

LEADER'S CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

Minutes of the 226th Meeting held at 5.00 p.m.
on Wednesday, 6th December 1978, in the Leader's
Room at the House of Commons.

Present: Mrs. Thatcher (in the Chair)

Mr. Whitelaw, Sir Keith Joseph,
Lord Carrington, Lord Hailsham,
Lord Thorneycroft, Sir Geoffrey Howe,
Mr. Prior, Sir Ian Gilmour, Mr. Pym,
Mr. Peyton, Mr. Jenkin, 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: Mr. Fowler, Mr. Percival,
Lord Donham, Mr. Butler, Mr. Stanley,
Mr. Wolfson, Mr. Ridley,
Mr. Nicholson.

1. Proposed Business for the Week 11th-15th December

On Monday, 11th December, there would be the Private Members' Motions of Mr. P. Viggers, Mr. A. Bennett and Mr. B. Davies. This would be followed by motions on the Appropriation (No.4)(Northern Ireland) Order (Mr. Neave, Mr. Goodhart) and on the Shops (Northern Ireland) Order (Mr. Neave).

On Tuesday, 12th December, Mr. A. Bennett would seek leave to introduce his Water Service Charges (Rebates) Bill under the 10 Minute Rule. This would be followed by the Recess Motion and Proceedings on the Consolidated Fund Bill.

On Wednesday, 13th December, Mr. N. Fairbairn would seek leave to introduce his Criminal Justice Act (1967) Bill under the 10 Minute Rule. This would be followed by motions on the Rate Support Grant Orders.

On Thursday, 14th December, there would be a debate on the European Monetary System (Mr. Lawson, Mr. Hurd). This would be followed by a motion on the Social Security (Contributions) (Mariners) Amendment Regulations and by a motion on the St. Lucia Status Order.

On Friday, 15th December, there would be the Christmas Adjournment debates.

2. Matters Arising on Business

There was a discussion of certain matters. It was noted that there would be an unofficial whip at the end of the debate on Government Oil Policies on 11th December which all members of the Shadow Cabinet were invited to observe. The following points were agreed:

(i) We should consider voting on the Recess Motion on Tuesday, 12th December.

(ii) We should try to have the Rate Support Grant Order for Scotland taken first on 13th December, and we should vote against both Orders on a 2 line whip. Mr. Heseltine would indicate that it was not appropriate in the present circumstances for local government spending to be increased as was proposed.

There was a discussion of various matters that might be debated if there were not to be a debate on the EMS. Among the subjects suggested were debates on the Expenditure Committee report on the Civil Service, the Report of the Select Committee on Procedure, the industrial dispute at the West London Hospital, ASLEF action against the commuters, the Government's proposals on vehicle excise duty, and certain other matters. It was agreed that it would also be appropriate to debate a number of these on Tuesday, 12th December.

3. Proposed Inquiry following the Bingham Report

Mrs. Thatcher reported on the Government's proposals for a special Commission on oil sanctions, and a note setting out the Government's proposals was circulated. There was a discussion and it was agreed that Mrs. Thatcher would explain to the Prime Minister that we thought that the Government's proposals were completely against the public interest. Lord Hailsham would make the same point to the Lord Chancellor. If the Government insisted on proceeding with an inquiry, we should insist in our turn that this should take the form of a Select Committee of both Houses without any judges being involved, and without power to see Cabinet papers. It might take the form of a committee of Privy Councillors.

4. Other Business

Mrs. Thatcher reported that Mr. Foot was proposing that an all-Party Select Committee should decide how to spend the sum of £1 million, voted from the European Commission for information relating to the European elections. There was a discussion and it was agreed that, as it was feared the Labour party would seek to obtain some of this money for predominantly Party political purposes, we should oppose Mr. Foot's proposal.

5. Future Meetings

The next meeting of the Shadow Cabinet would be at 3.30 p.m. on Wednesday, 13th December, and would discuss Mr. Edwards's paper on the referendum and any other matters arising.

The meeting closed at 6.20 p.m.