

Conference
1979

AGENTS DINNER

Some notes:

1. There are now 350 constituency Agents - excluding those in Area Offices. This figure is 50 up on three years ago. It is our intention to build up our constituency agent strength even further. The Labour Party have only 60 full time constituency Agents.
2. This has been one of the busiest years for Agents in the Party's history, what with the General and Local Elections, the Euro Election and the Devolution Referendums in Scotland and Wales.
3. In the General Election we achieved the largest swing since the War. The result showed the widest margin in votes between the two main Parties since 1935.
4. But there are several points the Agents should be reminded about. They include:

(a) Local Government By-Elections

Central Office are very concerned about our poor showing in these Elections. (Incidentally this anxiety predated our General Election victory). I attach a cutting from Labour Weekly which shows how easy it is for our local Party workers to relax in the aftermath of a General Election.

(b) The Liberals

Liberal "resurgences" often start from local government beginnings. Agents should realise that they are responsible for checking Liberal advances. In view of the highish Liberal poll at the Election and recent events at the Labour Conference the Liberals are expecting early successes.

(c) The Boundary Commission

The Agents need reminding about the absolute necessity of getting the Boundary Commission to report by the middle of 1982. Some of them with vested interests in constituencies which will be adversely affected may mark time. The Party must come before the interests of individual constituencies.

(d) Membership

This is a pre-requisite to success in a marginal constituency. Some marginals built up their membership as "criticals". The membership level must be maintained.


(e) The Winter

The Government will face a difficult winter in the local government sphere. Agents must do everything they can to keep their idiosyncratic local government leaders in check. The Government could lose substantial credibility if Conservative Local Governments do not accept the line.

(f) Political Leadership

The Agents would feel flattered if they were reminded that they were political leaders in their own community. It is their job to ensure that the Government's message is put across in the local press. They should not have to depend solely upon the national campaign.

5. The National Society of Agents will not be electing their new Chairman until Monday afternoon. Therefore I will let you know who will be chairing your Dinner on your arrival at Blackpool. Meanwhile, the outgoing Chairman is Cliff Allick (Isle of Ely). He deserves a few words of thanks. The disappointing outcome in Ely was to a considerable degree the result of tactical voting, not poor organization.



Richard

8th October 1979