



P91/7/30/2/12
19th March, 1948.

Thank you for your airmail letter of 6th - also for attached cuttings which I read with interest. The Crump? article had appeared however in our papers here. As you may have noticed the statement on which it was based (that Sir Stafford Cripps had denied that the closing of the door to SA imports to British African Colonies was due to Article 9) was subsequently repudiated by him as having been based on a misunderstanding. It is in fact quite clear that if Article 9 means what it says the Colonies can't discriminate in favour of our imports as against imports from USA. But throughout the interpretation of AT. 9 has been such as to allow all kinds of loopholes, and now again (presumably with USA consent) the restrictions on our imports have been relaxed.

I have been enjoying the relief from some of my burdens which the Cabinet reshuffle brought. It has undoubtedly made a considerable difference and I am all the better for it. The next two months or so promise however to be exceptionally busy and strenuous. We are closing down Parl: next week, and are planning to have the general election about the end of May. We think that it will be to our advantage to have the election pretty soon, since at the moment the country is prosperous and grievances have receded into the background. But apart from that we have been influenced by the international situation. Since the Czechoslovakian incident took place, it looks as if anything might happen, and we don't want an international crisis to coincide with a general election campaign if possible. Moreover the danger of a crisis may influence the electorate to turn to a Govt. which has served it well in past crises.

On the whole, election prospects seem to be good for us. On present indications we should win fairly comfortably, but a good deal can of course happen even in a period of two months. My own constituency should be safe enough. Last time I had a big majority and although the new delimitation has not been to my advantage, there should still be quite a good margin. So far no opponent has appeared in the field.

I was of course interested in the results of your North Croydon bye-election which came to hand a day or two ago. No doubt you will have been heartened by the magnitude of the Conservative victory. The figures certainly do suggest quite a substantial swing over. One can imagine that there will be a rise in the temperature of your political battle? as a result. One of the things that struck me was the size of the electorate - 90,000 against 10,000 - - - - ? I would not like to have to organise a campaign in such circumstances.

We shall have to have another session of Parliament after the election - probably in August or September. August is not a very pleasant month down here, so that one does not quite look forward to the prospect. But it can't be helped. Between the election and the new session the PM will go over to be installed as Chancellor at Cambridge so that I shall presumably shall have to act for him again. The chances of my being able to pay you a visit this year don't seem at present to be very good.

(Discusses weather in England & SA, concludes "It will help to put the elec. in a good mood for the election.")