

MINUTES OF THE STRATEGY GROUPSEVENTH MEETING: MONDAY 3rd NOVEMBER 1986

Present: Prime Minister (in the Chair)
Lord President
Foreign Secretary
Home Secretary
Chancellor of the Exchequer
Party Chairman
Chief Whip

Also present: Mr Alison
Professor Griffiths
Mr Sherbourne
Mr Harris (secretary)

1. Forward Political Diary

The Strategy Group discussed the best response to political events over the next fortnight.

The Strategy Group discussed the presentation of the Teachers' pay offer. It was agreed that it had received a good press, with the exception of Scotland. The Group agreed that it was important to show that the Government shared responsible teachers' aspirations for a high quality of professionalism.

The Strategy Group discussed the handling of the Autumn Statement; the political problems created by the Rate Support Grant Settlement; and the arrangements for and timing of any statement by the Prime Minister on her return from meeting President Reagan - on which the Foreign Secretary and Chief Whip would consult further and advise the Prime Minister accordingly; although it was noted that it was not normal practice for the Prime Minister to make a statement in Parliament after a bi-lateral meeting with a Head of Government.

GH/JW

The Party Chairman reported on the Knowsley North by-election campaign. It was suggested that Mr Hunt or Mrs Chalker might be approached to take part in television coverage of the result.

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2. BBC Bias

The Strategy Group congratulated the Chairman on putting forward a detailed and measured case over the coverage of the US raid on Libya. It was agreed that the BBC should now be given full opportunity to reply.

The Party Chairman drew attention to a report in the Guardian (Monday, 3rd November) which misleadingly stated that he had been refused permission by the Cabinet to send

the analysis of BBC coverage of the US raid under the auspices of the Government and had therefore done so under those of the Conservative Party. The Prime Minister agreed that this entirely false report should be corrected.

SS

3. Law and Order

The Home Secretary presented his proposals for tackling law and order issues between now and the General Election.

He noted that the rise in crime in the UK over the years was comparable with that in most of Europe, though less than the United States. Only about a quarter of crime was reported. Paradoxically, increasing numbers of police led to increasing numbers of crimes being reported. 23 per cent of recorded crime consisted of vehicle related crime. The peak ages for offending were 14 for females and 15 for males.

The Home Secretary outlined action taken by the Government to fight crime. Crime prevention was particularly important; there was evidence that alcohol-related crime might require further action. There had been large increases in resources for and numbers of police: each Parliamentary candidate must make it his business to know what increases in police numbers had occurred or were planned in his Constituency.

The Government must take credit for the prison building programme: 11,500 new places were going ahead. But there were problems. Between 15 and 20 per cent of prison running costs were wasted and the leadership of the POA were obstructive. He had ideas which would be advanced in due course for a non-disruption agreement with Prison Officers. It was also necessary to look at the idea of private prisons. But this must be sensitively handled. In the short run, it was necessary to concentrate on improving management of prisons and on reducing the number of remand prisoners.

Prison over-crowding, particularly the increased numbers of remand prisoners, remained a problem. The Courts were sending people to prison for longer periods. Further action on wayward over-lenient sentences was also required.

Other important policy areas in which further work was in hand were: help for victims of crime; promoting international action against criminals; measures to counter drug abuse.

The Home Secretary concluded by proposing two possible new areas for consideration: the nation-wide development of Neighbourhood Watch Schemes and the concentration of the fight against crime on the worst - often inner-city - areas

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DH so as to have the greatest impact on overall crime levels.
DH The Home Secretary agreed to make the notes for his presentation available to the other members of the Strategy Group. The Home Secretary also agreed to submit to the Prime Minister a draft section on the Criminal Justice Bill for her speech on the Address.

The Strategy Group discussed the problems of crime levels in inner-city areas. It was agreed that the importance of family responsibility should be stressed in all attempts to counter crime. The black Pentecostal Churches had an important role to play in mobilising West Indians in Neighbourhood Watch and other schemes. Professor Griffiths reported that the Leader of the West Indian Evangelical Alliance might lend his support to these efforts. The Home Secretary would advise the Prime Minister on whether she should see him.

The Foreign Secretary endorsed the need to mobilise West Indian businessmen. However, he warned against the danger of association with Khalistan activists, who were present at many meetings with the ethnic minorities.

