

Alfred



10 DOWNING STREET

PRIME MINISTER

1. FOLLOWING YOUR TALK
WITH ALFRED, THIS HAS
ARRIVED.

2. WE DUGH NOT TO
SHOW THIS TO MICHAEL
AM CARM. HOWEVER, MAY
I SEND A COPY TO
CECIL PARKINSON?

Yes - must
I do not want
to send it
15/2/1942.

CONFIDENTIAL AND PERSONAL

Glasgow (Hillhead) and Bye-election strategy in general

(First Paper) mid Feb. 1982

Intr.

Though the Glasgow (Hillhead) bye-election has special features - i.e. Scottish problems in general, and the sectarian divide in politics, highlighted by the adoption of a Catholic of Irish origin for a traditionally Orange seat, in particular - it also embodies aspects common to all bye-elections since the creation of the Alliance. This paper deals with the three aspects. (I shall supplement it by a second paper on the Scottish and sectarian aspects early in March, after I have done more work there and before a trip abroad).

Part One. The Sectarian Question: how to make the best of the situation

Part Two. A Scottish campaign or a British Conservative Campaign

Part Three. The Bye-election as an occasion for presenting Conservative Perspectives and Identity.

Part One. The Sectarian Question. How to make the
best of an awkward choice.

In Scotland, religious sectarianism and party politics have always remained much more intricately involved than in England, even in areas with high concentrations of Catholics of Irish origins. These have been exacerbated by the Northern Ireland troubles.

It is particularly strong in the Borders - which have strong links with Northern Ireland dating back to the "plantations", and in West-Central Scotland, where Catholics of relatively recent Irish origin live in proximity and constant friction with Orangemen from Ireland supported by Scottish Orange lodges.

Traditionally, the Irish have run the unions and the Labour Party there, while Protestants have run the Tory Party. "Old Catholic" Scottish families have become reluctantly accepted in modern times by middle class Protestants as allies against socialism, but feeling against the ethnic-Irish Catholic remains strong.

I should be the last one to argue that we should be reconciled to this state of affairs or that action to challenge it should be postponed "till the time is ripe", which is tantamount to postponing it indefinitely. We are, after all, approaching the 21st Century. But it follows that unless challenges to sectarianism are well enough planned and executed to succeed and become self-sustaining, opponents of change will be reinforced in their immobilism. (Remember, it was the choice of a Catholic for Roxborough and Peebles which let in David Steel in 1965., and reinforced the view that whole regions of Scotland are political no-go areas for Tory Catholics.)

Matters have been complicated by the growth of the SNP, which makes little appeal to the "Irish vote", and which in many parts of the country tends to draw on traditional Unionist voters, i.e. Scottish protestant artisan, lower middle and professional classes. The Liberals direct^{ir} the/appeal to much the same strate. The Social Democrats hope to add their quota of traditionally-labour voters repelled by the Leftwing takeover, a high proportion of them Catholic, whol will see it as an alternative Labour Party freed from the taint of atheistic Marxism and revolution. They also seem likely to draw votes from non-Socialist Protestants who cannot bring themselves to vote for a graduate of a Jesuit college.

How does this leave the Conservatives? Opinions I have heard so far - which of course need checking by other means, including possibly a discreet opinion poll - are that we are in danger of getting the worst of all worlds: Orange-inclined Protestants who traditionally vote Tory will not be able to bring themselves to vote for Malone, whereas his Catholic background will not be sufficient to draw Labour voters of Irish origin over to him when they have the Social-Democratic alternative. The fact that the Labour candidate is a bad choice personally seem likely - subject to polls and canvass-results - to rebound to Jenkins's benefit.

What choice are we left with?

We can either play the sectarian question on a very low key, or make a virtue out of necessity and play it up as a Conservative initiative in overcoming the legacy of religious sectarianism in Britain generally and Scotland in particular. Arguments in favour of the first course, letting sleeping dogs lie, are obvious. The second course, explicit anti-sectarianism, represents a higher risk strategy. It would need to be judged both necessary and achievable to merit adoption. It will be worth adopting only if it then is gone through with boldly.

The decision can be made only on the basis of opinion research, whether from canvass results, or a professional poll or both. I am aware of the objection that soliciting opinions may actually inflame or generate them. But the disadvantages of flying blind are even greater, both to the party and to you personally. First, research will give us time to plan a campaign strategy, rather than having our hands forced by events. Secondly, in so far as our bad performance in the three recent bye-elections, (two lost seats, one lost deposit) could be ascribed at least in part to specific local weaknesses - bad choice of candidate, weak organisation, etc. - the burden of complaint against overall policy, and leadership was correspondingly weakened. In the event of Malone doing badly, were this to be explained at least partly by the sectarian issue and weak constituency organisation, I should consider that a lesser evil than having a lost seat ascribed solely to government unpopularity. But for Malone to do well would be better still.

If we were to go nap on the anti-sectarian crusade, the speeches would be easy enough to write: "looking forward, not backward... new spirit of Christian unity.... John Paul II ... Christian brotherhood rather than doctrinal divide ... we are a unionist party which gladly includes all those of Irish origin who are loyal to this country etc."

But the feasibility also will depend on the atmosphere in the constituency association, which will certainly take into account the manner of Malone's adoption. Hence the relevance of whether he was chosen in conscious bold praiseworthy disregard of ethnic-sectarian considerations as the best man for the election, as one version goes, or whether it was a case of "a fly Irish lawyer and his friends hijacking the nominations" as another version (Andrew Sykes) puts it.

