

CROSBY BY-ELECTION

BACKGROUND BRIEF

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## CROSBY BY-ELECTION BACKGROUND BRIEF

### 1. Introduction

Since May 1979 we have had six Parliamentary by-elections in mainland Great Britain (this excludes the Fermanagh and South Tyrone by-election) and in only one case (Croydon N.W.) has the by-election resulted in a change in the Party holding the seat.

The by-election in Crosby has been caused by the death of the sitting Conservative Member, Sir Graham Page, who had held the seat for us since he took it over from the previous Conservative Member at a by-election held in 1953. The seat has been held by the Conservatives since it was created in the redistribution of constituency boundaries that preceded the 1950 General Election. Before 1950 the constituency of Waterloo which covered much of the area of the present constituency of Crosby had been held by the Conservatives from its creation for the 1918 General Election.

Graham Page held the seat for the Conservatives in the May 1979 General Election with a majority of 19,272 (31.6%) over the Labour candidate, making Crosby the 86th safest seat in Great Britain. Full details of the May 1979 General Election results in the constituency are shown below:-

#### MAY 1979 GENERAL ELECTION - CROSBY

<u>Candidate</u>	<u>Party</u>	<u>Vote</u>	<u>Percentage of Total Votes Cast (%)</u>
Graham Page	Conservative	34,768	57.0
Anthony Mulhearn	Labour	15,496	25.4
Anthony Hill	Liberal	9,302	15.2
Peter Hussey	Ecology	1,489*	2.4
Majority		19,272	31.6
Electorate		81,208	
Turnout		75.2%	

\* Candidate lost deposit

The redistribution of constituency boundaries before the February 1974 General Election involved major changes in the boundaries of the Crosby constituency - these changes involved more than 5% of the electorate and partly account for the increase in Conservative majority from 5,692 in 1970 to 15,570 in February 1974. The provisional proposals of the Boundary Commission for England for the constituency will, if approved, result in a further change in boundaries of the constituency, probably before the next General Election.

Graham Page's majority in May 1979 of 19,272 (31.6%) over Labour compares with a majority of 12,175 (21.0%) in October 1974, again over Labour and 15,570 (25.0%) in February 1974, again over Labour. His majority in May 1979 was the largest Conservative majority ever in the seat. Graham Page's vote fell from 32,519 (52.2%) in February 1974 to 29,764 (51.5%) in October 1974 but increased to 34,768 (57%) in May 1979. The Liberal candidate in February 1974 gained 12,842 votes (20.6%), this fell to 10,429 (18.0%) in October 1974 and to 9,302 (15.2%) in May 1979. Before the February 1974 General Election the previous time a Liberal candidate had stood in Crosby was in the 1950 General Election. The

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Labour vote in Crosby was 16,949 (27.2%) in February 1974, increasing to 17,589 (30.5%) in October 1974 and falling to 15,496 (25.4%) in May 1979.

Details of the votes obtained by the main parties in the February 1974, October 1974 and May 1979 General Election are shown below:-

FEBRUARY 1974, OCTOBER 1974 AND MAY 1979 GENERAL ELECTION RESULTS

- CROSBY

Party	February 1974		October 1974		May 1979	
	Vote	%	Vote	%	Vote	%
Conservative	32,519	52.2	29,764	51.5	34,768	57.0
Labour	16,949	27.2	17,589	30.5	15,496	25.4
Liberal	12,842	20.6	10,429	18.0	9,302	15.2
Ecology	-	-	-	-	1,489*	2.4
Majority	15,570	25.0	12,175	21.0	19,272	31.6
Electorate	77,860		78,583		81,208	
Turnout	80.0%		73.5%		75.2%	

Turnout in Crosby in May 1979 was 75.2% compared with 76.0% nationally. This compares with 73.5% in Crosby in October 1974 (72.8% nationally) and 80.0% in February 1974 (78.8% nationally).

Shirley Williams needs a swing of 21% from the Conservatives to gain the seat, assuming she retains all the May 1979 Liberal vote.

2. Local Government Election Results in Crosby

The constituency of Crosby is included almost wholly within the boundaries of the Metropolitan Borough of Sefton. The Conservative Party has controlled the Metropolitan Borough Council since it was created in 1973. The average percentage share of the votes cast in the May 1980 local government election (the last for the Borough) were:

Party	%
Conservative	50.5
Labour	23.0
Liberal	18.9
Ratepayer	7.7
Turnout	37.7

Note: These figures do not take account of the votes in the Molyneux Ward - only a small part of which is in constituency.

At present the Borough Council is composed of 38 Conservative Councillors 18 Labour Councillors, 5 Liberals, 1 Ratepayer and 1 S.D.P. The constituency is represented by 21 Conservative Councillors, 3 Labour Councillors, 1 S.D.P. 1 Ratepayers and 1 Liberal. The Liberals gained their seat in a 1980 local government by-election and the Social Democrats gained their <sup>seat</sup> in a local government by-election held three weeks ago.

Details of the 1980 local government election results in the constituency are shown below:-

1980 SEFTON COUNCIL ELECTION RESULTS

<u>Ward</u>	<u>Electorate</u>	<u>Vote</u>			<u>Party holding Seat (majority)</u>
		<u>CON</u>	<u>LAB</u>	<u>LIB</u>	
<u>Crosby Church</u>	9,822	962 (26.8%)	1,731 (48.7%)	879 (24.5%)	LAB (789)
Victoria	10,294	2,173 (49.4%)	730 (16.6%)	1,499 (34.0%)	CON (674)
Bundellsands	9,343	2,667 (75.5%)	431 (12.2%)	437 (12.4%)	CON (2,230)
Manor	10,446	2,250 (64.5%)	1,237 (35.5%)	-	CON (1,013)
<u>Formby Ravenmeols</u>	8,708	1,617 (43.3%)	434 (12.2%)	1,519 (42.6%)	CON (98)
Harington	9,984	1,946 (54.2%)	390 (10.9%)	1,254 (34.9%)	CON (692)
<u>Maghull Sudell</u>	9,694	1,635 (46.6%)	796 (22.7%)	Ratepayer 1,081 (30.8%)	CON (554)
Park	10,418	1,713 (43.2%)	1,041 (26.3%)	Ratepayer 1,210 (30.5%)	CON (503)
Molyneaux (part)	-	1,834 (51.3%)	789 (22.1%)	949 (26.6%)	CON (805)

3. General Background on Constituency

The Constituency of Crosby is located just outside Liverpool and consists of three main population centres - Crosby, Formby and Maghull. All of these are almost exclusively residential and serve as dormitory towns for Liverpool.

Crosby contains the largest concentration of older properties, and tends to attract professional people, those with established wealth, and a large number of retired or those nearing retirement. The Formby and Maghull areas have grown rapidly in recent years with modern housing developments attracting junior and middle rank executives working in Liverpool.

The total population of the constituency is approximately 111,206 broken down between the three main residential areas as follows:-

<u>Area</u>	<u>Population</u>
Crosby	51,663
Formby	26,819
Maghill	32,724

Crosby has a relatively high concentration of elderly people and Formby

and Maghull have a significant concentration of young couples with children. An approximate age profile of the three areas is shown below:-

	<u>Crosby</u> %	<u>Formby</u> %	<u>Maghill</u> %
0-16	25.0	29.2	28.4
17-44	35.5	40.1	41.2
45-64	23.7	21.5	22.4
65+	15.8	9.2	7.9

It is estimated that between 25% and 30% of the population of the Constituency are Roman Catholic, mostly of Irish descent, often 3rd or 4th generation. There is a pre-Reformation Catholic population concentrated particularly around the village of Little Crosby.

Approximately 71% of houses and flats in the constituency are owner occupied, 17½% are rented and 11½% council owned. The housing profiles of the three main areas are:-

Crosby

Dwellings 19,260 of which 3,317 (17.2%) are council.

