

General Election
Publicity

Conservative and Unionist Central Office

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Memorandum from: Anthony Shrimpsley To: The Chairman

Date: 19th April 1983

CONFIDENTIAL

GENERAL ELECTION TELEVISION AND PRESS CONFERENCES

Party Election Broadcasts

There will be a meeting on the day after the election is announced between the political parties and the broadcasting authorities to agree the grid of Party Election Broadcasts.

I will be discussing this matter with the Chief Whip shortly, but it seems that we should have two major objectives:-

- 1) To achieve the most lively mix of broadcasts in terms of length and presentation.
- 2) To resist strenuously the inevitable demand for extra time which will come from the Alliance.

In 1979 the Conservative and Labour Parties had five television broadcasts of ten minutes each, the Liberals were given three of ten minutes. The SNP and Plaid Cymru had local broadcasts only in Scotland and Wales.

Other parties nominating 50 candidates on a UK basis qualified for five minutes of broadcast time only on television and radio.

We should of course insist on the broadcast being transmitted simultaneously on all channels, and if possible on extending the radio broadcasts to Independent Local Radio as well.

There is considerable attraction this time in the idea of seeking shorter television broadcasts, i.e., five minutes instead of ten with the exception of one fifteen minute final broadcast which it is felt could be turned into a most attractive programme introduced and summed up by the Prime Minister. A programme of such length could well prove an embarrassment to the Labour Party.

The Alliance will press for equal time. Our best argument against this is that in 1979 the Liberals with 577 candidates had three broadcasts to the five each of the two major parties. We should be able, I would have thought, to limit them on this occasion to four broadcasts against five.

We would, of course, be offering to reduce the total television time of Party Election Broadcasts from fifty minutes to thirty-five minutes.

For radio we would similarly offer to take four of five minutes and one of ten minutes on Radio 4 (compared with four of ten minutes last time) and four of five minutes on Radio 2 (compared with three of five minutes last time).

If they are broadcast at the right times (i.e., drive time or mid-day to 1.00 p.m.) these Radio 2 broadcasts are very effective.

Use of television and radio programmes

The most important point is to agree upon those programmes in which the Prime Minister should take part.

Arising from earlier discussions we have established that the Prime Minister will reject invitations to appear in so called "debates" with the Leader of the Opposition.

The programmes considered most attractive for the purpose of presenting the Prime Minister are:-

Television: Granada 500, Nationwide, Weekend World, and the three special weekly programmes normally produced by ITN and BBC in their extended bulletins.

Radio: Election Call (Radio 4), World this Weekend (Radio 4), Jimmy Young (Radio 2), Newsbeat (Radio 1).

So far as appearances by other Ministers are concerned our objective will be to get maximum coverage in all the worthwhile current affairs programmes and news bulletins, so that it is more appropriate to consider the question of which Ministers and senior party members we should be most anxious to see appearing rather than attempt to draw up a schedule of programmes themselves.

We are making efforts to discover what nationally networked commercial radio programmes there are likely to be. By definition this would seem to limit the scope to those produced by IRN. Of course, all Members will be encouraged to accept local radio interviews in their own areas.

Morning Radio and Breakfast Television

I suggest that we should have a "dawn patrol" of Ministers including some of our rising stars briefed to stand by in pairs for breakfast television on the basis of invitations received the previous day.

These could include:-

Lynda Chalker, Geoffrey Pattie, John Patten, Norman Lamont, Kenneth Baker, Peggy Fenner, Kenneth Clarke, John Stanley.

Radio

Obviously the programmes will frequently ask for particular Ministers. Those whose appearances we might attempt to promote include:-

Rhodes Boyson, Angus Maude, Marcus Fox, Teddy Taylor, Kenneth Clarke, Geoffrey Pattie, Peggy Fenner, John Gummer, Malcolm Rifkind, Michael Ancram, Geoffrey Finsberg, Sir Michael Havers, Robert Dunn, John Stanley, William Waldegrave.

Television

For the major television programmes our frontline team could be:-

Sir Geoffrey Howe, Cecil Parkinson, Norman Tebbit, William Whitelaw, Michael Heseltine, Lord Hailsham (especially on law and order), Peter Walker (particularly on the Common Market), George Younger, Norman Fowler, Leon Brittan, Nigel Lawson, Tom King, Patrick Jenkin, John Biffen.

