Examination paper for ENG 2452: Britain in Europe

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Examination date: 16.12.2013

Examination time (from-to): 9.00 – 13.00

Permitted examination support material:
Collins Cobuild Advanced Dictionary
(or earlier versions with the title: Collins Cobuild English (Advanced Learner's) Dictionary)

Language: English

Number of pages:

Number of pages enclosed:

Checked by:

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Date

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Signature
You MUST answer Sections A and B.

Section A amounts to 50% of your final grade. Section B amounts to 50% of your final grade.

You should divide your time accordingly.

You must achieve a pass grade in both sections of the exam to achieve a pass grade overall.

Section A: Source Analysis

Answer BOTH questions 1 and 2 using the primary source extracts.

1. What can historians learn from Tony Benn’s account of the Labour government’s decision to support continued EC membership in 1975?

18 March 1975

‘At Cabinet we had before us the papers detailing the renegotiation package, and for the first time the issue of sovereignty was discussed properly. The crucial question was whether the Community was to be a supranational structure or a community of sovereign states…

I said “This is the most important constitutional document ever put before a Labour Cabinet. Our whole political history is contained in this paper. It recommends the reversal of hundreds of years of history which has progressively widened the power of the people over their governors. Now great chunks are to be handed to the [European] Commission. I can think of no body of men outside the Kremlin who have so much power without a shred of accountability for what they do”…

Harold then brought us to on the main question. Should we accept the terms or not? “I recommend that we should stay in and that is the view of the Foreign Secretary, though he will speak for himself. We have substantially achieved our objectives, the Community has changed de facto and de jure”…

I made my final speech. “Prime Minister, I fear that the Cabinet is about to make a tragic error, if it recommends that Britain stays in. I recognise that Jim has done his best and probably got the best terms that are compatible with continuing membership. But we have not achieved our Manifesto objectives and indeed we did not even try”…

The real case for entry has never been spelled out, which is that there should be a fully federal Europe in which we become a province. It has never been spelled out because people would never accept it. We are at the moment on a federal escalator, moving as we talk, going towards a federal objective we do not wish to reach…

This it was that the Cabinet reached its view to stay in the Common Market.’

2. How much does Michael Spicer’s account of the paving motion tell us about the divisions that plagued John Major’s leadership in this period?

‘For reasons which have never been entirely clear to me, Major’s main response to the Danish vote – besides claiming (accurately) that it would be reversed – was to commit himself to an hors d’oeuvre vote on the treaty, to be debated in advance of the proper ratification bill. This was termed a “paving” vote, and served merely to put the Bill at risk before it had even reached parliament.

The paving vote was scheduled for 5 November and became the focal point for members of the Fresh Start Group, the government itself, and the media.

The build up to this vote on all sides was feverish. Everyone knew that it was critical. John Major has confirmed in his autobiography that, had he lost the vote, he would have immediately resigned.

On Tuesday 3 November 1992, the night before the crucial paving debate, I chaired a meeting attended by more than 30 colleagues - more than enough to overturn the government’s majority, given that Labour would vote with us.

The response of the government whips was understandably brutal, even physical. One senior colleague, having been caught in the men’s cloakroom, was pulled by his hair into the government voting lobby.

The net effect of all this was that when the result of the vote was announced at 10.15pm on 4 November, the figures were 319 for the motion, 316 against: a government majority of three.

In my view, this was the single most decisive event in a rebellion which stretched many months ahead. Had we won this vote as, the night before, it looked as if we would, history would have moved in a different direction. John Major would have resigned, and the process of ratifying the Maastricht Treaty would have ground to a halt.’

Section B: Essay

Answer ONE of the following questions.

1. Why did the Attlee, Churchill, and Eden governments show so little interest in European integration during the period 1945-57?

2. Was 1960 a major turning-point in British history?

3. ‘That such an unnecessary and irrational project as building a European superstate was ever embarked upon will seem in future years to be perhaps the greatest folly of the modern era. And that Britain, with her traditional strengths and global destiny, should ever have been part of it will appear a political error of historic magnitude.’


Do Margaret Thatcher’s comments account for the nature of Britain’s role in Europe since 1973?