




10 DOWNING STREET

Prime Minister

Our Party in Scotland.

1. Michael Ancram asked me to let you see the attached Memorandum which he has prepared, as a result of his first four months as Chairman of our Party in Scotland.
2. Michael has send a copy to Peter Thorneycroft.

29th August, 1980


Ian Gow

2.

Memorandum on Scotland

I felt it would be useful if I were to set down on paper the current political situation in Scotland as I have seen it develop over these past four months since I was appointed Chairman. It is of necessity subjective, although I have sought objective analysis of these views before putting them forward.

1. Party Organisation

I have taken as my starting point the need to restructure the way in which the Party communicates in Scotland. This has for long been one of our weakest areas, but I am confident that by the autumn we will have improved our lines of communication both within the Party and to the media. The acquisition of a new Press Officer is of great assistance and I hope that by the beginning of the next session we will have set up a form of machinery for co-ordinating all Scottish communication embracing the M.P.s, M.E.P.s and those on the approved candidates list.

It has been a difficult summer for Conservatives in Scotland, and while morale has remained high it has become increasingly evident that the heightened rate of political activity which I will need to achieve must inevitably follow a better and more readily understood communication of what the Government has already done, is doing, and why.

I hope eventually to bring the constituency parties actively into this process, and thus to feel more part of the campaign and of the Government's achievements. We are fortunate in Scotland, I believe, to be small enough to achieve this effectively in a way not possible in the larger organisation South of the Border.

While I will continue to encourage and ~~chivy~~ local constituency organisations, I hope by increasing the feeling of participation to reawaken a degree of activism especially in the Labour strongholds in the West of Scotland which alone can provide the seeds for building up the Tory vote there again. The feeling of helplessness in such areas is our greatest hurdle. I hope that greater co-ordination and participation can cross it.

2. Party Problems

There are in my experience fewer organisational problems than there have been for some time, and the Party is more united than for many years. Of course there are a few exceptions in certain constituencies which remain to be dealt with, but by and large these are internal personality-clash difficulties.

Boundary revisions will and indeed have started to throw up a few problems. Many parts of Scotland are intensely parochial and changes are hard to accept. I am taking the strong line that the

Party will not support local appeals unless they are to the overall benefit of the Party in given areas. I expect a few personality problems to arise in this sphere as well, where our M.P.s may well find themselves in limited cases contesting with each other for the same new seat.

The basic task in this quarter is to keep the lid on the kettle which inevitably will boil a bit.

3. Party Prospects.

The local government and Glasgow Central by-election results were not good for us, but were not unexpected. I was encouraged by a recent Party Political Broadcast on T.V. (July 16th, made and produced in Scotland) which caused an unusually large number of applications for membership and information to be made to the Party - many of them from the industrial West of Scotland. The basis of this P.P.B. was philosophical - the purpose and aspirations of Conservatism in Scotland tied to Government policy. I am sure that at hard times this is a better format than straight policy projection.

We must expect fairly rough grass root reaction to increasing unemployment, redundancies and closures. On past experience this is likely to be marginally worse in Scotland than South of the Border. The most important danger inherent in this is not the usual and temporary loss of support to Labour, but a rather longer lasting switch of support to the S.N.P. This is a danger which we cannot afford to underestimate. In 1973/4 this trend did not respond to an improving economic picture in Scotland, partly because it is a more 'thinking' switch than that to Labour and does seem to carry for one election.

The lesson in this respect from 1973/4 is that the original switch must where possible be headed off. I believe that this can only be achieved by a conscious and open acceptance by the Government of Scotland's particular problems of infrastructure, communications and geographical distance. I am not suggesting special treatment which often passes unnoticed, but a publicly seen awareness by the Government that these differences and difficulties do exist. The Scottish mentality is sadly based on a traditional inferiority complex which manifests itself in arrogance and aggression. They like to be noticed and understood.

In more practical terms I believe that it is important that the Government continues to show its confidence in Scotland by providing opportunities for new industries and new technologies. This sort of confidence is a sound base on which the Party can effectively campaign for support. I am optimistic enough to believe that if we can get this base right, we can really increase our support in our difficult areas.

4. Parliamentary

While it is not my job to report on Scottish parliamentary performances, I mention the last year for its political effect in Scotland. There can be little doubt that the Scottish team has come over well, especially in contrast to their Labour opposite numbers. A small backbench team has also more than held its own against superior numbers on the other side, and this has been noticed and remarked upon in Scotland.

Much of this has been achieved because of a basically united front, which has been reflected within the Scottish Party as a whole. I am most anxious that this unity be preserved and that any attempts to revive old differences should be firmly discouraged, in particular where they may be generated from outside the Scottish Party. The devolution wounds are only recently healed and a period of united consolidation is vital.

5. Conclusions

The Party has entered the summer recess in reasonably good shape. There is much to be done in increasing activism and in continuously improving our communication of the Government's purpose in everyday and acceptable terms.

I hope to use the Chairman's office as the pivotal point for both of these. I am hopeful that I will get all possible co-operation from Ministers both in Scotland and the U.K. in tying these strands together into a wellknit and dynamic force.

12th August 1980
Edinburgh

Michael Aueram

ANCRAM, A.P.
SCOTLAND.

29th August, 1980

Thank you so much for your letter of 12th August, with which you enclosed a Memorandum dealing with the position of our Party in Scotland.

This I have shown to the Prime Minister.

I take it that you have also sent a copy to Peter Thorneycroft.

If you are going to be in London before the House re-assembles, please give me a ring (930-4433) and invite yourself to lunch or dine.

I hope that you are enjoying the Recess.

Ian Gow

Michael Ancram, Esq., MA, LL.B, MP.

From: Michael Ancram, M.A., LL.B., M.P.



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

12th August, 1980

Ian Gow, Esq., M.P.
10 Downing Street,
London S.W.1

D. Ian.

Thank you for your letter about the Eastbourne Bill. I enjoyed my evening and in particular your very fine early morning oratory.

I enclose as arranged a memorandum on the Scottish Party for the Prime Minister. I hope it will be useful, as I believe that it does contain not only a report of the current situation but a few pointers to the future. I must emphasize that we are not looking for handouts, but for verbal evidence that our problems are understood and taken into account. This has always been our weakness as a party in Government so far as Scotland is concerned. We give money to Scotland, but not understanding. The emphasis should be the reverse.

I can enlarge on this if required!

*Yours ever
Michael*