

LEADER'S CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

Minutes of the 96th Meeting held at 5.00 p.m. on  
Wednesday 11th February 1976 in the Leader's Room  
at the House of Commons

Present: Mrs. Thatcher (in the Chair)

Mr. Whitelaw, Sir Keith Joseph  
Lord Hailsham, Mr. Maudling  
Sir Geoffrey Howe, Mr. Prior  
Mr. Pym, Mr. Gilmour  
Mr. Jenkin, Mr. St. John-Stevas  
Mr. Raison, Mr. Naude  
Mr. Buchanan-Smith, Mr. Edwards  
Mr. Neave, Mrs. Oppenheim  
Mr. Biffen

Mr. Atkins

In attendance: Mr. Butler, Mr. Stanley  
Mr. Patten, Mr. Ridley  
Mr. Nicholson

Apologies: Lord Carrington, Mr. Peyton  
Mr. Heseltine, Lord Thorncroft

Proposed Business for the Week 16th - 23rd February

On Monday 16th February there would be the Second Reading of the Road Traffic (Drivers' Ages and Hours of Work) Bill (Mr. Fowler) followed by the Second Reading of the Fair Employment (Northern Ireland) Bill (Mr. Neave, Mr. Biggs-Davison) and a Motion on the Treatment of Offenders (Northern Ireland) Order.

On Tuesday 17th February there would be a Supply Day with subject to be decided.

On Wednesday 18th February Mr. Henderson would seek leave to introduce his Scottish Banknotes Bill under the 10 Minute Rule. This would be followed by the Remaining Stages of the Water Charges Bill (Mr. Speed, Mr. Jones) and a Motion on the Counter-inflation (Price Code) (Amendment) Order.

On Thursday 19th February there would be the Second Reading of the Trustee Savings Banks Bill (Mr. Nott) followed by a Motion on EEC Documents R/2662/75 and R/2663/75 on Nuclear Safety.

On Friday 20th February there would be the Second Reading of two Private Members' Bills: Mr. Lane's Homes Bill (Mr. Rossi) and Mr. Page's Corporal Punishment Bill.

On Monday 23rd February there would be a further Supply Day.

2. Subjects for Supply Days

There was a discussion. It was agreed that:

i) We should debate "Policy for the Fishing Industry" on the Supply Day on 17th February. This would be on a Motion for the Adjournment on which we would not vote.

ii) Among the points we should seek to make in the debate were the following: we supported the international movement towards territorial water limits of 200 miles, with reserved zones for fishing of 100 miles; we should press the Government to renegotiate the EEC common fisheries policy; if agreement on a common policy were to be delayed, we should negotiate unilaterally with other countries concerned; we should indicate that the Government had a responsibility to help the fishing industry through its short term difficulties but that no long term cash commitment was either needed or proposed.

iii) A decision on the subjects for the Supply Day on Monday 23rd February would be taken at the next meeting; among subjects suggested were unemployment and industrial problems in the West Midlands, the problems of Greater London, under-occupation in the privately rented sector and Angola.

iv) Members should indicate on the slips of paper circulated by Mr. Peyton what subjects they wished to be debated on future Supply Days.

3. Foreign Affairs

Mr. Maudling reported on the situation in Angola and our attitude to it, and Sir Geoffrey Howe reported on the impressions he had gained at the recent conference he had attended in Nairobi of reactions among the African countries. There was a discussion.

It was agreed that:

i) We should suggest that it was the task of the European countries together to urge an international conference on Angola.

ii) We could only support the Government enquiry under Lord Diplock into the recruitment of mercenaries (now that it had better terms of reference) but we should draw attention to the presence of some ten thousand Cuban regular troops in Angola.

4. The Chancellor's statement on measures to combat unemployment

Sir Geoffrey Howe reported on the measures that the Chancellor was likely to announce the following day. There was a discussion.

It was agreed that:

i) We should draw attention to the fact that Mr. Healey's proposals were entirely cosmetic and likely to have minimal effect while welcoming his refusal to carry through a general reflation.

...../ ii) We should

ii) We should refer to the problem of longer term unemployment, requiring a programme for training and retraining.

iii) We should contrast the spending of public money to keep people for a while in insecure jobs with the need to provide secure jobs in the long term for successive groups of school leavers, among others.

iv) We should draw attention to the problems arising from older men and women with families losing their jobs.

v) We should emphasise the need for the Government to examine all possible ways of relaxing constraints on future expansion, especially in the private sector, like price control.

The meeting closed at 6.05 p.m.