



10 DOWNING STREET

PRIME MINISTER

1. THIS IS MOST
INTERESTING.

2. I THINK THAT MANY
OF THE WETS WILL
FIND THEMSELVES IN
DIFFICULTY WITH THEIR
ASSOCIATIONS


13/10/1962

Conservative and Unionist Central Office

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

13 OCT 1982

Memorandum from: A.S. Garner

To: The Chairman

Date: 12th October 1982

CONFIDENTIAL:

Chesham & Amersham - Sir Ian Gilmour

There is a serious development in Chesham & Amersham regarding the readoption of Sir Ian. The attached correspondence relates.

As you will see, it is believed that the resolution will be defeated at the Executive Council meeting but I would not think that this was necessarily a foregone conclusion.

I think it is perhaps better that David Roberts does not attend, but it has the makings of a first-class row in the constituency.

Could we discuss please?

Conservative and Unionist Central Office

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

Memorandum from: David E. Roberts

To: Mr. A.S. Garner

Wessex Area

Date: 11th October 1982

DER/SMC

I enclose herewith a photocopy of the notice convening the next meeting of the Executive Council of the Chesham and Amersham Association and would draw your attention to Item 6.

I also enclose a copy of a confidential memorandum circulated by the Penn Branch from whence the resolution emanates.

The view of the Constituency is that the resolution will be defeated and I do not propose to attend the meeting since I feel it would look as if Central Office were becoming involved in what is a domestic matter and I think it is better if I kept away. However, I shall be given a full report the next morning.

DER

2/12/80

Chesham and Amersham Conservative Association

AP2067

Conservative Centre, Church Street, Amersham, Bucks. HP8 4DB. Tel. Amersham (0295) 21577

Member of Parliament THE RT HON SIR IAN GILMOUR, BT.
President THE RT HON EARL HOWE (CBE, DL, JP)
Chairman PETER C. PINFIELD, ESQ.
Hon. Treasurer RICHARD C. CHEETHAM, ESQ.
Secretary and Agent ROBERT D. S. NAIRNE, ESQ.

1st October, 1982.

TO: Members of the Executive Council

Dear Member,

Executive Council

A meeting of the Association's Executive Council will be held at the CONSERVATIVE CENTRE, Church Street, Amersham, at 8.15 p.m. on

WEDNESDAY, 20th OCTOBER, 1982

A copy of the minutes of the meeting held on 16th June is enclosed.

It is hoped that you will be able to attend. If for any reason you are unable to be present, please check with your other appointed Branch representative(s) to ensure that someone from the Branch is at the meeting.

Yours sincerely,

R. D. S. Nairne
Secretary & Agent

A G E N D A

1. Apologies for Absence.
2. Minutes of the meeting held on 16th June, 1982.
3. Matters arising from the minutes.
4. Report of the Finance & General Purposes Committee
5. Hon. Treasurer's Report.
6. Motion for Debate

"For the next General Election the Conservative Candidate should be selected from a short-list including Sir Ian Gilmour".

To be proposed by Mr. N. Shephard-Smith

To be opposed by Mr. C. F. Robinson

(The Proposer and Opposer each to be allowed 5 minutes followed by formal seconding, subsequent speakers will be allowed a maximum of 3 minutes. The Opposer and Proposer may have 2 minutes to reply to the debate.)

7. Report on the Party Conference held in Brighton - 5th/6th October.
8. District Council Elections 1983
9. Any other Business.
10. Date of next meeting - Wednesday, 13th January, 1983.

Chesham and Amersham Conservative Association

Penn Branch

Strictly Confidential

October 1st, 1982

To all Executive Council members

Dear Council Member,

As you probably know, at the next meeting of the Executive Council on October 20th the Penn Branch is proposing the following motion:-
"That for the next General Election, the Chesham and Amersham Conservative candidate should be selected from a short-list including Sir Ian Gilmour."

In view of the very serious nature of this motion, the Penn Branch Committee felt that it would be helpful to give you the background to the events that led us inevitably to take this step.

