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10 DOWNING STREET

PERSONAL AND CONFIDENTIAL

7th January 1982

Malcolm Thornton came to see me last evening.

He made the following points, arising out of the Crosby By-Election:-

1. The selection procedure for choosing the candidate was not nearly thorough enough.
2. There should be drawn up at Central Office a short-list of really outstanding candidates for By-Elections, whose names could be urged upon a constituency Chairman, should the need arise. I would have thought that it would be possible for Tony Royle to draw up a list of, say, 15 really outstanding candidates.
3. We need to identify, now, those Conservative held constituencies where our organisation is really weak, as was the case in Crosby, Southend (and Croydon?). Having identified these constituencies the Area Agents concerned should, as a matter of great urgency give priority attention to them.
4. When Ministers go to speak at By-Elections, they must be supremely well briefed about the local scene. Malcolm mentioned a particular Minister to me, whose performance at a Press Conference in Crosby had done very great damage, because the Minister was wholly ignorant about the local scene, even though his own Department was closely involved.

I have shown a copy of this letter to the Prime Minister, and would welcome a talk with you and Tony when you get back.

IAN GOW

The Rt Hon Cecil Parkinson MP

cc. Sir Anthony Royle KCMG MP
Malcolm Thornton Esq MP