

LEADER'S CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

Minutes of the 217th Meeting held at 5.00 p.m. on Wednesday, 26th July 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. Pym, Sir Ian Gilmour, Mr. Jenkin, Mr. Peyton, Mr. Davies, Mr. Neave, Mr. Heseltine, Mr. St. John-Stevas, Mr. Maude, Mr. Edwards, Mr. Nott, Mrs. Oppenheim, Mr. King, Mr. Taylor.
- Mr. Atkins.
- In attendance: Sir Michael Havers, Mr. Fowler, Lord Denham, Mr. Butler, Mr. Stanley, Mr. Patten, Mr. Ridley, Mr. Wolfson, Mr. Houston.
- Apologies: Mr. Prior.

1. Rhodesia

Mr. Davies reported on his visit to Rhodesia and on a meeting of MPs to discuss the issue. There was a wide variety of opinion in the Party, about whether or not we should take an initiative. Mr. Maudling's motion had been widely supported but it was not a practical proposition at the moment. We must make some contingency plans for either a break-down of the internal settlement leading to a resumption of control by Smith, or an attempt to hold the October election in a state of near anarchy. We could not avoid a vote on the forthcoming Government motion but we must try to keep the Party united around the central issue of strong criticisms of the Government's handling.

There was a discussion on the various options open to the Party. It was suggested that we might look at the example of Namibia and involve some members of the Security Council in searching for a solution, but the dangers of our proposing a particular scheme in a situation which we had no power to control and of appearing to despair of the internal settlement were noted. It was agreed that in the Commons debate we should concentrate on criticisms of Dr. Owen's handling of the whole business, but that we should also present some positive ideas for discussion and consideration. We would vote against the Government on a two line whip.

2. The Scottish Manifesto

Mr. Whitelaw reported on his discussion concerning the Scottish Manifesto. It was agreed that:

- (1) there should be further consideration of fishing policy to agree a form of words;

(ii) we should look sympathetically at the case for abolishing the tolls on the three major Scottish bridges, estimated to cost £1½ million, pending further discussions with Mr. Fowler. The arguments for the abolition of tolls on other bridges in Britain would be looked at case by case;

(iii) we must bear political considerations in mind when considering proposals for the dispersal of civil service jobs, but we were not committed to the current plans affecting West Gloucestershire and Bath. While we could accept the principle of dispersing a certain number of jobs to Glasgow, we did not believe that the Government's present proposals were satisfactory.

There was also a discussion of the suggestion that the Party should pledge itself in the Manifesto to establishing an oil fund, financed by oil revenues, to help improve the environment generally in Scotland and to assist areas dependent on oil development to prepare for a future without oil. There were difficulties in proceeding with this idea and it was agreed that Mr. Taylor should discuss it further with Sir Keith Joseph and Sir Geoffrey Howe.