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The
MANIFESTO
of the
CONSERVATIVE
AND UNIONIST
PARTY

GENERAL ELECTION
1951

CONSERVATIVE PARTY GENERAL ELECTION MANIFESTO 1951

Date of Election	Thursday 25 October
Party Leader	Winston Churchill
Candidates	617
MPs	321
Votes	13,717,538
% of vote	48.0%

We are confronted with a critical Election which may well be the turning point in the fortunes and even the life of Britain. We cannot go on with this evenly balanced Party strife and hold our own in the world, or even earn our living. The prime need is for a stable government with several years before it, during which time national interests must be faithfully held far above party feuds or tactics. We need a new Government not biased by privilege or interest or cramped by doctrinal prejudices or inflamed by the passions of class warfare. Such a Government only the Conservative and Unionist Party can today provide.

There must be no illusions about our difficulties and dangers. It is better to face them squarely as we did in 1940. The Conservative Party, who since victory have had no responsibility for the events which have led us to where we are now, offers no bribes to the electors. We will do our best to serve them and to make things better all round, but we do not blind ourselves to the difficulties that have to be overcome, or the time that will be required to bring us back to our rightful position in the world, and to revive the vigour of our national life and impulse.

We all seek and pray for peace. A mighty union of nations tread that path together, but we all know that peace can only come through their united strength and faithful brotherhood.

Contrast our position to-day with what it was six years ago. Then all our foes had yielded. We all had a right to believe and hope that the fear of war would not afflict our generation nor our children. We were respected, honoured and admired throughout the world. We were a united people at home, and it was only by being united that we had survived the deadly perils through which we had come and had kept the flag of freedom flying through the fateful year when we were alone. There, at any rate, is a great foundation and inspiration. Everyone knows how the aftermath of war brings extraordinary difficulties. With national unity we could have overcome them. But what has happened since those days?

The attempt to impose a doctrinaire Socialism upon an Island which has grown great and famous by free enterprise has inflicted serious injury upon our strength and prosperity. Nationalisation has proved itself a failure which has resulted in heavy losses to the taxpayer

or the consumer, or both. It has not given general satisfaction to the wage-earners in the nationalised industries. It has impaired the relations of the Trade Unions with their members. In more than one nationalised industry the wage-earners are ill-content with the change from the private employers, with whom they could negotiate on equal terms through the Trade Unions, to the all-powerful and remote officials in Whitehall.

Our finances have been brought into grave disorder. No British Government in peace time has ever had the power or spent the money in the vast extent and reckless manner of our present rulers. Apart from the two thousand millions they have borrowed or obtained from the United States and the Dominions, they have spent more than 10 million pounds a day, or 22 thousand millions in their six years. No community living in a world of competing nations can possibly afford such frantic extravagances. Devaluation was the offspring of wild, profuse expenditure, and the evils which we suffer to-day are the inevitable progeny of that wanton way of living.

A Conservative Government will cut out all unnecessary Government expenditure, simplify the administrative machine, and prune waste and extravagance in every department.

The greatest national misfortune which we now endure is the ever falling value of our money, or, to put it in other words, the ever-increasing cost, measured in work and skill, of everything we buy. British taxation is higher than in any country outside the Communist world. It is higher by eight hundred millions a year than it was in the height of the war. We have a population of fifty millions depending on imports of food and raw materials which we have to win by our exertions, ingenuity, and craftsmanship. Since Devaluation it takes nearly twelve hours of work with hands or brains to buy across the dollar exchange what we could have got before for eight hours. We have now to give from one-quarter to one-third more of our life's strength, skill and output of every kind and quality to get the same intake as we did before Devaluation two years ago. We pay more for what we buy from abroad. We get less for what we sell. That is what Socialist Devaluation has meant. This costly expedient has not prevented a new financial crisis.

We are a hard-working people. We are second to none in ability or enterprise so far as we are allowed to use these gifts. We now have the only Socialist Government in the Empire and Commonwealth. Of all the countries in the world Britain is the one least capable of bearing the Socialist system.

