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LEADER'S CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

236TH MEETING

5.00 p.m. Wednesday, 7th March 1979, in the  
Leader's Room at the House of Commons.

AGENDA

1. Minutes of the 233rd and 234th Meetings.
2. Future Business.
3. Forthcoming Events.
4. The Current Situation.
5. Any other business.

LEADER'S CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

Minutes of the 236th Meeting held at 5.00 p.m. on Wednesday, 7th March 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, Mr. Pym, Sir Ian Gilmour, Mr. Jenkin, Mr. Peyton, Mr. Neave, Mr. Heseltine, Mr. St. John Stevas, Mr. Maude, Mr. Edwards, Mr. Nott, Mrs. Oppenheim, Mr. King, Mr. Taylor, Mr. Carlisle, Mr. Biffen.

Mr. Atkins.

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

Apologies: Lord Carrington.

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

On Monday, 12th March, there would be the Second Reading of the Local Government Grants (Ethnic Groups) Bill. This would be followed by the Second Reading of the Local Government Finance Bill.

On Tuesday, 13th March, Mr. R. Page would seek leave to introduce his Trade Unions (Allocation of Political Funds) Bill under the 10 Minute Rule. This would be followed by a half Supply Day and by opposed Private Business on the County of Merseyside Bill. The following Proceedings on Consolidation Measures would also be taken: Capital Gains Tax Bill, Agricultural Statistics Bill, Electricity (Scotland) Bill and the Wages Councils Bill.

On Wednesday, 14th March, Mr. A. Mitchell would seek leave to introduce his Safety of Children in Cars Bill under the 10 Minute Rule. This would be followed by the Remaining Stages of the Industry Bill and Motions on the European Assembly Elections Regulations.

On Thursday, 15th March, there would be proceedings on the Consolidated Fund Bill followed by a debate on subjects raised by Members.

On Friday, 16th March, there would be the Private Members' Bills of Mr. Stanbrook, Mr. Durant and Mr. Goodhart.

On Monday, 19th March, there would be the Second Reading of the Road Traffic (Seat Belts) Bill.

2. Matters Arising on Business

There was a discussion of certain points and the following was agreed:

(i) Mr. Speed would open the debate on the Second Reading of the Local Government Grants (Ethnic Groups) Bill and Mr. Whitelaw would close. It was noted that the Bill was permissive and that the Home Secretary was entitled to decide how much to spend. We would not vote and Mr. Atkins would seek to discourage Conservative backbenchers from voting either for or against the Bill.

(ii) There would be a free vote on the Second Reading of the Road Traffic (Seat Belts) Bill.

3. Subject for Supply Day

There was a discussion and it was agreed that we would debate the Operation of the Courts in Scotland on the half Supply Day on 13th March, and would draw attention to the difficulties being created in their administration as a result of industrial action. Mr. Fairbairn and Lord James Douglas-Hamilton would be our speakers, and we would not vote.

4. Devolution

There was a further discussion of our attitude following the results of the referendums in Scotland and Wales. The following points were agreed:

(i) We should insist that the first priority was for the orders to repeal the Scotland and Wales Acts to be laid and determined.

(ii) We would not select any resolution on devolution for debate at the Scottish Party Conference in May at this stage, but we should consider at the time whether to have an emergency resolution on the subject.

(iii) It was noted that the Research Department were preparing a list of commitments made by Conservative spokesmen on what we should do if the Scotland and Wales Acts were not implemented. There would be a further discussion in the light of these commitments.

(iv) Members of the Shadow Cabinet were invited to consult Lord Thorneycroft as to whether it was desirable for them to appear on television programmes on which there was likely to be substantial discussion about the future of the devolution question.

The meeting closed at 6.00 p.m.