

CONFIDENTIAL

COPY NO. 1..

LEADER'S CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

103RD MEETING

5.00 p.m., Wednesday 17th March 1976, in the

Leader's Room at the House of Commons

AGENDA

1. Minutes of the 102nd Meeting
2. Future Business
3. Forthcoming Events
4. Party Organisation - paper by Lord Thorneycroft
LCC/76/105 - attached
5. Any Other Business

Conservative Research Department
24 Old Queen Street, London SW1

CFP/GSB
12.3.76

LEADER'S CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

Minutes of the 102nd meeting held at 5.00 p.m. on Wednesday 17th March 1976, 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,
 Mr. Maudling, Sir Geoffrey Howe,
 Mr. Prior, Mr. Pym, Mr. Gilmour,
 Mr. Jenkin, Mr. Peyton,
 Mr. St. John-Stevas, Mr. Raison,
 Mr. Maude, Mr. Buchanan-Smith,
 Mr. Edwards, Mr. Neave,
 Mrs. Oppenheim, Mr. Biffen,
 Lord Thorneycroft

Mr. Atkins

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

Apologies: Mr. Heseltine

1. The Conservatives and Coalition

Mrs. Thatcher reported that, in view of a report in 'The Times' on the previous day following Mr. Wilson's announcement that he was to resign, which indicated that she and certain members of the LCC had discussed the attitude of the Conservative Party towards forming a coalition and which also purported to represent the views of certain members of the Shadow Cabinet, she had issued a statement to the effect that 'The Times' report was totally inaccurate, that there had been no such discussion, and that the Conservative Party wanted a General Election, not a coalition.

2. Proposed Business for the Week 22nd-29th March

On Monday, 22nd March there would be a Supply Day, the first half being taken by the Liberals and the second half being taken by the United Ulster Unionists. This would be followed by Consideration of Lords Amendments to the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Bill (Mr. Whitelaw, Mr. Alison).

On Tuesday, 23rd March Mr. Renton would seek leave to introduce his Obscene Publications Bill under the 10 Minute Rule. This would be followed by the Second Reading of the New Towns (Amendment) Bill (Mr. Raison), a Motion on the Property Services Agency Order (Mr. Latham) and Consideration of Lords' Amendments to the Water Charges Bill (Mr. Speed, Mr. Jones).

On Wednesday, 24th March Mr. Cryer would seek leave to introduce his Health and Safety at Work (Amendment) Bill under the 10 Minute Rule. This would be followed by a Supply Day with subject to be decided. At 7.00 p.m. there would be the British Transport Docks (Felixstowe) Bill (Mr. Fowler), arising as opposed Private Business, followed by a Motion on Financial Assistance to Industry (By Chemicals International Limited).

On Thursday, 25th March there would be the Second Reading of the Weights and Measures &c. Bill (Mrs. Oppenheim, Mr. Lamont) followed by a Motion on Coal Industry Orders.

...../on Friday

On Friday, 26th March there would be Private Members' Motions, the motions being those of Mr. Gow on Personal Liberty and Freedom of Choice, Mr. Onslow and Sir George Young.

On Monday, 29th March there would be a Debate on the Green Paper on Direct Elections to the European Assembly (Cmd, No. 6399) (Mr. Maudling, Mr. Hurd).

3. Matters Arising on Business

There was a discussion and it was agreed that:

i) We would vote on a two line whip against the Second Reading of the New Towns (Amendment) Bill on a reasoned amendment indicating that New Town tenants who wished to do so should be able to buy their homes.

ii) There should be the maximum unofficial effort to secure a vote against the British Transport Docks (Felixstowe) Bill.

iii) We would vote against the Second Reading of the Weights and Measures &c Bill on a reasoned amendment and on a two line whip.

iv) Mr. Mauds would speak from the front bench on Mr. Gow's Private Members' Motion on Personal Liberty and Freedom of Choice on 26th March.