The town is mostly comprised of 19th and early 20th century houses with little recent development. Many of the large Victorian houses have been converted into flats, and any new development is restricted by Green Belt limits and consequently is almost exclusively infill. The poorest housing is in the south of the town where a slum clearance programme is in progress. The area, known locally as little Scandinavia, has had 211 dwellings included in a C.P.O. and the occupants have mainly been rehoused, and demolition has commenced. To assist in the rehousing process the Council built 22 flats on a vacant site in the area. The aim now is to provide new houses on the sites in as short a time as possible after they have been cleared. Priority is for rehousing being given to former residents in an attempt to retain community spirit.

The Edge Lane Estate in Thornton is comprised of approximately 430 dwellings of which 374 are three bedroomed maisonettes in 4-storey developments. The estate has proved a problem ever since it was built in the late sixties. The large communal areas created by the open-plan design easily become litter strewn and graffitti and vandalism are rife.

Formby

Dwellings 8,270 or which 419 (5.1%) are council.

Formby has some older housing of the same period and type as Crosby, but has seen much recent development with mid to upmarket housing estates. The village of Hightown - just south of Formby - has also become a centre for similar private developments.

Maghull - (West Lancs)

Dwellings 11,000 of which 681 or 6.2% are council.

Much of the housing development in Maghull occurred in the immediate post-war years.

Details of the rate increases in the area over the recent years are shown below. A supplementary rate has just been levied due to Merseyside Metropolitan Council cutting public transport fares.

<u>Rates</u>	<u>Sefton District</u> (Pence in pound)	<u>Rise</u> %	<u>Overall Rate</u> including Merseyside <u>County (Pence in pound)</u>	<u>Overall Rate</u> <u>Rise</u> %
1974/5	31.2		51.1	
1975/6	34.9	11.9	61.9	21.1
1976/7	35.7	2.3	63.7	2.9
1977/8	46.3	29.7	76.8	20.6
1978/9	50.1	8.2	82.6	7.6
1979/80	59.0	17.8	97.0	17.4
1980/81	66.6	12.9	115.8	19.4
1981/82	93.0	39.6	127.5	10.1

The residential bias of the District is shown by the fact that 60% of the rate income comes from domestic properties, the rest is broken down as follows:-

Commercial properties	18%
Industrial properties	8%
Other	14%
	<hr/>
Total non-domestic	40%

It is reliably estimated that some 60-70% of the working population of the Constituency commute into Liverpool for their employment. Of the remainder the majority are employed locally in the retail and services sector with only about 17% employed in manufacturing. The major employers in the constituency are:-

Sefton District Council	1300
John Moore's Mail Order- Crosby	1200
Moss Side Hospital - Maghull	600
Kotters Liverpool Ltd (Flexible Packaging- Maghull)	300
Pioneer Mutual Insurance- Crosby	280

Most of the Pioneer workers are local although John Moores do attract people from outside the town. Pioneer have managed to cut down on short-time working.

### Unemployment

It is difficult to precisely measure the number of unemployed in the constituency for several reasons. One is that the area is served by three Job Centres. Crosby Job Centre is within the Liverpool Travel to Work Area, unemployed people in Formby will register at the Southport Job Centre, and the jobless in Maghull could either register at Walton Vale within the Liverpool TTWA, or Ormskirk. As so many residents of the Constituency work in the City it is unlikely that a significant number of those who have lost their job will have registered at the City Centre Job Centre.

Crosby Figures (covering Seaforth, Crosby, Hightown, Thornton and Litherland)

The number of unemployed registered in Crosby are:-

Jan 1978	2822	Jan 1981	3845
Oct 1978	2574	Sept 1981	4340
Jan 1979	2750	Oct 1981	4410
April 1979	2646		
Oct 1979	2445		
Jan 1980	2875		
Oct 1980	3333		

The increase from April 1979 has been 1764 or 67%, compared with 119% for the region as a whole. The figures for the Liverpool TTWA and the N.W. Region are:-

	<u>Liverpool TTWA</u>	<u>N.W. Region</u>	<u>U.K.</u>
March 1974	6.1%*	3.4%	2.6%
April 1979	11.7%	6.8%	5.5%
Sept 1981	18.7%	15.0%	12.4%
Oct 1981	18.8%	14.9%	12.4%

\* 1974 would include Birkenhead area.

With a heavy reliance on industry outside the town to provide employment many local people have been affected by major closures and redundancies in the surrounding areas. For example, the Courtaulds plant in Walton closed six months ago with 1500 workers losing their jobs, of which some 200 lived in Crosby. The Tate and Lyle closure in Liverpool also cost 50 to 60 local people their jobs. The local retail sector has contracted slightly and there are now very few vacancies coming from it.

Structure of unemployed (Crosby)

<u>Duration</u>	<u>July 74</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>Apr 79</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>Oct 81</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>N.W. Region July 81%</u>
Less than 1 Mth	413	23.1	248	9.4	320	7.3	12.0%
1 - 2 Mths	213	11.9	234	8.8	279	6.3	12.1
2 - 6 Mths	451	25.2	731	27.6	1145	26.0	27.0
6 - 12 Mths	279	15.6	570	21.5	969	22.0	24.0
12 - 24 Mths	431	24.1	379	14.3	931	21.1	15.0
24 Mths +	-	-	481	18.2	766	17.4	9.9
	1787		2646		4410		100%

Structure of the unemployed

Age	July 74		Apr 79		Oct 81		N.W. Region July 81
		%		%		%	
18 - 19	213	11.9	414	15.6	438	9.9	41.6%
20 - 24	363	20.3	615	23.2	977	22.2	
25 - 34	400	22.4	576	21.8	1085	24.6	45.7%
35 - 44	252	14.1	349	13.2	684	15.5	
45 - 54	208	11.6	291	11.0	527	11.9	12.7%
55 - 65+	351	19.6	401	15.2	699	15.8	
	1787		2646		4410		100%

The relatively low concentration of younger people unemployed and the higher concentration of old people is reflected in the higher than average duration of unemployment.

Youth Unemployment

The number of young people unemployed (including school leavers) registered at the Careers Office are:-

Feb 1974	637	(Crosby 40)
April 1979	1303	( " 341)
Sept 1981	2855	( " 640, Maghull 394)
Oct 1981	2037	( " 490, " 228)

The overall figures include Southport and Bootle as well as Crosby and Maghull.

Vacancies

Vacancies for the Crosby Employment Office area are:

April 1979	132
Oct 1980	88
Oct 1981	106

4. General Election Results in Crosby 1950-1979

Year	Conservative		Labour		Liberal		Other		Con maj.	Turnout %
	Vote	%	Vote	%	Vote	%	Vote	%		
1950	22,347	60.2	9,403	25.4	5,336	14.4	-	-	12,944	84.5
1951	25,034	70.9	10,251	29.1	-	-	-	-	14,783	79.8
1953 (by-election)	18,614	68.1	7,545	27.6	-	-	-1,180	4.3	11069	62.5
12/11/1953										
1955	29,161	68.0	13,725	32.0	-	-	-	-	15,436	73.7
1959	29,801	66.9	14,745	33.1	-	-	-	-	15,056	77.5
1964	21,538	48.6	14,158	32.0	8,590	19.4	-	-	7,380	76.7
1966	21,980	54.1	18,674	45.9	-	-	-	-	3,306	72.2
1970	24,042	56.7	18,350	43.3	-	-	-	-	5,692	71.2

General Election Results in Crosby 1950-1979 (cont'd)

Year	Conservative		Labour		Liberal		Other		Con maj.	Turnout %
	Vote	%	Vote	%	Vote	%	Vote	%		
1974(F)	32,519	52.2	16,949	27.2	12,842	20.6	-	-	15,570	80.0
1974(O)	29,764	51.5	17,589	30.5	10,429	18.0	-	-	12,175	73.5
1979	34,768	57.0	15,496	25.4	9,302	15.2	1,489*	2.4	19,272	75.2

\* Candidate lost deposit

Since 1950 the boundaries of the constituency have been changed before the 1955 and 1974 (F) General Elections. The Conservative vote has fluctuated from 18,614 (1953 by-election) to 34,768 in the 1979 General Election. The Conservative percentage share of the vote has varied from 48.6% in 1964 to 68.1% in the 1953 by-election. The Labour vote has varied from 7,545 in the 1953 by-election to 18,674 in the 1966 General Election. Labour's share of the vote has fluctuated between 25.4% in the 1950 General Election to 45.9% in the 1966 General Election. The best Liberal performance out of five General Election for which they have put forward candidates was in February 1974 when the Liberal candidate obtained 12,842 votes (20.6%) The lowest Conservative majority in Crosby was 3,306 in the 1966 General Election, the highest was 19,272 in May 1979. Turnout has fluctuated between 62.5% in the 1953 by-election to 84.5% in the 1950 General Election.

