which "must form the consistent theme of Labour propaganda, month after month, year after year, until they become indissolubly associated with the Party in the public mind". From this there followed "Signposts for the Sixties", which enabled Labour to hammer away at five or six issues in the run-up to 1974.

4. Some would say that our present need is comparable. While a decreasing number of the electorate identify themselves with either major Party, we have suffered even worse from this than Labour - especially among younger voters. Many of them do not like us. Still more fail to identify with a Party whose representatives (even at grass roots) appear to them to have different life styles, to speak differently, and so on, from the mass of the electorate. For some time, it is said, we have been bad at politics, bad at organisation and not very good in government.

OBJECTIVES AND NEEDS

5. Against this background, we must set out:

- a. to convince people that whatever our likability, we will look after them better than our opponents;
- b. to overcome - or still better, to change - our "unlikable" characteristics; and
- c. to promote longer-term changes to broaden the base and character of the Party.

6. To attain these objectives we need to concentrate on three things:

1. Organisation

It cannot be too strongly emphasised that it is only by organising strategically, tactically and continuously that we can really keep things moving our way. The organisational effort needs to be thorough and sustained and very clearly directed.

2. Themes

Following Crosland's advice, we need to identify our central themes and then to stick with them consistently and with strident clarity. Only a minute percentage of the electorate follow the detail of manifesto-making. Less than one in six has been educated beyond "O" levels. Although we need to have thought through the "back-up" material in order to convince opinion-formers (from Larry Lamb to Joe Rogaly) Simplicity and concentration are of vital importance.

6. 3. Style

Political communication is probably least of all about issues, and most influenced by perceived Party identity and its emotional overtones. We greatly need to change our style so that we show a face with which the public can identify. At all levels in the Party we need to communicate simply, unboringly, colourfully and imaginatively, without long words and abstractions. Our spokesmen should be sympathetic, informal and widely representative ("class-less", recognisably identifiable by regional accents). Good humour and excitement are necessary to conquer boredom. If all these "image" changes are to be achieved, they will have to be built upon, or accompanied by a real broadening of the base of Party membership and support.

7. Such a policy of concentration is easier to approve than to implement. It is only worth adopting if it becomes a basic part of the Party's campaign strategy, for its success would depend on the persistence with which it is applied over a long period. No effort to influence public opinion has a fast effect, unless some startling event occurs. It requires us to distinguish clearly in our own minds between the complete plans prepared for office and those that are to be disclosed, sometimes only to a limited extent and sometimes with emphasis. It requires acceptance of the most objective evaluations available in deciding on the choice of issues, and readiness to substitute a new issue in place of one on which measured progress is poor.

TARGET VOTERS

8. The different groups of voters with whom we need to communicate identify themselves as follows:
- a. Party workers and natural supporters.
 - b. The great mass of the skilled working class.
 - c. The intelligentsia - in the media, universities, etc.
 - d. The young to whom we have at present almost the least appeal.

8. e. The business community. This last group is crucial because we cannot hope to convince the general public on economic and industrial issues unless we first convince those who are here in the front line; and because restoration of business confidence is the key to our success in Government. There is real risk of a working partnership between business and the Labour Party, as the foundation of a Scandinavian-type "quiet life".

Having agreed upon the importance of these groups, the approach to each is something else that needs to be organised in a well-considered fashion.

THEMES

9. The final choice of themes will also depend greatly on the expected reaction of the target groups. We need to find ways of differentiating ourselves clearly from Labour, of choosing our own ground, of creating our own language for the issues. This is the way for us to be taking initiatives, instead of simply reacting to Government.
10. Certain themes must probably be regarded as non-issues - on which there is little to be won, but where it is important at least to hold the line. I have in mind.
- Devolution (at best, appear more Unionist than the rest)
 - Immigration (at best, appear more restrictive than the rest - without racialism)
 - Short-term condition of the economy (this is hard to predict, could easily be "managed;" we should concentrate on longer-term anxieties, which can't be magicked away).
 - Relations with the unions (this is of critical importance, since it is a subject on which we do not carry conviction: but it will never be a winner for us: we need to outflank it, by emphasising other issues on which we are closer to the mass of union membership)
 - Incomes policy (this is a cross-party issue - often giving rise to "Yes, but..." or "No, but..." situations).

