

EUROPEAN ELECTIONS PUBLICATIONS' COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD IN FOREIGN
AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE ON 23 FEBRUARY 1984

PRESENT:

Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey Howe QC MP (Chair)	
Malcolm Rifkind QC MP	Adam Ridley
John Selwyn Gummer MP	Dr Robert Ramsay
Tom Arnold MP	Timothy Bainbridge
Christopher Prout MEP	Andrew Tyrie
Peter Cropper	John Houston

Apologies:

Michael Spicer MP	Sir Henry Plumb MEP
Rt Hon John Biffen MP	

1. The Strategy Paper: Mr Ridley said that the handling of national issues needed to be further examined, e.g. the economic summit and defence matters. Mr Gummer said the key thing was to keep everyone on board throughout the campaign. We would have to stop people going on about Spinelli for and against, or PR for and against. In particular we would have to stop Teddy Taylor and Tony Marlow rocking the boat. Sir Geoffrey Howe said he thought the main gap in the paper was inadequate emphasis on the national issues which would probably dominate the campaign. The important thing would be to get workers out and to convince them that this campaign was about combatting the pretensions of Neil Kinnock. The object of the paper was to provide a guidance note for the Cabinet and EDG leaders.
2. Mr Prout said it was important to get MPs involved in the campaign. Mr Gummer agreed. He said he intended, perhaps in company with a senior member of the EDG, to see MPs in

key constituencies and then to follow up with a letter to them. Sir Geoffrey Howe suggested there was also a need for a presentation to the 1922 Committee. Mr Gummer agreed. He thought this was best after the Chesterfield by election but before the House rose. Sir Geoffrey Howe proposed that it would be a good idea for the presentation to the 1922 Committee to be made by Sir Henry Plumb, Lord Whitelaw, Mr Gummer, Mr Arnold and himself in order to bring home to MPs the unique nature of this exercise. This was agreed. Sir Geoffrey Howe said it was important that senior Party leaders (and the more senior the better) should take every opportunity to stress with Party workers, MPs and MEPs the overriding importance of this election and the need for the Party to unite around a common platform. The Candidates' Conference would be another important occasion for doing this.

3. Mr Houston raised the question of liaison with the EDG. It was important to ensure that the policies pursued by the EDG in the Parliament between now and the election, and those pursued by the Government, were compatible. This would require continuous consultation. Mr Prout said he was concerned that some Government decisions seemed to be being taken without regard to the effect on the elections, e.g. decisions on milk prices. Sir Geoffrey Howe agreed that it was important that Ministers should bear the European elections in mind in approaching their Departmental work. Mr Gummer said that Ministers could also add a helpful reference to the benefits of Europe in correspondence.
4. Sir Geoffrey Howe said that it was too early to discuss the question of handling the results of the Brussels Summit.
5. On withholding, Mr Prout said the EDG thought timing would be crucial. Any decision to withhold should be taken as late as possible. If it was taken too soon and nothing was achieved by June we would start to look ineffective.
6. Sir Geoffrey Howe said that the campaign would inevitably be used to mount a major challenge to the Government's

policies and we must therefore envisage a high profile campaign.

7. Sir Geoffrey Howe said the farmers v. consumers point was an important one. He was constantly amazed by the insensitivity of some Conservative MPs to the impact on farmers of policies HMG were already pursuing. HMG would have to be presenting the harsh realities and by the time of the election it should be quite difficult to make the 'Party of the Farmers' jibe stick. Mr Prout said that in his constituency farmers were up in arms. He thought their real concern was the risk of the Community's money running out later in the year if no agreement was reaching concerning new own resources. He thought they wanted to be assured that they would not be asked to meet the bill for the financial collapse of the Community. Sir Geoffrey Howe said he would have a meeting with Mr Jopling and Mr MacGregor on the question of the long-run presentation of agricultural policy. Our approach in the elections would have to be one of balance between consumers, farmers and financial realities, while drawing attention to Labour irresponsibility.

8. Mr Prout drew attention to the need for serious Government/EDG discussions on policy matters which were arising, e.g. the forthcoming debate on the Albert/Ball Report in the European Parliament. It was important that the EDG did not take a line in this debate which was embarrassing to HMG. Sir Geoffrey Howe said he was conscious of the absence of adequate machinery to deal with that problem. Mr Ridley said that ideally the matter should be dealt with by the EDG spokesman or responsible MEP approaching the relevant Government Department for consultations, thus stimulating the adoption of a position within the Department, and following it up with a conciliation meeting with Ministers if that was necessary. This had not happened on the Albert/Ball Report. Mr Gummer said he thought the problem could not be resolved by committees. It was the responsibility of the individual MEP concerned to take the initiative in co-ordinating EDG activities with HMG. Sir Geoffrey Howe

said this was of the utmost importance in the run-up to the elections. Mr Prout said in theory this was the system which operated but in practice it did not always seem to work.

9. Sir Geoffrey Howe said that the strategy paper should be redrafted to focus more sharply on the key issues in the campaign, and in particular to include more domestic content. It should aim to put forward practical conclusions for action. It should be prepared in a form which would be suitable for circulation to the Cabinet, to the Campaign Committee and to senior MEPs.

10. The Manifesto: Sir Geoffrey Howe said that the existing first draft was a good draft. It would need to be synthesized, shortened, and overlap between the chapters eliminated. Mr Gummer said the Manifesto was very important. It provided the orthodox Party line which would help to keep people together during the election. Sir Geoffrey Howe said that more domestic policies should be included. We would also need more guidance on security and defence matters. There would be a need for a foreword by the Prime Minister so that she personally was seen to endorse it. He thought we should move fast in the preparations. There would have to be early Ministerial consultations. The first Ministerial session might best be held with Mr Rifkind in the chair and involving Ministers at the same level in the other key Departments. This might involve a weekend session. The resulting draft should then be shown to the Prime Minister. After that officials should see it, and then Cabinet colleagues and EDG spokesmen.

11. The Information Campaign: Sir Geoffrey Howe raised the question of the timing of advertisements and stressed the need for him to see them. Mr Gummer said the importance of starting the advertising campaign late enough to take the results of the Brussels Summit into account had been recognised and plans changed. He had given instructions to Saatchi & Saatchi that the key objectives were:

(a) to get our vote out, and

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(b) to lay the basis for our election campaign. The theme would be Europe and Jobs. He proposed that advertisements should be presented to him first and then to the Foreign Secretary before being put to the Campaign Committee.

12. There was a discussion of timing for the Manifesto. It was agreed that early completion was desirable because of the effect on themes and briefing, though it should not be published early.
13. It was agreed that the revised version of the strategy document should be finalised the following week. Mr Gummer said he thought it should have a more punchy presentation. Mr Bainbridge raised the question of the EDG involvement in the paper. It should have the authority of Sir Henry Plumb behind it too. Mr Gummer said it could be agreed by the Campaign Committee. But it was a paper which the Cabinet had asked the Foreign Secretary and him to produce. It should only go to the Cabinet and to the Campaign Committee. Dr Ramsay said there was an expectation in the EDG that they would have some sort of themes paper and Sir Henry Plumb was committed to present one to them. Mr Houston suggested that a revised version of the paper could be agreed by the Campaign Committee for wider circulation. This was agreed.
14. Mr Gummer said he was circulating a Mark II version of the Campaign Bible. Mr Houston pointed out that the Foreign Secretary had difficulties with the proposed dates for two of the press conferences.

PJC

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