

CAROLINE

- FORWARD ENGAGEMENTS
FILE

Please file for 23 Nov:

CONSERVATIVE PARTY

✓ 28.

30/10

Strategy Meeting

PRIVATE & CONFIDENTIAL

PT/SO

26th October 1979

STRATEGY

The Prime Minister has instructed me to arrange a meeting on a regular basis for the purpose of concerting the Party strategy with that being followed by the Government. The Prime Minister has decided these meetings will take place at Central Office at 9.45 a.m. on the following dates:

~~Friday, 23rd November~~

Friday, 22nd February

~~Friday, 25th January~~

Friday, 25th April

The Prime Minister wishes the following to attend these meetings:

The Leader of the House of Commons
The Chief Whip
The Paymaster General
The Chairman of the Party Organisation
The Deputy Chairman
The Vice Chairman (Local Government)
The Director of Research Department
Mr John Hoskyns

A Secretary will be provided from Research Department

I attach a note on Strategy which provides a background to these meetings, and I will be forwarding an Agenda in due course.

I would be grateful if you could let me know, in advance, if you are in any difficulty in attending.

THORNEYCROFT

A STRATEGY PAPER

by

Lord Thorneycroft

THE MEANING OF STRATEGY

1. Policy in Government is dictated in part by the Government's strategy, the main lines of which are laid down in the Party Manifesto, and inevitably and increasingly by brute necessity as it reacts to events inside and outside the country, most of them only imperfectly foreseen at the time it entered office.

2. The strategy for a political party is in a sense simpler and cruder than the strategy for a Government. It is aimed at interpreting and communicating the plans and actions of the Government in the most favourable light and has as its principle objective, the winning of a General Election at the conclusion of the Government's term of office.

3. It is useful for a Government to have a strategy in the sense of a forward plan of action and certain defined objectives which it can claim to have achieved at the end of its term. It is important for a party to have a strategy since without one, the winning of an election would become highly problematical. It is vital that both the Government and the Party should each know with some precision what the other is engaged upon.

THE PARTY STRATEGY

4. The Party strategy is concerned with such matters as:

- (a) the determination of the issues which concern the public.
- (b) The public attitude towards these issues.
- (c) The methods of communication with the public both in the collection of their opinions and transmission of ideas to them.

- (d) The selection of target groups of voters whose attitudes appear to warrant special attention.
- (e) The welding together of Governmental and Party activity so that Ministers are made to appear not only in a Governmental Executive role but also as representatives of Party ideas and philosophy seeking to achieve the hopefully desirable long term aims of the Party itself.
- (f) The identification of areas of political danger - warning Ministers where the interests of important numbers of target voters can be adversely affected by any action or series of actions, and hopefully avoiding such actions unless really important economic or other factors impel the Government to take them.
- (g) The recruitment of the widest possible area of membership in order to secure a truly national base for the Party's activities and a strong foundation for Government authority.

ARRANGEMENTS FOR CONSULTATION

5. The pursuit of strategy co-ordination will be best accomplished by periodic meetings between a small number of senior Ministers including, when possible, the Prime Minister, together with the Chairman of the Party, the Deputy Chairman, the Vice Chairman (Local Government), and the Director of the Research Department. The head of the Political Unit at No. 10, Mr Hoskyns should attend these meetings. Other Directors at the Central Office would be available for consultation as required. A representative of the Research Department could act as Secretary.

WORKING PAPERS

7. Among the matters which such a group might turn its attention to would be to receive and to commission a number of working papers for consideration by its members. The group itself should probably usefully meet about once every six weeks. The kind of items which could find their way into its agenda with the sort of subjects which would arise in discussion would include the following:-

- (a) an outline by the Government of how it saw events over the next two months developing. Main pluses and main minuses.
- (b) Co-ordination of Party and Government activity including speeches, party political broadcasts, briefings etc., to co-incide with these events.
- (c) Report by Research Department on main lessons to learn from Opinion Research. (Methods of this type of research are in process of being revised).
- (d) Consideration of target areas for important groups of voters.
- (e) Special campaigns for the nine million voters of pensionable age.
- (f) Arrangements for testing opinions among Trade Unionists.
- (g) What, if anything, can persuade Trade Union members to cross picket lines this winter?
- (h) The emerging struggle in Local Government elections.
- (i) Expansion of Party membership.
- (j) Expansion of the Small Business Bureau.
- (k) The forward planning of Public Relations, including consideration of the role of Government, or Party and of outside organisations in such a campaign.

Arrangements would then be made for the follow-up by appropriate Directors in the Central Office of decisions taken by the group and reports made to it at subsequent meetings.