

LEADER'S CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

Minutes of the 148th Meeting held at 5.00 p.m. on Wednesday, 26th January 1977, 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,
Sir Geoffrey Howe, Mr. Pym,
Mr. Prior, Mr. Gilmore, Mr. Jenkin,
Mr. Peyton, Mr. Davies,
Mr. St. John Stevas, Mr. Heseltine,
Mr. Maude, Mr. Neave, Mr. Edwards,
Mrs. Oppenheim, Mr. Biffen,
Mr. King, Mr. Hott, Mr. Taylor.

Mr. Atkins.

In attendance: Sir Michael Havers, Mr. Stanley,
Mr. Butler, Mr. Patten, Mr. Ridley,
Mr. Hooson, Mr. Nicholson.

Apologies: Lord Thorneycroft.

1. Future business for the Week 31st January-7th February

On Monday, 31st January, there would be the Second Reading of the International Finance, Trade and Aid Bill (Mr. Parkinson, Mr. Horder). This would be followed by debates on EEC Documents R/70/77 on Skimmed Milk and Skimmed Milk Products (Mr. Peyton) and E/1929/76 on Immersion Chilling of Poultry.

On Tuesday, 1st February, Mr. Nicholas Ridley would seek leave to introduce his Post Office (Telephone Equipment) Bill under the 10 Minute Rule. This would be followed by further proceedings on the Scotland and Wales Bill (Mr. Pym and team).

On Wednesday, 2nd February, Mr. John Hannan would seek leave to introduce his Social Security (Amendment) Bill under the 10 Minute Rule. This would be followed by further proceedings on the Scotland and Wales Bill (Mr. Pym and team).

On Thursday, 3rd February, there would be a Supply Day, with subject to be decided. This would be followed by an Opposition Prayer on the Motor Vehicles (Tests) Regulations (Mr. Fowler).

On Friday, 4th February, there would be Second Readings of the Private Members' Bills of Mr. Biddale, Mr. Fletcher-Cooke and Mr. MacCormick.

On Monday, 7th February, there would be debates on the Private Members' Motions of Mr. Hugh Dykes, Mr. Kenneth Warren and Mr. Tim Sainsbury. These would be followed by the Second Reading of the Reduction of Redundancy Debates Bill.

2. Matters Arising on Business.

There was a discussion of various points and the following was agreed:

(1) In further proceedings on the Scotland and Wales Bill on Tuesday and Wednesday there would be a one line whip, but there would be a three line whip if the official Opposition amendment was called to provide that no election for a Scottish or Welsh assembly should take place until a Speaker's Conference had reported on the number and role of Scottish and Welsh MPs. It was noted that whipping on the Scotland and Wales Bill was always subject to revision in the light of unforeseen circumstances.

(ii) We should decide how to vote on the Second Reading of the Reduction of Redundancy Rebates Bill on 7th February in the light of views expressed in the Business Committee: while there might be a saving to the Exchequer this appeared to be at the expense of additional burdens on private enterprise.

3. Subjects for the Supply Day

There was a discussion and it was agreed to devote the first half of the Supply Day to unemployment in the North-Western region, and the second half to the Government's attitude to the Child Benefits Scheme, on both of which we would vote on a three line whip. In respect of the former debate, it was agreed that we should not advocate reflation as a remedy but should draw attention to the effects of Government policies on, for example, small businesses. A decision about speakers would be taken later. It was noted that early debates on educational standards, unemployment in Scotland, and pig-farming would be desirable.

4. The position of the Attorney General

Lord Hailsham and Sir Michael Havers reported on the developments in the Appeal Court arising from the application by Mr. Gouriel for a temporary injunction against the Union of Post Office Workers, the Attorney General's statement to the Commons on the previous day, and the likely outcome of his probable appeal to the House of Lords. It was agreed that we could only decide what reaction to make when the House of Lords had made its judgement.

5. The Bullock Report

There was a discussion on how Mr. Dell's statement to the Commons that afternoon might be interpreted as an indication of the Government's attitude.

6. Rhodesia

It was agreed that an early debate would be desirable but we should not devote a supply day to this subject.

7. Other business

Mrs. Thatcher reported that she had responded to a request by the Young Conservatives to repudiate Mr. Enoch Powell's speech in Stratford by pointing out that Mr. Powell was no longer a member of the Conservative Party and that it was not possible to prevent Conservative constituency associations or branches from inviting whoever they wished to speak to them.

It was noted that Mr. Heseltine would submit a paper to the LCC on "Operation Clean Sweep" for the local elections, which he proposed to launch in a speech at Durham on Friday, 4th February.

The meeting closed at 6.00 p.m.