

PI Five

EUROPEAN ELECTIONS PUBLICATIONS' COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF MEETING OF SUB GROUP ON POLICY
FOR EUROPEAN ELECTIONS 10 NOVEMBER 1983

PRESENT:

Mr Rifkind (in the chair)
Mr Ridley
Mr Cropper
Mr Houston

Mr Tyrrie
Mr Prout
Mr Bainbridge

1. POLITICAL CLIMATE FOR ELECTIONS: Mr Rifkind said that we should try to assess what factors were likely to be important at the time of the elections. Mr Ridley suggested that a list of points of criticism of Government and Party policy needed to be prepared, so that they could be borne in mind when drafting. This was agreed. CRD will draft.
2. There was a discussion on the importance of the Athens summit for preparations. The possibility of negotiations continuing for some time was recognised. Mr Prout explained the attitude of the European Parliament: if Athens was judged unsuccessful there could be a particular problem on the 1983 refunds. It was agreed that the Community Budget was likely to be a central issue in the elections.
3. There was a discussion of Labour Policy. It was felt that it would take some time for this to emerge clearly. Anything that could be done (eg in Parliament) to force the pace on Labour policy would be useful. It was agreed that short notes should be prepared by CRD for the next meeting summarizing Labour and Alliance Policy.
4. There was a discussion of the likely economic situation. The Chancellor had already made it clear that his Budget would be a tough one. It was possible that unemployment would be perceived to have reached a turning point, inflation would be going down, and growth would be continuing. It was felt that the EC trade balance needed to be borne in mind; the 43% figure for trade was particularly important.

Mr Ridley would prepare a note for the next meeting.

5. The effects of the local government elections were discussed. The importance of party workers bearing in mind the European elections was recognised. The need to identify other potential issues was raised, eg EP discussions on N.I., disarmament talks, Cruise Missiles. It was agreed that a list should be drawn up.
6. FRAMEWORK FOR THE MANIFESTO: Mr Rifkind said we needed to decide whether we were seeking an identity of policy on all issues, or whether scope needed to be left for the EDG to adopt a different line within the European Parliament. It was agreed that the manifesto should show a clear Conservative line on all the major issues. The objective agreed would have to be pursued by the different branches of the Party as seemed appropriate at the time.
7. THEMES: the Parliament: it was agreed that support for the pragmatic role was appropriate.
8. The Veto: Mr Rifkind said the Government could agree that the veto should be used sparingly. But the erection of a structure to restrict its use was inappropriate; in the last analysis it was for a Government to decide what was in its vital interests. It was agreed that the proper stance was to express support for restrictive use of the veto, recognising that its excessive use by others could damage British interests, while insisting on its retention as an instrument of last resort.
9. Uniform Electoral System: It was agreed that the appropriate posture would be to express regret at the failure of the EC to reach agreement, to point out that a large number of options had been canvassed (many including PR, some not), and to express a hope that there would be more success on the next occasion. Leading Party spokesmen would have to refrain from attacking PR.
10. Economic Recovery: It was agreed that the view of HMG as outlined in the meeting paper provided the appropriate approach. This should be set along-side policy on the

internal market. Parallels should be drawn with the 30's recession. There was a discussion of EMS. It was agreed that the policy of expressing willingness to participate at the right time would have to continue - unless and until the right time arrived.

11. Trade and Development: No problem. The importance of trade for overcoming recession, and the Conservative support for liberalisation, should be stressed.
12. Regional and Social Funds: It was agreed that substantial defensive briefing (which Mr Ridley would provide) was required on additionality, which should not otherwise feature in the manifesto. It was agreed that in spite of this problem, we should exploit the receipt of grants and loans.
13. Enlargement: We should express strong support.
14. CAP: The difficulties of defining even broad lines of policy in advance of Athens were discussed. It was agreed that an attempt should nonetheless be made to draft a policy line, covering various commodities, in order to clarify the issues. It was agreed that stress should be laid on the benefits of the CAP.
15. Democracy, Stability and Security in Europe: It was agreed that this was an important positive theme. Mr Rifkind proposed stressing the political rather than geographical identity of Member States, and the relevance of the Community to policy towards Eastern Europe. This was agreed.
16. Internal Market: This should be a central positive message. On Company Law and Vredeling it was agreed that the basic approach had to be voluntary measures, with the possibility of statutory back-up not being ruled out.
17. No other themes were suggested.
18. TIMETABLE: It was agreed to recommend to the Howe Group that a further sub-group meeting should be held before Christmas, but that a meeting of the full Howe Group

would be most appropriate early in January, after receipt of proposals from Members of the Cabinet and from EDG Spokesmen, and after Athens.

19. Further Work: It was agreed that Mr Houston and Mr Bainbridge would consult to arrange the preparation of a short note and proposed line on each of the problem areas identified, with the assistance of others as appropriate. In addition, CRD, Mr Bainbridge and Mr Houston would each draw up a detailed list of the more limited policy areas where it was thought that problems might exist, these to be presented in summary form to the next meeting. It was agreed that there was a need to follow-up with departments to ensure that contributions were forthcoming by the deadline indicated.

JH/PJC
16.11.83