

Conservative and Unionist Central Office

32 Smith Square Westminster SW1P 3HH Telephone 01-222 9000

Memorandum from: ... Anthony Shrimpsley.....

To: ... The Chairman.....
cc: Michael Spicer.....
Peter Cropper.....
... Tony Garner.....

Date: 17th November 1983.....

CONFIDENTIAL

EUROPEAN ELECTIONS - PUBLICITY

I have been asked to update my noted of July 21st on the European Elections.

The major issue of principle in the financing of the campaign seems about to be decided. As soon as this decision has been made we should be ready to seek the maximum public benefit from it by preparing statements and guidance as to our reasons for refusing to use Euro taxpayers' money in the actual campaign for the European Parliamentary Elections.

We need to contrast our attitude with that of rival parties while at the same time not attempting to disguise earlier spending on the information campaign by the European Democratic Group. A formally worded statement from the Chairman should be prepared and the ground seeded by timely leak to an appropriate newspaper a day or so beforehand.

The Campaign Itself

While 40 days is spoken of as the period of the elections, I think it would be generally agreed that this is far too long in practice for the national campaign even though candidates will wish to be busy in the constituencies. Something like 3 weeks would seem to be much more appropriate.

Polling day is on Thursday, 14th June. I note that the Conservative Women's National Conference takes place on May 22nd and 23rd in London with the theme of "Partners in Europe".

May 23rd would therefore seem to be an ideal launch date with the possible publication of the manifesto in the morning and a full dress press conference at Smith Square, followed up by a speech from the Prime Minister to the Conference that afternoon on European issues.

I suggest that it is particularly important that the Prime Minister is seen to play a significant role in the campaign this year, both because her negotiating strength on the budget itself is a major campaign asset and because she will be able to offer such a contrast with the evasive stance of the Labour Party.

I would hope that she would be willing to make at least one other major speech during the campaign and to attend perhaps two of the press conferences.

There would seem to be no need for a Prime Ministerial tour in the style of the General Election. In any case, with Parliament in session this would be totally unrealistic. However, senior Ministers should be asked to agree to a reasonable number of speaking engagements so that there is always some heavyweight contribution to the debate coming from the Conservative Party each night.

/...

Press Conferences

Last time 5 of these were held including the manifesto launch and that would seem to be about the right pattern. Additional press conferences can always be organised at short notice if necessary.

TV & Radio

At this stage, the broadcasters do not anticipate showing nightly special programmes on the European campaign. However there will undoubtedly be substantial coverage on news bulletins and individual current affairs programmes. A trawl through the programme makers reveals a lower level of interest than five years ago. The independent television companies have declined to purchase any special programmes from ITN save for a results programme on the evening of Sunday, 17th June.

World in Action and TV Eye may each consider one feature during the campaign and the BBC's Newsnight may consider up to two features, for the first and last weeks respectively. Campaign reporting is anticipated to take a form similar to local elections, with regional events finding a place in the regional news slots. Members of the Government speaking in support of candidates can expect coverage in the national news bulletins but such bulletins are not likely to be extended for the purpose. BBC Television's results programme will go out on BBC2. BBC radio's position is not yet certain.

Our Broadcasting unit will need to be set up to organise appearances by Ministers and MEPs and we shall need a monitoring set-up to cover TV and radio and provide reports for the campaign committee. While the Press and Communications Department will organise the recording of programmes, the monitoring and reporting should be done by Research Department officers as usual.

This will not need to be on a major scale but I am discussing with Colin Hart the likelihood of one room and an office being made available for monitoring in the EDG area.

EDG Press Officers will join the Central Office Press Officers on the 3rd floor and I have been promised a couple of secretaries also. The office will need to be manned until late at night but I do not envisage around the clock operation at this stage.

Advertising

I would consider it vital that even if our funds are limited we mount a worthwhile advertising campaign during the final 3 weeks. The priorities should be:

1. National Press (including Scottish and Welsh national newspapers)
2. Party Election Broadcasts - there is one officially allocated but there seems no reason why we could not do a second from our normal schedule.
3. Cinema advertising aimed at the younger voter.

