

Minutes of Directors'  
Meeting: Tuesday, 15th  
January, 1980

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Present: Mr McAlpine (in the Chair)  
Mr Bowis  
Mr Corp  
Mr Garner  
Miss Hooper  
Mr Howarth  
Mr Reece  
Miss Varley

Miss Varley reported on the Local Government Bill which had had a very bad start. It had been introduced into the House of Lords but the Labour Party had objected on the grounds that it had aspects of finance in it and should therefore have been introduced into the Commons first. However, copies were available and had been seen by Local Government leaders. At the same time, Mr Heseltine had agreed to drastically alter the Bill. Many Local Government leaders were not happy about some aspects of the Bill, many of which were those which may well be dropped from the new Bill. Mr Heseltine had agreed, in principle, to meet the Local Government leaders in the following week.

Mr Garner reported on the By-election at Southend. The process of selecting a Candidate would go ahead and recommendations from the Selection Committee should be available by the 16th February. The Liberal Party had adopted David Evans as their Candidate and it was thought that he would be quite a formidable opponent, having campaigned vigorously on tax relief and commuter fares among other things. There was no news as yet from the Labour Party.

Research Department were drawing up questions for the survey canvass which should be underway shortly.

ATH

Mr Bowis reported that the Small Business Bureau were already starting work in Southend and Mr Cowell would be meeting with Robin Nelder at the end of the week. The South East Essex Branch of the CTU were fairly strong and Mr Bowis also expected a lot of support from the student organisation.

Miss Hooper said that the WNAC would be meeting shortly and it was hoped that a lot of support would be forthcoming.

AH

Recent news items could make the campaign fairly difficult, such as commuter fares, mortgage rates, electricity and gas prices, and the rate increases would also be known by then.

Rochford Local Authority, which took in part of the Constituency, had gone over to private enterprise refuse collection which could cause problems with NUPE.

Publicity for the Campaign was discussed. The Liberals must be matched leaflet for leaflet. Miss Hooper pointed out that although campaign posters could not be posted at railway stations, MPs' surgery advertisements could be. This was not generally known and it was felt that all local Associations should be taking advantage of this.

It was suggested that perhaps farmers with land bordering on railway lines from Southend into London might be approached to help with the Campaign by having vans parked on their land with posters on the sides. Mr Reece and Mr Garner would discuss this aspect of campaigning. It was thought that election expenses could be a problem here.

ASG, GR

Mr Howarth would be looking into the different aspects of a campaign in Southend.

ATH

Mr Reece talked about complaints he had received from various people on the bias shown again the Government by the BBC. Mr Reece said it was difficult to take a stand on this matter, as it would not look good for the Party and the bias was difficult to pin down anyway as it was based on innuendo. It was agreed that individuals writing to the BBC on the subject would have far better effect.

It was mentioned that the telephone enquiry system at Central Office did not work as well as it should. All enquiries that didn't obviously belong in a specific department should be passed to the CPC. Mr McAlpine and Mr Howarth would speak to Mr Knapp about this. A new telephone system was being considered for installation during the year, whereby a call to someone who was not available would automatically be passed to someone else in the Department.

RAMCA, ATH

Miss Hooper would shortly be attending a CBI meeting on "Economic Realities - The Women's Role" and it was suggested that she look out for Conservative women industrialists who might be useful. There was a shortage of such women with sound views, good articulation, voice and looks.

AH

Miss Varley spoke about amalgamating Conservative News and the Local Government Briefing Notes. This was generally agreed to be a good idea and the Chairman would be having a meeting on publicity where the subject could be discussed further.

PT

Mr Bowis told the meeting that, in connection with the steel strike, there was evidence of hardening against the management and more extensive picketing.

The Chairman of the Party had had an approach from Liberals in Banbury asking for help with getting Conservative speakers for a schools conference. It was felt that the Party could not offer help in this way.

The FCS had produced a poster on the Olympic Games and Soviet Union, Those present generally agreed that it was a good poster but were told that the Foreign Office had reservations about it.

Next Meeting: Tuesday, 29th  
January, 1980 at 11.30 am