

LEADER'S CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

71TH MEETING

5.00 p.m. Wednesday 16th July 1975. in the Leader's
Room at the House of Commons.

AGENDA

1. Minutes of the 69th Meeting - attached.
2. Future business.
3. Any other business.

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

CFP/SMB
15.7.75

LEADER'S CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

Minutes of the 71st Meeting held at 5.00 p.m. on Wednesday 16th July 1975, in the Leader's Room at the House of Commons.

Present: Mrs. Thatcher (In the Chair)
 Mr. Whitelaw, Sir Keith Joseph,
 Lord Hailsham, Mr. Maudling,
 Sir Geoffrey Howe, Mr. Gilmour,
 Lord Carrington, Mr. Prior,
 Mr. Jenkin, Mr. Peyton,
 Mr. St. John-Stevas, Mr. Heseltine,
 Mr. Raison, Mr. Buchanan-Smith,
 Mr. Edwards, Mr. Neave, Mr. Younger,
 Mr. Fowler, Mrs. Oppenheim, Mr. Jopling,
 Mr. Maude
 Mr. Atkins
 Mr. Shelton, Mr. Ryder, Mr. Patten,
 Mr. Ridley, Mr. Nicholson (in attendance)

Apologies: Lord Thorneycroft

1. Minutes of the 68th Meeting

It was agreed, on Mr. St. John-Stevas's suggestion, that the parenthesis in the penultimate line of the first paragraph of item 7 should be amended to read "but it was strongly urged that this would be inadvisable."

2. Proposed business of the week

Mrs. Thatcher outlined the proposed business of the week, 21st - 28th July.

On Monday 21st July there would be the first day of the debate to approve the White Paper "The Attack on Inflation" (Cmd 6151) (Mrs. Thatcher, Mrs. Oppenheim).

On Tuesday 22nd July Mr. Ovenden would seek leave to introduce his Rent Act 1974 (Amendment) Bill under the 10 Minute Rule. This would be followed by the conclusion of the Debate on the White Paper (Sir Geoffrey Howe, Mr. Prior), then by the Second Reading of the Remuneration, Charges and Grants Bill, and then by the Motion on Members Pay and Salaries (Mr. Peyton) on which there would be a free vote.

On Wednesday 23rd July Mr. Cunningham would seek leave to introduce his Temporary Abolition of Ministerial Salaries Bill under the 10 Minute Rule and this would be followed by proceedings on the Remuneration, Charges and Grants Bill.

On Thursday 24th July there would be the first day of the Report Stage of the Petroleum and Submarine Pipelines Bill (Mr. Jenkin, Mr. Gray).

On Friday 25th July there would be consideration of the EEC Documents on Common Agriculture Policy (R/635/75) and on Fisheries Policy (R/2713/73 and R/2193/74).

On Monday 28th July there would be the first day of the Report Stage of the Community Land Bill (Mr. Raison, Mr. Rossi).

3. Matters arising on business

There was a discussion on the Remuneration, Charges and Grants Bill. It was emphasised that this Bill threatened a significant move away from the rule of law towards the administrative state, and ran contrary to known principles of the constitution, in that it permitted employers to break their contracts by reference not to an Act of Parliament or Schedule attached thereto, but simply to a Government White Paper. Reference was made to the legislation of Labour in 1966 and the Conservatives in 1972, both of which accorded with the accepted view of the constitution. It was agreed that we should move a reasoned amendment on the Second Reading, pointing out the unconstitutional nature of the Bill and the fact that it provided £8 million more for increased rent subsidies and we should then abstain on the main vote on the Second Reading.

There was a discussion on the Government's attempt to hurry the Bill through. It was agreed that we should protest against having the Second Reading late on Tuesday night, and we should seek to have the Bill's Committee Stage on Thursday rather than Wednesday.

It was agreed that Mr. Nott and Mr. Howell would speak on the Second Reading of the Remuneration, Charges and Grants Bill, and that a team (including one or two lawyers) would speak as appropriate during the Committee Stage, during which there would be a running two line Whip.

It was suggested that we should require at least two and a half days to debate the Report Stage of the Community Land Bill, but it was agreed to examine precedents for Report Stages.

4. Members' Pay and Allowances

There was a discussion on the Government's statement on Members' pay and allowances and the proposed Motions for Tuesday. The reactions to Mr. Short's statement showed that opinion in all sections of the House was dissatisfied with the Government's approach. It was reported that many of our Members were still opposed to increases in Members' pay beyond the £6 limit, but that an increasing number had realised that certain colleagues faced financial difficulties on existing salaries. It was agreed that the best approach was to abstain but that if any members of the Shadow Cabinet felt strongly about voting - for or against - having seen the Motions, they should inform Mr. Atkins.

5. Voting at the end of the Debate on the White Paper

There were reports from meetings of the Finance Committee and the Advisory Committee on Policy. Mr. Atkins reported on opinion among M.P.s at large. The vast majority thought abstention was the best course, while a few might wish to vote against, but might be persuaded to abstain if no one voted with the Government or if the number doing so was negligible. It was agreed that members of the Shadow Cabinet would help the Whips persuade various colleagues to abstain. It was agreed that our reasoned Amendment would show that we supported the Government's action on inflation, but that we were opposed to the Government's failure to drop their nationalisation plans and cut public expenditure. It was agreed that the drafting of the Amendment should be left to Mrs. Thatcher, Sir Geoffrey Howe, Sir Keith Joseph, Mr. Prior, Mr. Gilmour, Mrs. Oppenheim, and Mr. Raison. It was also agreed that the arguments in the reasoned Amendment would be made widely known to the Lobby.

The Meeting closed at 5.15 p.m.