

**U DX141**

**General Election Campaign Papers  
of Howard J. Elcock**

**1979**

**Historical Background:**

The general election of 1979 took place on 3 May. The Conservative Party, led by Margaret Thatcher, won a parliamentary majority of 44 seats, easily removing the sitting Labour government, led by James Callaghan. It was the first of four consecutive election victories for the Tories and meant that Thatcher became the first female head of government of the UK and in Europe.

The election of 1974 had been won by Labour, led by Harold Wilson, with a slim majority of three seats. After 18 months, Wilson resigned and was succeeded by James Callaghan as Prime Minister and leader of the Labour Party. Within a year of Callaghan's succession, Labour's parliamentary majority had disappeared and he was forced to make agreements with four other parties to remain in government. A vote of no confidence was finally passed against Callaghan's government when the Scottish Nationalists withdrew their support, and a general election was called.

The Labour Party's 1979 campaign focused on support for the National Health Service and full employment but was hurt by the strikes of the Winter of Discontent (1978-1979). On the other hand, the Conservatives promised to curb inflation and reduce the might of the trade unions. The Liberals, suffering from the impact created by criminal allegations against their former leader Jeremy Thorpe, were now led by David Steel. All three main parties were, therefore, entering the election with new leaders.

The Conservative Party won with a 5.2% swing of the vote from Labour, the largest swing since the election of 1945. In 1980, Callaghan was replaced as Labour leader by Michael Foot.

Howard J. Elcock was born on 6 June 1942 and was educated at the Priory School for Boys in Shrewsbury before graduating from Oxford in 1964. He became a Politics lecturer at the University of Hull in 1966 and stayed at the University until 1981.

Elcock was a member of Humberside County Council between 1973 and 1981, acting as Planning Committee Chairman between 1975 and 1977, and campaigned unsuccessfully against the Tory incumbent Sir Patrick Wall as Labour candidate for the Haltemprice constituency in the General Election of 1979. In 1981 he became Head of the School of Government at Newcastle Polytechnic, later Northumbria University. He retired in 1997 but as a Professor (Emeritus), continues to be an energetic researcher and writer. He has written numerous books and articles including *Local Government, Change and Decay?: Public Administration in the 1990s* and *Political Leadership*. Previously Chairman, Elcock is currently Vice-Chairman of the Campaign to Protect Rural England's North-East Regional Group. He has also been a Labour Party member since 1965.

**Custodial history:**

Donated by Howard Elcock, July 1980 [U DX141/1-3]

**Description:**

This collection contains correspondence, campaign material such as canvassing leaflets and other Labour Party publications relating to the general election of 1979. U DX141/1 includes correspondence, press statements and other papers relating to Howard Elcock's campaign as Labour Candidate for the Haltemprice constituency. U DX141/2-3 contain general Labour Party publications, including *Today* magazine and copies of the *Campaign Handbook Update*.

**Extent:** 1 file and 31 items

**Related material:**

Papers of Sir Patrick Wall [U DPW]

Records of the Beverley and Haltemprice Branch of the Social Democratic Party [U DSD]

Elliot Morley MP [U DMY]

James Johnson MP [U DJJ]

Papers of John Prescott MP [U DMR]

Papers of J. Kevin McNamara [U DMC]

Papers of Austin Mitchell MP [U DMM]

Papers of David Winnick MP [U DMW]

Hull Labour Party [U DLP]

Records of Hull Labour Party [U DX124]

The Campaign for Labour Party Democracy and Yorkshire Regional Council of the Labour Party [U DX222]

**Access conditions:** Access will be granted to any accredited reader

U DX141/1	Correspondence and other material relating to Howard Elcock's campaign as Labour candidate for the Haltemprice constituency in the General Election Includes a very rough calendar of campaign events e.g. canvassing, printed pamphlets entitled 'General Guidance for Drivers of Persons at Risk' of assassination and 'General Guidance on Personal Security Measures', papers relating to the candidate selection process, campaign pamphlets, correspondence from the Labour Party providing advice on various aspects of running a campaign such as media appearances and use of canvassing as well as other letters sent to all general election candidates, press statements made by Elcock, correspondence from various lobbyists and lobbying groups and a circular entitled 'Regional Briefing for Candidates: Yorkshire and Humberside'. 1 file	1979
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Hull History Centre: General Election Campaign Papers of Howard J. Elcock

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| U DX141/2 | <p>General Election Labour Party campaign material<br/>Includes copies of the Labour Party Information Paper, containing the <i>Campaign Handbook Update</i> for April 1979, which gives details of Party policy on various subjects such as employment, foreign policy, health services and housing. There is also a copy of <i>The Government Record 1974-1979</i>, which provides a summary of government efforts and achievements during this period, organised by department, various other leaflets produced by the Labour Party for the general election campaign and copies of <i>Labour Weekly</i> supplements related to the campaign.</p> <p>11 items</p> | 1979             |
| U DX141/3 | <p>Labour Party Publications<br/>Includes copies of <i>Today</i> magazine, printed and published by the Labour Party Research Department, for use by candidates and other Party spokesmen. Each edition contains short articles on various policy areas and subjects such as the Tory Manifesto, council housing, taxation and schools.</p> <p>20 items</p>  | Apr-<br>May 1979 |