

LEADER'S STEERING COMMITTEE

Minutes of the 45th Meeting held at 5.00 p.m. on Monday, 13th December 1976, in the Leader's Room in the House of Commons.

Present: Mrs. Thatcher (in the Chair)

Mr. Whitelaw, Sir Keith Joseph, Lord Carrington, Sir Geoffrey Howe, Mr. Prior, Mr. Gilmour, Mr. Peyton, Mr. Davies, Mr. Maude, Lord Thorneycroft.

Mr. Atkins.

In attendance: Mr. Stanley, Mr. Douglas, Mr. Nicholson.

Apologies: Mr. Pym.

1. Sir Keith Joseph introduced his two papers: 'Our Tone of Voice and our Tasks' and 'Politicising the Party'. There was a discussion with regard to Home Office Affairs. It was noted that the Research Department was examining various methods of dealing with crime and criminals used in other countries, and that Mr. Whitelaw and his assistants were also examining the possible use of a quota system to reduce substantially immigration in all categories.

The following points were agreed:

- (i) One of the best ways of broadening the base of the Party support was through liaison and work with organisations and individuals concerned with various social problems. It was desirable for a variety of reasons to encourage and assist voluntary organisations, especially in the field of local authority welfare.
- (ii) MPs and candidates should be encouraged to have meetings with special interest groups in their constituencies, and more should be done to let them know what developments were taking place in this field in Central Office. Lord Thorneycroft undertook to ensure that the Community Affairs Department arranged meetings with regional groups of MPs.
- (iii) We should continue our efforts to secure the use of effective "down-to-earth" people in our Party political broadcasts. While, in broadcasts and speeches generally, a certain amount of "knocking" the Government was necessary, we should be aware that the public were bored by simple "knocking", as the press and public reception of Labour's "Hon. Algernon" Party political broadcast showed.
- (iv) We should concentrate attention on gaining the support of people at work, and should give attention to developing an earnings policy designed to secure not only tax reductions but

adequate rewards for professionalism, skill and hard work. It was agreed that Sir Geoffrey Howe and Mr. Prior would submit a paper on earnings and tax policy.

(v) We should take account of the possibility that the economic indicators in a year's time, especially those on balance of payments and sterling, might be showing a significant improvement, although unemployment and inflation would still be intolerable.

(vi) It was desirable to examine a number of these matters further. Mr. Prior would enquire into the legal position of strikes with political aims.

(vii) Sir Keith Joseph was invited to discuss with those responsible in Central Office and in the Areas his ideas for politicising the Party in the light of what was already being done and what further developments might take place.

2. Defence

Mr. Gilmour raised the question of how we should react if, as expected, the Government cut defence in the forthcoming IMF package. It was agreed that, while we might be unwilling to vote against the package, we should condemn the defence cuts vigorously.

The meeting closed at 6.50 p.m.