

LEADER'S CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

Minutes of the 231st Meeting held at 5.00 p.m.  
on Wednesday, 31st January 1979, in the Leader's  
Room at the House of Commons.

Present: Mrs. Thatcher (in the Chair)  
Mr. Whitelaw, Sir Keith Joseph,  
Lord Hailsham, Sir Geoffrey Howe,  
Mr. Prior, Mr. Pym,  
Sir Ian Gilmour, Mr. Jenkin,  
Mr. Peyton, 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: Sir Michael Havers, Mr. Fowler,  
Lord Strathcona, Dr. Vaughan,  
Mr. Butler, Mr. Stanley,  
Mr. Wolfson, Mr. Patten,  
Mr. Nicholson.

Apologies: Lord Carrington, Lord Thorneycroft.

1. Proposed Business for the Week 5th February - 12th February

On Monday, 5th February, there would be the Second Reading of the Vaccine Damage Payments Bill (Mr. Jenkin, Dr. Vaughan).

On Tuesday, 6th February, Mr. J. Cope would seek leave to introduce his Government and Local Authority Contracts Bill under the 10 Minute Rule. This would be followed by a Half Supply Day and opposed Private Business.

On Wednesday, 7th February, Mr. I. Gow would seek leave to introduce his Workers' Freedom Bill under the 10 Minute Rule. This would be followed by the Remaining Stages of the Nurses, Midwives and Health Visitors' Bill (Dr. Vaughan, Mr. Hodgson) and a Motion on EEC Documents R/3185/78, R/3089/78, R/3090/78, R/3146/78 and R/3093/78 on the Communities' Budget.

On Thursday, 8th February, there would be the Second Reading of the Crown Agents Bill.

On Friday, 9th February, there would be the Private Members' Bills of Mr. Whitney, Mrs. Knight, Mr. Morris and Mr. Pavitt.

On Monday, 12th February, there would be the Second Reading of the Credit Unions Bill.

2. Matters Arising on Business

(i) There would be a provisional 2-line whip for the Remaining Stages of the Nurses, Midwives and Health Visitors' Bill on 7th February.

(ii) Mr. Lawson would speak in the Debate on the EEC Documents on the Communities Budget,

(iii) Mr. Luce would open the debate on the Second Reading of the Crown Agents Bill and Mr. Cope would be invited to help Mr. Luce and close the debate.

(iv) Mr. Whitelaw would again discuss with Mrs. Knight the danger that her British Nationality (Amendment) Bill might be so amended as greatly to increase immigration.

(v) Mr. Ian Stewart would speak on the Second Reading of the Credit Unions Bill on 12th February, and Sir Geoffrey Howe would decide whether a closing speaker would be required. We would not oppose this Bill.

3. Subject for the Half Supply Day

There was a discussion and the following points were agreed:

(i) A final decision on this could not sensibly be taken before 5th February. It was noted that the Speaker was likely to grant an S.O.9 debate the following day on the crisis in the hospitals. If the S.O.9 were not granted, we would consider debating this issue on 6th February. Otherwise, we would prefer to debate the effect of the various industrial disputes on schools. We would provisionally indicate that this was our intention.

(ii) If education were debated, we would attack Mrs. Williams' record in involving herself with the Grunwick pickets and her present claim that "force majeure" prevented her Department from keeping schools open. Mr. Carlisle would speak, and in view of the situation in Wales, we should consider inviting Mr. Edwards to close.

(iii) The Chief Whip would seek to deter Conservative backbenchers from tabling a number of S.O.9s on the afternoon of 6th February.

4. The Industrial Crisis and Our Reactions

Mr. Heseltine reported on the crisis facing water supplies in the North West and on the effects of the gravediggers strike. Mr. Fowler reported on the likely final settlement of the road hauliers' dispute, the cost of such a settlement, and the pay claims and prospects for further strikes involving the National Freight Corporation, the docks and bus services. There was a discussion and the following points were agreed:

(i) We should not react to the Liberal Leader's broadcast that evening.

(ii) We should not at present say anything on the subject of prospective victimisation of those who did not take part in the road hauliers' dispute as, if the precedent of the bakers' dispute was followed, the industry was likely to settle this question in a satisfactory way.

(iii) We should urge the Prime Minister to carry out his responsibilities and to take up the offer made in Mrs. Thatcher's television broadcast.

#### 5. The Problem of Relative Pay in the Public Sector

There was a preliminary discussion on the nature of this problem and on the various methods we might adopt to avoid conflict and control inflation. The following points were agreed:

(i) The Research Department would produce a paper for future discussion, which would set out the facts and would suggest various options.

(ii) Mr. Prior would seek to obtain information on the various negotiating bodies in the public sector from the House of Commons Library.

(iii) We should bear in mind the dangers that might arise when and if Labour recaptured the local authority associations.

(iv) Members of the Shadow Cabinet were invited to encourage members of their backbench Committees to attend the meeting of the Finance Committee on 6th February, when Sir Geoffrey Howe would speak on public sector pay.

#### 5. Other Business

Mr. Fowler reported on the likely judgement of the European Court on the use of tachographs on lorries. It was agreed that in reacting to this judgement we should indicate that, while we would always seek to abide by the judgements of the Court we would want to explore how this judgement might be implemented without causing further disputes in the industry. It was noted that the Netherlands seemed to have won a derogation from the Commission's rules on this and that, if this was so, we might do the same. We should explore this further.

The meeting closed at 6.12 p.m.