The Nation now has the chance of rebuilding its life at home and of strengthening its position abroad. We must free ourselves from our impediments. Of all impediments the class war is the worst. At the time when a growing measure of national unity is more than ever necessary, the Socialist Party hope to gain another lease of power by fomenting class hatred and appealing to moods of greed and envy.

Within the limits of a statement of this kind, it is only possible to deal with some of the main questions now before us. We wish to be judged by deeds and their results and not by words and their applause. We seek to proclaim a theme, rather than write a prospectus. Many years ago I used the phrase, 'Bring the rearguard in.' This meant basic standards of life and labour, the duty of the strong to help the weak, and of the successful to establish tolerable conditions for the less fortunate. That policy is adopted by all Parties to-day. But now we have the new Socialist doctrine. It is no longer, 'Bring the rearguard in,' but 'Keep the vanguard back.' There

is no means by which this Island can support its present population except by allowing its native genius to flourish and fructify. We cannot possibly keep ourselves alive without the individual effort, invention, contrivance, thrift and good housekeeping of our people.

In 1945 I said:

‘What we desire is freedom; what we need is abundance. Freedom and abundance – these must be our aims. The production of new wealth is far more beneficial than class and Party fights about the liquidation of old wealth. We must try to share blessings and not miseries. The production of new wealth must precede common wealth, otherwise there will only be common poverty.’

It is because these simple truths have been denied and our people duped by idle hopes and false doctrine that the value of our money has fallen so grievously and the confidence of the world in Britain has been impaired. Confidence and currency are interdependent and restoring confidence by sound finance is one of the ways in which the value of our money may be sustained and the rising cost of living checked.

The Conservative aim is to increase our national output. Here is the surest way to keep our people fully employed, to halt the rising cost of living, and to preserve our social services. Hard work, good management, thrift – all must receive their due incentive and reward.

In the wider world outside this Island we put first the safety, progress and cohesion of the British Empire and Commonwealth of Nations. We must all stand together and help each other with all our strength both in Defence and Trade. To foster commerce within the Empire we shall maintain Imperial Preference. In our home market the Empire producer will have a place second only to the home producer. Next, there is the unity of the English-speaking peoples who together number hundreds of millions. They have only to act in harmony to preserve their own freedom and the general peace. On these solid foundations we should all continue to labour for a United Europe, including in the course of time those unhappy countries still behind the Iron Curtain.

These are the three pillars of the United Nations Organisation which, if Soviet Russia becomes the fourth, would open to all the toiling millions of the world an era of moral and material advance undreamed of hitherto among men. There was a time in our hour of victory when this object seemed to be within our reach. Even now, in spite of the clouds and confusion into which we have since fallen, we must not abandon the supreme hope and design.

For all these purposes we support the Rearmament programme on which the Socialist Government have embarked. We believe, however, that far better value could be got for the immense manpower and sums of money which are involved. Special sacrifices are required from us all for the sake of our survival as free democratic communities and the prevention of war.

Our theme is that in normal times there should be the freest competition and that good wages and profits fairly earned under the law are a public gain both to the Nation and to all in industry – management and wage-earner alike. But the vast Rearmament policy of spending five thousand millions in three years on Defence inevitably distorts the ordinary working of supply and demand, therefore justice requires special arrangements for the emergency. We shall set our face against the fortuitous rise in company profits because of the abnormal

process of Rearmament. We shall accordingly impose a form of Excess Profits Tax to operate only during this exceptional period.

At the same time a revision of the existing system of taxation on commercial and industrial profits is required. Relief will be given in cases where profits are ploughed back and used for the renewal of plant and equipment.

We believe in the necessity for reducing to the minimum possible all restrictive practices on both sides of industry, and we shall rely on a greatly strengthened Monopolies Commission to seek, and enable Parliament to correct, any operations in restraint of trade, including of course in the nationalised industries.

I will now mention some other practical steps we shall take.

We shall stop all further nationalisation.

