

LEADER'S CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

Minutes of the 179th Meeting held at 5.00 p.m.
on Wednesday, 16th November 1977, in the Leader's
Room at the House of Commons.

Present: Mrs. Thatcher

Mr. Whitclaw, Sir Keith Joseph,
Lord Carrington, Sir Geoffrey Howe,
Mr. Prior, Sir Ian Gilmour,
Mr. Davies, Mr. Jenkin, Mr. Peyton,
Mr. Neave, Mr. Heseltine,
Mr. St. John Stevas, Mr. Maude,
Mr. Edwards, Mr. Nott,
Mrs. Oppenheim, Mr. King,
Mr. Taylor.

Mr. Atkins.

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

Apologies: Lord Thorneycroft, Lord Hailsham,
Mr. Pym.

1. Proposed Business for the Week 21st-28th November

On Monday, 21st November, there would be a Supply Day. This would be followed by a Motion on the Counter-Inflation (Price Code) Order (Mrs. Oppenheim).

On Tuesday, 22nd November, there would be the first day of the Committee Stage of the Scotland Bill (Mr. Pym and team).

On Wednesday, 23rd November, there would be the second day of the Committee Stage of the Scotland Bill (Mr. Pym and team). This would be followed by a Prayer on Artificial Insemination of Cattle Regulations (England and Wales) and (Scotland) (Mr. Peyton).

On Thursday, 24th November, there would be the Second Reading of the European Assembly Elections Bill (Mr. Whitclaw). This would be followed by a Motion to approve the Highway Code (Mr. Fowler).

On Friday, 25th November, there would be the Private Members' Motions of Mr. Michael Spicer, Mr. Julian Ridsdale (and Mr. N. Spearing).

On Monday, 28th November, there would be the Private Members' Motions of Mr. N. Spearing, Mr. F. Rose and Mr. T. Jessel. These would be followed by EEC Documents R/214/77, R/2428/77, R/2434/77, R/2521/77 and R/2429/77 on Fisheries.

2. Matters Arising on Business

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

(i) There would be a 2 line whip for the first two days of the Committee Stage of the Scotland Bill.

(ii) We would not vote on the Prayer on Artificial Insemination of Cattle Regulations but we would seek to find out more about what the effects of the Regulations might be, and Mr. Peyton would make any appropriate criticisms.

(iii) Mr. Hurd would be our second speaker in the debate for the Second Reading of the European Assembly Elections Bill. There would be a 3 line whip in favour of Second Reading, but leave of absence would be given to those who requested it. We would point out again that the Party had pressed for the early introduction of the Bill last winter.

3. Subject for the Supply Day

After a discussion it was agreed that we would debate, first, the working of industrial tribunals and then the Transport White Paper on the Supply Day on 21st November, subject to any further discussion at the Business Committee. It was also agreed that we would consider debating the steel industry, Services' pay and nationalised industries' pension funds on a later Supply Day when appropriate.

4. The Industrial Situation

Mr. Whitelaw explained the line he had taken in the debate on the fire services dispute in the Commons the previous day. It was agreed that for the time being we should hold to his line, viz. that:

(i) the firemen were not likely to gain anything by being on strike;

(ii) what Mr. Callaghan and his Ministers were saying now was the exact opposite of what they were saying in 1973-4;

(iii) it was absurd for the taxpayer to support overmanning in one section of the economy (like the steel industry), and yet prolong undermanning in another by holding down pay;

(iv) efforts should be made to see that the troops were provided with more up-to-date firefighting equipment;

(v) it would be utterly deplorable if those who had worked were victimised at the end of the strike;

(vi) we did not necessarily approve of the way the Government had handled negotiations with the firemen.

It was noted that the prison officers and the nurses, and after them other public service unions, were waiting to see the outcome of the firemen's dispute before pressing their claims.

With regard to pay in general, it was noted that we had never supported strikes for higher pay, and that we had supported the case the police had presented partly because they were not permitted to strike. In dealing with pay problems we should have regard to the shortage of manpower in certain essential services. We should reiterate that we favoured free and realistic collective bargaining, having regard to all the circumstances.

5. Other business

(i) Lord Carrington reported that he proposed to move a Motion in the House of Lords to restore the most recent defence cut in view of Britain's improving trading position. This was welcomed.

(ii) The Research Department would publish figures showing the comparison for all the main economic indicators of the record of the Conservative Government (1970-74), and this present Government, now that the latter had been in power for precisely as long as the former.

(iii) With regard to the question of whether the leaders of the minor parties should, in the future, lay wreaths at the Cenotaph on Remembrance Sunday, it was agreed that we should leave it to the Prime Minister to take whatever steps he thought appropriate with regard to the leaders of the Liberal and Nationalist Parties. It was desirable for the Leader of the Official Opposition to continue to participate in this ceremony.

The meeting closed at 6.15 p.m.

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LEADER'S CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

Arrangements for future meetings of the Leader's Consultative Committee in the Leader's Room at the House of Commons will be as follows:

Monday, 21st November - there will be NO meeting of either the Leader's Consultative Committee or of the Leader's Steering Committee.

Wednesday, 23rd November at 5.00 p.m. - for discussion of future business.

Conservative Research Department,
24 Old Queen Street, London, SW1.

CFP/NEH
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