

LEADER'S CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

Minutes of the 234th Meeting held at 5.00 p.m. on Wednesday, 21st February 1979, in the Leader's Room at the House of Commons.

Present: Mrs. Thatcher (in the Chair)

Sir Keith Joseph, Lord Carrington, Lord Hailsham, Lord Thorneycroft, Sir Geoffrey Howe, Mr. Prior, Mr. Pym, Sir Ian Gilmour, Mr. Jenkin, Mr. Peyton, Mr. Heseltine, Mr. St. John Stevas, Mr. Maude, Mr. Nott, Mrs. Oppenheim, Mr. King, Mr. Taylor, Mr. Carlisle, Mr. Biffen.

Mr. Atkins.

In attendance: Sir Michael Havers, Mr. Fowler, Lord Denham, Mr. Butler, Mr. Stanley, Mr. Patten, Mr. Wolfson, Mr. Ridley, Mr. Nicholson.

Apologies: Mr. Whitelaw, Mr. Neave, Mr. Edwards.

1. Proposed Business for the Week 5th-12th March

On Monday, 5th March, there would be a Supply Day. This would be followed by a Motion on the Hovercraft (Civil Liability) Order (Mr. D. Hunt).

On Tuesday, 6th March, Mrs. Colquhoun would seek leave to introduce her Protection of Prostitutes Bill under the 10 Minute Rule. This would be followed by the Second Reading of the Independent Broadcasting Bill (Mr. Critchley) or the Leasehold Reform bill and Opposed Private Business.

On Wednesday, 7th March, Mr. Reid would seek to introduce his Family Violence (Scotland) Bill under the 10 Minute Rule. This would be followed by the Second Reading of the Leasehold Reform Bill (Mr. Rossi) or the Remaining Stages of the Industry Bill (Mr. Lamont, Mr. Grylls) and Motions on the Appropriation (Northern Ireland) Order and Shipbuilding Industries (Northern Ireland) Order (Mr. Neave).

On Thursday, 8th March, there would be a Supply Day on which the Question would be put on all outstanding Estimates and Votes, and there would then be a debate on a Motion to take note of Developments in the European Communities, July-December 1978 (Cmnd. 7489).

On Friday, 9th March, there would be the Private Members' Bills of Mr. Allsop, Mr. Tapsell and Sir George Young.

On Monday, 12th March, there would be the Second Reading of the Independent Broadcasting Bill (if not previously taken, and this would be followed by the Remaining Stages of the Weights and Measures Bill and Motions on the European Assembly Elections Orders (Mr. D. Howell).

## 2. Matters Arising on Business

There was a discussion and it was noted that Labour Left-wingers were likely to seek to delay the private Business on 5th March (the Cheshire County Council Bill) for the same reason that they had objected to earlier Bills restricting the right to demonstrate and march.

The following was agreed: we would strongly protest at the proposal that the first day after the House returned, 5th March, should be a Supply Day. It would also be unreasonable to offer that day to the minority parties.

## 3. Subjects for the Supply Day

There was a discussion on what subjects we would wish to discuss on any Supply Day during the week. The following points were agreed:

(i) It would not be desirable to force a debate on the outcome of the Referendum until we had considered the results further and there had been a discussion in the 1922 Committee. If the Scottish people rejected the Assembly outright or voted for it by less than 40 per cent, we would simply press the Government to carry out their commitment to introduce an order annulling the Scotland Act.

(ii) We might devote a Supply Day to a debate on Foreign Affairs, but we should prefer to oblige the Government to give up a day of its own for such a debate.

(iii) Other subjects we might choose to debate on an early Supply Day included: Housing (a full day); Agriculture (a half or a full day); Training (a half day); Operation of the Employment Protection Act (a half day) and the Government's policy towards the Ports (a half day).

## 4. Local Authority Workers' Dispute

Mr. Heseltine outlined what he understood to be the details of the Government's offer, which was said to have been accepted by the negotiators of the various unions. The following points were agreed:

(i) We should emphasise that the Government alone was responsible for the increases in rates which were likely to emerge as a result of the immediate settlement, and the additional increases from any concessions as a result of a comparability study. In particular, we would point out that the Prime Minister was responsible for raising the Government's offer to 10% (despite his later attempt to withdraw this and confuse the record), and that Mr. Shore was responsible for reaching a secret agreement with the union negotiators and disregarding the local authority employers.

(ii) In continuing to stress the importance of reducing overmanning in local government, we should refer to Mr. Frank Chapple's article in the News of the World of 18th February 1979.

(iii) Mr. Heseltine would ask the leaders of Westminster Council for an explanation of their apparently unnecessary and extravagant concessions to the refuse collectors.

(iv) The Research Department would examine the pay increases to which the Government were already committed in the coming financial year.

5. Other Business

Broadcasting. Members of the Shadow Cabinet who accept direct requests from the broadcasting authorities to appear on television or radio were requested to let the Communications Department in Central Office know of these arrangements.

6. Advisory Support in Government

There was a discussion about political and professional support in Government. It was agreed that names should be sent to Mrs. Thatcher but that no-one should be approached direct at this stage.

The meeting closed at 6.12 p.m.