The Party Chairman said that opinion research confirmed that law and order remained politically strong ground for the Conservatives. Although its salience was relatively low as a national issue, were one to ask families which issue meant most to them a higher salience might well be recorded. The opinion research also confirmed that the general public were united in wanting more discipline in schools. It was widely understood that education and crime were closely linked. The Chancellor of the Exchequer noted that discipline should be treated as an element of crime prevention. The Foreign Secretary stressed the link between truancy and juvenile crime.

DH The Strategy Group discussed the need to reduce the number of those in prison on remand. The Home Secretary agreed that the Courts must become more efficient in order to reduce congestion. He would present a short paper to the Prime Minister on this matter.

4. Next Meeting

The next Meeting of the Strategy Group will be on Monday 17th November at 11.30: the Secretary of State for Defence will present a paper for discussion during the second part of the Meeting from 12 o'clock.

RH/CR
4.11.86

C O N F I D E N T I A L

SEVENTH STRATEGY GROUP MEETING ON MONDAY 3rd NOVEMBER 1986

A G E N D A

1. Forward looking diary for the next two weeks (Bernard Ingham's paper)

2. Discussion on law and order initiated by Douglas Hurd

SS
3.11.86

C O N F I D E N T I A L

NOTE FROM STEPHEN SHERBOURNE FOR THE STRATEGY GROUP MEETING
ON MONDAY 3rd NOVEMBER 1986

Law and Order

1. There is no paper coming from Douglas Hurd.
2. This discussion is of course taking place before the law and order policy group has concluded its deliberations.
3. The purpose of the discussion at this stage is to fix the minds of senior Ministers on what will be a major election issue.
4. In discussion people should keep their eyes on the next election:
 - (a) Where will we be weak in an election on law and order - and what can we do about that? ||
 - (b) Where will we be strong - and how can we make the most of that?
 - (c) Where do we attack the Opposition most?
 - (d) What can we do on (a), (b), and (c) above between now and an election, so we are positioned as strongly as possible when the election comes?

STEPHEN SHERBOURNE

31 October 1986

Hartley has sent the same note to Douglas Hunt. 8/31/86.

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FROM HARTLEY & BOOTH.

PRIME MINISTER

31 October 1986

STRATEGY GROUP: LAW AND ORDER

MONDAY 3 NOVEMBER AT 11.30 AM

- A. We need a theme for our stand at the next Election. A strong front runner which you may like is the theme PARTNERSHIP AGAINST CRIME - meaning partnership between the Police and members of the Public and companies in the fight against crime. Even a few years ago, everything was left to the police.
- The Conservative principle on which the developing approach stands is personal responsibility.
 - In support of the police and alongside the police, the outstanding achievements which allow us to claim special credit for this new onslaught on the problem are:
 - (a) Involving the public helping the police: Neighbourhood Watch Schemes (15,000 since 1982) (NB: the Left is Lambeth is against these schemes!).
 - (b) Involving the public and companies helping the police: Crime Prevention for the first time elevated by this Government to a full cross departmental strategy involving the public (Kaufman has been trying to borrow our clothes here).

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- 2 -

(c) And more widely: Victims Support - both putting Criminal Injuries Compensation Scheme on a statutory basis 1987/8 (for victims of violent crime) AND providing special help to National Association of Victims Support Schemes - £9 million in 1987/8 (helping a wide range of victims of crime including burglary and sexual assault).

- We can promise an expansion of these developments awakening everyone's sense of responsibility.
- All this might cover the topic except in the Inner Cities. Here, we suggest we need a second theme, maybe under some such heading as:

B. SPECIAL URBAN NEEDS (Inner City is a highly debatable term!)

We can show we have appreciated the problem by setting out the crisis for the elderly and the weak marooned in tower blocks and run-down council estates. Here, we look to new solutions not only law and order ones but including:

1. Mobility:

Promise to allow the elderly freedom to move out (there are 520,000 unused private sector units, Nationally, at least one third are estimated to be available to rent if we

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- 3 -

repeal the Rent Acts). We could devise and work up proposals for new hope to sad and fearful elderly.

A strategy to ensure new business and also public servants are motivated to move in. Businesses should be shown the future here and highflying public servants should see work here as an avenue to career promotion. This is especially important in the case of police. We must work up and expand existing enterprise proposals. This could repeat the overall partnership theme.

2. Promise to break up the failed council estates.

3. Promise to bring back the village, the small community or neighbourhood, expanding our work through DoE on simplified Planning Zones and UDCs (though not more Enterprise Zones) and promising to expand our work to utilise and beautify derelict land. (Derelict land grant and the revision of the 1981 Act).



HARTLEY BOOTH

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