5. By-Elections Since May 1979

Excluding the Fermanagh and South Tyrone by-election there have been six Parliamentary by-elections since the May 1979 General Election and in only one has there been a change in the party holding the seat - Croydon N.W., gained by the Social Democratic/Liberal Alliance from the Conservatives. By-elections have taken place in three seats held by the Conservatives in May 1979 (Hertfordshire S.W., Southend East and Croydon N.W.) and in three held by Labour (Manchester Central, Glasgow Central and Warrington). In three cases (Southend East, Glasgow Central and Croydon N.W.) the by-election was caused by the death of the sitting Member in one case due to the Member being elevated to the Peerage (Manchester Central), in one case due to the resignation of the member due to ill-health (Hertfordshire S.W.) and in one case due to the appointment of the sitting Member as a Judge (Warrington) Details of the by-election results are shown below:-

BY-ELECTIONS SINCE MAY 1979

Manchester Central

	CON VOTE %	LAB VOTE %	LIB/SDP VOTE %	OTH VOTE %	SNP VOTE %	WINNING PARTY (majority)	TURNOUT %
May 1979							
G.E.	4,413 (22.1)	14,117 (70.8)	1,052* (5.3)	365* (1.8)	-	LAB (9,704)	63.7
By-election 27.9.79	1,275* (12.0)	7,494 (70.7)	1,502 (14.2)	328* (3.1)	-	LAB (5,922)	33.6
Change	-3138	-6623	+450	-37	-	LAB HOLD	
G.E. By- election	(-10.1)	(-0.1)	(+8.9)	(+1.3)		(-3782)	-30.1

Swing Conservative to Labour - 5%

\* Candidate lost deposit

Bertfordshire S.W.

	<u>CON</u> VOTE %	<u>LAB</u> VOTE %	<u>LIB/SDP</u> VOTE %	<u>OTH</u> VOTE %	<u>SNP</u> VOTE %	<u>WINNING PARTY</u> (majority) %	<u>TURNOUT</u> %
May 1979	33,112 (54.7)	16,784 (27.7)	9,808 (16.2)	839* (1.4)	-	CON (16,328)	79.7
By-election (13.12.79)	17,031 (45.9)	10,259 (27.7)	8,752 (23.6)	1,038* (2.8)	-	CON (6,772)	48.3

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Change -16,081 -6,525 -1,056 +199 - CON HOLD  
 G.E.-by- (-8.8) (0.0) (+7.4) (+1.4) (9,556) -31.4  
 election

Swing Conservative to Labour - 4.4%

Swing Conservative to Liberal - 8.1%

\* Candidate or candidates lost deposit.

Southend East

	<u>CON</u> VOTE %	<u>LAB</u> VOTE %	<u>LIB/SDP</u> VOTE %	<u>OTH</u> VOTE %	<u>SNP</u> VOTE %	<u>WINNING PARTY</u> (majority) %	<u>TURNOUT</u> %
May 1979	22,413 (56.1)	11,639 (29.1)	5,244 (13.1)	676* (1.7)	-	CON (10,774)	70.1
By-election (13.3.80)	13,117 (36.8)	12,687 (35.6)	8,939 (25.1)	894* (3.5)	-	CON (430)	62.5

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Change -9,296 +1,048 +3,695 +218 - CON HOLD  
 G.E. - by- (-19.3) (+6.5) (+12.0) (+1.8) (-10,344) -7.6  
 election

Swing Conservative to Labour 12.9%

Swing Conservative to Liberal 15.6%

\*Candidate or candidates lost deposit

Glasgow Central

	<u>CON</u> VOTE %	<u>LAB</u> VOTE %	<u>LIB/SDP</u> VOTE %	<u>OTH</u> VOTE %	<u>SNP</u> VOTE %	<u>WINNING PARTY</u> (majority) %	<u>TURNOUT</u> %
May 1979	1,937 (16.4)	8,542 (72.5)	-	-	1,308* (11.1)	LAB (6,605)	59.5
By-election (26.6.80)	707* (8.8)	4,902 (60.8)	-	337* (4.1)	2,122 (26.3)	LAB (2,780)	42.8

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Change -1,230 -3,640 - +337 +814 LAB HOLD  
 G.E by- (-7.6) (+11.7) (+4.1) (15.2) (-3,825) -16.7

\*Candidate or candidates lost deposit

Warrington

	<u>CON</u> VOTE %	<u>LAB</u> VOTE %	<u>LIB/SDP</u> VOTE %	<u>OTH</u> VOTE %	<u>SNP</u> VOTE %	<u>WINNING PARTY</u> (majority) %	<u>TURNOUT</u> %
May 1979 G.E.	9,032 (28.8)	19,303 (61.6)	2,833* (9.1)	144* (10.5)	-	LAB (10,274)	71.3
By-election	2,102* (16.7.81)	14,280 (7.1)	12,521 (48.4)	605* (42.4)	-	LAB (1,759)	67.0
Change GE- By- election	-6,930 (-21.7)	-5,026 (-13.2)	+9,688 (+33.3)	-461 (+8.4)	-	LAB HOLD (-8,515)	-4.3

Swing to Conservative to Labour 4.3%  
 Swing Conservative to SDP/Liberal 27.5%  
 Swing Labour to SDP/Liberal 23.3%

Croydon N.W.

	<u>CON</u> VOTE %	<u>LAB</u> VOTE %	<u>LIB/SDP</u> VOTE %	<u>OTH</u> VOTE %	<u>SNP</u> VOTE %	<u>WINNING PARTY</u> (majority) %	<u>TURNOUT</u> %
May 1979 G.E.	19,928 (49.4)	16,159 (40.1)	4,239* (10.5)	-	-	CON (3,769)	72.5
By-election	10,546 (16.7.81)	8,967 (30.5)	13,800 (40.0)	1,229* (3.5)	-	LIB/SDP (3,254)	62.5
Change G.E. by- election	-9,382 (-18.9)	-7,192 (-14.1)	+9,561 (29.5)	+1,229 (+3.5)	-	LIB/SDP GAIN	-10.0

Swing Conservative to Labour 2.4%  
 Swing Conservative to Lib/SDP 24.2%  
 \* Candidate or candidates lost deposit.

4. By-Elections 1974-79

Of the 30 by-elections that took place in the 1974-1979 Parliament, ten took place in seats held by Conservative candidates in the October 1974 General Election and the Conservatives successfully defended all these seats. Of the 20 by-elections in seats held by Labour in the October 1974 General Election, 6 by-elections resulted in the gain of the seat by the Conservatives (Woolwich West, Walsall North, Workington, Birmingham Stechford, Ashfield and Ilford North), and in one (Liverpool Edge Hill) the Liberals gained the seat. The average swing from Labour to Conservative in the 27 by-elections that took place in England (i.e. excluding the Glasgow Garscadden, Hamilton, and Berwick and East Lothian by-elections) was 10.5%.

