

SAFE

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Richard

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GENERAL ELECTION ARRANGEMENTS

Minute of a meeting held in the Leader's Office on 8th August 1978

Present: Mrs Thatcher
Lord Thorneycroft
Lady Young
Mr Howell
Mr Boaden
Mr Garner
Mr Howarth
Mr Stanley
Miss Stephens
Mr Wolfson

Photocopies of this note sent
to Alan Howarth & J. Wolfson
22/8/78 AW

1. Timing of Press Conferences

It was reported that the Labour Party had indicated to us that they were determined to hold their press conference before ours. We had said that we too wished to go first, and we had therefore proposed to Transport House that the two major Parties should hold the first press conference on alternate days. They had however rejected this proposal.

- No - 1st of M. U. was lost

It was therefore agreed that Mr Reece should be asked to write to Mr Percy Clark explaining why we had made this proposal, observing that it had always been possible in the past to come to an amicable agreement, asking him to confirm that they were indeed rejecting our suggestion and saying that if that was so we would have no alternative but to go at our chosen time and if necessary go simultaneously with them. Our letter should be released to the press.

It should be removed before it is sent.

2. A discussion took place about initiatives by the Party in the few days immediately prior to the official opening of the Election campaign on Monday D - 17.

(i) It was agreed that Mrs Thatcher would exercise her entitlement to a reply broadcast the following evening if the Prime Minister were to make a ministerial broadcast on the day the Election was announced. If there were no ministerial broadcasts she would do a television interview on the evening of the day the Election was announced. Mrs Thatcher asked for information on the previous use of ministerial broadcasts and on the rules or conventions governing length, format etc. Texts of previous broadcasts would be obtained for her. It was noted that someone should be asked to draft what she might say.

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(ii) The Candidates Conference should be held on Thursday D - 21. Arrangements would be subject to agreement with the Chairman of the 1922 Committee. Lord Thorneycroft would propose to Mr du Cann that the Conference should be held at the Grosvenor House Hotel. There should be a buffet lunch at 12.30 p.m. The following should be invited to attend: all candidates (including Scottish), Front Bench peers, the Party Treasurer, the National Union Officers, the Area Chairmen (if they felt they could reasonably be away from their Areas) and Central Office Directors. After lunch Mrs Thatcher should speak on the issues and strategy of the campaign. Lord Thorneycroft should then speak on organisation and the back-up from Central Office for the constituencies. Lord Thorneycroft and Mr Maude should then answer questions.

(iii) A meeting of the Shadow Cabinet would be held on the morning of Thursday D - 21, before the Candidates Conference.

(iv) The Manifesto press conference would be on Friday D - 20 in time to catch the evening television and press.

We would not have the full number of copies of the Manifesto printed until the date of the Election had been formally announced. Consideration should however be given to having a short Manifesto available which could be printed at very short notice. Consideration should also be given to having 1000 copies of the longer document printed quickly either by McCorquodales or by Central Office.

(v) Mrs Thatcher's Adoption Meeting at Finchley would be held at 2.30 p.m. on Saturday D - 19. This would be the first of Mrs Thatcher's major campaign speeches.

(vi) Mrs Thatcher would not undertake any public engagements on Sunday D - 18. We should aim to get pictures of senior colleagues on television that evening and in the press on the morning of Monday D - 17. A picture of Mr Whitelaw playing golf was suggested.

3. A paper was discussed on morning briefing arrangements concerning the Leader. The proposals in it were agreed.
4. The 9th draft of the Leader's tour programme was discussed in general terms.

Mrs Thatcher said that she would wish to spend more time in her constituency than was at present scheduled. She also felt that the programme was too crowded. The engagements that she undertook must be geared for maximum appropriate media coverage.

On Saturday D - 12 Mrs Thatcher would need to be at Finchley by 2.0 p.m.

On Sunday D - 11 Mrs Thatcher would not herself make a speech and it was therefore important that Mr Whitelaw, Sir Geoffrey Howe or Sir Keith Joseph should do so. She would be happy to do a phone-in programme, possibly on Capital Radio, that day. She would also be happy to be publicised visiting the home of a sporting or stage celebrity that day.

It was agreed that it would be preferable to hold the CTU rally on Sunday D - 4 in a hall with a capacity of, say, 600 or 700 people and have it full to overflowing rather than book a hall for 2000. The idea of holding the rally in Nottingham rather than London was considered and rejected.

Election Call on Monday D - 3 should be cut out.