

G.R.

3rd December 1979

Richard asked me to let you know that your Public Relations Strategy paper went into the Box over the Weekend. The PM did not make any comment on it except to underline words/lines on pages 1 and 2. I enclose a photogopy.

Tessa Jardine Paterson
Political Office

Gordon Reece Esq

W/E BOX - FROM GORDON REECE.

A PUBLIC RELATIONS STRATEGY

The four arms of the publicity department - press relations, public relations, advertising and publications - must now be directed at a General Election likely to take place between late September 1983 and spring 1984.

TARGET GROUPS

The four principal target groups are

- a. Women in working class households
- b. Skilled, semi-skilled and other 'try-hard' workers
- c. Conservative active supporters
- d. Opinion formers, particularly in the universities.

There are several other significant categories whom we will need to add to this list from time to time.

Particularly the elderly, the first time voter, the council house buyer, the first time house buyer, the businessman etc.

But research has clearly shown that we won the last election by a change in the voting behaviour of the working classes, and especially women in working class homes.

Geographically it would also seem prudent to weight the delivery of our messages at the North-West and West Yorkshire, and if circumstances improve, West Scotland. If our support in the south and west midlands were to drop at the next election by 2% but the North West and West Yorkshire brought into line with the national trend, we would retain our parliamentary majority at roughly the same level.

Omitted from this list is the first-time voter. He is more likely to be inspired by ideals and a philosophy than by the success or failure of the Government's economic policy. We would do better to encourage active participation by Government ministers in university debates and to involve ministers in youth activities, and postpone our major effort in this area until 1982.

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The pensioner and the elderly on the other hand are likely to be highly motivated by economic measures and the Government's success.

But:

a. A significant number of the present elderly will be non-voters at the next election;

b. By 1983 a new generation of the elderly will have appeared who at the time of writing still regard themselves as middle-aged;

c. The Government's economic policy is long-term policy, and the elderly do not look at things long-term.

The salience of our message to the pensioner would be better in 1983.

OPINION FORMERS

Opinion formers come into two categories.

The first and by far the more important is the media. The capacity of the press and television to help form attitudes cannot be overestimated. A favourable mention in say the Sunday Express or the Sun reaches over ten million people.

A similar message on the ITN or BBC news reaches over eleven million. In the case of the Sun and ITN news this gives a virtual saturation of target groups A and B.

The importance of the press department in its work of influencing these vital sources must never be undersold.

The other opinion formers are more disparate. Some school teachers and clergymen are opinion formers and others not.

Some businessmen are opinion formers and others not.

We could ask constituency chairmen for a list of opinion formers in their areas and transfer them to our computer mailing list, but the replies are likely to be unreasonably weighted with recent constituency chairmen and presidents and other worthies and to have far too few women on the list.

We could of course augment our mailing list by buying opinion formers lists from say Diner's Club, American Express etc. But it is worth remembering that the commercial pick-up of direct mail is only 2%.

TELEVISION

Television can change people's hearts and we should use it that way.

We have six television party politicals a year.

We should use them to promote the party, the Prime Minister and the Government in the language and tone of voice suggested under 'Policy'.

In addition the Prime Minister might consider broadcasting two fire-side chats a year on television using PPB time.

I have made enquiries from the US networks on the frequency of President Roosevelt's radio fire-side chats. To their surprise and mine they were far less frequent than people remember. Only 7 broadcasts in his first term and 6 in his second - an average of less than two a year. Obviously two a year seems a lot to the viewer and listener.

This method of presentation would suit the PM's style and would obviate the need for a Labour reply which Ministerial broadcasts allow.

The Press Office will also endeavour to place television current affairs programmes on the subject which are favourable to the party's PR strategy - for example this month we shall be pushing trade union reform and the sale of council houses. Our success in this field depends on early advice from the Chief Whip on the probable date for the publication of Bills. The Publicity Department receives every help from the Chief Whip's Office.

ADVERTISING

Tim Bell has submitted a separate paper on our advertising strategy which I endorse. I recommend that an advertising campaign should be mounted along these lines during all the parliamentary recesses in 1980 - with the major campaign obviously being in the summer recess. We should direct them in Target Groups a) and b) through posters, women's magazines and popular newspapers and to Target Groups c) and d) through selected up-market and specialised newspapers and magazines.

Tim Bell's suggestion that the COI advertising budget could be properly deployed to advise people of their rights on say the sale of council houses once the Bill becomes law is an example of how constructive ways can be found to promote the detail of Government policy. In this regard it is worth bearing in mind that the Labour Party at one time included the phrase: 'You know it makes sense' in most COI advertising and then incorporated that very phrase into their election slogan when the time came round.

PRESS RELATIONS

The Press Department will continue to advise on, print and publish and individually promote Ministers and MP's speeches. These continue to be over-weighted towards Fridays, a bad day as Saturday newspapers are small. We shall try to continue to encourage Ministers to make party statements on Sundays and other good days for newspaper coverage.

We expect early results next year from the policy of Cabinet Ministers meeting the "back benches" of newspapers in off-the-record discussions at newspaper offices in the evenings. Lunches are seldom useful because a) the really influential people like the night editor, the news editor and assistant editor, chief sub, picture editor etc are never asked and b) the room is filled with non-journalist executives and other worthies who want to make their number with a member of the Cabinet.

Evening meetings of the sort I envisage were pioneered by the Prime Minister when Leader of the Opposition at the offices of the Sun. She often felt that little had been gained by these exercises. But the working journalists loved them. Anyone who doubts the success of the ventures has only to read the paper.

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We hope to persuade 12 leading Cabinet members, and possibly on rare occasions the Prime Minister herself, to visit The Sun, Daily Mail, Daily Express and Daily Telegraph over the next two years and to visit BBC Television Current Affairs and the CA and News Groups of selected ITV Companies.

Obviously the amount of time that the Prime Minister and any members of the Cabinet can devote to party business on television and in the press is limited. But it should not be too limited. The cost-effective use of time in terms of column inches and air-time is unlikely to be matched by any other activity.

G R / ASMcC
27.11.79