In 1978 there was ten by-elections (Ilford North, Glasgow Garscadden, Lambeth Central, Wycombe, Epsom and Ewell, Hamilton, Manchester Moss Side, Penistone, Pontefract and Castleford, and Berwick and East Lothian.) The swing to the Conservatives in by-elections during 1978 in England was 7.3%. In 1979 up to the General Election there was only three by-elections, in Knutsford, Clitheroe and Liverpool Edge Hill; here the swings to the Conservatives were 11.5%, 9.9% and 8.4% respectively.

The highest swings to the Conservatives were in late 1976 and the first half of 1977 (22.5% in Walsall North, 20.9% in Ashfield, 17.6% in Birmingham Stechford). The Liberals had the biggest swing of all, 32.4% (from Labour) in capturing Edge Hill, Liverpool in March 1979.

BY-ELECTION RESULTS 1974-1979

			<u>Swing</u> <u>to Con</u>	<u>Con</u>	<u>Lab</u>	<u>Lib</u>	<u>Turnout</u>
			%	%	%	%	%
<u>1975</u>							
26.6	Woolwich W	Con gain	7.6	48.8	42.1	5.3	-11.6
				+10.2	-5.0	-9.0	
<u>1976</u>							
4.3	Coventry N.W.	Lab Hold	5.0	37.7	47.7	11.3	- 2.3
				+ 5.8	-4.2	-4.4	
11.3	Carshalton	Con Hold	8.4	51.7	27.5	15.0	-13.8
				+ 6.3	-10.4	-1.7	
11.3	Wirral	Con Hold	13.7	66.0	20.3	11.4	-20.0
				+16.0	-11.3	-6.2	

			<u>Swing</u> <u>to Con</u>	<u>Con</u>	<u>Lab</u>	<u>Lib</u>	<u>Turnout</u>
			%	%	%	%	%
<u>1976</u>	(continued)						
24.6	Rotherham	Lab Hold	13.3	34.7	50.7	7.8	-18.7
				+12.6	-13.9	-5.5	
15.7	Thurrock	Lab Hold	10.7	35.4	45.3	12.2	-14.5
				+11.0	-10.3	-7.8	
4.11	Newcastle C	Lab Hold	13.7	19.7	47.6	29.0	-17.4
				+3.2	-24.2	+17.3	
4.11	Workington	Con Gain	13.1	48.2	45.6	6.2	- 1.6
				+15.9	-10.4	-5.5	
4.11	Walsall N	Con Gain	22.5	43.4	31.6	3.2	-15.1
				+17.3	-27.9	-10.2	
2.12	Cambridge	Con Hold	9.9	51.0	26.0	18.3	-20.4
				+9.8	-10.0	-2.8	

1977

24.2	City of London	Con Hold	9.3	59.1	19.7	9.8	-13.6
				+7.4	-11.2	-5.1	
31.3	Stechford	Con Gain	17.6	43.4	38.0	8.0	- 5.3
				+15.6	-19.6	-6.6	
28.4	Grimsby	Lab Hold	7.1	45.7	46.9	6.7	+0.4
				+13.8	-0.2	-13.9	
28.4	Ashfield	Con Gain	20.9	43.1	42.5	9.6	-15.6
				+20.8	-20.9	-4.7	
7.7	Saffron Walden	Con Hold	11.7	55.7	14.6	25.2	-13.4
				+12.0	-11.4	-5.1	
18.8	Ladywood	Lab Hold	8.9	28.4	53.1	4.9	-14.3
				+ 6.3	-11.4	-8.5	
25.11	Bournemouth E	Con Hold	8.7	63.4	15.3	13.4	-27.9
				+11.7	-5.7	-11.8	

1978

2.3	Ilford North	Con Gain	6.9	50.3	38.0	5.0	- 5.4
				+9.4	-4.5	-11.6	
13.4	Garscadden*	Lab Hold	5.6	18.5	45.4	-	- 1.8
				+5.6	-5.5	-	
21.4	Lambeth C	Lab Hold	9.4	34.4	49.4	5.3	- 8.1
				+8.2	-10.7	-7.2	
27.4	Epsom & Ewell	Con Hold	6.2	63.6	16.5	12.8	- 18.9
				+9.5	-2.8	-13.8	
27.4	Wycombe	Con Hold	8.0	60.0	28.5	7.4	- 15.3
				+13.7	-2.3	-12.0	
13.5	Hamilton*	Lab Hold	0.05	13.0	51.0	2.5	- 5.1
				+3.5	+3.4	-1.4	
13.7	Moss Side	Lab Hold	3.5	40.6	46.4	9.2	- 11.3
				+6.3	-0.7	-8.4	
13.7	Penistone	Lab Hold	8.8	32.9	45.4	21.5	- 14.8
				+8.9	-8.7	-0.2	
26.10	Berwick & East Lothian	Lab Hold	-0.75	40.2	47.4	3.6	- 11.9
				+2.6	+4.1	-2.3	
26.10	Pontefract	Lab Hold	7.8	27.2	65.8	7.0	- 22.1
				+11.0	-4.6	-5.3	

			<u>Swing to Con</u>	<u>Con</u>	<u>Lab</u>	<u>Lib</u>	<u>Turnout</u>
<u>1979</u>			%	%	%	%	%
1.3	Clitheroe	Con Hold	9.9	65.0	28.4	6.6	-15.8
				-17.0	-2.8	-14.2	
1.3	Knutsford	Con Hold	11.5	67.1	15.6	15.8	-19.5
				-16.1	-7.0	-10.6	
29.3	Edge Hill*	Lib Gain	8.4	9.4	23.8	64.1	- 4.8
				-11.3	-28.1	-36.8	

\* Garscadden

\* Hamilton

\* Berwick & East Lothian

\* Edge Hill

swing to SNP from Lab 3.6%  
 swing to Lab from SNP 4.5%  
 swing to Lab from SNP 4.3%  
 swing to Lib from Lab 32.4%

When Parliament (1974-79) was dissolved, by-elections were pending in Derbyshire N.E., Chipping Barnet, Abingdon, and Batley and Morley.

(d) Conservative By-Election Gains <sup>1974</sup> (0) - 1979 - Special Analysis

Constituency (by-election date)	Conservative Vote			Labour Vote			Liberal Vote			'Other' Vote			Turnout	
	1974(0)	By-Election	Change	1974(0)	By-Election	Change	1974(0)	By-Election	Change	1974(0)	By-Election	Change	1974(0)	By-Election
WOOLWICH WEST (26/6/1975)	16,073 (38.6%)	17,280 (48.8%)	+1207	19,614 (47.1%)	14,898 (42.1%)	-4716	5,962 (14.3%)	1,884 (5.3%)	-4078	- (-)	1,359 (3.8%)	+1,359	73.9%	62.3%
WORKINGTON (4/11/1976)	12,988 (32.3%)	19,396 (48.2%)	+6408	22,539 (45.0%)	18,331 (45.6%)	-4208	4,728 (11.7%)	2,480 (6.2%)	-2248	- (-)	- (-)	-	75.8%	74.2%
WALSALL NORTH* (4/11/1976)	12,455 (26.1%)	16,212 (43.4%)	+3757	28,340 (59.5%)	11,833 (31.6%)	-16507	6,377 (13.4%)	1,212 (3.2%)	-5165	465 (1.0%)	8,141 (21.8%)	+7676	66.6%	51.5%
BIRMINGHAM STECHFORD (31/3/1977)	11,152 (27.8%)	15,731 (43.4%)	+4579	23,075 (57.6%)	13,782 (38.0%)	-9293	5,860 (14.6%)	2,901 (8.0%)	-2959	- (-)	871 (2.4%)	+871	64.1%	58.8%
ASHFIELD (28/4/1977)	12,452 (22.3%)	19,616 (43.1%)	+7164	35,367 (63.4%)	19,352 (42.5%)	-16015	7,959 (14.3%)	4,380 (9.6%)	-3579	- (-)	2,187 (4.8%)	+2187	74.7%	59.7%
LILFORD NORTH (2/3/1978)	19,843 (40.9%)	22,548 (50.3%)	+2705	20,621 (42.5%)	17,051 (38.0%)	-3570	8,080 (16.6%)	2,248 (5.0%)	-5832	- (-)	2972 (6.7%)	+2972	74.5%	69.1%

\* It should be noted that this was John Stonehouse's seat.

