

CONSERVATIVE AND UNIONIST CENTRAL OFFICE

ABBAY HOUSE, 2-B VICTORIA STREET, WESTMINSTER S.W.1.

23/74

MEMORANDUM

To Mr. Watson.

From Mr. J. Trenter.

12th August, 1949.

CONFIDENTIAL

LARTFORD

I now have the following report to make on this constituency.

Membership

There are now 2,300 members of the Senior Association and 125 Young Conservatives.

Finance

The income for 1948 was 2980 and their estimate for this year is 21,500; it is doubtful whether the target will be reached. Finance will always be a difficulty in this constituency, but the position will improve when the organisation has been strengthened.

There is no Election Fighting Fund and they will require considerable help.

Example

Miss Margaret Roberts was only accepted early this year, after the constituency had been without a Candidate for a considerable period.

Miss Roberts, although young and comparatively inexperienced, has made considerable progress and is putting new life into the Association. She is a good speaker, devotes a good deal of time to the Constituency, and is extremely popular.

Officers - Chairman

Mr. J. Trenter, now in his second year as Chairman has gained confidence and is now really first class. He is pulling the Association together and his enthusiasm is showing results. Unfortunately he is an extremely busy man and cannot devote as much time to the Association as he would like to.

Vice-Chairman

Not outstanding, with the exception of Mr. Goff, who also has little time to spare.

Miss Hamilton, the Young Conservative is distinctly promising.

#### Hon. Treasurer

Mr. J.E.D. Kelsey, is fair, he is hardworking, but has little organising ability and much of his labour is misdirected.

#### Agent

R.W. Mills, a young agent who has suffered a good deal through ill health during the eighteen months he has been in the Constituency. He is keen and hardworking, but is not an outstanding organiser.

#### Organisation

This is patchy. Some of the wards are fairly well organised, but the 'black' spots are really bad. There is a great dearth of really good active workers, and it will be some time before these show any considerable improvement.

#### Young Conservatives

There are two branches with a total membership of 125. Miss Hamilton, their Chairman, is a good leader, but they have to face considerable Socialist opposition. The advent of a young Candidate should help them.

#### Local Government

For the first time we fought a few of the Dartford and Erith seats in the recent borough elections, but without success. Both Boroughs have large Socialist majorities, the only Boroughs in the Area which are Socialist controlled.

The Craford Urban District, a 'black' spot, was Socialist controlled, but the Independents rather surprisingly gained control last spring, by a narrow majority.

Before the County Council Elections the Socialists held four of the five County Council Divisions; Independents gained two seats from them.

#### Clubs

There are three Clubs with a total membership of 750. In two of them there are distinct signs of increased political activity.

#### General

This is by far the most difficult seat in the Area. The Socialists are strong, well organised and have ample funds, and it is hard work rousing our people from their 'defeatist' attitude.

In spite of an excellent Candidate and Socialist defeats in the County Council Election, we are extremely unlikely to win this seat. It would take a repetition of 1931 to swing public opinion in our favour. Even then it would be a narrow majority.

It will be necessary to devote considerable time and assistance to this Constituency to 'contain' the enemy and prevent their surplus workers going over to Bexley and tipping the scales against us there.

*J.H.*