4. Subject for the Supply Day

There was a discussion and it was agreed that we should debate the Crippling Burden of Taxation on the half Supply Day on 24th March. (As a result of the Liberals selecting this subject for debate on their Supply Day on 22nd March, it was later decided to debate International Trade on 24th March).

5. Party Organisation: Paper by Lord Thorneycroft

Lord Thorneycroft introduced his paper (LCC/76/105) and there was a discussion. The paper was agreed and the following points were also agreed:

i) The whole Shadow Cabinet should continue to give vocal support when necessary to Lord Thorneycroft's recent changes in the organisation of Central Office, both at the Central Council Meeting at Norwich and elsewhere.

ii) The area organisation of the Party could not be removed but efforts should be made to prevent Central Office Agents having to spend time on giving a great deal of attention and especially secretarial assistance to the numerous committees that existed at area level. Members of the voluntary side should be encouraged to bear more of these burdens, where they were unavoidable. We should attempt to reduce the meetings within the areas, which involved people spending too much time and money in travel.

iii) Attention should be given to providing more advice to members of the Shadow Cabinet on how best to get publicity for the main points of their speeches and statements. Members might seek to produce shorter press releases, attempt to make more speeches and statements during the week, and would only make longer speeches when they considered it essential to expound policy at length.

iv) We should discuss informally with Sir Tatton Brinton the question of his submitting a minority report to the Houghton Committee on Financing Political Parties, while indicating that as he was not our official delegate on that Committee we could

not undertake to support whatever he said unconditionally.

v) As certain members of the LCC were finding the volume of letters they had received far greater than had been expected when the allocation of the first tranche of "Short Money" was made, consideration would be given to the provision of more secretarial help when we discussed the allocation of the second tranche.

6. Foreign Affairs

Sir Keith Joseph raised the question of whether we should oppose a visit to this country by Mr. Brezhnev, the possibility of which had been reported in the Press. There was a discussion, and it was agreed that the Research Department should first ascertain whether such a visit was likely.

7. Motor Cycle Crash Helmets (Religious Exemptions) Bill

It was agreed that there would be a free vote on the religious exemptions clause and Mrs. Thatcher indicated that she would state, as her personal view, that there appeared to be no reason to compel Sikhs to wear safety helmets now, when they had not been compelled to wear helmets on active service in war time.

The meeting closed at 6.12 p.m.

SUPPLY DAYSAGRICULTURE

General Debate on Farming, Food & Fishing

Not yet

EMPLOYMENT

State of employment in particular areas (½ day each)

London and West Midlands

Soon

Remainder

Later

Secret ballot for Union elections

June/July

Training for industry for those still at school and school leavers (½ day)

May/June

ENERGY

Supply and pricing of Electricity and Gas

Feb/March

ENVIRONMENT

Underoccupation of housing - including rent acts

Soon as you like

Land Policy (though the Development Land Tax 2nd Reading will dispose of this for the time being)

Local Government District Elections

Soon after Easter

Debate on the White Paper 'Sport and Recreation'.

DEFENCE

Nothing until Defence White Paper

HOME

General Debate on the protection of the individual citizen

Future of the Probation service.

INDUSTRY

Nil return.

SCOTLAND

Grant aided schools and the consequences of Government policy for education in Scotland

November

Transport in Scotland - After Government Statement on rail policy.

The Scottish Economy

Summer

Housing

Spring/Summer

SOCIAL SERVICES

Health Exports

2/3 weeks

Mobility Allowance

Not before May

Making the poor poorer

After Budget

The role of voluntary organisations

Note before June

The Administrative burden in the Health Service

June/July

TREASURY

Return to single rate of VAT

Before Budget

Take note of the 3 Reports of the Diamond Commission on the Redistribution of Income and Wealth

"

MISC.

The Collapse of Socialist ideas.

The need to allow free enterprise to operate properly, within a humane framework of laws and services.

The process of national wealth-creation and the conflict between this and socialism.

The contradictions of nationalisation

The limits of re-distribution

The myth of job saving

Price controls destroy jobs. *

The need for much higher profits, earned in competition, as the base for investment and secure jobs.