The table above shows the change in the vote for each of the main parties between the October 1974 General Election and the by-election in each of the six seats we won from Labour in the 1974 (0) - 1979 period.

6. By-Elections 1970-1974

Under the 1970-74 Conservative Government 30 by-elections took place, 9 of which resulted in a change in the Party that had held the seat in the 1970 General Election. The Conservatives lost 5 seats, in by-elections - four to Liberals (Sutton and Cheam, Isle of Ely, Ripon and Berwick and Tweed) and one to Labour (Bromsgrove). Labour gained three seats and lost three seats. They gained Bromsgrove from the Conservatives and Merthyr Tydfil and Southwark from an Independent Labour but lost Rochdale to the Liberals, Lincoln to Democratic Labour and Glasgow Govan to the SNP.

Since the war the Liberals have gained 10 seats at by-elections and lost one - full details are below:-

7. Liberal By-Election Gains Since War

1945 - 1950 NONE

1950 - 1951 NONE

1951 - 1955 NONE

1955 - 1959 ONE GAIN AND ONE LOSS

28th Feb 1957 Liberals lost Carmarthen to Labour

17th March 1958 Conservatives lost Torrington to Liberals

1959 - 1964 ONE GAIN

14th March 1962 Liberals gained Orpington from Conservatives

1964 - 1966 ONE GAIN

24th March 1965 Liberals gained Roxburgh, Selkirk & Peebles from Conservatives

1966 - 1970 ONE GAIN

26th June 1969 Liberals gain Birmingham Ladywood from Labour

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1970 - 1974 FIVE GAINS

26th Oct 1972 Liberals gained Rochdale from Labour

7th Oct 1972 Liberals gained Sutton & Cheam from Conservatives

26th July 1972 Liberals gained Ripon From Conservatives

26th July 1972 Liberals gained Isle of Ely from Conservatives

8th November 1973 Liberals gained Berwick on Tweed from Conservatives

1974 (F) - 1974 (O) NONE

1974 - 1979 ONE GAIN

29th March 1979 Liberals gained Liverpool Edge Hill from Labour

Please see following page for analysis of Liberal by-election gains since the War.

ANALYSIS OF LIBERAL BY-ELECTION  
GAINS SINCE WAR

	<u>GE</u> <u>Turnout</u> %	<u>By-election</u> <u>Turnout</u> %	<u>Majority</u> <u>GE</u>	<u>Majority</u> <u>By-election</u>	<u>Notes</u>
<u>1955-1959</u>					
Carmathen (28.2.57)	85.1	87.5	3,333 (Lib-Lab)	3,069 (Lib-Lab)	Liberal loss to Labour*
Torrington (27.3.58)	69.2	80.6	9,312 (Con-Lab)	219 (Lib-Con)	Liberal gain from Conservatives*
<u>1959-1964</u>					
Orpington (14.3.62)	82.8	80.3	14,760 (Con-Lab)	7,055 (Lib-Con)	Liberal gain from Conservatives+
<u>1964-1966</u>					
Roxburgh, Selkirk & Peebles (24.3.65)	82.2	82.8	1,739 (Con-Lib)	4,607 (Lib-Con)	Liberal gain from Conservatives+
<u>1966-1970</u>					
Birmingham Ladywood	59.7	51.9	5,315 (Lab-Lib)	2,713 (Lib-Lab)	Liberal gain from Labour =
<u>1970-1974</u>					
Rochdale (12.2.72)	72.8	68.8	5,171 (Lab-Lib)	5,093 (Lib-Lab)	Liberal gain from Labour+
Sutton & Cheam (7.12.72)	67.6	56.3	12,696 (Con-Lab)	7,417 (Lib-Con)	Liberal gain from Conservatives*
Isle of Ely (26.7.73)	71.9	65.8	9,606 (Con-Lab)	1,470 (Lib-Con)	Liberal gain from Conservatives+
Ripon (26.7.73)	73.7	64.3	12,064 (Con-Lab)	946 (Lib-Con)	Liberal gain from Conservatives*
Berwick on Tweed (8.11.73)	73.7	74.8	7,145 (Con-Lab)	57 (Lib-Con)	Liberal gain from Conservatives*
<u>1974(0)-1979</u>					
Liverpool Edge Hill (29.3.79)	61.2	56.6	6,171 (Lab-Lib)	8,133 (Lib-Lab)	Liberal gain from Labour +

\* Held by Labour in subsequent General Election

\*\* Regained by Conservatives in subsequent General Election

+ Liberals held in subsequent General Election

= Regained by Labour at subsequent General Election

(e) Liberal By-Election Gains from Conservatives Since War - Special Analysis

Constituency (by-election date)	Conservative Vote			Liberal Vote			Turnout	
	Previous General Election	By-Election	Change	Previous General Election	By-Election	Change	G.E.	By- electi
Torrington (27/3/1958)	20,124 (65.1%)	13,189 (37.4%)	-6936	No Lib Candidate	13,408 (38.0%)	+13408	69.2%	80.6
Orpington (14/3/1962)	24,303 (56.6%)	14,991 (34.7%)	-9312	9,092 (21.2%)	22,846 (52.9%)	+13754	82.8%	80.3
Roxburgh Selkirk & Peebles (24/3/1965)	18,924 (42.8%)	16,942 (38.6%)	-1982	17,185 (38.9%)	21,549 (49.2%)	+4364	82.2%	82.2
Sutton and Cheam (7/12/1972)	23,957 (58.1%)	10,911 (31.9%)	-13046	6,023 (14.6%)	18,328 (53.6%)	+12305	67.6%	56.3
Isle of Ely (26/7/1973)	28,972 (59.9%)	15,920 (35.0%)	-13052	No Lib Candidate	17,390 (38.3%)	+17390	71.9%	65.8
Ripon (26/7/1973)	21,211 (60.7%)	12,956 (40.5%)	-8255	4,583 (13.1%)	13,902 (43.5%)	+9319	73.7%	64.3
Berwick upon Tweed (8/11/1973)	15,558 (59.7%)	12,432 (39.7%)	-3126	6,741 (21.9%)	12,489 (39.9%)	+5748	73.7%	74.8

This table shows the change in Conservative and Liberal vote in each of the constituencies that the Liberals have gained from us in by-elections since the War.

9. The Social Democrats

Some background briefing on the Social Democrats is included as Appendix 1 to this note.

10. The Warrington by-election

The Warrington by-election held on 16th July was the fifth by-election in Great Britain during this Parliament (this excludes Fermanagh and South Tyrone). It was the first by-election in which a Social Democratic candidate (Roy Jenkins) stood and the third by-election in which the Conservative candidate lost his deposit. Conservative candidates lost their deposits in Manchester Central, Glasgow Central and Warrington. Details of the results are shown on the following page.

WARRINGTON BY-ELECTION (16th July)

<u>Party</u>	<u>General Election</u>		<u>By-Election</u>		<u>Change</u>	
	<u>Vote</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>Vote</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>In Vote</u>	<u>In%</u>
Labour	19,306	61.6	14,280	48.4	-5,026	-13.2
Social Democrat/Liberal	-	-	12,521	42.4	+9,688**	+33.3**
Conservative	9,032	28.8	2,102*	7.1	-6,930	-21.7
Liberal	2,833*	9.1	-	-	-	-
Others	144	0.5	605	2.1	+ 461	+ 1.6
<hr/>						
Majority	10,274	32.8	1,759	6.0	-8,515	-26.8
Turn Out		71.3		67.0		- 4.3
Electorate	43,921		44,465			+544

\* Lost Deposit

\*\* Increase from previous Liberal vote.