You may well be aware that Sir Ian's criticism of Margaret Thatcher's policies did not win universal approval throughout the constituency. His remarks about the Government "heading for the rocks" in particular caused a good deal of anger, and the Penn Branch Committee received several letters calling for his resignation. Moreover, at this year's Penn Branch Annual General Meeting, (normally a very placid and cheerful affair!), there was widespread and forceful disapproval of Sir Ian from the floor, and the Branch Committee received a certain amount of criticism for "not expressing the views of the members". Finally, when the time came this Spring to collect the subscriptions, we found many members all over the Branch area who refused to rejoin the Conservatives while Sir Ian was our M.P., and warned that they would be unable to vote for him when the time came.

You will appreciate the seriousness of the position. The loss of members was bad enough but it would be far worse if the defection of Conservatives due to their dissatisfaction with Sir Ian were to lose the seat to strong opposition from the S.D.P. As you may recall, we drew the attention of the Constituency Association at the F. & G.P. and the Executive Council to the problems we were facing. It became clear that similar reactions had been experienced in other branches and all Branch Committees were asked to find out the level of support for Sir Ian Gilmour within their own areas and to report back to the Executive Council.

The Penn Branch Committee took the view that it would be quite improper to purport to express the opinions of our membership on such an important matter without making an effort to ascertain the views of our members directly. We therefore sent to every one of our members a questionnaire, a copy of which is enclosed. Two points should be noted. Firstly, the survey was of the "self-completion" type (i.e. not a personal interview), and no stamp was provided for the reply. To receive 222 replies from 805 members indicates great interest in the survey and the response rate of 28% would be regarded as an excellent return to a commercial direct mail shot.

Contd.....

Secondly, although anonymity was permitted, with only a few exceptions the respondents gave their names and addresses, enabling us to see that the replies came from all over the area and were a cross-section of our membership both geographically and demographically. In other words we have no reason whatsoever to suppose that the results of the survey do not give a fair representation of the views of our entire membership.

On the enclosed questionnaire, I have noted for your information the answers to each question expressed as a percentage of all the replies received, and including "no reply" where applicable. While the answers to the first four questions are interesting, it is of course the views of our members about the M.P. which are most relevant in this case. The results are disturbing: 45% of the respondents were dissatisfied with Sir Ian and 31% were doubtful whether they would support him at a General Election. But it was the answers to the final question that led inevitably to the Penn Branch motion because, as you see, only 15% of respondents thought that Sir Ian should be automatically reselected as our Conservative candidate; 85% thought that there should be a reselection process.

Faced with such clear and widespread feelings among our members, there was of course no justifiable alternative to proposing the motion that we have, but we would like to make two points. Firstly, nobody regrets more than the Penn Branch Committee that such issues even have to be discussed. It would be far easier and more pleasant for us simply to provide financial and administrative support for an M.P. in whom the whole constituency had total confidence, but the controversy was not of our making. Secondly, our motion does not and is not intended to imply any views as to the outcome of any candidate selection procedure, which would be the responsibility of the Executive Council; the candidate selected would of course deserve the full support of Penn and all other Branch Committees. We are concerned only that such a selection process should take place in order that democracy is not only effective but seen to be effective. Bearing in mind the feelings existing within the Penn Branch membership alone, any decision other than to select our Conservative candidate from a short-list would in our view be unthinkable.

Yours sincerely,

Neil Shepherd-Smith

Neil Shepherd-Smith
Chairman, Penn Branch.

RESULTS

SURVEY OF ALL MEMBERS OF THE PENN BRANCH OF THE CHESHAM AND AMERSHAM CONSERVATIVE ASSOCIATION

This is your chance to communicate your views on political issues. Individual replies will be treated with strict confidence and there is no need to identify yourself on this ballot form, though you may do so if you wish. However, the results will be analysed and summarised and used as guidance by your Committee on policy decisions during the months to come.

Name and address of respondent (Optional).

222 REPLIES RECEIVED

FROM 805 MEMBERS.

RESPONSE RATE: 28%

1. The Government's Record

Are you on the whole

Tick one box

- (a) Satisfied? 89% (b) Neutral? 8% (c) Dissatisfied? 3%

2. The Economy

Do you think the Conservative Government's record is

Tick one box

- (a) Good? 51% (b) Satisfactory? 46% (c) Poor? 2% (1% N.R.)

