

LEADER'S CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

Minutes of the 134th Meeting held at 5.00 p.m. on Wednesday, 20th October 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. Maclellan~~, Sir Geoffrey Howe,
Mr. Pym, Mr. Gilmour, Mr. Jenkin,
Mr. Peyton, Mr. St. John Stevas,
Mr. Heseltine, Mr. Raison, Mr. Maude,
Mr. Buchanan-Smith, Mr. Edwards,
Mr. Neave, Mrs. Oppenheim,
Mr. Biffen, Lord Thorneycroft.

Mr. Atkins.

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

Apologies: Mr. Prior, Mr. Maudling

1. Proposed Business for the Week 16th-25th October

On Monday, 25th October, there would be the Second Reading of the Retirement of Teachers (Scotland) Bill (Mr. E. Taylor). This would be followed by the Second Reading of the Valuation and Rating (Exempted Classes) (Scotland) Bill (Mr. E. Taylor). Proceedings on the Sexual Offences (Scotland) Bill and Motions relating to Safety of Sports Grounds Orders (Opposition Prayer).

On Tuesday, 26th October, Mr. Cow would seek leave to introduce his National Freight Corporation (Denationalisation) Bill under the 10 Minute Rule. This would be followed by the Remaining Stages of the Insolvency Bill (Mr. Higgins and Mr. Percival) and Motions on the Northern Ireland Orders relating to Housing and Firearms (Amendment) (Mr. Neave and Mr. Biggs Davison).

On Wednesday, 27th October, Mr. Hal Miller would seek leave to introduce his Education Act 1944 (Amendment) Bill under the 10 Minute Rule. This would be followed by Lords Amendments to the Race Relations Bill (Mr. Whitelaw and Mr. Alison).

On Thursday, 28th October, there would be the Remaining Stages of the Industry (Amendment) Bill (Mr. Grylls). This would be followed by Lords Amendments to the New Towns (Amendment) Bill (Mr. Raison) and Lords Amendments to the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill (Mr. Speed).

On Friday, 29th October, there would be the Second Reading of the Land Drainage Bill (Lords) (Consolidation Measure). This would be followed by the Remaining Stages of the International Carriage of Perishable Foodstuffs Bill and the Remaining Stages of the National Health Service (Vocational Training) Bill (Mr. Vaughan) and the Remaining Stages of the Endangered Species (Import and Export) Bill (Mr. Sainsbury).

On Monday, 1st November, there would be the Remaining Stages of the Development of Rural Wales Bill (Mr. Edwards and Mr. W. Roberts) which would be followed by a debate on Welsh Affairs.

2. Matters Arising on Business

There was a discussion of certain points. It was noted that the Government had accepted a number of the Lords amendments to the Race Relations Bill, and that we would support almost all the remaining Lords amendments when they came up for debate in the Commons on 27th October.

3. Lords Business

Lord Carrington reported on the present situation, and it was noted that there had been little development since the discussion the previous week. There was a discussion on what Lord Carrington might consider saying to the 1922 Committee the following evening, and it was agreed that nothing should be said there that might prejudice the outcome of whatever action the Lords might take on the various controversial Bills before them.

4. Forthcoming Events

It was agreed that in view of the need for maximum Conservative voting strength in the House of Commons during the debates on Lords amendments to current government bills it would be preferable if the Cambridge by-election did not take place until 2nd December.

5. Allegations Against MPs

There was a discussion arising from the Prime Minister's statement in the House on this matter on Tuesday, 19th October, and certain questions raised by MPs, upon which the Speaker was expected to rule. It was agreed that we would support a rapid enquiry into the allegations made so that Parliament's reputation did not suffer.

6. Government Advisers

Sir Keith Joseph raised the question of what use we would wish to make in Government of political advisers. It was agreed that a small committee, perhaps including certain MPs who had previously served in this position, should be set up to discuss the matter with members of the Shadow Cabinet, and should report in due course to the Leader.

The meeting closed at 6.12 p.m.

A for Tories

CONSERVATIVE RESEARCH DEPARTMENT

24 Old Queen Street, S.W.1.

MEMORANDUM

CONFIDENTIAL

To Mrs. Thatcher

From Robbie Gilbert

19th October, 1976

PAY CLAIMS

As the 1976/77 pay round gets under way a number of claims will come under close scrutiny by the Press. They will be looking carefully to see whether any look like breaking the present pay limits. Undoubtedly, Shadow spokesmen will be asked to comment on specific claims, since there will be press speculation about whether we will support potential breaches in the same way that Labour supported the miners during Stage 111.

The line was clearly established at the time of the Seamen's dispute in a statement by Mrs. Thatcher that "if they were to go on strike against the Government's pay policy ... they would receive no aid or comfort whatever from the Conservative Party. The pay policy was approved by Parliament and we cannot help a strike to break that policy in any way".

There is a risk, however, that this line may appear to have been broken if Shadow spokesmen are encouraged to make comments which appear to pre-judge whether particular claims are within the new limits or to suggest that others should be settled beyond the limits. Press reports over the weekend may have given the impression that we were saying that on the one hand the Police should be made a special case and on the other the Miners' claim could not be reconciled with the present limits.

It might be helpful to clearly re-establish the original line and to have comments on all future pay claims handled by one Shadow Office in the first instance to ensure consistency.

Robbie Gilbert

RHG/BLV

c.c. Rt. Hon. J. Prior MP
Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey Howe MP
Mr. Chris Patten
Mr. Adam Ridley

Charlton to Cashier. Put in my 'Packets' folder for Wednesday