

MINUTES OF THE STRATEGY GROUP

FOURTH MEETING: 21st JULY 1986

Present: Prime Minister
Lord President
Chancellor of the Exchequer
Home Secretary
Party Chairman
Chief Whip

Also present: Mr. Alison
Professor Griffiths
Mr. Sherbourne
Mr. Jeffrey Archer
Mr. Hal Miller MP
Mr. Michael Dobbs
Sir Anthony Garner

Sir Christopher Lawson
Mr. John Lacy
Mr. Harvey Thomas
Mr. John Desborough
Mr. Keith Britto
Mr. Harris (Secretary)

Apologies: Foreign Secretary

The Chairman explained that the purpose of the meeting was to demonstrate the state of preparation of the Party Organisation in readiness for the General Election. It was his intention to ensure that the Prime Minister had the maximum flexibility in choosing the date of an Election. All the organisation of preparations would be completed by Christmas Day 1986.

Mr. Jeffrey Archer explained steps in hand for the critical seats.

Sir Christopher Lawson explained the steps in hand for direct mail. The Prime Minister emphasised the importance of the content of letters sent out to make sure they were written clearly and simply. They should also be designed to elicit a response from the recipient of the letter. Sir Christopher Lawson also explained the use being made by the Party of computers.

The Chairman said that the printing operation at Reading was being re-organised and that new staff would be in place by October. Steps were also being taken to ensure effective security at our printers.

The Chairman explained the new operation for overseas voters, "Conservatives Abroad".

On organisation, Sir Anthony Garner set out steps in hand concerning critical seats, constituency agents, the training of officers and candidates, the use of experienced ex-constituency officers to help with critical seats in each area, the arrangements for Ministerial tours and speakers, his preparation for planning Ministers' movements in a General Election proper, the continuation of the grassroots campaign, new material to be published, a review of election material and the cascade system.

- 2 -

On local government, Mr. Hal Miller explained the significance which would be attached to the local government elections of May 1987. The Chairman set out the lessons which had been learned from the 1986 local elections and the measures being taken accordingly. Mr. Miller explained the support that would be provided to local government candidates.

On campaigning and training Mr. John Lacy set out the steps in hand for briefing and training Association officers, candidates and agents in order to make more effective contact with the electorate and in particular to targetted voters. The Prime Minister emphasised the importance of the content of these briefing meetings. It was also agreed that particular emphasis should be given towards contact with youth and the use of younger Members of Parliament.

Mr. Harvey Thomas set out the steps in hand for the October Party Conference. A slogan for the conference would have to be chosen soon. It was also agreed that once the slogan and theme of the conference had been identified, those Ministers speaking at the conference would need to be informed so that their speeches could reflect the main theme.

Mr. John Desborough explained the contacts being made by the Chairman with those in the press, television and radio. The Chairman was giving interviews to programmes and publications with a more specific appeal so that his views were read or heard by those who were not especially political.

The Prime Minister referred to the large number of press releases of Ministers' speeches coming out of Central Office each Friday. She hoped that there would be greater co-ordination in future so that the media's attention could be directed to one major ministerial speech; otherwise more than one senior minister would make a speech, the press would have no idea which was the more significant, the impact would be reduced and Ministers' time wasted.

Mr. Robin Harris set out the work in hand for the Research Department for the General Election concerning secretarial support for the new policy groups, publications especially on the Opposition parties, the Campaign Guide, Speakers' Notes, Daily Notes and Manifesto briefing. He also mentioned one or two initiatives currently under consideration. On "Questions of Policy" a paper on the establishment of these meetings would in due course be submitted to the Prime Minister.

Mr. Harris also explained that he had agreed a tentative allocation of duties during an election in respect of personnel likely to be available, from the Research Department and from special advisers.

It was agreed that the Party must ensure that it had, and readily accessible, all the necessary photographs and film footage with which to attack the Opposition and show with maximum effect the achievements of this Government. Concerning the latter, mention was made in particular of "before" and "after" photographs of improvements on derelict land and the building of hospitals and roads.

On Party Election Broadcasts, it was agreed that two or three of these would have to be ready in advance of the election.

At the conclusion of the meeting the Chairman emphasised that this meeting had been concerned with organisation and not the content of the campaign. The Prime Minister said that it was important to look at the style of campaigning and come up with ideas on a new and fresh approach.

The Prime Minister specifically thanked everybody present for their contribution to the meeting.

SS/AP

PRIME MINISTER

Strategy Group ⁸⁷ _{Lead} _{clashes}
Meeting on Monday 21st July at Conservative Central Office

During the meeting and the presentations by Directors, you may wish to raise the following points:

1. This year's Party Conference: the slogan and the theme.
(it is important that all Ministers are notified of the theme so that their speeches all aim for the same targets.)
2. Critical Seats: what action is being taken?
3. Party Political Broadcasts: what themes are being deployed?
It is important that these themes would allow us to move easily into an election campaign at short notice.
4. The state of the "War Book".
5. Who is responsible for the Opposition Parties? It is vital that during the election campaign we have at our finger-tips immediate access to the telling quotes and telling photographs (eg. Kinnock and Scargill). As people's responsibilities changes, this material must be available on a systematic basis.
6. Who is responsible for keeping visual material (photographs and film footage) of the achievements under this Government: "before" and "after" photographs of reclamation of derelict land, new hospitals, new offices and factories, new sports facilities, shopping centres etc.
7. Your own campaign as Prime Minister: what work is in hand on planning your tours, walkabouts, rallies, television and radio appearances?

① Groups to be Targeted

STEPHEN SHERBOURNE

18.7.86

Critical

✓ Selby Archer ✓

D-M Cameron

✓ Chris Lawson ✓

Agenda Day?