The Government has said that the main aim is to fight inflation.

Do you think their action has been

Tick one box

- (a) Too tough? 8% (b) Just right? 81% (c) Too weak? 11%

Do you think that unemployment should be reduced?

Tick one box

- (a) Yes, at all costs. 14% (b) Not if it meant increased inflation. 85% (1% N.R.)

3. Industrial Relations

The Government has tried to curb the power of the Unions, with legislation regarding strikes, the closed shop and so on.

Do you think the Government's action has been

Tick one box

- (a) Too tough? 1% (b) Just right? 49% (c) Too weak? 50%

4. Law and Order

Do you think the Government is doing enough to maintain Law and Order?

Tick one box

- (a) Not enough. 71% (b) About right. 28% (c) Too tough. 0% (1% N.R.)

There has been a recent move by the Police Federation to restore Capital Punishment for certain crimes.

Do you think the death penalty should be restored in some circumstances?

Tick one box

- (a) Yes. 80% (b) No. 19% (1% N.R.)

If 'Yes' then should this be for

You may tick more than one box

- (a) All murder? 30% (b) Certain murders e.g. in course of other crime? 66%
 (c) Murder of police? 77% (d) Terrorist activity causing death? 77%
 (e) All terrorism? 50%

5 Member of Parliament

Our own M.P., Sir Ian Gilmour, has expressed some criticism of the Government on economic issues. In turn, there has been some criticism of Sir Ian.

Are you on the whole satisfied with Sir Ian Gilmour as our M.P.?

Tick one box

- (a) Satisfied. 21% (b) Neutral. 34% (c) Dissatisfied. 45%

It has been suggested in some quarters that Sir Ian Gilmour should resign. Do you agree with this suggestion?

Tick one box

- (a) Yes. 40% (b) No. 58% (2% N.R.)

Will you vote Conservative at the next General Election

If Sir Ian Gilmour is our candidate?

Tick one box

- (a) Yes. 69% (b) Doubtful. 21% (c) No. 10%

If there is another Conservative candidate?

Tick one box

- (a) Yes. 87% (b) Doubtful. 10% (c) No. 1%

Do you think

Tick one box

- (a) Sir Ian Gilmour should be automatically reselected as our Conservative candidate? 15%
- (b) The Conservative candidate should be selected from a short-list including Sir Ian Gilmour? 58%
- (c) The Conservative candidate should be selected from a short-list excluding Sir Ian Gilmour? 27%

Any other comments:-

This form should be completed and returned as soon as possible and by 31st May at the latest.

When completed, it should be returned to one of the following people, who have been selected to give as far as possible a spread of collection points geographically dispersed over the whole Penn Branch area. You will appreciate that we do not want to put you to the expense of postage, but we cannot afford to supply a stamped envelope to all members. Please remember that this is the chance for your views to be taken into account, and please therefore return the completed form to any of the following:-

Alan Dibbo, Esq., 24, Howe Drive, Beaconsfield.

Miss Mollie Finch, 24, Hazelmere Road, Penn.

Paul Godfrey, Esq., Elmside, Elm Road, Penn.

Mrs Richard Maynard, Underwood, Coleshill Lane, Winchmoor Hill Amersham.

Mrs Neil Shepherd-Smith, Woodend, Forty Green Road, Knotty Green, Beaconsfield.

David White, Esq., Flint House, Penn Street, Holmer Green, High Wycombe.

Gilmour

IAN GILMOUR

"Possible Question"

Has the Prime Minister had time today to read the book by her RHF the Member for Chesham and Amersham.

Would she care to comment on his assertion that her Party is now the natural Party of unemployment?

"Answer"

I have not had time to read my RHF's book, though I have read the review which I commend, written by the RH Gentleman the Member for Down South in today's Times.

I understand that my RHF quotes with approval from my own speech when I said that it was "the bounden duty of Government to seek a real and lasting cure" to the human tragedy of unemployment. And that remains the purpose of HMG.