The Iron and Steel Act will be repealed and the Steel industry allowed to resume its achievements of the war and post-war years. To supervise prices and development we shall revive, if necessary with added powers, the former Iron and Steel Board representing the State, the management, labour, and consumers.

Publicly-owned rail and road transport will be reorganised into regional groups of workable size. Private road hauliers will be given the chance to return to business, and private lorries will no longer be crippled by the twenty-five mile limit.

Coal will remain nationalised. There will be more decentralisation and stimulation of local initiative and loyalties, but wage negotiations will remain on a national basis.

All industries remaining nationalised will come within the purview of the Monopolies' Commission and there will also be strict Parliamentary review of their activities.

We seek to create an industrial system that is not only efficient but human. The Conservative Workers' Charter for Industry will be brought into being as early as possible, and extended to agriculture wherever practicable. The scheme will be worked out with trade unions and employers, and then laid before Parliament.

There you have a clear plan of action in this field.

Housing is the first of the social services. It is also one of the keys to increased productivity. Work, family life, health and education are all undermined by overcrowded homes. Therefore a Conservative and Unionist Government will give housing a priority second only to national defence. Our target remains 300,000 houses a year. There should be no reduction in the number of houses and flats built to let but more freedom must be given to the private builder. In a property-owning democracy, the more people who own their homes the better.

In Education and in Health some of the most crying needs are not being met. For the money now being spent we will provide better services and so fulfil the high hopes we all held when we planned the improvements during the war.

The whole system of town planning and development charges needs drastic overhaul.

We shall review the position of pensioners, including war pensioners, and see that the hardest needs are met first. The care and comfort of the elderly is a sacred trust. Some of them prefer to remain at work and there must be encouragement for them to do so.

To obtain more food practical knowledge and business experience must be released to comb the world for greater supplies.

We shall maintain our system of guaranteed agricultural prices and markets and protect British horticulture from foreign dumpers. We have untitled acres and much marginal land. Farmers and merchants should work together to improve distribution in the interests of the public. Subject to the needs of Rearmament, the utmost will be done to provide better housing, water supplies, and drainage, electricity and transport in rural areas.

The fishing industry will be protected from unrestricted foreign dumping. Every effort will be made by international agreement to prevent over-fishing.

Food subsidies cannot be radically changed in present circumstances, but later we hope to simplify the system and by increases in family allowances, taxation changes and other methods, to ensure that public money is spent on those who need help and not, as at present, upon all classes indiscriminately.

Apart from proposals to help Britain to stand on her own feet by increasing productivity, we must guard the British way of life, hallowed by centuries of tradition. We have fought tyrants at home and abroad to win and preserve the institutions of constitutional Monarchy and Parliamentary government. From Britain across the generations our message has gone forth to all parts of the globe. However well-meaning many of the present Socialist leaders may be, there is no doubt that in its complete development a Socialist State, monopolising production, distribution and exchange, would be fatal to individual freedom. We look on the Government as the servant and not as the masters of the people. Multiplying orders and rules should be reduced, and the whole system kept under more rigorous Parliamentary scrutiny. We shall call an all-Party conference to consider proposals for the reform of the House of Lords.

We shall restore the University constituencies, which have been disfranchised contrary to the agreement reached by all three Parties during the war.

The United Kingdom cannot be kept in a Whitehall straitjacket. The Unionist policy for Scotland, including the practical steps proposed for effective Scottish control of Scottish affairs, will be vigorously pressed forward.

There will be a Cabinet Minister charged with the care of Welsh affairs,

We shall seek to restore to Local Government the confidence and responsibility it has lost under Socialism.

All these and other issues of the day can only be stated briefly in our Party Manifesto. A much fuller account will be given of them in Britain Strong and Free which will be published in a few days.

I close with a simple declaration of our faith. The Conservative and Unionist Party stands not for any section of the people but for all. In this spirit, we will do our utmost to grapple with the increasing difficulties into which our country has been plunged.

Winston Churchill