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argument, and one which carries much conviction given recent controversies over motorway inquiries, is that planning inquiries do not provide a credible forum for local objectors to siting decisions, still less for those who wish to challenge energy policy in principle. The second arm, hardly less plausible, is that Parliament is incapable, even given the existence of a Select Committee on Science and Technology, of providing an effective counterweight to official and expert opinion in this area. Parliamentarians not only lack resources and expertise, they are also likely to be increasingly handicapped by barriers of official secrecy and professional discretion. They may also be overwhelmed by the sheer strength of the Executive's commitment to a policy designed to maintain energy supplies, bolstered up by pressure from both sides of the nuclear industry itself.

Successive governments have proclaimed the virtues of participation. Neither public inquiries nor parliamentary controls are likely to give would-be participants what they feel entitled to. Realising this objectors will, the authors speculate, have increasing recourse to direct action, and the authorities are likely to tighten security even further—which brings us back to Part One of the document. The process as described is a chain reaction in the idiom of political life.

### *Conclusions*

The crucial decisions about future energy policy must break through the short-time horizons of conventional political thought. The long-term issues raised by the Royal Commission and by the authors of *Nuclear Prospects* constitute just one block of variables in a complex cost-benefit equation. Both documents are, in their different ways, important contributions to, or at least agendas for a debate which needs to take place before options are closed. The Royal Commission's Report is by far the weightier of the two, though some of its conclusions have already been challenged,<sup>9</sup> and it may in places have fallen short of the highest standards of scientific rigour.<sup>10</sup> But no one who has hitherto accepted uncritically that nuclear energy will create a better world should be allowed to escape the obligation of reading it.

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## The CBI and the Conservative Party: A Changing Relationship?

It might be assumed that the relationships between the Conservative Party and organisations representing manufacturing industry would normally be close. Yet relations between the Confederation of British Industry (CBI) and the Conservative Party have on occasions been considerably strained. This was particularly the case during the period of the passage of the Heath Govern-

<sup>9</sup> e.g. by the Chairman of the Atomic Energy Authority, reported *The Times*, November 26, 1976: replying to an article by Lord Rothschild commending the Report, *The Times*, September 27, 1976.

<sup>10</sup> R. H. Mole, "The Flowers Report: opportunities missed", *Nature*, vol. 264, December 9, 1976, pp. 494-496.

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ment's Industry Act in 1972.<sup>1</sup> Subsequently the gradual improvement in relations was retarded by the CBI's reservations about the Government's handling of the miners' opposition to Stage 3 of its income policy. The situation was further exacerbated by the belief of some Conservatives that a speech by Campbell Adamson, then CBI Director-General, on the Industrial Relations Act had played some part in their defeat in the February 1974 election.<sup>2</sup> There is no doubt that the relationship has improved since then, but our aim is to examine likely future relations between the CBI and the Conservative Party in the light of the recent Conservative Party policy document, *The Right Approach*, and the recent CBI policy document, *The Road to Recovery*.<sup>3</sup>

The Conservatives have welcomed the CBI document as one that "echoes the sentiments expressed in the Conservative Party's statement of aims".<sup>4</sup> However, a closer examination of the two documents suggests that the CBI may disagree with some of the ideas of a future Conservative government. There is, of course, a tendency within the Conservative Party to see small businesses rather than big businesses as encapsulating the essence of all that is truly Conservative. As one speaker commented at a recent Conservative Party conference: "There are a great number of things on which the small businessman must be represented and better represented within this party. They are our friends and I think they have proved and will prove better friends than the big barons of the CBI."<sup>5</sup>

As one might expect, the range of the Conservative document is somewhat wider than that of the CBI document. The CBI is concerned with economic policy in the conventional sense; housing policy, education policy and issues like devolution are mentioned only in so far as they are seen to be relevant to the general conduct of the economy. The Conservative Party document has to deal with (for example) such issues as Government patronage of the arts. The CBI is able to deal with the central economic issues in more depth and includes more analysis to sustain its arguments.

Before looking at the differences between the two documents, it is necessary to stress that there is a great deal of overlap between them. Both documents consider that the burden of taxation in Britain is excessively harsh and the CBI and the Conservatives agree on what they see as the need to reduce the scale of public expenditure. However, the CBI's proposals are much more specific than those of the Conservatives, both in terms of the size of the cuts called for and their distribution. The CBI calls for a reduction in total public expenditure planned for 1979/80 of around 5 per cent. (excluding the capital expenditure of the nationalised industries). It sees housing as the biggest area for savings; council houses should be sold and rents increased. Subsidies for public transport should be substantially cut and there should be commercial charging for school meals. These cuts, in the CBI's view, might not be enough; student grants might have to be replaced by loans and personal

<sup>1</sup> See W. P. Grant and D. Marsh, *The Confederation of British Industry* (London, Hodder and Stoughton, 1977), pp. 156-168.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 89.

<sup>3</sup> *The Right Approach: a Statement of Conservative Aims* (Conservative Central Office, 1976) and *The Road to Recovery* (CBI, 1976).

