

(1) Mr. H. H. - to see  
(2) PES 87 file.

PRESS CONFERENCE - PENSIONS - 4 JUNE 1987

OPENING STATEMENT - RT HON NORMAN FOWLER

MR NORMAN FOWLER: Let me show you the four threats that the Labour Party has as far as the pensioner in this country is concerned: higher inflation, which will reduce savings. That is what took place in the past and I have given you the comparisons on the savings; higher taxes and higher rates; state direction of pension funds, and promises that they cannot afford. That is what Labour is basically promising the pensioners. That is why I have issued the challenge today as far as the pensioners are concerned, and as far as their proposals are concerned.

Pensioners know that the Conservative Government have inflation-proofed their pensions. They know that the Conservative Government is a savers' Government. They know that we have not, as Labour have done, concealed plans to give increases with one hand and scrapped them away with the other. Pensioners know, because they remember, that Labour's sky-high spending programme would wreck the nation's economy and plunge them - the pensioners - into financial hardship.

PRIME MINISTER: We will take questions on the subject of the day, which is the social security provision and the Health Service and then go on to others if time permits.

Q: The Labour Party is suggesting that a Conservative Government might introduce some form of payment for patients in hospitals. Can you say categorically that this will not be the case for any patient at any stage of their hospital stay?

MR FOWLER: We have not got proposals, and we do not intend to introduce those kind of charges. We have made that clear previously. We have made it clear in previous elections. We have already made it clear, incidentally, in this election, and I make it clear again today.

Q (MR BILL THOMPSON): I wish to ask about the Government's treatment of haemophiliacs.

PRIME MINISTER: The Government does not treat haemophiliacs; the doctors treat haemophiliacs!

Q: They do in a way, if you let me finish my question, Prime Minister. The question to Mr Fowler is this: first, 30 per cent. of haemophiliacs now have HIV. Why did Mr Fowler's Minister of State, Mr Clarke, in November 1982 when he was questioned in the Commons deny that there was any danger that factor 8 could infect haemophiliacs? Why, now that we have a finite number of haemophiliacs infected, is he refusing to provide any compensation?

MR TONY NEWTON: On the 1982 situation, the knowledge about the way in which HIV infection was transmitted was only really completed rather later than that. It did not become clear what the methods of transmission were until, if I remember rightly, some time rather later in the 1980s at which point action was taken both here and in the United States to ensure the availability of the heat-treated factor 8 product on which point, of course, we have just opened a £50 or £60 million factory at Elstree which will shortly, within the next year or two, make this country completely self-sufficient in blood products of that kind.

On the point of compensation, we have indicated that we see it very difficult to draw distinctions between people who experience, say, a tragic problem of this kind in this way when the treatment is on the best available knowledge and in good faith, and medical accidents that can occur in other ways.

Q (ELINOR GOODMAN): Does your lengthy attack on Socialists and, in particular Marxists, today suggest that you are getting more worried about the prospect of a Labour victory, as indicated by some of the polls?

PRIME MINISTER: No, I am just revealing the facts which they are doing everything possible to conceal. As you know, it is not our policy to conceal. We are proud of our policy. Therefore, we make every effort to reveal both our record and