Labour's majority collapsed from 10,274 (32.8%) at the May 1979 General Election to 1,759 (6%) in the by-election. On a turnout that was only just over 4 per cent less than at the General Election Labour's vote fell from 19,306 (61.6%) to 14,280 (48.4%) - a drop of over 5,000 votes at a point in the electoral cycle when the main opposition party would expect to gain ground in by-elections. The Social Democrat (Roy Jenkins) standing with Liberal support increased the Liberal/Social Democrat vote from 2,833 (9.1%) in May 1979 to 12,521 (42.4%) at the by-election. The Conservative vote dropped from 9,032 (28.8%) in May 1979 to 2,102 (7.1%) at the by-election.

Labour's majority was the lowest they have obtained in Warrington since the war. The result was impressive for the Social Democrats but is not unique. For example, in terms of swing, 23.4% to the Social Democrats from Labour in Warrington was not as great as the swing the Liberals obtained in the Liverpool Edgehill by-election just before the May 1979 General Election. Comparisons with some of the Liberal by-election victories under the 1970-1974 Conservative Government also help to put the result into perspective - the swing to the Liberals (from the Conservatives) in Sutton & Cheam (December 1972) and by Dick Taverne in Lincoln (March 1973) was larger than that obtained from Labour by the Social Democrats in Warrington.

It must be admitted that the Social Democrats did better than either national opinion polls or opinion polls conducted in Warrington would have appeared to have indicated. Opinion polls conducted since the by-election have indicated perhaps the start of an upturn in terms of national support for them.

11. The Croydon N.W. By-Election

The Croydon N.W. by-election held on 22nd October was the sixth by-election in Great Britain during this Parliament (excluding Fermanagh and South Tyrone) and the first that resulted in a change in the party holding the seat. Details of the results are shown in Section 5 of this note.

The Conservative majority of 3,769 in the May 1979 General Election became a Liberal/SDP majority of 3,254 at the by-election. On a turnout that was 10% less than at the General Election, the Conservative vote fell from 19,928 (49.4%) in May 1979 to 10,546 (30.5%) at the by-election. Labour's vote also fell from 16,159 (40.1%) in May 1979 to 8,967 (26.0%) in the by-election and their candidate was forced into third place. Bill Pitt, the Liberal SDP candidate, who had previously fought the seat as a Liberal candidate obtained 13,800 (40%) of the votes cast - an increase of 9,561 (29½%) over the vote he had received as the Liberal candidate in the constituency in May 1979.

Opinion polls conducted throughout the campaign in the constituency showed the Liberal/SDP candidate most likely to win.

12. Opinion Polls in Crosby

(a) N.O.P. (Daily Mail 25th October 1981)

An N.O.P. poll published in the Daily Mail on October 26th and conducted in Crosby on 24/25 October found 46% of the electorate claiming they would vote Alliance, 34% Conservative and 20% Labour. N.O.P. found that 36% of Alliance supporters had previously voted Conservative, 34% Labour, 16% Liberal. 4% had voted for a number of other parties and 8% had not voted at all.

(b) M.O.R.I. (Granada TV, 23rd October)

The Granada TV programme 'A Week on Friday' transmitted on Friday 23rd October included the results of the first survey to be conducted in Crosby since the death of the sitting Conservative Member. The survey conducted by MORI on Friday 23rd October found 40% claiming they will vote for Shirley Williams, 34% Conservative and 25% Labour. MORI found that most electors in Crosby claimed that the result in Croydon N.W. would make no difference to their voting intention, but a significant 17% of prospective Alliance voters claimed it made them 'more likely' to vote for the Alliance candidate.

13. The State of the Parties in Parliament

Conservative	334	Ulster Democratic Unionist Party	3
Labour	246	(Messrs. Paisley, P. Robinson,	
S.D.P.	22	McQuade)	
Liberal	12	United Ulster Unionist Party	1
S.N.P.	2	Anti H-Block	
Plaid Cymru	2	(Mr Carron)	
Ulster Unionists	4	Socialist	1
(Messrs. Molyneaux, Powell		(Mr Fitt)	
Ross, McCusker)		The Speaker & 3 Deputy Chairmen +	4
Ulster Progressive		Vacant Seats (Crosby, Belfast 5)	2
Unionist	1		
(Mr. McFedder)			
		Total	635

+ Do not normally vote

14. Press Comments on Crosby

A selection of press comments on the by-election campaign in the constituency is attached.

Appendix A: The Social Democrats

Copies of three recent 'Briefing Notes' on the Social Democrats and two recent Politics Today on them are attached. In addition a detailed brief on what is known about Social Democrat policies is also enclosed.

# Briefing Note

No. 24

8.7.81

## THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATS

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The Social Democratic Party was launched on 26th March 1981 by four ex-Labour Cabinet Ministers supported by another ten former Labour MPs. Since then, it has been joined by two more Labour MPs and one Conservative MP and a number of Labour and cross-bench peers. Mr. Roy Jenkins, formerly Labour's Deputy Leader, Home Secretary (twice) and Chancellor of the Exchequer, and more recently President of the European Commission, is currently contesting the Warrington by-election.

### "No Roots, No Principles, No Philosophy, No Values"

There might be reason for surprise in the timing of the decision by the SDP leaders to break away from the Labour Party. After all, the drift to the extreme Left in that Party did not begin last January and it might be claimed that, by leaving the Party when Mr. Benn and his supporters were launching their most threatening grab for power, the SDP were making an extremist take-over more, not less likely.

Certainly Mrs. Williams and her associates have made their hostility clear to the idea of a Centre Party. On BBC Radio on 8th June 1980 she said: "We believe that a Centre Party would have no roots, no principles, no philosophy and no values" (Guardian, 9th June 1980).

### Socialist, Not Centre

Mrs. Williams and her colleagues clearly see the SDP as replacing the old Labour Party. Thus Dr. Owen said on BBC Radio on the 17th March 1981: "I am not interested in the soggy centre", and when asked by Sir Robin Day, "Do you call yourself a Socialist?", he replied: "Yes, I do." Similarly, Mr. William Rodgers said at the SDP's launch: "We are not a Centre Party, but are left of centre."

These statements explain the record of the politicians who are now in the SDP. As Mr. Leon Brittan, Chief Secretary to the Treasury, has pointed out: "The (Labour) Party's manifesto for the February 1974 Election, which had the full support of the Social Democrats at the time, promised nationalisation of shipbuilding, ports, the aircraft industry, and companies in pharmaceuticals, road haulage, construction and machine tools. It also promised movement towards a universal system of comprehensive secondary schools, the end of charitable status for public schools and the phasing out of private practice in hospitals" (Castleton, 5th July 1981).

All the ex-Labour Social Democrat MPs loyally voted for the last Labour Government's measures of nationalisation, strengthening the closed shop and other trade union privileges, the compulsory imposition of bureaucratic controls on pay, prices, dividends and capital movements, and the incentive-destroying top tax rates of 98 per cent. Mrs. Shirley Williams gave respectability to law breaking by standing in the Grunwick picket line in May 1977. Mr. Roy Jenkins as Home Secretary in 1965-67 was partially or wholly responsible for the passage of a number of controversial measures through Parliament, including the abolition of capital punishment, the Race Relations Act, the Abortion Act and, as has been noted with regret in the context of recent disturbances, the repeal of the Riot Act with its provisions against riotous assembly. In 1974, as Home Secretary again, he was responsible for providing an amnesty for illegal immigrants. Indeed, he and his colleagues have consistently voted against Conservative attempts to control immigration. The SDP MPs have also consistently voted against the present Government's legislative programme, including such measures as the Employment Act and the Housing Act.