/...

Obviously the cost will be the decisive factor. Saatchis are talking about a campaign of press and Party Election Broadcasts costing approximately £850,000.

National advertising would of course be backed up by local leaflets - some provided by Central Office and others produced by the constituencies themselves. It is vital that to supplement the national TV and Radio publicity constituency information officers and agents seek as much exposure as possible on local radio and TV for their candidates.

There needs to be a significant gap both in time and style between the Conservative Party's election advertising and any joint information campaign advertising put out earlier in the year.

Ideally a cut off on visible publicity should come not later than the end of February, although some of the internal arrangements such as the payment of Euro information officers in the constituencies themselves could presumably go on very close to the 40 day limit. Within the 40 day period payment for any such services offered by the joint information campaign should of course come from the Conservative Party itself.

Strategy

We should get off to a good start by showing that we do not believe in using taxpayers' money for Party political campaign while the Labour Party, and the Liberals, are determined to grab all they can. This position is fully compatible with the Government's determination to get a fair deal on the European budget payments.

At the last European Election it was felt that a low key campaign was required both because of the weakness of the Labour Party and the proximity to the General Election.

I think it is highly questionable that that would be the right posture this time.

The European Election comes a full year after our General Election success at a time when dissatisfaction with the Government can be expected to be showing itself. Any such protest has a ready made vehicle in the Liberal/SDP Alliance. They will be working very hard and we cannot afford to appear at all complacent. Our campaign must be aimed at getting out the Conservative voter - and that means stopping him, or her, from drifting to the Alliance. We must be prepared not only to attack apathy among our known supporters but constructively to attack the Alliance position, especially the Liberal aspect. Both sections can be shown as being so committed to European federal idealism that they place British interests second - even to the point of being willing to abandon the veto in the Council of Ministers on matters effecting vital national interests. The Liberal campaign is in fact being financed by money from European Liberals taken out of European Parliament funds.

/...

The Labour Party can be shown as thoroughly hypocritical wishing to withdraw from Europe but having been forced to accept that in truth this is a last resort.

It should be possible to exploit dissensions in the Labour Party about whether they wish to remain in or come out, and Mr Kinnock ought to be vulnerable on this one. Our information is that Labour intends concentrating its activity on a "Euro Campaign for Jobs" yet the threat of withdrawal jeopardises millions of jobs in Britain.

We can show this at our press conferences with extensive use of graphic aids showing the nature of benefits from Common Market funds to particular regions and industries.

It should be possible with research to produce a major company every day which would be far worse off but for Common Market money. This will make good publicity both nationally and of course locally. At the same time we must emphasise the strongest part of our argument which is that it is the Conservatives who have proved that they can get the best out of our membership of the European Community and are not afraid to pound the table in search of a square deal.

We can show that this posture has earned the respect of our European partners who themselves fight fiercely for their own national interest and regard other countries who fail to do so with contempt.

Our message is:

"GET THE BEST OUT OF EUROPE - VOTE CONSERVATIVE"

Having stressed the European issues it must not be forgotten that the campaign will be fought and decided at two levels. It may well be that European subjects, especially the more technical ones, will be submerged in national British issues reflecting on the current performance and popularity rating of the Government at Westminster. Therefore at all press conferences and in major Ministerial speeches the European issues should be closely linked with national Government policies.

For example, although defence is not technically an EEC matter, the unity of Europe is very much part of defence philosophy and should be presented in that context whenever possible. Our press conferences should of course feature leading Euro-candidates. But, there must always be a senior Minister on the platform and the conferences should be chaired by the Party Chairman.

The same goes for PEB's. While MEPs may figure significantly a more nationally known face such as that of a senior Minister should wherever possible make the "straight to camera" political statement, and the subject matter should always be presented in terms of how it effects the voter in Britain.

At no time dare we lose sight of the fact that while this is an election for the European Parliament we are putting forward

/...

Conservative candidates for constituencies in this country. During the period of the campaign questions of pleasing or placating our European colleagues in other countries must take second place to domestic considerations.

AS/sg
17.11.83