

TO: Liberal Party Executive Committee
FROM: JOHN SPILLER, ELECTION AGENT.
SUBJECT: ROCHDALE BY-ELECTION 26th October 1972.

1. Organisation of Rochdale Liberal Association

Survey carried out on 21st August, state of organisation as follows:

Membership - 40

Ward Organisation: 2 Good, 3, average, 1, poor, 6 defunct
(Total 12 wards)

Active Members - 30

Staff: None

Finance : Current Account £300.00 Deficit
Fighting/fund Account £100.00 Credit

Records: Out of date. No electoral register

Premises: Office. 144 Drake Street, Rochdale

Morale of active workers: Good

Electorate: Large percentage considered that Cyril Smith had a chance of winning.

2. Action taken 22nd August - 24th September

(a) Campaign Team : Formation of Committee of fifteen persons to plan and implement Liberal Campaign:

Press, Research, Administration, Finance, Canvassing, Meetings, Distribution, Postal-Votes, Publicity, Transport.

(Memo: 22/8/72)

(b) Ward Organisation : Reconstruction of Ward Organisation. Persons appointed to discharge campaign at Ward Level: Canvassing, transport, Distribution, Publicity.

(c) Financial Appeal : Internal and external appeal to raise £1,500.

(d) "Outside" Workers: Appeal for canvassers and speakers.

3. The Campaign - 25th September - 26th October

(a) General Tactics: Project to electorate that campaign would be close fought battle between Liberal & Labour. Attempt to stifle Tory effort in first week of campaign. Make direct bid for Labour votes. Indirect efforts to secure reduction in Tory support.

(b) Issues

- (i) Value of Liberal M.P
- (ii) Participation in Government
- (iii) Liberal Industrial Policy
- (iv) Exposure of Labour & Conservative Industrial and economic policies.
- (v) Need to secure honesty in political and public life.

- (c) Canvassing : Objective: 100% intensive canvass. Identification of Liberal support.
- (d) Meetings : 3 major, 13 Ward meetings.
- (e) Press : Daily Conference. Effort to exploit personality of Liberal Candidate. Publicity to issues outlined (b).
- (f) Committee Rooms Objective: to man maximum number of stations
- Polling Stations using large percentage of "outside workers".
- (g) Candidate : Concentration on door-to-door canvassing

SUMMARY

It is my firm belief that the Liberal majority could have been higher perhaps even to the extent of 8,000. One or two factors prevented a larger majority:

- (a) The appalling state of Liberal Organisation that existed prior to the 22nd August, as outlined at the start of report. Lack of a large number of active workers with the Association prevented pre-election planning so necessary to an organised election campaign.
- (b) Insufficient thought was given to the training of committee room workers, many of whom were new workers helping for first time in an election campaign. Out of the 22 committee rooms operated on polling day, it is my belief that 5 were operating below the standard desired.

I trust that the Party (as a whole) will accept the responsibility for the state of affairs in (a). I accept total responsibility for (b).

I believe that we achieved a good measure of success in other aspects of the campaign:

The Campaign Committee, consisting of active workers from within the Rochdale Association, carried out its duties very well. Committee predicted, ten weeks in advance, the date of the election. This enabled the Party to conduct a four and a half day campaign as opposed to a sixteen day campaign for Labour, and a 13 day campaign for the Conservatives. All organisational objectives were achieved by the start of the campaign proper.

The help given to Rochdale by outside workers, some travelling hundreds of miles, both during the campaign and on polling day, contributed to the success of the canvassing which identified 22,764 Liberal and possible Liberals. Those Liberals who were unable to travel to Rochdale contributed to the success of the financial appeal which realised a total of £2,100.

Large scale press publicity throughout the whole campaign helped to break any "credibility barrier" that may have existed. Candidate's aide, Mr. Aza Pinney was entirely responsible for press relations. It is a tribute to his efforts that the Party was able to obtain more publicity for the Rochdale By-Election than for any recent By-Election the Party has contested.