### SDP Policy - A Nuisance?

The likely SDP attitude to policy was outlined by Mr. Peter Jenkins,

political correspondent of the Guardian, who wrote: "If they are wise they will not be drawn into exaggerating the importance of policy ... too much policy is a nuisance" (25 March 1981). This perhaps explains Dr. Owen's reply to a Southampton woman who had asked what was in his party's manifesto: "Look, love, if you want a manifesto - go and join one of the other parties" (Times, 27th March 1981).

The main expression of SDP policy consists of a Statement of Principles launched on 16 June by Mr. David Steel, representing the Liberals, and Mrs. Williams representing the SDP. Mr. Tony Greaves, Organising Secretary of the Association of Liberal Councillors, said that many of his members were "highly critical" of its contents: "most of them considered it to be far too wishy-washy" (Liberal News, 23rd June 1981). Mr. Jo Grimond gave a more detailed criticism of the document. He was surprised that it criticised governments for trying to change "the boundaries between the private and public sectors; ... The crux of the difficulty is that the mixed economy cannot work with the present nationalised industries" (Spectator, 27 June 1981).

Whatever financial orthodoxy Mr. Jenkins may have practised as Chancellor, he is currently promising the voters of Warrington massive increases in public spending which are almost identical to the policies of Mr. Foot's Labour Party and its left-wing candidate in Warrington, Mr. Hoyle, and which will increase interest rates and inflation to levels which can only be disastrous for jobs.

#### Conflicts with the Liberals

Potential conflicts between the SDP and the Liberals are not confined to policy. For example, Mr. Steel said that he found the collective leadership of the SDP to be a slow, cumbersome and rather frustrating mechanism (Times report, 12th June 1981) - to which Dr. Owen retorted: "We have heard him endlessly on about this. It is nothing to do with him who we have as leader" (Financial Times, 19th June 1981). Dr. Owen's own rather eccentric views are: "I do not think a Prime Minister is essential for running a Government" (Observer, 29th March 1981), and he has also said that the Liberals were "unable to grapple with tough issues" (Times, 28th March 1981).

Even some of the Social Democrats appear to have doubts whether their new enterprise is worth while. Mrs. Williams said: "The danger for any new party ... is that it becomes all things to all men" (Observer, 29th March 1981). Mr. Ian Wrigglesworth, a SDP MP, said: "We have got to give everyone outside the impression we are all happily working together" (Sunday Times, 29th March 1981). Another SDP MP, Mr. Tom Ellis, wrote: "Sadly, it is this same old obsessive preoccupation with shallow party advantage together with a certain youthful brashness, which seems to result in occasional ineptitudes in the political direction of the new party" (Times, 5th June 1981).

#### A well trodden cul de sac

Mr. Brittan said: "What the Social Democrats' economic policies amount to is: 'never mind if some nationalised monopolies give poor service at high prices. Never mind if pay controls have failed again and again. Never mind if reflation has always meant inflation ... We do not want change, for we are the ... status quo party ... The British economy, after two decades of our kind of policies, is our monument: it must be preserved in aspic.' Those who argue this way are ... seeking to lead bemused voters up a well trodden cul de sac." (Castleton, 5th July 1981).

DJN/JLS

# Briefing Note

No. 31  
23.9.81.

THE LIBERALS - A "VANISHING IDENTITY".

Although the Liberal Assembly endorsed by an overwhelming majority the principle of an alliance with the SDP, it was clear that there remain fears and doubts about possible conflicts over both organisation and philosophy. Underlying these fears is the very considerable anxiety among Liberals that the SDP, which has already "poached" several Liberal activists, and which may "poach" large numbers of seats which the Liberals hope to gain, may end by taking over and swallowing up the Liberal Party, which has not governed Britain for 60 years.

What provoked Liberal alarm was the threat by Mr. Steel on ITV's Weekend World on 13 September that he might disown Liberal candidates who stood in defiance of agreements between the two parties: "We wouldn't give help from the centre to candidates or associations who were being difficult." (Daily Telegraph, 14 September 1981). The National Executive of the Liberal Party also agreed on a moratorium - later declared to be advisory, not mandatory - on the selection of new Liberal candidates.

## Reactions to Central Dictation

Mr. Cyril Smith MP said in Llandudno that any attempt to instruct local Liberal parties would be "catastrophic": "They are asking people to be rebellious. ... I do not believe the Liberal party is the sort of party where the constituencies will be dictated to by a central bureaucracy in London" (Daily Telegraph, 15 September 1981). Mr. Michael Meadowcroft, Chairman of the Liberal Steering Committee, declared: "We cannot hide the fact that Social Democracy and Liberalism are on different roads. Liberals believe in spreading power to communities. Traditional social democracy is over-centralised" (Daily Telegraph, 15 September 1981).

Several other Liberal fears were recorded. Mr. Trevor Jones, prospective candidate for West Dorset and Chairman of the Association of Liberal Councillors, declared that "it would be folly for Liberals to give up anything for which they have struggled for so long - like territory" (Times, September 14 1981). Mr. Stuart Mole, Mr. Steel's personal assistant and candidate for Chelmsford, contrasted the Liberal interest in local politics with "a strong tendency among the SDP to look on elections as a means to get to Westminster with the best star quality, rather than developing a special rapport with voters." (ibid.) Mr. Dick Hains, President of the London Liberal Party, disapproved of Mr. Steel's "lemming-like desire to jump into bed" with certain new SDP recruits, and added: "Many people fear it (the SDP) is likely to become another Labour party" (Times, 14 September 1981). Mr. William Wallace, vice-chairman of the party's Standing Committee, said: "The SDP must not be allowed to deteriorate into a refuge for all those who jump off the sinking Labour party ... we can't work very easily with those who are jumping to save their skins, and whose records and attitudes are evidently illiberal" (Daily Express and Daily Telegraph, 17 September).

Even Mr. Alan Beith, a Liberal MP, criticised the refugees from Labour Party re-selection conflicts: "machine men whose machines had broken down and ceased to deliver," and the Young Liberals launched a leaflet declaring: "Too many Liberals have fought too hard for too long against these same people - part of the corrupt local Labour machine - to make common cause with them now" (Daily Mirror, 14 September 1981).

## Sterile Purity of Doctrine

Although Mrs. Shirley Williams warned the Liberal Party about: "rejoicing in a sterile purity of doctrine and unsullied isolation", (Daily

Telegraph, 16 September 1981), Mr. Meadowcroft pointed out plenty of serious doctrinal differences between the parties. For example, the SDP appeared to believe in economic growth to generate increased wealth which they wanted to distribute: "The Liberals accept that you can't, and think that even if you could, it wouldn't necessarily be worth having": Hence, he argued, the Liberals' belief in ecology, their opposition to nuclear power - and a potentially very different approach to such a problem as inner city decay (Times, 14th September 1981).

### Revolt over Nuclear Disarmament

As Mr. Clement Freud MP, commented: "yesterday we entered into a marriage, today we had our first tiff" (Guardian, 18th September 1981). This consisted of a significant defeat for the Liberal leadership on what is coming to be one of the most important issues of politics. The Liberal Party which has always been opposed to the introduction of the Trident missile system - essential if Britain's nuclear deterrent is not to become obsolete - voted to oppose the deployment of Cruise missiles in Europe. An amendment favoured by the Party leadership, which called for the deployment of Cruise missiles to be deferred for two years while a balanced reduction of weapons was negotiated, was defeated by 754 votes to 485. While Mr. Steel immediately reserved the position of Liberal MPs, two of these, Mr. Richard Wainwright (Colne Valley) and Mr. David Alton (Liverpool, Edge Hill) had voted with the nuclear disarmers. Mr. William Rodgers, the SDP Defence spokesman, agreed that the vote was a move towards unilateralism by the Liberals and said bluntly: "... this was a wrong decision."