Hence also the importance of ascertaining whether the displaced front-runner, John Kernohan, of the, and his supporters view Malone with Christian amity and Conservative solidarity, or at least can be persuaded to make a good show of such sentiments from now till the election, or whether they will bear grudges. I shall be seeing them with my Daily Telegraph hat on, in any case.

The flurry caused in Orange Scotland by the Pope's imminent visit, exacerbated by Paisley's rabble-rousing, have also sharpened feelings in West-Central Scotland, not leaving Kelvinside unaffected.

Once again, the problem is one of ascertaining the situation without creating dust; but that is better than waiting to be caught out by events.

If too much bad blood has been created, the chances of winning the seat may be slimmer, But this will not markedly affect the equally important problem of using the election as a sounding-board to create wider impact in the rest of Scotland and Britain.

Part Two. A Scottish Campaign, or a British Conservative Campaign.

From my conversations with them, qua Daily Telegraph leader-writer, I gathered that though both Malone and Macmillan thought more in terms of politics than of policy, insofar as they had any ideas on policy presentation, they were of the "Scottish" variety favoured by Younger. As you know, this entails buying votes and warding off Scottish nationalist fantasies by promising ever larger sums of English taxpayers' money in order to maintain Scotland as a sort of nature-reserve for inefficiency, work-simulation and monopoly. Hence he naturally fits in the same camp of Edwards, Prior, and the other "spenders". As you know, it was Younger's intervention against the bids for the Royal Bank of Scotland which effectively preserved its monopolistic inefficiency and the cosiness of the British Banking system, at the cost of depriving Scotland and Britain of an infusion of funds and energies via Hong Kong.

The weakness of the Younger approach is not only that it deepens our national inflationary recession, but that far from up-staging Scotnats, Libs, and Labs of various hues, it legitimises and lends weight to their fantasies. The Nats, Libs and Labs will always outpromise us. The outstretched palm supplements the clenched fist. But for any aspiring Conservative, the opportunist Younger line is the line of least resistance.

Malone will take the Younger line unless he is under strong pressure to do otherwise. And unless that pressure comes strongly from London, it will never get far across the border.

I can expand if you are interested.

Part Three : Bye-elections Conservative Presentation

This is the fourth bye-election since the Alliance was formed. The Alliance has been strongly represented at three out of the four, i.e. Warrington, Crosby and now Hillhead. Jenkins has the manner of statesmanship - if not much of the content - he radiates a sense of office and power. He has written readable histories and could have been a don, though not an historian of mark. Shirley Williams, though superficial and unscrupulous, is one of the most plausible communicators in the business, and can now ride a blow like a heavyweight.

write
right.

Have you considered that the Scottish Central Office's separate list, with a few dozen names on it, not notable heavyweight, might need attention? Should we not consider "head-hunting" a few national figures for bye-elections on both sides of the border?

The Alliance has made the most use of bye-elections as the occasion for reaching a national audience. And even in Croydon, where they put in the nonentity of the year - deserving the "Albert Who" award - to walk away with the prize, they ran the best media campaigns so far, and seem set to do so again, unless the Scotnats pip them, or the Conservative deployment is absolutely revolutionised. But it is not only in its choice of candidates that our party eschewed people able to make an impact.

The SD's have managed to give the impression of intellectual vitality, ferment, presence, and so, whether we like it or not, has the Labour Party since the split. Fabian society publications are readable and no longer predictable. Their younger Labour academics, still wondering whether to leave for the SDP or stay in and fight, are debating relatively sanely.

By contrast, the Conservatives give the impression of being unwilling or unable to debate at an intellectual level. Our front-benchers tend to be excessively ministerial at one moment, party-political at another, but not very keen on arguing either with the SD Alliance, with Labour or with their own dissenters like Gilmour, a lightweight but strident, who remains unanswered.

One hears few speeches from anyone on the front benches, virtually none, as far as I know, which go beyond defence of the squeeze or re-iteration of eternal verities.

Yet the public is hungry for ideas.

I think a good solid non yah boo analysis of recent developments in the Labour Party leading to the emergence of the SD and the Alliance, with positive aspects and contradictions in all their implications would go down well, establish our intellectual bona fides, and arouse great interest both among the non-committed, and among more reasonable people in the two parties, with whom we simply must establish or re-establish dialogue if party democracy is to be reinforced in face of serious erosion.

Revolutionary achievements, like the sale to its workers of British freight in face of fierce union opposition, which should have been the focus of several speeches dealing with its various major implications, for this and the next parliament when half way down the news pages in Saturday's papers. It could have been the first salvo in our new campaign.

* Self-employment is possible in the technological age.

*Labour spoke about cooperatives but produced bankruptcies, we intend to transform state-ownership into public ownership, state-capitalism at a loss into people's capitalism paying its way. There will be a model for private and new firms to adopt.

* The great buy-out of British freight by those who work in it is true industrial democracy, because it unites responsibility with reward.

*Who opposed this great advance in economic democracy, this enfranchisement of the wage-slaves?(Wage slave is popular Marxist jargon for wage-earners). The Transport and General Workers Union, the bastion of the TUC and the Labour Left. Why? Because wage-slaves provide serfs for the reactionary style union barons, who build their careers on the closed shop and on perpetuation of the old worker-employer relationship. They wheeled out their sponsored Labour Party as bailiffs to threaten repossession without compe

When the workers were given the chance to vote, they voted with their pocket-books. They chose freedom.

*A new and better way of precluding strikes without the need for legislation. etc.

A constructive rival to Institutional investment.

Do I have a market?