

CONFIDENTIAL

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LEADER'S CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

229TH MEETING

Wednesday, 24th January 1979, in the Leader's  
Room at the House of Commons.

AGENDA

1. Minutes of the 228th Meeting.
2. Future Business.
3. Forthcoming Events.
4. The current situation.
5. Any other business.

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

CFP/MMM  
22.1.79

LEADER'S CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

Minutes of the 229th Meeting held at 5.00 p.m.  
on Wednesday, 24th January 1979, 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 Thornycroft, Sir Geoffrey Howe,  
Mr. Prior, Sir Ian Gilmour,  
Mr. Peyton, Mr. Jenkin,  
Mr. Heseltine, Mr. Neave,  
Mr. St. John Stevas, Mr. Maude,  
Mr. Edwards, Mr. Nott,  
Mrs. Oppenheim, Mr. King,  
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. Pym, Mr. Taylor

1. Proposed Business for the Week 29th January - 5th February

On Monday, 29th January, there would be the Second Reading of the Price Commission (Amendment) Bill (Mrs. Oppenheim).

On Tuesday, 30th January, Sir Brandon Rhys Williams would seek leave to introduce his Housing (Shorthold Tenancies) Bill under the 10 Minute Rule. This would be followed by the Second Reading of the Countryside Bill (Mr. Alison) and by the Remaining Stages of the Estate Agents Bill (Mr. Neubert).

On Wednesday, 31st January, Mr. G. Janner would seek leave to introduce his Equal Opportunities for Men Bill under the 10 Minute Rule. This would be followed by the Committee and Remaining Stages of the Price Commission (Amendment) Bill.

On Thursday, 1st February, there would be a Motion to appoint the Joint Committee on Special Commission on Oil Sanctions (Mr. St. John Stevas).

On Friday, 2nd February, there would be the Private Members' Bills of Mr. Pattie, Mr. Wainwright, Mr. D. Stewart, Mr. N. Edwards and Mr. Grocott.

On Monday, 5th February, there would be a Supply Day.

## 2. Matters Arising on Business

(i) Mr. Parkinson would speak at the close of the debate on the Second Reading of the Price Commission (Amendment) Bill on Monday, 29th January.

(ii) We would seek to move a prayer on the Children and Young Persons Act later on the evening of 29th January.

(iii) We would vote against the Second reading of the Countryside Bill on a 2-line whip with a reasoned amendment.

(iv) Mrs. Oppenheim, Mr. Parkinson and Mr. Giles Shaw would speak in the debates on the Remaining Stages of the Prices Commission (Amendment) Bill and there would be a running 3-line whip. We would make general "Second Reading" speeches in these debates, reiterating our point that this Bill would increase unemployment, but would consider seeking to move political amendments to exempt certain industries, exclude certain industries for various limits of time, and limit the general duration of the Bill.

(v) We should decide on the subject for the Supply Day on 5th February in the light of events. One suggestion was that we might debate the workings of the Employment Protection Act.

## 3. The Industrial Crisis

There was a discussion and the following points were agreed:

(i) It was desirable to secure a statement on the law on picketing from the Attorney General as soon as possible and preferably before the Government produced their own Code of Practice for Pickets. Sir Michael Havers would seek to table a Private Notice Question to the Attorney General the following day. He and Mr. Atkins would discuss the wording of the PNQ and Sir Michael would mention the matter to the Speaker. If the Speaker did not accept this PNQ, Sir Geoffrey Howe would refer to the issue and put various questions to the Attorney General in his speech in the debate the following day, having previously warned Mr. Silkin what he was proposing to do.

(ii) We would alert a number of our backbench lawyers who were familiar with the law on picketing to ask supplementaries to the Attorney General. We would encourage MPs generally and the press to follow up the statement.

(iii) Members of the Shadow Cabinet who obtained information about the impact of picketing on the flow of vital commodities would communicate the key items of such information to Mrs. Thatcher's office and the Research Department. Very great care would be taken in the use of any such reports.

(iv) In the debate the following day we would draw attention to the damage being done to the economy that would not be visible for some time, such as the loss of export orders and the goodwill and confidence in our markets overseas.

(v) We should relate the Government's inaction to the power of the trade union movement generally and the TGWU in particular over the Labour Party through supply of funds, conference votes and sponsorship, and refer to Mr. Benn's latest apparent defiance of Mr. Callaghan and the publication of a frankly

anti-EEC Labour Party European Manifesto as evidence of the continuing depth of the rift.

There was also a discussion of the law on picketing, and practical aspects of its application in which reference was made to the methods adopted by the then Conservative Government during various strikes in 1972/73 which appeared to be successful.

4. Future Policy Work

Any member of the Shadow Cabinet who wished to clear outstanding items of policy with the Shadow Cabinet was requested to communicate these to Sir Keith Joseph, Mr. Maude or the Research Department by the beginning of February.

The meeting closed at 6.10 p.m.

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

DJN/ASD/MHM  
29.1.79

PRICE COMMISSION (AMENDMENT) BILL - TIMETABLE

The Prime Minister announced the proposed price restraints on 16th January. Under the existing law the Price Commission must consider notifications of price increases within 28 days. If they do not do so, the applicants may raise their prices.

The 28 days expire on Tuesday next, 13th February. According to press reports, certain price increases (including beer and petrol) were notified just after the Prime Minister's announcement. The Price Commission normally meets on Wednesdays, and thus would consider these price increases next Wednesday, 7th February. For this reason we have been seeking to obtain Royal Assent by Thursday of this week. To avoid uncertainty, this is much the best outcome. But it would also be possible - and contingency arrangements have been made against delay in obtaining Royal Assent - for the Price Commission to consider these increases up to Tuesday 13th February.

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C. B. I.