

From The Rt. Hon. Humphrey Atkins, M.P.



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

*Please file
on 1522
committee*

21st December 1976.

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Dear Margaret,

I enclose herewith a copy of the notes I took at yesterday's meeting with the Officers and Executive of the 1922 Committee.

Yours ever

The Rt. Hon. Margaret Thatcher, M.P.



Present:-

Margaret Thatcher		
Edward du Cann	Mark Carlisle	Betty Harvie Anderson
Sir John Hall	Sir Paul Bryan	Peter Hordern
Hon. Charles Morrison	Sir Nigel Fisher	Peter Rees
Walter Clegg	Neil Marten	Patrick Mayhew
Philip Goodhart	Sir Bernard Braine	

HEA in attendance.

E.duC.

Congratulated M.T. on leadership since last meeting.
Two subjects of main concern - devolution and the economy.
Also wanted views on other trip-wires in front of us.

M.T.

Period to end July 1977.

1. Believes chances of an election before then are fairly high. Not certain how this will come about - bye-elections, disagreement in Cabinet etc?
2. Chancellor's latest package will not work. Unemployment will rise, prices will go up sharply after January.
3. Election will be ugly - personalities, scares and smears.
4. M.T.'s main task to devise way of running a national campaign as a party.
5. Devolution debate over next months will not be as damaging to party as some think. Time will show that Bill is either not enough or too much.
6. Political attack will come on other things, particularly on PQs and the weekly Supply Day. Main political attack on economy perhaps late February, early March.
7. Must have study group on future of the House of Lords.

Morrison

M.T.'s views on coalition (i.e. approach by P.M.)?

M.T.

Only possible if agreement on purpose, method and programme. She doubts it will happen. Ghost of Ramsey Macdonald.

Marten

If any move in this direction contemplated, party must be consulted. Agrees devolution not really a party issue. Any study of future of Lords tied up with Europe, electoral system, etc.

Hordern

Against P.R. For study of Lords. For some form of devolution to Scotland and Wales.

Bryan

Agrees election will be fought on scare lines, but Government will not be able to keep it there.

Goodhart

Early Supply Day on defence cuts. For referendum on devolution and perhaps even on House of Lords.



- Harvie Anderson No votes in House of Lords - however must do something before next Labour Government. Anti P.R.
- Fisher Pro P.R. for Scotland. Will come in the end for U.K. M.T. not to close options. Approach from P.M. for coalition might come. Callaghan would have much more support than Macdonald.
- Braine Keep options open on P.R. Devolution referendum should be over whole U.K.
- Rees Electoral systems in Europe, U.K. Scotland, Ireland, etc. will have to be the same in the end. Devolution committee should be run on very light rein. Legal complexities if referendum goes one way in Scotland and the other in Wales.
- Carlisle Light rein on Devolution committee. Scottish representation here must be reduced. Keep options open on P.R.
- Hall How does next Conservative Government actually get industry moving? Have to get rid of malaise. Are taxation measures enough? Hopes we shall concentrate on increasing national wealth.
- M.T. More interested in earnings policy rather than incomes policy. Also withdrawal of Government from industrial activity. Price control as at present is ridiculous.
- Horder Must make room to reduce taxes. Therefore must reduce public expenditure in short term. Should increase Government accountability (E.du.C. Public Accounts Committee's report). Will M.T. please support this publicly.
- Harvie Anderson Fears that we shall inherit at moment of further collapse and be unable to satisfy hopes because we cannot create jobs at once.
- Bryan Legislative burdens on industry far too great. Supports Ian Stewart's speech today (although he didn't hear it!) No more! In fact, less!
- Morrison Investment affected by uncertainty of political future. Argued for P.R. as a solution.
- M.T. Production could easily go up by 1/3rd without any further investment. Oil companies have lots of investment but tankers are laid up. There are many ways of helping economy without P.R. which she suspects is producing more left-inclined governments. Told John Hall that no Government has been able to do industry's job for it - in fact much of the trouble is that our predecessors have thought they could.