

Gardiner

Prime Minister

1. Although Patrick Wall is Chairman of the "92", your Pretorian Guard, George Gardiner, is the effective power and is a superb organiser.
2. As you know, we had very considerable successes in the backbench committee elections last month.
3. Herewith George's Report. I am in touch with Cecil Parkinson about making use of George's undoubted journalistic and PR skills at O.
4. I have also asked Sue Goodchild to put George and his wife on an invitation list for Chequers.

23.12.81

IAN GOW

From George Gardner, M.P.



House of Commons
LONDON, SW1A 0AA

APPROVED REPORT

Before reporting on the elections for Committee offices in the 1981-82 session, I would like to remind members of the context in which they began. Throughout the summer elements in our Party were briefing the Press that the elections would mark a backbench revolt against Margaret Thatcher's leadership. Some of our members holding chairmanships were put on an advertised "hit list". The chairman of the 1922 was to be opposed, probably by Charlie Morrison. Indeed, the Leader would be challenged herself - and Geoffrey Rippon announced he was willing to be drafted. So at our last dinner members of the "92" resolved not only to beat off the challenge to our own members, but also to teach those who sought to undermine Margaret Thatcher's leadership a lesson.

In this we succeeded beyond many of our hopes, though the sequence began with a disappointment. Two of our members stood for the two vice-chairmen's posts on the 1922 Executive, in the hope of displacing Charlie Morrison. Neither quite succeeded, despite two recounts. It is the view of your Steering Group that if only one "92" member had challenged, he would almost certainly have succeeded.

After this it was good news almost all the way. On the 1922 Executive all our five former members were returned, together with our joint secretary and treasurer. The sixth name on our list, Cranley Onslow, was elected to the one vacant place.

Ray Whitney succeeded in ousting Geoffrey Rippon as chairman of Foreign Affairs. William Clark and Michael Grylls - both on the so-called "hit list" - retained the chairmanships of Finance and Industry respectively. Six other "92" members were returned as chairmen. Only two bid upwards for this office and failed. Following the Foreign Affairs election, our members now hold half of the chairmanships of the main Committees.

At vice-chairman level we made significant gains in contested elections, notably Nick Bonsor (Foreign Affairs), Jill Knight (Health), Ivor Stanbrook (N. Ireland) and Teddy Taylor (Trade). In addition, 10 of our members either retained vice-chairmanships or moved up unchallenged.

At secretary level it is a similar story, with several of our newer members gaining Committee office.

In this year's elections two new approaches were adopted. First, the daily whip was issued in breast-pocket size, tear-off booklet form. Second, a broader "cell system" was operated, in which our whip was passed regularly to colleagues who had expressed a wish to support sound men, but who perhaps knew nothing of the "92". But occasionally such colleagues have a right to expect reciprocal support from the whip, which explains why our members may have seen one or two unexpected names on their slips of paper.

Finally I must thank William Clark, Tony Durant, Michael Colvin and Bob Dunn for all their help in this exercise. The "92" has been described as the "Praetorian Guard" of our Prime Minister. I like to think we performed that role with success in these elections.

Gardiner

AND
CONFIDENTIAL

18th December 1981

I had a talk to George Gardiner last evening.

He is anxious to help.

I have a high regard for his journalistic and PR ability.

May we have a word, please?

IAN GOW

The Rt Hon Cecil Parkinson MP