



Ancram
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1 Apr 1983

10 DOWNING STREET

THE PRIME MINISTER

28th April 1983

Thank you very much for your letter of 26th April, together with its enclosures, which I will study carefully over the weekend.

I am most grateful for all the trouble which you have taken in preparing your Report.

Michael Ancram Esq MP

From: Michael Ancram, M.A., LL.B., M.P.



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

26th April, 1983.

Dear Prime Minister.

I enclose my annual pre-Conference memorandum on the Party and the political scene in Scotland. I also enclose a summary as the memorandum is longer than usual. I felt that at this stage in the life of this Parliament I should send you the fullest report possible for reference if required as much as for immediate information.

I have referred to various economic statistics and industrial trends, but to avoid too much paper I have not appended the details. These can be provided if required either from Central Office or from the Scottish Office.

As you will see, I am firmly of the view that the psychology of attacking rather than defending is going to be central to the campaign we fight in Scotland when the election comes, although this is a slight gamble of which we must be aware.

I am, of course, always available to amplify any further points if you should require it before Perth. I hope that whatever the date of the election we can use this Conference as the beginning of an aggressive and optimistic campaign in Scotland.

*Yours sincerely
Michael*

The Rt. Hon. Margaret Thatcher, M.P.
10, Downing Street
S.W.1.

SUMMARY OF THE MEMORANDUM TO THE PRIME MINISTER
FROM MICHAEL ANCRAM.

Introduction: The political situation in Scotland is less easy to define at present than previously. The two underlying and countervailing trends are increasing unemployment and increasing business confidence.

We have no local elections in Scotland this year.

1. The Political Scene in Scotland: We have gained ground in the opinion polls over the last year, but remain behind our 1979 showing. Labour continue to run strongly in the polls and are ahead of their 1979 figure.
2. The State of the Other Parties:
 - 2.1 Labour: in Scotland they have not reflected the troubles experienced south of the Border, and they still thrive on the myth that Scotland is a Socialist country.
 - 2.2 Alliance: they do not appear to be much of a new threat in Scotland except possibly in the cities.
 - 2.3 S.N.P.: far down in the polls which is a mixed blessing - good in our rural areas where they challenge us, and bad in industrial areas where we need them to undermine the Labour vote.
3. Party Organisation: Following major boundary revisions we are well advanced in candidate selection except in 'hopeless' seats. We have identified and are working both critical and marginal constituencies.

Election planning is also well advanced and morale and enthusiasm are good.
4. The Main Issues: largely unchanged since last year.
 - 4.1 Unemployment: comparatively better trend than the U.K. average.
 - 4.2 Trident and nuclear disarmament
 - 4.3 "The Cuts": a myth in health and education (expenditure per child).
 - 4.4 Law and Order
 - 4.5 Rural fuel costs
 - 4.6 Ravenscraig.

5. Our Strongest Case.

5.1 Economic: Scottish figures are comparatively better than the U.K. average in many cases. We have ridden out the recession better.

5.2 Social: the general increasing role and responsibility of the individual and family under this Government, particularly in the home and in education. This has no particular Scottish context except in extent.

6. Electoral Prospects: Boundary revisions have not really benefitted us much in terms of increased seats on paper. They have brought a number of new seats within range which will help spur enthusiasm and could provide gains.

7. Election Options: No strong views within the Party for any particular date. The Party will be ready for an election by the Conference if this were to be required.

8. Conclusion: We intend and are prepared to run an aggressive and optimistic campaign whenever an election is called. We need to establish this optimism in the media's mind at the earliest possible date, and will use the Conference for this.

The Conference slogan is "Resolute for Scotland".

MEMORANDUM TO THE PRIME MINISTER

FROM MICHAEL ANCRAM

CHAIRMAN OF THE PARTY IN SCOTLAND

Introduction: The background to the current political scene in Scotland is more complex and less definable than it has been previously at the time of my annual reports prior to the Perth Conference. Since last year we have fought two by-elections in 'hopeless' seats - at Coatbridge and Airdrie and at Glasgow Queenspark. In the former, in the immediate aftermath of the Falklands victory, we registered a small swing from Labour to us (about 3%). In the latter in a bleak autumn campaign we narrowly lost our deposit. Neither result can or should be given much significance.

