

CONFIDENTIAL

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LEADER'S CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

64th MEETING

5.00 p.m., Wednesday, 11th June, 1975 in the  
Leader's Room at the House of Commons

AGENDA

1. Minutes of the 63rd Meeting - attached.
2. Future business.
3. Any other business.

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

CFF/MEM  
10.6.75

LEADER'S CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

Minutes of the 64th Meeting held at 5.00 pm on Wednesday 11th June 1975, in the Leader's Room at the House of Commons.

Present: Mrs. Thatcher (In the Chair)

Mr. Whitelaw, Sir Keith Joseph, Mr. Peyton, Mr. Gilmour, Sir Geoffrey Howe, Mr. Maudling, Lord Hailsham, Lord Carrington, Mr. Prior, Mr. Jenkin, Mr. St John Stevas, Mr. Maude, Mr. Raison, Mr. Neave, Mr. Buchanan-Smith, Mr. Edwards, Mr. Younger, Mr. Jopling.

Mr. Atkins

Mr. Montgomery, Mr. Shelton, Mr. Patten, Mr. Ridley, Mr. Nicholson (In attendance).

Apologies: Lord Thorneycroft, Mrs. Oppenheim, Mr. Fowler, Mr. Heseltine.

1. Business of the Week

On Monday 6th June there would be a Supply Day, with subject to be decided, and this would be followed by the Committee and Remaining Stages of the British Leyland Bill (Mr. Heseltine, Mr. King).

On Tuesday, 17th June Sir Brandon Rhys Williams would seek leave to introduce his Democratic Elections Bill under the 10 Minute Rule. This would be followed by a further Supply Day, with a debate on an Adjournment Motion on the Army (Mr. Goodhart, Mr. Wiggin), and then the Second Reading of the Public Service Vehicle (Arrest of Offenders) Bill, and Proceedings on the Export Guarantees Bill and the Nursing Homes Bill (Mr. Awdry) which were consolidation measures.

On Wednesday 18th June Mr. Clement Freud would seek leave to introduce his Representation of the People (Amendment) (No 2) Bill under the 10 Minute Rule. This would be followed by the remaining stages of the Sex Discrimination Bill (Mr. Gilmour, Mr. Alison), with a running 2 line whip.

On Thursday, 19th June a ballot for Private Member's Motions on Monday 7th July would take place, and this would be followed by the Second Reading of the Criminal Jurisdiction Bill (Mr. Neave) and either the Second Reading of the Safety of Sports Grounds Bill (Mr. Monro), or the remaining stages of the Industrial and Provident Societies Bill (Mr. Howell) and of the Diseases of Animals Bill (Mr. Hicks).

On Friday, 20th June there would be Government business: the Second Reading of the Children Bill (Mr. Fowler, Dr. Vaughan).

On Monday, 23rd June there would be a further Supply Day with subject to be decided.

2. Subjects for Supply Days

Mrs. Thatcher said that there remained seven Supply Days in the present session for which subjects still needed to be found. It would be helpful if we could emphasise certain recurring themes, for example : showing how extreme the Government continued to be despite clear indications that the electorate wanted moderation ; the dangerously high public expenditure, especially in the field of nationalisation, housing and food subsidies; and, above all, the relevance of what the Government was doing or not doing to the overriding priority of overcoming inflation.

There was a discussion in which a number of subjects were suggested. It was agreed that the whole of next Monday's Supply Day should be devoted to housing. As it was becoming increasingly desirable for the Conservative Party to state its position on the Social Contract and on pay increases, especially in view of the current claims being pursued by the NUR and NALGO which would involve sharp increases in the cost of living and in burdens on rate payers and tax-payers, it was thought that this subject might be discussed in the Supply Day debate on the following Monday, 23rd June. Another subject for that day might be postal ballots in union elections. A final decision on subjects would be reached next Wednesday.

Other subjects mentioned were education, emphasising the role that remained for selection, while attempting to find points of agreement between the Parties; and steel for which we had offered the Government one of our supply days before the Recess. It was pointed out that this offer did not hold beyond the Recess.

3. Trade Union and Labour Relations (Amendment) Bill

In reply to a question from Lord Carrington, Mr. Prior said that the return of the Bill to the Commons with the Lords' amendments had been delayed while the Government discussed its attitude with the Manifesto Group of Labour MPs. He was remaining silent for the time being on the main issues raised by the Bill, since he did not wish to prejudice any successful outcome of these discussions.

4. Future Policy

The need for interim reports from all policy groups on major issues by the end of July was reaffirmed: the aim being to help prepare our lines at the Party Conference and for use if any early General Election supervened. A full day's meeting would probably have to be devoted to discussing these reports around the end of the session : a list of convenient days would be drawn up.

Mr. Payton suggested that it would be desirable to have a policy group on the reorganisation of central government. This would ensure that we would have a policy on re-gaining power for reforming the central government machine : we needed to examine such questions as the future of the giant Departments, the effectiveness of Treasury control over the nationalised industries, the Cabinet Committee system and the staffing of Ministers' private offices. It was agreed that it was a little too early to set up such an additional group.

5. Electoral Reform

This subject was still exciting controversy as the two "10 Minute Rule" Bills down for discussion in the following week showed. Mr. Maude had drafted a letter for Lord Ashdown, which Lord Thorneycroft was going to sign, to show industrialists which set out our policy. It would our support for...

Speakers' Conference while pointing out the difficulties behind the various proposals for reform; there was no guarantee that these would give industrialists the sort of political result they wanted. It was agreed that the paper on this subject by the Research Department would be circulated to the Shadow Cabinet, and Mrs. Thatcher would seek to get John Stanley's permission to circulate a letter he had sent her on the same subject. These papers pointed out that almost any system of electoral reform would reduce the number of Conservative seats in Parliament, and it was feared that even if the number of Liberal MPs were to increase, they might be inclined to support a Labour Government. It was suggested that we should emphasise how electoral reform might harm the country rather than just the Conservative Party.

6. Timing of Recess

Mr. Atkins said that it was understood that the Government was proposing at the moment that the House should rise on the 1st August and return on the 13th October, and that the new Session should start on the 11th November.

The meeting closed at 6.15 pm.