

LEADER'S CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

Minutes of the 232nd Meeting held at 5.00 p.m.
on Wednesday, 7th February 1979, in the Leader's
Room at the House of Commons.

Present: Mrs. Thatcher (in the Chair)
Mr. Whitelaw, Sir Keith Joseph,
Lord Hailsham, Lord Thorneycroft,
Sir Geoffrey Howe, Mr. Prior,
Sir Ian Gilmour, Mr. Jenkin,
Mr. Neave, Mr. Heseltine,
Mr. St. John Stevas, Mr. Maude,
Mr. Nott (Item 4 onwards),
Mr. King, Mr. Taylor,
Mr. Carlisle, Mr. Biffen,

Mr. Atkins.

In attendance: Sir Michael Havers, Mr. Fowler,
Lord Ferrers, Lord Denham,
Mr. Parkinson, Mr. Shaw,
Mr. Butler, Mr. Stanley,
Mr. Wolfson, Mr. Patten,
Mr. Ridley, Mr. Nicholson.

Apologies: Lord Carrington, Mr. Pym,
Mr. Peyton, Mr. Edwards,
Mrs. Oppenheim.

1. Proposed Business for the Week 12th February - 19th February

On Monday, 12th February, there would be the Second Reading of the Credit Unions Bill (Mr. Rees, Mr. Stewart). This would be followed by consideration of Lords Amendments to the Price Commission (Amendment) Bill (Mrs. Oppenheim, Mr. Parkinson).

On Tuesday, 13th February, Mr. Aitken would seek leave to introduce his Resolution of Trades Disputes (Life and Death Services) Bill under the 10 Minute Rule. This would be followed by a Supply Day.

On Wednesday, 14th February, Mr. Temple-Morris would seek leave to introduce his Secondary Picketing (Abolition) Bill under the 10 Minute Rule. This would be followed by the Remaining Stages of the Banking Bill (Mr. Stewart) and a Motion on ERC Documents R/3185, R/3089, R/3090, R/3146, R/3093, R/3312, and R/4102 on the Communities' Budget (Mr. Lawson).

On Thursday, 15th February, there would be the Second Reading of the Public Health Laboratories Bill (Mr. Jenkin). This would be followed by the Remaining Stages of the Vaccine Damage Payments Bill (Dr. Vaughan).

On Friday, 16th February, there would be the Private Members' Bills of Mr. Grylls, Mr. Anthony Grant and Mr. Dodsworth.

On Monday, 19th February, there would be a Supply Day, which would be devoted to a debate on the First Report from the Select Committee on Procedure 1977-78.

2. Matters Arising on Business

There was a discussion on certain matters and the following points were agreed:

(i) We should support amendments made in the Lords to the Price Commission (Amendment) Bill, as these were strictly justifiable on their merits.

(ii) Mr. St. John Stevas would speak in the debate on the First Report from the Select Committee on Procedure on 19th February.

3. Subject for Supply Day

There was a discussion and it was agreed that we should debate a motion on the industrial strategy and the outlook for industry on the Supply Day on 13th February. Sir Keith Joseph and his colleagues would draft a motion and we would press the Government particularly on the prospects for British Leyland, the effects of the road hauliers' strike and the details of the corporate plan for the shipbuilding industry.

4. The Companies Bill

Mr. Parkinson reported on the developments relating to Mr. Mikardo's amendment which would in effect deter companies from donating to political parties. There was a discussion and it was noted that we would not help the progress of the Bill until this issue had been satisfactorily resolved.

5. The Industrial Crisis

Mr. Heseltine reported on the prospects for a settlement of the water dispute and on developments in the local authorities' manual workers' dispute. There was a discussion and the following points were agreed:

(i) Mr. Heseltine would prepare a paper indicating the structure and finance of the water industry, the extent of over-manning and the prospects for savings, and the likely effect of whatever the final outcome to the dispute might be.

(ii) We would indicate that there was concern about the amounts of refuse that were piling up, which would be a danger to health if the weather became milder.

(iii) In a speech at the Young Conservative Conference this weekend Mr. Prior would set the Government's pursuit of a "concordat" with the TUC in the context of what the country really needed.

(iv) Conservative MPs and council leaders should be deterred from suggesting that the local authority employers should

exceed their existing offer, and we should emphasise that if local authority pay rose beyond that offer, savings would have to be made through cuts in manpower.

(v) We should ensure that the Government were blamed for both the rate increases that already appeared certain and for the likely further increases as a result of any settlement in double figures of the local authority dispute.

(vi) We should draw attention to the fact that the real earnings of most of the local authority workers were much higher than their basic pay.

(vii) A paper on the use of volunteers in industrial disputes would be prepared in the light of a discussion with Lord Carrington when he returned to Britain. In the meantime, we would continue stressing that it was the Government's duty to keep essential services functioning, and volunteers should be used if required. We should emphasise that this was not "strike breaking" as volunteers were not paid and were not seeking to take over the jobs of those on strike.

The meeting closed at 6.10 p.m.