✓ Tony Lawson

Had Miller - March Day

369
(207)
1/3
5,600

Comparing the 1st
groups

Osma Henry

Henry Bone

Parliament
- Speeches in
Mack
(Worship
Honour)

Issue

- Tom Jackson

Main/Division
Sunday

Research

-
Robert Mann

Xpress / Stan

38
32
21

42 1/2

SS



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From:
MICHAEL DOBBS
Chief of Staff

Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
London SW1

8th July 1986

Jean Prime Minister,

Media Monitoring

I mentioned last week that I would let you have a note on our media monitoring activities.

There are four prime objectives of this undertaking:

- to enable us to identify ways of improving our own approaches to the broadcasters;
- to ensure that the broadcasters approach political/current affairs coverage in a much less irresponsible fashion by letting them know that we are monitoring their activities;
- to establish in the public mind that there is bias and incompetence in broadcast journalism;
- to encourage and assist government departments in carrying out their own broadcasting activities.

The operation is based on the premis that broadcasters have a duty to handle current affairs and political issues in a balanced and objective fashion. The viewer should be able to make up his own mind on the basis of the facts presented, and not be led to an opinion by the subjective editorial activities of the broadcasters. We should also recognise that Central Office and many government departments have given much less attention to the broadcasting media than they have to the press. We have to put our own house in order while encouraging the broadcasting to do likewise.

.../...

It is not an easy task to get journalists or the general public to accept allegations of political bias or incompetence, and we must avoid the allegation that our complaints are simply political petulance. We should try to present our complaints in as non-partisan fashion as possible, emphasising incompetence as much as political bias. Tony Jay and I have nearly finalised an analysis of the BBC's coverage of Libya and also of your recent trip to Israel which I hope will highlight this style of approach. I will let you have a copy of it as soon as it is ready. Tony wishes to remain anonymous in this activity.

We need to set up a relatively simple system which will allow us to use voluntary assistance (MPs or Party workers) as effectively as possible. We are proposing:

1. To tape selected news and current affairs programmes for reference purposes, and to establish a monthly library of leading news bulletins. We shall be selective as we shall not have the capability to have a comprehensive monitoring system or to deal with all allegations of bias.
2. To establish a head count to ensure that there is a balance between Conservative/Government speakers and others, or to discover why a balance is not being maintained.
3. To analyse the treatment of pressure groups which fall into the political category, to ensure that these are also balanced by pro-government spokesmen. (A recent BBC leaflet, for instance, suggests that the Rotary Club is a proper balance for CND!)
4. On relevant programmes we propose to establish whether interviewers' attitudes are consistent (whether they are as aggressive or cynical with Opposition spokesmen as they are with Government spokesmen).
5. In looking at the issues, to analyse the number of specific references to leading contentious issues such as "health cuts", job losses, and bad industrial news, and to see whether these are balanced by reference to good news stories.
6. To examine the broadcasters selection of news stories to see whether they habitually emphasise items which do not command the attention of other news media. (eg. pressure group activity, minor industrial disputes, etc.)

In order to set up such a system, we are undertaking the following activities:

- taking on a new broadcasting officer for our Press Department who has relevant experience and specific responsibility for improving our contacts with friendly and competent broadcasters. We need to take the initiative much more than we are doing at present;
- taking on media officers for the crucial regions of the Midlands and the North West (currently we have no regional media officers in England).

- setting up a CCO team during the recess to analyse various news programmes;
- liaising with relevant government departments on broadcasting matters through Ian Gilles and Bernard Ingham;
- the Chairman will talk to the Chief Whip concerning possible use of backbenchers.

It is important to emphasise that we wish to encourage co-operation with responsible broadcasters, and to avoid journalists closing ranks on the issue of "freedom from interference". Therefore, we are hoping not to be entirely negative, and to be highly selective about our targets.

We are also talking to a new media monitoring operation which has been set up by Brian Crozier and others. We wish to avoid duplication and, hopefully, we will find many areas of mutual support.

Please let me know if there is anything not covered in this note which you would like us to concentrate on specifically.

*Yours sincerely,
Michael.*

POINTS THE PRIME MINISTER MAY WISH TO RAISE DURING THE
MEETING OF THE STRATEGY GROUP AT CENTRAL OFFICE ON MONDAY
21st JULY

1. The state of the War Book
2. The need for a fresh approach in an election so that we are clearly seen to have moved on since the 1983 election.
3. What ideas do people have about the Prime Minister during the election: tours, walkabouts, speeches and television.
4. What action is being taken to help the critical seats.
5. Who is keeping incriminating photographs of, for example, Kinnock and Scargill (I have asked Central Office to do this)
6. Who is keeping "Before and After" photographs of improvements in derelict land, our developments etc. (I have also asked Central Office to do this)
7. Party political broadcasts - they should be co-ordinated into a strategy ready to move at any time into five election broadcasts.

SS

15.7.86

Jeffrey

Critics

- What to do (Compare etc)
- What do advise. - Between how often

- Then

Chris

Direct Point - ~~Provide~~ Information *
= Method =

Cons. abroad

10th Edition

- Needs a
Chamber,
Cos. -

Jim

Anyone who take away on
polling days.

Holidays - sick relative

Tom

- Tactical notes

C.O.A.'s

Central Office Agent.

Detailed report.

Personal equipment.

67 sets - 38

Financial structure

Leadership = others / candidates

Media // Spec. int. groups //

Brookings

Who if you to come in.
William ...

New Voices & Q&P →

Free
to News papers.

Sec. Policy
Gps
Before. Range -
frequency

Dump.

Publisher of
guides

← Policy guide for consumers

← 19 replacements