For the most part we have been faced with the two underlying and countervailing trends of increasing unemployment on the one hand, and slowly increasing business confidence on the other.

The notable political milestones have been the successful conclusion of the Falklands War, the ongoing Ravenscraig situation, and the implementation of the Boundary Commission Report. Their political effects have been mixed and add to the difficulties in making an accurate assessment of the political climate and prospects. I deal with each more specifically in the course of this report.

I must add in introduction that there are no local elections in Scotland this year on which a more statistical analysis and assessment can be made.

1. The Political Scene in Scotland: At the time of the Falklands campaign there was a noticeable difference in political reaction North and South of the Border. While opinion polls in Scotland showed a small swing to the Conservatives during the campaign, it bore no resemblance to the major transference of support recorded in England.
- 1.1 However, throughout the autumn and into the New Year Scottish polls recorded a remarkably steady recovery month by month in our support from 22% last summer to 30% in January and February, when we were almost back to our 1979 General Election level. March showed a post-Bermondsey drop almost exclusively to the SDP, which has recovered somewhat in the latest polls. (See Appendix 1).
- 1.2 There are no startlingly obvious reasons for the recovery of support over the autumn, particularly as they were not matched South of the Border. My own view is that there were three main factors at work. Firstly, a post-Falklands effect based on a respect for the resolution with which the campaign had been pursued to victory. This was matched by a noticeable fall off in criticism of the Government but particularly of the Prime Minister on the doorstep. Both aspects were generally reported from the constituencies.

Secondly, the Ravenscraig saga during the autumn portrayed the Scottish Secretary and the Party in Scotland in a distinctly pro-Scottish light and reduced the inveterate criticism of us as an "English Party".

Thirdly, there was and remains a quietly growing confidence that economically the worst is over. This has been underlined by recent regional reports, notably the CBI's, and is increasingly reflected in available statistics.

1.3 Having said this - and it is an important base from which we will have to fight the General Election in Scotland - the continued strong showing of the Labour Party in the polls is a matter for concern, and I deal with it shortly. Combined with the post-Bermondsey opinion polls it suggests a less stable and less optimistic position for us in Scotland than appears to be the case in England. We remain very vulnerable to tactical voting, which the elections in 1974 showed is an art which the Scottish electorate are skilful in practising.

1.4 Nevertheless, compared with our nadir of some 18 months ago we have recovered a good deal of ground, and we must be careful to base the confidence, which we must display, on this very real and encouraging improvement.

2. The State of the Other Parties:

2.1 The Labour Party: Despite a very lacklustre Scottish parliamentary performance, and in the face of the internal Party problems which have caused such trouble to them down South, it must be said that the Scottish Labour support has held and if anything increased.

They have managed to show a surprisingly united face in Scotland and have few scruples about attaching themselves to every industrial problem or dispute going, whatever the merits.

Their vote in the industrial central belt is very steady and unthinking. It has not suffered from the undermining at the soft edges which has happened in England. More work is required to chip away at the edges, and it may be that a firm "no devolution this time" line will have some effect in this respect. I believe they may also be vulnerable to a concerted attack on the effects of their "hardline" policy document on a Scotland which over the last few years has weathered recession better than many other parts of the U.K.

The Scottish Labour Party should not be underestimated and must remain our major and consistent target. They thrive on the myth that Scotland is a Socialist country (they have never had a majority of the popular vote - we have in 1955) when in reality they get roughly 4 votes to every 3 we get. This is a theme which psychologically is of vital importance in the light of the newly drawn boundaries.

2.2 The Alliance: Since Hillhead they have made little headway in Scotland and, the post Bermondsey poll apart, they have faded dramatically in the opinion polls. In general they do not appear to be a great threat, except in the cities where their middle-class

intellectual support is naturally stronger, and where they could hurt us by taking our vote and letting Labour in.

They themselves are threatened in Hillhead (Roy Jenkins) but their strongest challenger there on the new boundaries is probably Labour (Neil Carmichael) rather than us. It will be a tight contest and may well keep Jenkins "at home" during the campaign rather more than he would wish.

There are certain areas where there are cracks appearing between the Liberals and the SDP, namely disarmament and possibly nuclear energy where they may yet be embarrassed.

- 2.3 The S.N.P.: They have had a bad year, both in the polls, where they cannot come off the bottom, and internally where they have had a mini blood-bath of expulsions.

