

LIBERAL PARTY ORGANISATION

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

HELD ON FRIDAY 11 MAY 1979 AT 7.30 pm

AT THE MIDLAND HOTEL, PETER STREET, MANCHESTER

Present:

- Geoff Tordoff Chairman of the Party
- Michael Steed President of the Party
- Monroe Palmer Joint Hon. Treasurer
- Kenneth Vaus Chairman of the FAB
- Hugh Jones Secretary General
- Roger Pincham Vice Chairman of the Executive
- *Tom Dale International Liaison Officer
- *Andrew Ellis By-elections Officer
- *Bernard Greaves Director of Policy Promotion
- Tony Greaves Community Politics Co-ordinator
- Nigel Ashton Home Counties - deputy for N. Westbrook
- Roy Bainbridge Home Counties
- Ralph Bancroft London
- Maurice Bennett East Midlands
- Martin Biermann Western Counties
- Claire Brooks Directly elected
- Bernard Budd Directly elected
- Raymond Clifford Eastern Region
- John Commons ULS - deputy for C. Burch
- Tony Cottam ALTU - deputy for G. Waddilove
- Lord Evans of Claughton Immediate Past President
- Philip Goldenberg Home Counties
- Gavin Grant Directly elected
- Vera Harvey Devon and Cornwall
- John Leston NLYL
- Barbara Lindsay Merseyside
- Llew Monger Northern Region
- Neva Orrell North West
- Eric Ridge London
- Philip Rule Candidates Association
- Martyn Smith West Midlands - deputy for A. Batchelor
- John Smithson Directly elected
- Ian Stuart Liberal Agents Association
- Clare Williams LPO Staff Association
- Dennis Wrigley Greater Manchester

* - denotes co-opted member

make efforts, as early as possible, to improve the organisation so that success could be gained when the opportunity arose, most particularly in those seats where real potential existed. It would also be necessary to secure a sound financial base for the Party to sustain a national structure that could provide increased support for certain key areas of activity which would be vital if the Party was to achieve its aims.

On the whole, the Party's campaign had run successfully and had been well received by the electorate, due in no small measure to the excellent leadership of David Steel, who had made a strong impression.

Lord Evans conveyed Mr. Steel's view that the campaign strategy had proved appropriate for this Election. He shared the general disappointment at the loss of three seats with no further gains, but in the face of a massive swing to the Conservatives, the Party had nonetheless secured a solid core of support of over four million people, which could be regarded as a positive and genuine Liberal vote and as a basis on which to build for the future. In view of the internal disorder that was likely to erupt in the Labour Party, the Liberal Party must take advantage of being able to offer the only radical and progressive alternative to the Tory Government.

The Executive recorded its deep gratitude to Mr. Steel for his inspired leadership during the Election campaign.

Lord Evans paid tribute to the General Election team at Headquarters and particularly to Mr. Tordoff, who had taken over responsibility for the Press Unit at short notice, and to Lord Banks, who had been in charge of the Policy Unit. He also thanked Gordon Lishman, who had edited the Candidates Bulletin, Nelia Penman for her work in running the Speakers Unit almost single-handed, members of the WLF who helped in various ways and the Secretary General and staff at Party Headquarters.

In response to a question, Mr. Tordoff stated that he had tried repeatedly during the campaign to have leading candidates appear in television and radio discussion programmes, but had met stubborn resistance from the broadcasting authorities which would only accept MPs or persons who had well-established links with the media.

Claire Brooks expressed her extreme disquiet at the unfair tactics used by opponents of the Liberal Party. There had been one particularly damaging article in a northern regional newspaper, and other notable instances of unethical behaviour demonstrated by the major parties. The Executive was firmly of the opinion that if any candidate believed that adequate grounds existed, the possibility of taking legal action should be seriously considered.

The Chairman asked regional representatives to urge their associations to make prompt payment of all outstanding LPD accounts.

In conclusion, Mr. Tordoff expressed the grateful thanks of the Executive to Lord Evans for his untiring work as Chairman of the General Election Committee.

(b) Local Elections