

RESEARCH DEPARTMENT PUBLICATIONS  
FOR A GENERAL ELECTION

1. Between now and the General Election, the Research Department will continue to produce :
  - \* The weekly "Briefing Note"
  - \* The fortnightly series of "Politics Today"
  - \* Parliamentary Briefs (40 of these were published in the last quarter of 1982).
  - \* "Insight Briefs" - pink and green pages containing significant quotations from Opposition leaders.
  
2. The Research Department also proposes to produce the following special publications in General Election year :
  - \* The Campaign Guide
  - \* "Political Statistics" - a loose leaf collection.
  - \* "Speakers Notes" - also in loose leaf form.
  - \* Briefing on the Conservative Manifesto, and those of other Parties (for limited circulation).
  - \* "Daily Notes" during the campaign itself.
  
3. Uncertainty over the date of the General Election impinges on the Research Department "critical path", and the implications of various assumptions need to be made clear.
  
4. The Campaign Guide. The Prime Minister agreed (May 10th 1982) with a Research Department suggestion that the Campaign Guide should be published on July 8th 1983, for distribution before the Summer Recess. The Party Chairman has recently confirmed this agreement. It must be clearly understood that, if present plans are adhered to, no Campaign Guide would be available in the event of a snap election being called for June 1983. The January 1974 experiment, when sheaves of galley proofs were sent out after the announcement of a dissolution, was not a success.

5. It is to cover this eventuality that the Research Department proposes a bumper Politics Today for 4th May 1983, the fourth anniversary of the Government. This would enumerate in full the Government's legislative and other achievements and serve, after a fashion, as a Campaign Guide. The Research Department would still hope to finalise the Guide itself (maybe with a different title) and publish it after polling day as a document of record.
  
6. It would still be possible in early January 1983, to bring forward the publication date of the Campaign Guide itself to the end of April. However, given the large number of staff changes that have taken place in the Research Department in recent weeks, it would be a prodigious task. We would have to deliver the last chapters of the final text to the printers by February 21st. Bringing forward the publication date of the Guide would, furthermore, have a number of drawbacks. If polling day were in the event delayed until October or later than that:
  - i) little coverage, if any, could be given to the contents of a mid-March budget.
  - ii) the statistics in a Campaign Guide which had been sent to the printers on February 21st would be very out-dated by the time of an October election.
  - iii) a Campaign Guide Supplement would probably have to be produced in late summer 1983 (and possibly another just after Christmas 1983). Supplements have not proved popular in the past.Nonetheless a late-April Campaign Guide is not totally impossible.
  
7. "Political Statistics" and "Speakers Notes". These two publications, produced by Michael Dobbs and Michael Portillo respectively in 1979, were judged to have been very valuable and we intend to repeat them. They took the form of pages for a single loose leaf binder - which could this time be sent out well in advance to Agents, Candidates and senior officials.
  
8. We intend to start work on both these series early in the New Year, and sets of loose leaf pages could be available in May 1983 for immediate distribution if a General Election were called. (Or a week or two earlier if it were not thought that such distribution would let the cat out of the bag).

9. If the pages of Political Statistics and Speakers Notes were prepared for distribution in early May, and no General Election were then called, they could be updated for circulation in early September, or at any time through the Autumn and Winter. Ideally the distribution would take place five or six weeks before polling day, giving Candidates and Agents a chance to study and absorb their contents.
10. These two sets of data were, last time, found particularly useful by those operating in Central Office, and by those accompanying Party leaders round the country.
11. Manifesto Briefing can only be prepared at the very last minute. Daily Notes can be loosely planned in advance, but the subject matter is governed largely by the progress of the campaign.
12. Other Publications. An updated "Words for Eating" will be published in February, with compromising quotations from leaders of the Opposition Parties. There will no doubt be numerous other publications, prepared on request, such as pamphlets, Zipcards (speaking notes on single issues, in pocket form), etc.
13. Local Government Elections May 1983. It may be worth noting that sets of Political Statistics and Speakers Notes, covering mainly domestic issues, could be distributed in early April under the disguise of briefing for Local Government elections.
14. Points for Decision and Endorsement
  1. The implications of a July 8th publication date for the Campaign Guide need to be fully understood in the context of contingency planning for a June election.
  2. Distribution dates must be agreed for the Political Statistics and Speakers Notes -
    - i) starting maybe with end March (for use in the Local Government elections)
    - ii) moving on to early May (for a June General Election).
    - iii) then proceeding to early September (for a mid-October General Election).
  3. Consequent on these decisions, the decision on a May 3rd Politics Today special number can be taken.

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