

Conservative and Unionist Central Office

(F) Press, Publicity
& Broadcasting

32 Smith Square Westminster SW1P 3HH Telephone 01-222 9000 Telegrams Constituents London SW1

Chairman of the Party: THE RT HON CECIL PARKINSON MP

Deputy Chairman: THE HON R. ALISTAIR McALPINE

Vice Chairmen: ALAN HOWARTH
LORD MARSHALL OF LEEDS
SIR ANTHONY ROYLE KCMG MP
THE RT HON THE BARONESS YOUNG

CONFIDENTIAL

25th November, 1981

Derek Howe, Esq.,
10 Downing Street,
London SW1

Dear Derek,

Apropos our conversation this morning, I've decided against making any representations to the BBC or to ITN about either of the matters we discussed. I may say that this decision has the unanimous approval of our Directors, who met this morning, and also of the Chairman, Rt Hon Cecil Parkinson, MP whom I subsequently consulted.

As regards both ITN's and the BBC's intentions to include in their Crosby by-election result programme a contribution by David Steel (Liberal) in addition to SDP spokesmen's inclusion in their panel of three party representatives, a point which weighed with me is that Shirley Williams describes herself on the nomination and ballot papers as the "Social Democratic Party/Liberal Alliance" candidate. It therefore seemed inappropriate to protest against an extraneous comment by the Liberal leader, provided that the time he occupies is deducted from the time allotted to the SDP representative on the panel (which I understand will be the case).

In any event, I am told that the question of Mr Steel's participation has already been considered at a high level in our Party. The reason why Rt Hon Francis Pym withdrew from the BBC2 panel, I believe, is that he wished to keep open for the time being the whole issue of an "extra" appearance on TV by either a Liberal or a Social Democratic representative when a candidate from the other side of the Alliance is involved.

While Mr Pym was understandably anxious not to compromise his own position, the fact that we are replacing him on the BBC panel with another Cabinet Minister, Rt Hon Leon Brittan, must not be taken to mean that the Party have conceded the principle of "extra" representation for the Alliance on TV election programmes.

As regards the other matter we discussed, i.e. the Jo Riley "Thought for the Day" on Radio 4, November 23rd, it happens that our Chairman is to be the guest of Sir Ian Trethowan and David Holmes at a private lunch at the BBC on Friday of this week. Having read the transcript of Mr Riley's piece, he agreed that its terms scarcely justified an official protest about pro-SDP bias, but thought this lunch-party would be a timely opportunity for him to raise the matter informally with the Director General and his principal aide. He intends to do so on the ground that "Thought for the Day" isn't really an appropriate medium through which to vent opinions on an event of intense party-political interest such as current by-election campaigns.

*Yours,
Harry*

Sir Harry Boyne

ccThe Chairman, Mr A Howarth, Mr A.S. Garner, Rt Hon Francis Pym, MP

BRIAN REDHEAD

It's fourteen minutes to eight. And now it's time for thought for the day, and today it comes from Manchester where Jo Riley who's a journalist on the Liverpool Echo is in our studios.

JO RILEY

Good morning. Let me start today by recalling a couple of sentences from St. Luke's Gospel which most of you will surely know from your very first stage appearance in the school nativity play. And it came to pass in those days that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be taxed. And all went to be taxed, everyone unto his own city. That story tells us how Government operated in a totalitarian society. But now let's contrast it with the decree that went out from Parliament on November 4th that the constituency of Crosby shall go to the polls to elect an MP this Thursday.

This story is about a voluntary ballot in a democracy. But what both the Bible story and the current news story have in common is a foundation in politically conscious societies. In New Testament times, of course, the Jews were allowed a certain amount of autonomy to practice their faith. But they couldn't go to the ballot box to rid them of the Caesar who lived in Rome, which was still the size of a fishing village then.

Crosby was once a village community too, but until recent weeks mention of the word itself was more likely to evoke talk of Bing Crosby than any thought of a now sprawling conurbation on North Merseyside. Yet this week is Crosby week. The former Borough has become the centre of our world, and I should know because I live there. Our letter boxes have never been so well used as pamphlets and leaflets pour through them like confetti. Shirley Williams actually left her calling card while I was at work, the canvasser for John Butcher, the Conservative, got me out of the bath to ask if he could count on my support, and a member of Labour man John Backhouses' team thrust even more literature into my hand as I was leaving my local off-licence. We have also been bombarded by the visual effects department

perhaps the most spectacular example being photographs of Mrs Williams nailed half-way up trees in an outbreak of nature we call "Ince" Woods on the Formby by-pass. We know too that whatever Thursday's result it will be analysed and re-analysed by commentators until they split the political atom. Because of the peculiar circumstances of this by-election, a large turn-out is virtually assured. I shall certainly be using my vote but deep down inside, I feel rather unsettled by it all and why? Because like many people I am disillusioned by a political world ^{that's} becoming ever more polemic. With the highly selective use of facts and figures by all parties with the almost regulation assumption that an opponents view must be wrong, and most of all by the notion that good political theatre consists of taking sides and ignoring all else. How refreshing it would be to exploit the middle ground more to welcome compromise and do away with much of the superfluous confrontation, contradiction and rigid role-playing that characterises so much of our political life today and debases it to cliché ridden sermoring. Yet at the end of the day I remember the introduction to an American TV series of the 60s which reminded us that although there was much wrong with democracy all the other systems of Government were so much worse. I also remember we were all tookeen to see in political extremes the solutions to the problems facing us. But to ignore the non-political dimensions is to ignore Jesus' answer to the Pharasees question "is it lawful to give tribute to Caesar or not?" And back came the famous reply, "render to Caesar the things that are Caesars and God the things that are Gods."