Their present state is a mixed blessing. In 1974 they undermined the Labour vote, which then returned 'home' in 1979. Renewed undermining would be useful to us in some new seats and a small recovery on their part would not be a matter for great dismay.

However, they are still a major threat in some of our rural and Northern seats, where they tend to act as a focus for the anti-Tory vote rather than as a positive political movement. They therefore still present us with the dichotomy of helping us in Labour urban seats but threatening us in certain of our own rural ones. Special measures are in hand to provide our rural candidates with ammunition to deal with them on a more localised basis, while leaving them alone in other and more general areas.

3. Party Organisation: We have successfully completed the move of Scottish Central Office from 11 Atholl Crescent to 3 Chester Street. It is a more convenient and suitable office, which will be easier to manage and to operate from.

- 3.1 Major boundary revisions in a majority of the Scottish constituencies have occasioned major reorganisation. This has largely been carried through without problems, and the new constituencies can now start the task of preparing themselves for the General Election.

At the time of writing, the candidate selection situation is as follows:-

- (a) Critical seats without sitting M.P.s: there are 7 of these and Candidates are in place in all of them.
- (b) Marginal seats without sitting M.P.s: there are 4 of these and Candidates are in place in 3 of them. Selection in the 4th is well advanced.

- (c) Others without sitting M.P.s: there are 42 of these and Candidates are in place in 23 of them.

There are therefore 52 Candidates in place out of 72 seats at the time of writing, and selection is in progress in the majority of the remainder.

- 3.2 The critical seats (see attached list, Appendix 2) fall into three main bands:

- (a) The West/Central band.
(b) The Highland band
(c) The North Eastern band.

The first band is largely offensive in the sense of seats to be gained, while the second and third together are largely defensive in the sense of seats to be retained. These groupings will allow for a more concentrated effort to be made at the Election than if they had been more scattered. Those critical and marginal seats not in the bands will require more individual treatment.

- 3.3 The situation regarding Agents leaves a lot to be desired. The number of constituencies with full-time Agents is 18. A number of Agents were lost to the Party for constituency financial reasons. We are, however, taking steps to provide basic election training for organising secretaries, and are working to provide Agents in the critical seats which are without.

- 3.4 The basis for the Glasgow Task Force has now been formed under the leadership of Sir Norman MacFarlane. It is my intention to ask them to concentrate their pre-election and election efforts in the marginal areas of the Hillhead and Cathcart constituencies which are our two main hopes in Glasgow.

I do, however, regard them as having a longer-term function than the next election which in many ways will be a teeth-cutting exercise for them.

- 3.5 I have formed with George Younger a Tactical Committee which has made considerable progress in preparing detailed election plans. I hope to be able to dovetail this into the national planning at an early date. Intelligence during the election will be of vital importance particularly in view of the dangers of tactical voting in Scotland. I have asked Russell Fairgrieve to undertake this task, and he has begun to set up a network of reliable reporters and assessors who will not be drawn exclusively from Party activists, and hopefully will provide more realistic assessments than has sometimes been the case in the past.

- 3.6 In general the Party organisation is in reasonable heart, and there has been a marked increase in enthusiasm, although sadly as usual this

has been less evident in the West. I believe there is a major chance of motivating a greater effort at this election due to boundary revision. I deal with this under section 6.

4. The Main Issues: These have remained largely unchanged over the last twelve months, but are none the less politically relevant for that.

4.1 Unemployment: This remains the most important issue in the Scottish political and public mind. It is apparently more politically disadvantageous to us in Scotland than it has been South of the Border, and there has been a tendency to talk about it in moral terms among non-political bodies, including churchmen, which has further created difficulties for us.

Spectacular real or threatened job losses such as Invergordon and BACO Falkirk, such as Lithgows, Timex and Ravenscraig have kept it prominently in the public eye. Isolated areas of very high unemployment in the West Central belt have further publicised it.

We have deployed the standard arguments consistently and with some effect. We are helped by the fact that the Scottish increase has been noticeably less than the U.K. average, a point we have been making through PPBs and speeches increasingly over the last few months. (I might add that the inevitable response that Scottish unemployment started from a higher base in 1979 does not reflect well on the Labour Party from whom we inherited that higher base!).

The growth of the new technological industries in Scotland, and the expected resurgence in the oil-related industries will be helpful both psychologically and statistically in an election campaign.

