**1979 Conservative Manifesto [no flashy title]**

**Foreword**

FOR ME, THE HEART OF POLITICS is not political theory, it is people and how they want to live their lives.

No one who has lived in this country during the last five years can fail to be aware of how the balance of our society has been increasingly tilted in favour of the State at the expense of individual freedom.

This election may be the last chance we have to reverse that process, to restore the balance of power in favour of the people. It is therefore the most crucial election since the war.

Together with the threat to freedom there has been a feeling of helplessness, that we are a once great nation that has somehow fallen behind and that it is too late now to turn things round.

I don't accept that. 1 believe we not only can, we must. This manifesto points the way.

It contains no magic formula or lavish promises. It is not a recipe for an easy or a perfect life. But it sets out a broad framework for the recovery of our country, based not on dogma, but On reason, on common sense, above all on the liberty of the people under the law.

The things we have in common as a nation far outnumber those that set us apart.

It is in that spirit that I commend to you this manifesto.

*Margaret Thatcher*

**I. Our five tasks**

THIS ELECTION is about the future of Britain - a great country which seems to have lost its way. It is a country rich in natural resources, in coal, oil, gas and fertile farmlands. It is rich, too, in human resources, with professional and managerial skills of the highest calibre, with great industries and firms whose workers can be the equal of any in the world. We are the inheritors of a long tradition of parliamentary democracy and the rule of law.

Yet today, this country is faced with its most serious problems since the Second World War. What has happened to our country, to the values we used to share, to the success and prosperity we once took for granted?

During the industrial strife of last winter, confidence, self-respect, common sense, and even our sense of common humanity were shaken. At times this society seemed on the brink of disintegration.

Some of the reasons for our difficulties today are complex and go back many years. Others are more simple and more recent. We do not lay all the blame on the Labour Party: but Labour have been in power for most of the last fifteen years and cannot escape the major responsibility.

They have made things worse in three ways. First, by practising the politics of envy and by actively discouraging the creation of wealth, they have set one group against another in an often bitter struggle to gain a larger share of a weak economy.

Second, by enlarging the role of the State and diminishing the role of the individual, they have crippled the enterprise and effort on which a prosperous country with improving social services depends.

Third, by heaping privilege without responsibility on the trade unions, Labour have given a minority of extremists the power to abuse individual liberties and to thwart Britain's chances of success. One result is that the trade union movement, which sprang from a deep and genuine fellow-feeling for the brotherhood of man, is today more distrusted and feared than ever before.

It is not just that Labour have governed Britain badly. They have reached a dead-end. The very nature of their Party now prevents them from governing successfully in a free society and mixed economy.

Divided against themselves; devoid of any policies except those which have led to and would worsen our present troubles; bound inescapably by ties of history, political dogma and financial dependence to a single powerful interest group, Labour have demonstrated yet again that they cannot speak and dare not act for the nation as a whole.

Our country's relative decline is not inevitable. We in the Conservative Party think we can reverse it, *not* because we think we have all the answers but because we think we have the one answer that matters most. We want to work *with the grain*of human nature, helping people to help themselves - and others. This is the way to restore that self-reliance and self-confidence which are the basis of personal responsibility and national success.

Attempting to do too much, politicians have failed to do those things which *should*be done. This has damaged the country and the authority of government. We must concentrate on what should be the priorities for *any* government. They are set out in this manifesto.

Those who look in these pages for lavish promises or detailed commitments on every subject will look in vain. We may be able to do more in the next five years than we indicate here. We believe we can. But the Conservative government's first job will be to rebuild our economy and reunite a divided and disillusioned people.

Our five tasks are:

1. To restore the health of our economic and social life, by controlling inflation and striking a fair balance between the rights and duties of the trade union movement.
2. To restore incentives so that hard work pays, success is rewarded and genuine new jobs are created in an expanding economy.
3. To uphold Parliament and the rule of law.
4. To support family life, by helping people to become home-owners, raising the standards of their children's education, and concentrating welfare services on the effective support of the old, the sick, the disabled and those who are in real need.
5. To strengthen Britain's defences and work with our allies to protect our interests in an increasingly threatening world.

This is the strategy of the next Conservative government.