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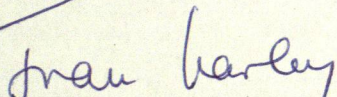
The Prime Minister

8th May 1981

cc: The Rt Hon The Lord Thorneycroft CH
The Rt Hon Tom King MP

1981 Local Government Elections - Preliminary Analysis

We enclose a brief note setting out some of the key results from this year's Local Government Elections. At present we do not have full results for all of the contests, but a preliminary analysis provides a fairly comprehensive overview. We will, by early next week be producing a more detailed analysis and we will of course send a copy to you as soon as this analysis is complete.



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G U Y 38

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PRELIMINARY BRIEFING ON RESULTS OF 1981 LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS

1. Introduction

In the 1981 local government elections we were defending seats won in 1977 at a point when Labour were trailing us by over 20 points in the opinion polls. It was to be expected that we would lose some councils and the likelihood of returning to the position that existed when these counties were first fought in 1973 was anticipated.

On the whole, the results we have obtained are as expected privately within the Party.

It should be noted that at time of writing we do not have the full results for all the local authorities and a more detailed analysis will of course be produced as soon as possible.

2. Broad Comparisons between 1981 Local Government Elections Results and 1973 Results

The table below shows in broad terms those counties in which our performance was better than in 1973 - the base year for comparison.

Better than 1973

Buckinghamshire

Cambridgeshire

Devon

Durham

East Sussex

Hampshire

Isle of Wight (but Liberals did better collapsing Socialist and Independent vote - who probably were Conservatives)

Kent

Lincolnshire

Surrey

Hertfordshire

Merseyside

Powys

South Glamorgan

West Sussex

South Yorkshire

Wiltshire

G.L.C.

Worse than 1973

Avon

Cheshire

Cleveland

Cumbria

Derbyshire

Greater Manchester

Humberside

Worse than 1973 (continued)

Lancashire
 Northamptonshire
 Nottinghamshire
 Somerset
 West Yorkshire

Approximately the same as 1973

Leicestershire
 Oxfordshire
 Tyne and Wear
 Cornwall

3. Gains and Losses of Control of Local Authorities 1981

The table below shows changes in control of local authorities that are available as of 10.30 on Friday morning. Further results are still coming in and a more comprehensive analysis is being developed.

Conservatives Lost (to Labour)

G.L.C.
 Greater Manchester
 Merseyside
 West Midlands
 West Yorkshire

Shires Lost to Labour (previous Conservative)

Avon
 Cleveland
 Cumbria
 Derbyshire
 Humberside
 Lancashire
 Nottinghamshire
 Staffordshire

Conservative Loss to Liberals

Isle of Wight

Conservative Loss to NOC

Bedfordshire
 Berkshire
 Cheshire
 Gloucestershire
 Leicestershire
 Northamptonshire
 Warwickshire

(full results not available yet but Northumberland is expected to go to Labour - previously NOC)

NOTE:

Our private assessment before the elections indicated that our control in Cambridgeshire, Essex, Hertfordshire, Lincolnshire, Oxfordshire and Somerset was likely to be in jeopardy. We have retained control of all these authorities.

4. The G.L.C. Election Results

Bearing in mind the customary unpopularity of a Government mid-term this is an amazingly good result. It is clearly better than the polls were forecasting and not the landslide Labour were talking of at the start of the campaign.

In 1973 - at a similar period for a Conservative government - when Labour last captured the G.L.C. they won eight more seats than they gained yesterday (Hampstead, Hendon North, Brentford and Isleworth, Ilford North, Croydon Central, Croydon North-West, Croydon North-East, Carshalton). At the election the Liberals won Sutton and Cheam as well as Richmond (won by 2,848 votes in 1973 compared with 115 yesterday).

Six of the seats which Labour gained yesterday were gained by majorities of less than 800 votes in each.

David Smith's decisive victory over Ted Knight in Norwood was a triumph and a clear indictment of Labour Marxist policies in Lambeth.

This is the closest result in all the six G.L.C. elections since it was created in 1964. No Party in government has ever won the G.L.C.:

1964:	LAB 64	CON 36		LAB MAJ 28
1967:	CON 82	LAB 18		CON MAJ 62
1970:	CON 55	LAB 45		CON MAJ 10
1973:	LAB 58	CON 32	LIB 2	LAB MAJ 26
1977:	CON 64	LAB 28		CON MAJ 36

(The 1964/67 & 70 figures exclude Aldermen)

1981:	LAB 50	CON 41	LIB 1	LAB MAJ 9
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The tables of figures below show an interesting comparison between General Elections and G.L.C. elections since 1973:

1973 G.L.C.	LAB 58	CON 32	LIB 2
1974 (Feb GE)	LAB 50	CON 42	
1974 (Oct GE)	LAB 51	CON 41	
1977 G.L.C.	LAB 28	CON 64	
1979 GE	LAB 42	CON 50	
1981 G.L.C.	LAB 50	CON 41	LIB 1

Our assessment would indicate that of the 50 Labour Councillors elected - 29 are Left-wingers, 16 Right-wingers and 5 can be considered as 'Centre' members. It must be regarded as a strong possibility that Ken Livingstone will be selected as Leader of the G.L.C. at the Labour Party meeting this evening (8th May).

In Parliamentary terms our calculations indicate that in 12 G.L.C. Parliamentary marginal seats, the swing to the Conservatives since the General Election was less than 5% to Labour.

We are in process of developing a more detailed analysis of the G.L.C. results which should be available early next week.

5. The Liberals

The results of the local government elections must be regarded as disappointing by the Liberals. In London in 1973 they gained Sutton and Cheam and Richmond. This time they only gained Richmond by a very narrow majority after a recount. Their overall performance in the G.L.C. was disappointing as they expected to do significantly better.

On Merseyside, the Liberals did not gain control and the results were 56 Socialists, 27 Conservatives and 14 Liberals.

The Liberals gained control of the Isle of Wight. This result was widely anticipated.

6. The Social Democrats

Although the Social Democrats were not officially putting forward candidates, the intervention of Stephen Haseler in Lambeth Norwood (standing for the Social Democratic Alliance) certainly took votes from Labour. We have at present no detailed analysis of the performance of individuals under the label 'Social Democrat' in other elections but we will be looking in detail at those contests early next week.

7. North/South Divide

These results reinforced the trend shown in the General Election and since, towards the tendency for the Conservative Party to become a Southern based Party. Our presence in the North is increasingly being confined to the rural areas. Our performance in this year's local government elections becomes significantly worse the further North one goes. For example, Labour have gained control of Lancashire for the first time since the War.

Miss Joan Varley & Mr Keith Britto