

LEADER'S CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

Minutes of the 131st Meeting held at 5.15 p.m. on Wednesday, 4th August, 1976, in the Leader's Room at the House of Commons

Present: Mrs. Thatcher (in the Chair)
Mr. Whitelaw, Sir Keith Joseph,
Lord Carrington, Mr. Maudling,
Sir Geoffrey Howe, Mr. Prior,
Mr. Pym, Mr. Gilmour, Mr. Jenkin,
Mr. Payton, Mr. St. John-Stevens,
Mr. Heseltine, Mr. Raison,
Mr. Maude, Mr. Buchanan-Smith,
Mr. Edwards, Mr. Neave,
Mr. Biffen
Mr. Atkins
In attendance: Mr. Lamont, Mr. Stanley,
Mr. Patten, Mr. Douglas,
Mr. Ridley, Mr. Nicholson
Apologies: Lord Hailsham, Mrs. Oppenheim,
Lord Thorneycroft

1. Proposed Business for the Week 11-15th October

On Monday, 11th October, there would be the Second Reading of the Weights and Measures (No.2) Bill followed by a Motion on the Counter-Inflation (Price Code) Order.

On Tuesday, 12th October, and Wednesday, 13th October, there would be the Remaining Stages of the Health Services Bill.

On Thursday, 14th October, there would be the Report and Third Reading of the Electricity (Financial Provisions) (Scotland) Bill and of the Maplin Development Authority (Dissolution) Bill. This would be followed by consideration of Lords Amendments to the Armed Forces Bill and by resumed debate on the Second Reading of the Public Lending Right Bill. If there was time there would follow progress on the Remaining Stages of the Road Traffic (Seat Belts) Bill.

On Friday, 15th October, there would be completion of the Remaining Stages of the Road Traffic (Seat Belts) Bill, a Debate on the Green Paper on a Proposed New Highway Code and the Second Reading of the Endangered Species (Import and Export) Bill.

2. Matters arising from business

Mr. Lamont reported that a reasoned amendment had been drafted for the Second Reading of the Weights and Measures (No.2) Bill on 11th October. It deplored the inadequate preparation for the Bill and the absence of adequate safeguards regarding the enforcing of metrication, and also the fact that the Bill went further than the requirements of the relevant

EEC directive, and therefore suggested that the House should decline to give the Bill a Second Reading. There was a discussion after which it was agreed that, in view of the feeling in the Party, we would put down the amendment.

3. House of Lords Business

There was a preliminary discussion about coming business in the House of Lords. It was agreed that:

- (i) It would not be desirable for the Lords to reject the British Transport Docks (Felixstowe) Bill as the Lords Select Committee had voted to let it go forward.
- (ii) The Lords might have to stand on a major point of principle, most likely on the Dock Work Regulation Bill. There would be a further discussion, however, nearer the appropriate time.

4. Policy Document

A second draft of this had been circulated taking into account the points made in the discussion of Monday, 26th July. There was a discussion - certain members had sent to Mr. Maude and Mr. Patten suggestions for amendments to the draft, and a number of other suggestions were made during the discussion. It was agreed that:

- (i) Mr. Maude and Mr. Patten would make the final amendments to the draft in the light of the discussion and the amendments suggested.
- (ii) There would not be a passage on Transport in the document, but Mr. Fowler was invited to make a speech during the recess on our approach to this subject.
- (iii) Any other suggested amendments needed to be communicated to Mr. Maude or Mr. Patten by the close of Monday, 9th August.

5. Other business

With regard to speeches during the recess, it was agreed that one appropriate subject would be the abuse of unemployment and supplementary benefits, as Government members were very sensitive on this subject, as cuts in the number of civil servants in the DHSS were likely to affect the supervision of payment and abuse of benefits, and as it was understood that the Liberals were threatening to exploit the issue in areas of relatively low pay, such as the West Country.

6. Next meeting

It was agreed that the next meeting would be at 11.00 a.m. on Tuesday, 28th September at Central Office.

The meeting closed at 7.45 p.m.