Nevertheless, the horror of high unemployment in Scotland is a major hurdle which we should not underestimate.

4.2 Trident and Nuclear Disarmament: In the last year the emphasis of the "peace campaigners" has moved from an almost exclusively anti-Trident position to one of general opposition to the deployment of nuclear arms in Scotland.

With Bill Walker's help and co-ordination we are now beginning to deploy the counter-arguments at the right level, that is in the communities at meetings and in the local press. My own experience is that at this basic level our arguments subjected to questions are effective, and we hope to increase this part of our campaign.

Nevertheless, anti-nuclear sympathies continue to run deep, particularly among the young and young marrieds who pick it up at community functions and who are not politically motivated. This is a dangerous area for us, and we need to get into that same area using where possible advocates who are respected members of their local communities - ministers, doctors, etc. This is beginning to happen, but not yet at the rate which I seek.

- 4.3 "The Cuts": The oft-repeated claims of our opponents that we have slashed the Health Service and education in Scotland, as well as local government services, have gained a substantial degree of credence in the public mind.

The figures on health and education in Scotland show a very different picture, and we are deploying these figures as widely as possible at present, and in the simplest and most acceptable form. We are slightly hindered by our own claims to be making economies, and there is much work to be done yet to establish that the economies are designed to be in the areas of waste rather than services, and that where the reality on the ground is different, this is almost invariably due to authorities outwith governmental control applying economies deliberately at the wrong end.

- 4.4 Law and Order: A perceived increase in violence and vandalism has brought this issue to the fore again, and I believe that we must be seen to be taking a new initiative to deal with it. The cost of effective beat policing is prohibitive, but I suggest that a further allocation to the police would be a well received token of intent and sincerity on our part. This is mainly an urban issue although not exclusively.

- 4.5 Rural Fuel Costs: The increases in the price of petrol in the remoter and more rural areas has caused a great deal of concern, and is a political issue now of some strength.

Again, we must be seen to be taking this on board, particularly at a time of falling oil prices (although the two price ranges are scarcely compatible in practice). The differential pricing between rural and urban may still be the most fruitful area for us to explore.

- 4.6 Ravenscraig: This continues to be a political hot potato, although the Party's attitude through the autumn, and Patrick Jenkin's statement in December prevented it from becoming a source of political damage to us. Ravenscraig remains a symbol in the Scottish mind of Scotland's industrial base and any decision at this stage which appeared to lead to an eventual and probable closure would be highly damaging to us in electoral terms across a wide area of Scotland. However, I believe that we could ride a decision which while cutting jobs could be shown to be providing Ravenscraig with the prospects of a future.

- 4.7 There are many other issues with which we will have to deal during the election campaign, but at the time of writing these are the ones I would expect to be at the fore.

5. Our Strongest Case: Work is currently being concluded on submissions for possible inclusion in the Scottish part of the Manifesto. This has been carried out under George Younger's chairmanship, and it is not for me to report on it.

There are, however, two main strands to the case we must make in Scotland at the election, the one economic and the second social.

5.1 Economic: Scotland has ridden the recession better than many parts of the United Kingdom and is now showing signs of a faster recovery than some other areas. Both of these facts, substantiated by numerous statistics, will have to be, and can be, attributed to the skill of the Scottish Office, and to George Younger in particular. He is a widely respected Secretary of State, and in political terms there is much to be gained by identifying Scotland's relatively better position with his success in his job.

Scottish economic growth is currently three times the U.K. rate. Unemployment increases have been and continue to be less. Per capita expenditure has been higher than the U.K. average, as have the average male wage and health provision. We have collated and are updating a series of "we've done better" statistics which we will deploy from now and through the eventual election campaign. These figures can be made available if required.

5.2 Social: This strand differs little from its equivalent South of the Border. It will be based on the increasing role and responsibility of the individual and the family as a result of the policies of this Government, allied to a proper level of assistance to those who need it.

In particular, choice and improvement of standards in education, and increasing ownership and tenant participation in housing will form the twin pillars of this argument. In both fields I hope we will have further initiatives to announce during the election.

Tied to lowering increases both in prices and in rates, a sound picture of future real improvements in both the standard and quality of life can be drawn. There is, I believe, now sufficient upon which to found a campaign of hope after what have been three difficult and politically depressing years. This, psychologically, could prove a strong card.