11. Some other issues should be regarded as subordinate, that is to say, issues on which we must lock in the support of key minorities but without necessarily trumpeting our views too widely, since the points have limited appeal.

For example:

"We are the country Party".

"We will fight for grammar, direct grant and independent schools".

"We shall restore the private sector in health".

"Defence of the realm is the first duty of government" (some would give more importance to this).

"Fair treatment for fishermen".

"Liberate rural transport".

- and no doubt there are others, that should not be ignored; but are not central.

12. What then should be the main themes? And do they need to be covered by a central, more idealistic, theme?

Certainly we need more than sensible policies and sympathetic styles of presentation. We need moral fervour, because our efforts do reflect idealism and dreams. In this sense, the theme of freedom, is vital for us: for freedom, and freedom to choose, is our moral base, as equality is that of Socialism. And yet I wonder (in light of observations by people as diverse as Womthorne and Callaghan) whether the public packaging of our policies (as opposed to our prerorations) is best founded on freedom. I incline to prefer for this purpose the central message that "Conservatism is common-sense".

Obviously there is much room for argument over what should be our principal themes. Tentatively I suggest the following:

1. Wasteful and Excessive Government

This enables us to deploy the whole case against over-government, over-spending, over-taxing, over-borrowing, and to emphasise our commitment to minimum legislation and minimum institutional change. This theme could be filled out with endless examples of waste in all parts of the public sector - examples which people can understand and which will

12. 1. enable us (as did the Australian Liberals) to move away from the question of "where would you cut?" I am sure this is a key theme, which is why I'm afraid I tend to be a bore about it. It should certainly not be a strait-jacket; hence paragraph 13 below. But the exceptions that we do make to this theme need to be carefully considered as a group. It is vital that they should not impair our credibility on the issue which is at the heart of our long-term appeal.
2. Let people spend their own money
This attack on high direct taxes has a wide shop-floor appeal and can be linked with the whole of Ralph Howell's "Why Work?" argument. It forms a useful container for the less attractive, but necessary, policies for allowing profits to grow, cutting taxes on better-off and so on. And it could be given a human face by linkage with child benefits, tax credits and so on.
3. Ownership: Council Houses - and the rest
The case for wider ownership and partnership in industry is important and we should do all we can to make it our own. Home ownership is the best plum in this tin from the Tory point of view. This theme can be developed into an onslaught on the extravagant inefficiency of most public sector housing policy, slum clearance, redevelopment, blight, rent control, and so on. The positive thrust can carry our message into every council house and onto every shop-floor in the country. This could form the foundation of a campaign which would not only communicate a distinctive Conservative policy, but would get our organisation working in areas where we are weak and our image needs much improvement.
4. Standards in Education
This is a genuinely populist issue and enables us to shake off the impression that we care only about standards in top schools for top people. It should also lend itself to a national campaign which would penetrate areas where we are normally weak.

12. 5. Making Britain safe to live in

This is another way of saying "law and order". No more legislation, more money for the police, less harassment of the motorist (end un-enforcable speed limits, and reduce the number of traffic cops), a blitz on truancy, and more power for the magistrates. This is a simple, cheap, minimum legislation, package with plain popular appeal.

6. Protect working people from bullying

This is the one part of the anti-union argument that we can plainly win. Alongside opposition to such things as the Dock Work Scheme and the installation of unions in charge of pension funds and factories, we should surely be aggressive on free postal ballots for union elections and the right to independent appeal against expulsion or exclusion from a closed shop. The case can be constantly re-presented - and it cannot fairly be answered in the context of real life examples.

13. I have excluded from this list any specific issue which attempts to give us a dramatically compassionate case. We can hardly hope to win against the Labour Party in a competition about compassion without destroying the credibility of our commitment to sensible control of public spending. But we should certainly organise sympathetic positions on as many "Jack Ashley" issues as possible and hew out some nuggets of beneficence which have particular appeal to important interest groups: abolition of the earnings rule, tax treatment of widows, invalid vehicles, the poverty trap, adequate medical insurance cover for people going abroad - and so on; and we should promote the enthusiasm of those of our Members who want to run such hobby horses.

14. One other theme should concentrate on discrediting the Government. The most important thing here is the development of three or four key phrases ("borrowing one pound out of every five", "the natural party of unemployment"). We have never done as well as Labour with such phrases as "Thirteen wasted years" or "the £800 million deficit".