There will no doubt be enough demand to keep most members of the Government busy but these names include at least a reasonable selection of those whom experience shows to make an effective impact on television.

I think it is important to stress again that the arrangements for briefing these Ministers specifically for television and radio should include a strong Research Department involvement.

I attach as Appendix A the up-to-date viewing figures of given programmes.

News Conferences

Excluding a Bank Holiday there will normally be thirteen news conferences at Central Office not including the Manifesto launch.

Almost all of these will be taken by the Prime Minister backed up by at least one senior Minister to comment upon the major issue which we are trying to put across that day.

I suggest that we follow the previous pattern of 1979 in which the Prime Minister opens the press Conference with a few brief remarks and introduces the Minister who is making a statement on the issue of the day (on which there will be a prepared press release). Both of them will then take questions.

This formula allows the Prime Minister if necessary to preface the press conference by commenting on an important topical issue which has arisen overnight and to rebutt if she chooses statements by the opposition.

I recommend we make special preparation on the following thirteen daily issues:-

- 1) The Economy - The Prime Minister and the Chancellor - inflation, prices, prospects for economic recovery - in effect a mini budget.

- 2) Strategy for jobs - Prime Minister, Secretary for Employment, Kenneth Baker - how we are creating real jobs, training young people, helping industry to expand, (specially with new technology), promoting exports and competition.
- 3) Law and Order - Prime Minister, Home Secretary and possibly Lord Chancellor - support for the crime fighters, strengthening the powers of the courts, the prison building programme, need for schools and parents to raise standards and values.
- 4) Defence and Disarmament - Prime Minister and Defence Secretary - "Peace" is a Tory word, how the deterrent has kept Britain safe, how Labour would leave this country defenceless.
- 5) Health and Welfare - Prime Minister and Social Services Secretary - spending on the NHS, improvements in efficiency, record on pensions, increase in choice of treatment by encouragement of private medicine.
- 6) Education - Prime Minister, Education Secretary and Dr. Boyson - raising educational standards, getting rid of dud teachers, cutting out waste, improving educational choice, assisted places schemes.
- 7) Housing - Prime Minister and Housing Minister - booming sale of council houses, Labour and Alliance policies, growth of owner occupation.
- 8) The Unions and the Right to Work - Prime Minister and Secretary for Employment - the end of the "confrontation" bogey, trimming unions powers, giving the unions back to their members.
- 9) Rates - Prime Minister and Environment Secretary - attack on local government overspending, helping the rate payer, curbing the bureaucrats.
- 10) Nationalised Industries - Prime Minister, Industry Secretary and Energy Secretary - progress in privatisation, cutting out waste, improving efficiency in coal and steel.
- 11) Foreign Affairs - Prime Minister, Foreign Secretary, and Agriculture Secretary - Europe, how we fought Britain's cause, the Atlantic Alliance, the pursuit of world peace.
- 12) Defending the constitution - Prime Minister, Lord Chancellor and Leader of the Commons - the threat to the House of Lords, defending individual rights, keeping the gentlemen in Whitehall under control.
- 13) The Environment - Prime Minister and Environment Secretary - protecting the countryside, lead in petrol, etc.

These subjects are placed in an order which would be perfectly workable but of course can be juggled in any way required.

APPENDIX 'A'

TV NETWORKTOP CURRENT AFFAIRS/NEWS PROGRAMMES

| <u>PROGRAMME</u> | <u>STATION</u> | <u>DAY</u> | <u>AVERAGE NO OF NT/WK HOMES SWITCHED ON</u> |
|------------------|----------------|-------------|--|
| Panorama | BBC1 | Mon | 3,338,387 |
| World in Action | ITV 1 | Mon | 5,031,117 |
| T.V. Eye | ITV 1 | Thur | 4,543,659 |
| Question Time | BBC 1 | Thur | 2,459,199 |
| Weekend World | ITV 1 | Sun | 773,764 |
| News at 9.00 | BBC 1 | Mon- Fri | 5,580,680 |
| News at 10.00 | ITV 1 | Mon- Fri | 5,604,499 |
| Newsnight | BBC 2 | Mon- Fri | 940,201 |
| Nationwide | BBC 1 | Tue- Fri | 4,435,050 |