

LEADER'S CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

Minutes of the 84th Meeting held at 5.00 p.m.
on Wednesday, 19th November 1975, in the
Leader's Room at the House of Commons

Present: Mrs. Thatcher (In the Chair)

Mr. Whitelaw, Sir Keith Joseph
Mr. Maudling, Sir Geoffrey Howe
Mr. Gilmour, Lord Carrington
Mr. Prior, Mr. Jenkin
Mr. Peyton, Mr. St. John-Stevas
Mr. Raison, Mr. Maude
Mr. Buchanan-Smith, Mr. Edwards
Mr. Neave, Mr. Younger
Mr. Jopling, Lord Thornercroft
Mr. Atkins

In Attendance: Mr. Rifkind, Mr. Montgomery
Mr. Butler, Mr. Patten
Mr. Ridley, Mr. Nicholson

Apologies: Lord Hailsham, Mr. Heseltine
Mr. Fowler, Mrs. Oppenheim

1. Proposed Business for 20th November - 1st December

The debate on the Address would take place between Thursday, 20th November and Tuesday 25th November. On Thursday 20th November, the subjects would be Industry and Prices (Mr. Heseltine, Mrs. Oppenheim); on Friday 21st November, the main subject would be the Health Service (Mr. Fowler, Dr. Vaughan); on Monday 24th November the main subject would be Education (Mr. St. John-Stevas, Mr. Maude); and on Tuesday 25th November the main subject would be the Economy (Sir Geoffrey Howe, Mr. Peyton).

On Wednesday 26th November there would be the Second Reading of the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Bill and a motion on the 1974 Act Continuance (No. 2) Order. (Mr. Gilmour, Mr. Alison)

On Thursday 27th November there would be the Second Readings of the National Coal Board (Finance) Bill (Mr. Jenkin, Mr. McNair-Wilson) and of the Moneylenders (Crow Agents) Bill (Mr. Tugendhat).

On Friday 28th November there would be the Second Readings of the OECD Support Fund Bill and the Northern Ireland Loans Bill (Mr. Howell).

On Monday 1st December there would be the Second Reading of the Agriculture (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill (Mr. Jopling, Mr. Mills).

2. Matters Arising on Business

There was a discussion on a draft amendment to the Address on the subject of education, and it was agreed that Mr. St. John-Stevas and Mr. Maude, in consultation with Mr. Raison, would amend their draft to emphasise the fact that the Government's proposals would significantly change the balance between central and local government as fixed by the 1944 Education Act.

3. Devolution

Mr. Raison introduced his paper (LCC/75/88) on Devolution in England and there was a discussion.

It was agreed that this subject should be discussed by the Committee on the Constitution which was to be set up following discussions in the 1922 Committee. It would then be possible for the LCC to reach a decision at a later stage in the light of the views of that Committee.

There was a discussion on the main devolution issue. It was agreed that, in reacting to the proposals in the Government's White Paper, we should have regard to two criteria in particular:

- a) Did the proposals fulfil the need to help preserve the unity of the UK?
- b) Would they lead to more efficient and economic administration in each part of the UK?

It was agreed that, while we remained opposed to an Assembly for Wales, we were fully committed to a Scottish Assembly, together with a share for Scotland in the revenues from North Sea oil. The grant of powers to any Scottish Assembly should recognise the ultimate legislative and executive authority of Westminster. Mr. Rifkin was invited to prepare a paper, for circulation on Monday evening and discussion at the meeting of the LCC on 26th November, setting out the various choices facing us with regard to the detailed powers of an Assembly, and considering in particular the role of any Scottish executive.

The meeting closed at 6.13 p.m.