ORGANISATION

15. Much of the foregoing analysis is not all that new. The most important element is the way in which we organise our handling of this material. And it is here that I am most concerned about the adequacy of our arrangements.

It is not too difficult to identify what it is we have to sell and the nature of the people to whom we have to sell it. I have no doubt that we know:

- what has to be done;
- that it can be done;
- that we can win the presentation of this case; and
- that we have the leadership to do this.

16. Yet most of the media are not sufficiently convinced along these lines and some of their doubts may be attributable to their lack of confidence in our capacity to organise the necessary long-term campaign. And many of our troops in the field are equally unconvinced that we are getting the message across in accordance with a well-organised purposeful strategy. From this it follows that the nation (including many who should be our natural supporters, but who now flirt with such things as electoral reform) is unwilling to be stirred.

17. In other words, in order to achieve our apparently simple objectives, it is not enough to have good people and good arguments. It is essential to have an efficient organisation to ensure that we use our best people and our best arguments to best effect.

18. The present position does not sufficiently convey the impression that we are doing this. The leading members of our sales_force (Shadow Cabinet, MPs, and Party activists) certainly suggest to me that they would welcome a move to point them more clearly in a clear direction. There is a great deal of activity for the sake of activity, much of which is over-lapping. Many groups of workers - at all levels - often find themselves half-discussing the same issues on many successive occasions. I fancy they are much more anxious than it has been customary to believe to be given a clear lead. The '22 Committee, for example, may be prepared to be told - at the beginning of each term, and of each Recess, exactly what the leadership would like them to do in accordance with a revealed plan.
19. What is needed above all is an organisation that will direct all these activities and draw them all together in pursuit of a common strategy, founded, I should suggest, on my analysis of the image deficiencies and the key issues. This is in no sense a criticism of the present leadership. For the extraordinary thing is that has never, so far, been approached in this kind of way.
20. This means creating a closely integrated organisation of which the Leader should plainly be in over-all charge, but in relation to which the Leader should not have to do day-to-day work. The key parts of the organisation are as follows:
 - Shadow Cabinet
 - Party in the House (Whips' Office and '22 Committee)
 - Research Department (with particular responsibility for policy)
 - Central Office (Party organisation)
 - Publicity Department
 - Leader's Private Office.
21. The right approach would seem to involve regarding each of these activities as in the charge of a "director" of seniority and to bring all those directors together in a fashion comparable

21. to the main board of a company, in charge either of "the Chairman" (the Leader) or a "managing Director", directly responsible to the Leader and in close and continuous touch with her.
22. If the "managing director" approach is adopted, then the "managing director" figure is of critical importance. He could be the person in charge of the Leader's Office, provided he is a senior figure, without other responsibilities. Alternatively he could be the Chairman of the Party, so long as sufficient account was taken of the need for continuous contact with the Leader, effectively on a day-to-day basis.
23. As an alternative to the "managing director approach", the Leader could act as "Chairman and Managing Director". In that case she would need the support of a "Chief Executive", to act as a vigorous progress-chaser. He would need, in the same way as the "managing director" enough seniority and authority to enable him to be ruthless (and rude!) on the Leader's behalf.
24. Once this strategic planning group is properly organised, it should be possible to organise non-overlapping functional groups, including Members of Shadow and Party officials, to deal with each of the other issues. The following aspects are some of those that call for specific consideration by such sub-groups.
 1. Clear briefing of the Party, in Parliament and elsewhere, as to the key issues so that no Party Member can fail to be able to utter the Party's central message without prompting.
 2. Organisation of the Party's performance in the House (Supply Days, etc.) on the same basis.
 3. Mobilisation of the Party in the country, not only on the policy issues, but also in the direction of changing the image and character of the Party along the lines discussed.
 4. Mobilisation of industry (for message production as well as for fund-raising) in support of our basic themes: much industrial discontent would be reduced if our critics were given a clear job to do.

24. 5. The total mix of publicity, including publicity material, PPBs and image-changing.
6. The special efforts directed at young people, trade unionists (and union leaders) and other target groups.

CONCLUSION

25. This analysis is not intended to be iconoclastic and has not be prepared with any eye on personalities concerned. Nor do I have any close experience of the present nuts and bolts of Party organisation. Simply as a fresh look it may be of some value in prompting thoughts. By no means all the ideas are my own, since I have derived considerable help from documents prepared by Christopher Patten and Tom Hooson.