

CONFIDENTIAL

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LEADER'S CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

121ND MEETING

3.00-6.00 p.m., Monday, 5th July 1976, in the
Leader's Room at the House of Commons.

POLICY DISCUSSION AGENDA

1. Interim Report: Education Policy Proposals,
(LCC/76/121) - attached.
2. Interim Report: Employment Policy,
(LCC/76/122) - to follow.

Conservative Research Department,
24 Old Queen Street, London, S.W.1

CFP/MEM
1.7.76

LEADER'S CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

Minutes of the 121st Meeting held at 3.00 p.m.
on Monday, 5th July, 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,
Sir Geoffrey Howe, Mr. Prior,
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: Dr. Keith Hampson, Mr. Stanley,
Mr. Butler, Mr. Patten,
Mr. Douglas, Mr. Nicholson,
Mr. Ranelagh.

Apologies: Mr. Maudling, Mr. Pym,
Mr. Heseltine.

1. Progress on Policy Group Discussions

There was a discussion on various aspects of our
current policy work, and it was agreed that:

(i) We could not decide what to publish before
the Party Conference, or during the Party Conference,
until the current discussions were concluded and a
study made of the points of agreement and emphasis
emerging from the Minutes.

(ii) The general intention, however, was clear
viz. to indicate our strategy without spelling out
details. However, it would be helpful to show that
we have examined certain problems in detail, by
indicating various courses that might be adopted without
committing ourselves firmly to them.

(iii) It was undesirable for there to be a constant
leakage of separate detailed items of policy during the
summer.

2. Land

Mr. Raison introduced the paper (LCC/76/119) pointing
out that we were carrying out consultations with various
outside professional bodies on what we put in place of
the Community Land Act. There was a case for keeping
some of the machinery of the Act to enable us to issue

directives to local authorities that no further land should be acquired and that which was acquired should be dispersed of. Two main points were agreed:

(1) It was our firm intention to repeal the Community Land Act.

(2) We accepted the case for a tax of profits arising from betterment.

3. Education

Mr. St. John-Stewas introduced the paper (LCC/76/121). There was a discussion and the general themes and principles were agreed, with the proviso that we would not spell out too much detail in the policy document.

With regard to standards we should emphasise that alongside our desire to preserve good selective schools we were equally concerned to raise the standards in comprehensive schools. One point which needed to be borne in mind was the need to help children with language difficulties.

The following points were also agreed:

(1) A national system of monitoring performance of schools should be established.

(2) A principal role in this could be played by a strengthened Assessment of Performance Unit (APU) and school inspectorate.

(3) We should recognise that there were restrictions on the role of the D.E.S. and the Inspectorate in assisting in the raising of standards.

(4) We should emphasise that monitoring performance applies as much to numeracy as to literacy in view of low attainment in mathematics in schools.

(5) Externally set and moderated examinations should remain an essential part of the system.

(6) We recognised that there were objections regarding any publication of the results of APU tests on individual children but the publication of schools' attainment in APU tests would be popular with the public.

(7) National minimum standards in reading, writing and arithmetic should be introduced for all pupils before they embarked on secondary education. The age at which tests should be taken should be such as to allow remedial work to be undertaken when needed.

(8) There should be an inquiry into standards and discipline in secondary schools with special reference to comprehensive schools.

(9) With regard to proposal 6 on page 2 there were twin dangers: the possible cost and the possible use that the Labour Party might make of this to interfere with curricula.

(10) We should not refer to the proposal in paragraph 1b on page 4 in the Policy Document.

(11) The proposals of the parents charter were agreed but with regard to paragraph 3 on page 5 on local appeals boards, the principle of having an appeal was agreed but Mr. St. John-Stewas would examine the practical aspects of this proposal with Lord Hailsham. We would examine whether the Ombudsman system might be of assistance.

(12) With regard to paragraph 1 at the bottom of page 4 on Section 76 of the 1944 Education Act we should ensure that we obtained the precise form of words desired to ensure maximum freedom of choice. With regard to Wales, the Education Group would discuss with Mr. Edwards' Group the administration of the powers giving parents the right to ask for their children to be taught in English.

(13) In paragraph 4 on page 5 the word "required" in the second line should be replaced by "encouraged".

(14) It was agreed that head teachers with the agreement of parents concerned should have power to allow pupils to leave school early as long as proof was obtained of such pupils' admission to apprenticeships, service in the forces, further and higher education and jobs where further education was involved.

(15) In paragraph 4 at the bottom of page 8 we should not spell out that we were considering placing 17 and 18 year olds on the juvenile bench.

(16) In paragraph 3 on page 9 we should re-examine the proposal to discontinue the social priority school teachers' allowance.

(17) Regarding paragraph 9 of page 9 there were arguments against appointing educational welfare officers and a case for teachers being involved in pastoral care.

(18) With regard to Section 8 on pages 10-12 on Further and Higher Education there was danger of increasing bureaucracy if an Advanced Education Commission was set up to co-ordinate the work and finance of polytechnics, colleges of education and further education colleges as suggested on page 12. The University Grants Committee should be retained and polytechnics recognised as being national institutions. It was desirable to remove some control of this section of further education from the local education authorities, and there were powerful arguments for the setting up of a Polytechnics Grants Committee but we should, for the time being, keep our options open and seek to build on the work of the group.

(19) The proposed "Teachers' Council" (page 13) was desirable in principle. It should take over the D.S.S. disciplinary function, as this would increase the status of the teaching profession, but we would have to ensure that the NUT did not control the Council.

(20) While it was recognised that the Shadow Cabinet Sub Committee and Mr. Finsberg's group on Greater London were in favour of abolishing the ILEA and moving its work to the London boroughs, there were difficulties regarding demarcation between boroughs and arising from what might in the future be our proposals for polytechnics. We should not publish our intention regarding ILEA and would examine the matter further.

(21) It was noted that any reducing of the grant given to students' unions in respect of all students would be a considerable blow to the Conservative students who had recently made significant advances. So would the substitution of a system of loans for grants, which was not practicable. However consideration should be given to the introduction of loans for postgraduates.

(22) We should use cash limits to cut the cost of educational administration, especially that of ancillaries in the schools.

4. Spending

Mr. Wote set out the proposals of the Public Sector Group for cutting educational spending. It was agreed that Mr. Mott would let Mr. St. John-Stevas have a copy of his Group's proposals which would then be the subject of discussions between the Education and Public Sector Groups.

5. Other Business

With regard to the Policy Document on housing, it was agreed that although it was our intention to enable housing associations to buy the houses they occupied, this right would not extend to student housing associations.

The meeting closed at 6.10 p.m.