

LEADER'S CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

Minutes of the 207th Meeting held at 5.00 pm on Wednesday, 24th May 1978, 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, Lord Thorneycroft, Sir Geoffrey Howe, Mr. Prior, Sir Ian Gilmour, Mr. Jenkin, Mr. Davies, Mr. Neave, Mr. Heseltine, Mr. Maude, Mr. Edwards, Mr. Nott, Mrs. Oppenheim, Mr. King, Mr. Taylor.
- Mr. Atkins.
- In attendance: Sir Michael Havers, Lord Denham, Mr. Butler, Mr. Stanley, Mr. Patten, Mr. Wolfson, Mr. Ridley, Mr. Nicholson.
- Apologies: Mr. Pym, Mr. Peyton, Mr. St. John Stevas.

1. Proposed Business for the Week 6th-9th June

On Tuesday, 6th June, Mr. P. Whitehead would seek leave to introduce his Justices of the Peace Act 1361 (Amendment) Bill under the 10 Minute Rule. This would be followed by the Second Reading of the Employment (Continental Shelf) Bill (Mr. Hayhoe) and of the Theft Bill (Mr. Percival) and by the remaining stages of the Nuclear Safeguards and Electricity (Finance) Bill (Mr. Gray), or by a debate on the Common Agricultural Policy (Mr. Peyton).

On Wednesday, 7th June, Mr. N. Ridley would seek leave to introduce his Trade Union Officials (Registration) Bill under the 10 Minute Rule. This would be followed by the first day of a debate on Foreign Affairs.

On Thursday, 8th June, there would be a Supply Day, which would be given to the second day of the Foreign Affairs debate.

On Friday, 9th June, there would be a debate on the Report of the Select Committee on Violence in the Family (HC 329) and the Government Observations (Cmd 7123) or there would be the remaining stages of the Suppression of Terrorism Bill (Mr. Gardner), and of the Judicature (Northern Ireland) Bill (Mr. Neave, Mr. Percival), and a Motion on EEC Document R/3245/77 on Liner Conferences and Motions on the Church of England (Miscellaneous Provisions) Measure (Mr. D. Hunt), or there would be the second reading of the Employment (Continental Shelf) Bill (Mr. Hayhoe) and of the Theft Bill (Mr. Percival) which would be followed by the remaining stages of the Nuclear Safeguards and Electricity (Finance) Bill (Mr. Gray).

2. Matters Arising on Business

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

(i) If there were a debate on the CAP we should not be defensive; we should point out that the Government had expressed themselves satisfied with the terms of entry as renegotiated in 1974-5; they had not done anything to improve the CAP since; and our problems had largely resulted from the devaluation of the £.

(ii) We should investigate which Government Department was responsible for handling violence in the family. It might be appropriate for Mr. Sims to speak in the debate on 9th June, if this took place.

3. Tactics on the Scotland and Wales Bills

Lord Carrington reported on what the Government's wishes on the timing of the Scotland and Wales Bills were believed to be. There was a discussion and it was agreed that the Lords could not complete consideration of the Wales Bill by 7th July, as the Government wished. It was not sensible to allow the Government to be in a position in which it could send Parliament away early for the Summer Recess. Decisions on which amendments the Lords should stand on and for how long, should be taken at a later meeting, but it was not desirable for the Lords to become too deeply involved in controversy over the Bills.

There was also a discussion on the 'umbrella' organisation for the referendum campaign on the Scottish Assembly. It was agreed that further consideration should be given at a later stage to the details of the referendum campaign.

4. West Africa

Mr. Davies reported on his recent visit to Nigeria and Ghana. It was noted that British firms were encountering increasing difficulties in maintaining their business interests in these countries.

5. Discussion on the Manifesto

(a) Defence: There was a discussion, and the proposals were agreed. It was also agreed that we should draw attention to the large number of jobs lost in recent years in defence industries, and that we should examine the possibility of developing further young soldiers' battalions and the TAVR. The first priority, however, was to restore the armed forces to full strength.

(b) Foreign Affairs: The paper was agreed after a brief discussion.

(c) Scotland: It was noted that a policy document had already been published. It was agreed that proposals for the administration of the Health Service which were suitable for England would not apply to Scotland.

(d) Northern Ireland: There was a discussion, and the proposals in the paper were agreed. It was also agreed that we should press the Government to implement the proposal to increase the number of Northern Ireland seats if, as was likely, they appeared to be delaying it. This reform took first priority; the reform of Northern Ireland local government would be more appropriate for the second and third years of government.

6. Spring Holiday Recess

It was agreed that the Foreign Affairs spokesmen would prepare statements on the situation in Zaire for issue as appropriate during the recess. Mr. Davies would discuss with Mr. Michael Latham the possibility of writing to the British Council of Churches and inviting that body to condemn the massacre in Zaire.

The meeting closed at 6.10 p.m.