6. Electoral Prospects:

6.1 Current polls (see above) put us somewhat below our 1979 standing, particularly in relation to Labour. I believe this can be recovered, especially as in 1979 there was a marginal swing to Labour from ourselves in Scotland and we are thus less vulnerable to any pendulum effect.

6.2 On a straight assessment of the boundary changes we stand to make a net gain of 1-2 seats. This has been approximately confirmed by a recent computer-based analysis of the 1982 Regional Government elections related to the new constituencies. (It must be said that certain of the computer findings are way out, and cast doubt on this method of assessment).

6.3 However, the new boundaries contain a much more encouraging underlying trend. On a basis of analysis part statistical and part from local intelligence, the revised map does give us a chance of a breakthrough in a number of seats in the sense that they come within range of a moderate swing in our direction.

- 6.4 While refraining from commenting on the prospects of such a swing, the importance of this trend is nevertheless valid in psychological terms, particularly in those parts of Scotland where resigned apathy has been our greatest hurdle for many years. By bringing seats within range it, of itself, creates a greater incentive to effort, and a greater inducement to vote, than has been the case for some time.

It is my intention to highlight this chance by frequent public reference in an attempt to galvanise activity and support in areas where neither have been in great evidence in the past. For this reason I do not intend to specify publicly the target seats, in order to get the widest degree of increased work and renewed support possible.

Perhaps the greatest spur towards such activity is the ingrained knowledge that if we do not succeed in the new 'close' seats our opponents will again entrench in them in the future. In any event it certainly gives the Party an encouraging target to aim at which alone should be worth a degree of extra enthusiasm.

7. Election Options: There have been no strong indications in Scotland for a particular date for the election, and most dates have been equally canvassed. Preparations for an election are well in hand, and could if required be immediately operative after the Conference.

Most of our Candidates are newly adopted and would not suffer from a longer time scale.

Any further major industrial bad news in Scotland before the election would, however, obviously not be helpful.

8. Conclusion: Despite the difficulties of reorganisation the morale of the Party is good and we are in reasonable fighting spirit. There is sufficient confidence at the grass roots to run an aggressive and optimistic campaign with a fair degree of credibility. If we can at an early stage persuade the generally unhelpful Scottish media that we are fighting to increase our representation rather than to protect what we have I believe that we could provide some surprises.

Our basic task must be to increase our electoral base in Scotland in as many areas as possible in a hard-hitting campaign. If this can be done the seats may well follow.

For that reason we are embarking now, in conjunction with Scottish Ministers, on a systematic attack on the Scottish Labour Party and its policies based overtly on the premise that the tide has turned economically, is turning politically, and that Scotland's newly apparent hopes can only be destroyed by the sort of policies and arguments which the Labour Party are now putting forward. We will detail this case.

I am hopeful that the message of the Conference will be one of hope, of confidence and of a firm belief in the truth which will carry us through to the election whenever. Our Conference slogan is "Resolute for Scotland".

Michael Ameen

Edinburgh
26th April 1983.

SYSTEM THREE OPINION POLLS

	<u>Cons.</u>	<u>Labour</u>	<u>Alliance</u>	<u>S.N.P.</u>
August 1982	22%	44%	17%	16%
September 1982	24%	42%	15%	18%
October 1982	20%	48%	18%	14%
November 1982	26%	46%	16%	12%
December 1982	28%	45%	15%	11%
January 1983	30%	45%	11%	14%
February 1983	30%	47%	11%	12%
March 1983	22%	47%	18%	13%
April 1983	25%	49%	14%	13%

CRITICAL SEATS(a) West/Central band

Strathkelvin and Bearsden	Candidate	Michael Hirst
Stirling	Candidate	Michael Forsyth
Glasgow Cathcart	Candidate	Douglas May
Glasgow Hillhead	Candidate	Murray Tosh
Cunninghame North	Sitting Member	John Corrie

(b) Highland band

Ross & Cromarty & Skye	Sitting Member	Hamish Gray
Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber	Candidate	David Maclean
Moray	Sitting Member	Alex Pollock

(c) North Eastern band

Gordon	Candidate	James Cran
Banff and Buchan	Sitting Member	Albert McQuarrie

(d) Roxburgh and Berwickshire

Candidate Iain Sproat

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13 June.

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Impossible.

