

LEADER'S STEERING COMMITTEE

Minutes of the 47th Meeting held at 5.00 p.m.
on 14th February 1977 in the Leader's Room at
the House of Commons.

Present: Mrs. Thatcher (in the Chair)

Mr. Whitelaw, Sir Keith Joseph,
Sir Geoffrey Howe, Mr. Prior,
Mr. Pym, Sir Ian Gilmour,
Mr. Peyton, Mr. Davies,
Mr. Maude, Lord Thorneycroft.

Mr. Atkins.

In attendance: Mr. Brittan, Mr. Butler,
Mr. Stanley, Mr. Douglas,
Mr. Ridley, Mr. Nicholson.

Apologies: Lord Carrington.

1. A Proposal for a Constitutional Conference

Mr. Pym introduced the above named paper (LSC (77) 57). There was a discussion and the following points were agreed:

(i) The Party might be discredited if it appeared that the proposal was simply a temporary device to beat the guillotine.

(ii) We should try and avoid a constitutional convention going beyond the subject of the constitutional future of Wales and Scotland and into subjects like reform of the House of Lords or proportional representation. In particular, it was not desirable to discuss House of Lords reform with the other Parties as we already had a policy group on the subject.

(iii) It was desirable to support any proposals that would strengthen the resistance of possible Labour rebels to the guillotine.

(iv) Mr. Pym and Mr. Atkins would seek to discover how the Party was likely to react to Mr. Pym's proposal. Mr. Pym would prepare a shorter version of his paper which would be discussed at the next meeting of the Leader's Consultative Committee on Wednesday, 16th February.

It was noted that if the Government failed to guillotine the Scotland and Wales Bill and decided to leave it to continue its slow passage there would be little chance of a Bill to introduce direct elections to the European Parliament passing this Session.

2. Other Business

It was agreed that, contrary to the decision at the last meeting of the Leader's Consultative Committee (see Minutes LCC/77/150, paragraph 3), we would prefer the results of the referenda in Scotland and Wales to be merely consultative and not mandatory, whether they were affirmative or negative.

The meeting closed at 6.00 p.m.