<sup>4</sup> *Politics Today*, November 8, 1976, p. 363.

<sup>5</sup> 93rd Conservative Conference, *Verbatim Report*, p. 116.

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insurance introduced to cover the cost of health care. The Conservative document contains no such shopping list of cuts. Admittedly, the Conservatives do call for savings on "identifiable Socialist policies" and on food and housing subsidies. However, after the usual call for "the elimination of waste and extravagance", they then conclude that further cuts involving reductions in the scale of public services are inescapable. However, they are unable (or unwilling) to say where these cuts should be.

On incomes policy, both documents are somewhat evasive. The Conservatives argue that "our purpose must be to exclude the need for any further resort to a formal incomes policy".<sup>6</sup> The CBI states that "we have decided that precise proposals (on incomes policy) at this moment might not be helpful to our long-term aim of securing a radical reform of our pay determination system".<sup>7</sup> The CBI are none too specific about the kind of reform they want, although they refer approvingly to the voluntary West German system of Concerted Action (as do the Conservatives).

However, the CBI place much more emphasis than do the Conservatives on the need to secure agreement with the trade unions. The Conservatives are, of course, critical of the Social Contract and although they acknowledge the importance of a strong and responsible trade union movement in a free society, the CBI does seem to place rather more emphasis on the importance of negotiations with the trade unions. The CBI's President in office, Lord Watkinson, is a firm believer in the virtues of tripartite negotiations between the Government, CBI and TUC. There are, of course, many people in the Conservative Party who share this approach, not least Mr. Heath; but there are many others who are sceptical of its efficacy and resent the importance it attaches to big as distinct from small business. The CBI gives the trade unions a pat on the back for what it terms their "less inflexible" attitude; *The Right Approach* contains no such compliment—it was left to Mr. Heath to make it at the Conservative Party conference.

Of course, there are important differences of opinion between the CBI and TUC, not least on the question of industrial democracy. The CBI is highly critical of the TUC's plan for worker directors. Nevertheless, the general impression that emerges from a comparison of the two documents is that the CBI sees more value in talking to the unions on a wide range of issues than the Conservatives, notwithstanding recent contacts between the Conservative leadership and the TUC. On the other hand, some of the arguments that the CBI puts forward—for example, its criticisms of price controls—are unlikely to endear it to the trade unions.

The CBI declares its opposition to plans for further nationalisation, but it does envisage a continuing role for the National Enterprise Board. The CBI would like to see it reconstituted as a more independent body, holding government shareholdings and providing temporary assistance to companies in financial difficulty. The Conservatives have recently reaffirmed their intention to abolish the NEB.

The Conservatives are perhaps a little more optimistic than the CBI about the extent to which their policies are endorsed by the public. The Conservatives invoke de Tocqueville to reassure them about the unchanging nature of

<sup>6</sup> *The Right Approach*, p. 38.

<sup>7</sup> *The Road to Recovery*, p. 72.

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the British character; the CBI carried out an opinion poll which found that 83 per cent. of the population disagreed with the statement: "I think profit is a dirty word". However, the survey also found what the CBI regards as disturbing gaps in respondents' knowledge of the role of profit-making industry in the economy. It is now making more efforts to influence public opinion; as a first practical step, the CBI has set up the "Understanding British Industry" project aimed at providing teaching material for the 13-16-year-old group.

Some of the differences between the documents are undoubtedly a reflection of the essential differences between a political party and a pressure group. Taken as a whole, the Conservative document is rather more ambiguous and evasive than that of the CBI. However, this is what one would expect, given the need to "fudge" the evident differences within the Conservative Party on issues like incomes policy. Moreover, the Conservative Party has to pay some regard to the sensibilities of the electorate. The CBI document contains some blunt statements about unemployment, which it sees as continuing above 3 per cent. beyond 1979; prophecies of this kind are not to be found in the Conservative document.

However, the differences between the two documents cannot simply be explained in terms of the differences between a political party and a pressure group. The CBI document reveals the businessman's yearning for consistent economic policies. The CBI makes it clear that it has no interest in the "polarisation of political thinking that can lead to a nation being divided from top to bottom".<sup>8</sup> What the CBI wants is to make "the mixed economy, broadly as we have it now, work". This leads the CBI to place more faith in tripartite bargaining than the Conservatives. Tripartite bargaining is unlikely to find the kind of favour with a Thatcher Government that it found with a Heath Government.

The publication of the CBI document marks a trend within the organisation since 1974 towards a more overtly political stance. The CBI is now much more concerned with influencing public opinion than it has been in the past. However, this does not necessarily mean that the CBI will enjoy a close or harmonious relationship with a future Conservative Government. In many ways, relations between the CBI and the Conservatives are likely to be substantially influenced by the relationship between the TUC and the Government and the TUC and the CBI. Although the trade union movement might find itself in opposition to both the CBI and a Conservative Government, it is likely that there will be occasions when it finds that its relations with the CBI are better than its relations with the Government. The CBI and the Conservatives have much in common on broad strategy, but their divisions on particular issues and tactics may eventually pull them apart.

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<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.* p. 9.