The Assembly vote flew in the face of vigorous advice from a number of Liberals. Mr. David Penhaligon, MP for Truro, was greeted by calls of "rubbish" when he said, "If you vote for the resolution you are increasing the possibility that another day will come ... when the Soviet Union invades Britain. The Russians have not stopped storing SS20s; don't vote for this motion until they do." Mr. Richard Moore, a former candidate for the European Parliament, described the anti-Cruise vote as "an emotional spasm passed by the warm hearted and soft headed" (Daily Telegraph, 18th September 1981). Mr. Viv Bingham, the newly elected President of the Liberal Party, described himself as "an old pacifist" in his opening address and made clear his view that the conference should reject the advice of the leadership and vote against unilateral weapons (Daily Telegraph, 16 September 1981).

What is ironical about the Liberal vote is that the SDP members broke away from the Labour Party very largely because of that Party's increasing commitment to unilateral nuclear disarmament. What is even odder is that on 15th September 1981, at a fringe meeting at the Liberal assembly, Mr. Roy Jenkins pledged the full support of the SDP to Mr. Pitt, the Liberal candidate in the Croydon North-West By-election, despite Mr. Pitt having made it clear that he is himself a convinced unilateral disarmer and indeed a pacifist. As Professor Lord Beloff, who left the Liberal Party for the Conservatives some years ago, asked in a letter to The Times: "Does full support from the SDP mean that Dr. Owen will go to Croydon to speak for him: if so what defence policy will he be recommending? Does not (this) throw the gravest doubt on the sincerity and credibility of the Liberal-SDP alliance?" (Times, 18 September 1981).

### An Inappropriate Alliance

As Mr. Ferdinand Mount commented: "He (Mr. Steel) had delivered his party wholesale into an alliance with the survivors of the more illiberal governments in British history. A large number of Liberals were, and are, extremely unhappy about the alliance. They see their separate identity gradually vanishing along with their separate electoral support, and all to the benefit of a party midwived if not created by their own leader." (The Standard, 22 September 1981).

# Briefing Note

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## SDP CONFUSION

Mrs. Shirley Williams's economic policy as set out in her Crosby by-election leaflet entitled "A Positive Programme" is different in some important respects from that put forward by others in her Party. (It is not clear what constitutes official SDP policy). For example:

- \* Interest rates: Her first priority is to get interest rates down. Yet an SDP Discussion Paper (October 1981) says that, "to suppose that the first requirement is to lower interest rates ... is to fatally misunderstand business psychology". (Mrs. Williams is silent on how interest rates can be brought down, particularly since she thinks that "borrowing ... could safely rise by £1½-2 billion").
- \* The exchange rate: She would hold it steady, to encourage exports without forcing up inflation. Yet the SDP economic spokesman, Mr. John Horam, said: "A monetary policy should be arranged to allow for further depreciation of the exchange rate" (Hansard, 4.11.81, col. 65). This would force up inflation.
- \* Incomes policy: Despite the fact that her party does not yet have agreed policy proposals here, Mrs. Williams promises an incomes policy backed by an inflation tax on employers paying "more than the country can afford". This would simply make for more bureaucracy, and a further squeeze on hard-pressed industry.

Public Expenditure. The SDP seem to be agreed on a £5 billion a year increase in public spending, with an attempt to stop this from feeding through into prices by an incomes policy of some sort. They do not tell us how they will proceed, should their attempt at incomes policy fail to have the desired effect.

Past experience suggests that they will fail. For example, between 1974 and 1979, 85% of the increase in money in the economy went straight into increased prices, in spite of Labour's incomes policies and the social contract.

To pay for her programme Mrs. Williams promises to increase Government borrowing by £1½-2 billion, but she is vague about where the other £3-3½ billion would come from.

- \* She expects to make substantial savings because of falling unemployment, yet the most likely consequence of her extravagant plans for increased public expenditure is not more jobs - history tells us it is more inflation, higher interest rates and, at the end of the day, higher unemployment.
- \* She says that "North Sea revenues shouldn't be used to cut taxes" - in other words, these would be used to pay for additional expenditure - and other taxes would rise to cover existing expenditure.

Mortgage Interest and Education. Confusion has reigned over certain other issues. The proposal, put forward in a pre-Conference discussion document, to bring about a "progressive reduction" in mortgage tax relief for owner occupiers, has since been subject to silence, punctuated by occasional attempts at fudging.

On education, while other SDP leaders shrink from Mrs. Williams' desire to abolish independent schools (which, it is estimated, would cost up to £2,000 million), the party appears united on the proposal to remove charitable tax status from such schools. As Mr. Michael McCrum, formerly headmaster of

Eton College, has pointed out, "If charitable status were removed, or indeed modified to the detriment of independent schools, those who would lose out would be the pupils with free or subsidised places. ... It is precisely those schools that help the poor most, such as Christ's Hospital...that stand to lose most by the loss of charitable status" (Times, 18th November, 1981). The SDP are also united on opposition to the Assisted Places scheme, which is also designed to help bright children from poorer homes.

Mrs. Williams' Socialist Commitment. Mrs. Williams, however, has been anxious to bury the issue of independent schools so far as the Crosby by-election is concerned. She would also like the Crosby electors to be ignorant of her wider Socialist commitment. Shortly after losing her seat at Hertford and Stevenage in the 1979 General Election, she declared, "If I got fed up with the Labour Party I should simply leave politics altogether" (Daily Telegraph, 13th June 1979). Seven months later she declared, "There has been much talk recently of a new centre party. Speaking for myself, I do not want a new centre party, I want a Labour party, the Labour party, refreshed by new thinking ... (Sunday Times, 3rd February 1980).

Eight months later she declared, "I have re-read all the Labour manifestos of this decade, 1970, two in 1974, 1979 ... Generally speaking these were the aims and policies I believed in" (Guardian, 29th November 1980). She dismissed the Liberals - "The Liberals aren't a serious alternative" (ibid.), having earlier written, "The Liberals have as many opinions as they have members" (News of the World, 14th September 1980).

She also stated, "I would not join a centre party because I believe the whole idea is wrong ... So far as I am concerned, I will always be in a party to the Left of centre" (Sunday Telegraph, 30th November 1980).

Nationalisation. Her voting for measures of nationalisation during the last Labour Government (of the aircraft and shipbuilding industries and of building land) was not simply out of deference to her Party's whips, as is shown by her statement, "nationalisation is primarily a means to an end, the end being the more just distribution of wealth in our society" (Daily Telegraph, 26th February 1974). In a Labour Party Political Party Broadcast on 20th November 1974, she boasted about the legislation which would remove inequality of wealth - "public ownership of development land, the new gifts tax and the proposed wealth tax". The last named was not implemented by the Labour Government: however, Mrs. Williams has not weakened and the Sunday Telegraph of 27th September, 1981 quotes her as writing that, "there is much to be said for a wealth tax ... "

Profits and Prices. Mrs. Williams was Secretary of State for Prices in 1974-1976. The policy of price control which she administered contributed to a disastrous squeeze on industry, and the doubling of unemployment. Prices rose by nearly 60 per cent during the 2½ years in which she held this office.

"I don't think Mr. Benn is an Extremist". During the 1979 Election Campaign, Mrs. Williams referred to a list of 43 extremist Labour MPs and candidates, published by a group of Labour moderates; it included such people as Mr. Benn, Mr. Frank Allaun, Miss Joan Maynard, Mr. Ian Mikardo and Mr. Dennis Skinner. She said, "I know quite a few of the 43 and I am bound to say if they are extremists, then I am one too". She went on to say: ... I don't believe Members of the Tribune Group are extremists - it would be a ludicrous phrase to hang round their necks ... I don't think Mr. Benn is an extremist" (Election Call, BBC Radio 4, 18th April 1979).

LMR/DJN/JLS