

CONFIDENTIAL

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LEADER'S CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

180TH MEETING

5.00 p.m., Wednesday, 23rd November 1977, in  
the Leader's Room at the House of Commons.

AGENDA

1. Minutes of the 178th and 179th Meetings.
2. Future business.
3. Forthcoming events.
4. Any other business.

Conservative Research Department,  
24 Old Queen Street, London, S.W.1.

CFF/MMM  
17.11.77

LEADER'S CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

Minutes of the 180th Meeting held at 5.00 p.m.  
on Wednesday, 23rd November 1977, in the Leader's  
Room at the House of Commons.

Present: Mrs. Thatcher

Mr. Whitelaw, Sir Keith Joseph,  
Lord Carrington, Sir Geoffrey Howe,  
Mr. Prior, Mr. Pym, 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, Sir David Renton,  
Mr. Fatten, Mr. Ridley, Mr. Hoosen,  
Mr. Nicholson.

Apologies: Lord Thorneycroft, Lord Hailsham.

1. Proposed Business for the Week 28th November-5th December

On Monday, 28th November, there would be Mr. Spearing's Private Members' Motion on the European Economic Community (Sir D. Renton) and those of Mr. Rose and Mr. Jessel. These would be followed by a Motion on EEC Documents on Fisheries (R/2147/77, R/2428/77, R/2429/77, R/2434/77, R/2521/77 and R/2642/77) (Mr. Jopling, Mr. Sproat) and by a Motion on the Code of Practice entitled Time-off for Trade Union Activities (Mr. Hayhoe).

On Tuesday, 29th November, there would be the 3rd day of the Committee Stage of the Scotland Bill (Mr. Pym and team). This would be followed by a Motion on Financial Assistance to Industry (Thames Board Mills Limited) (Mr. K. Clarke).

On Wednesday, 30th November, there would be the 4th day of the Committee Stage of the Scotland Bill (Mr. Pym and team). This would be followed by a Motion relating to the Sheriff (Removal from Office) Order.

On Thursday, 1st December, there would be the Committee Stage of the European Assembly Elections Bill.

On Friday, 2nd December, there would be the Private Members' Motions of Mr. Abse, Mr. Dalyell and Mr. Watkinson.

On Monday, 5th December, there would be a Supply Day which would be devoted to a debate on the Reports from the Public Accounts Committee.

2. Matters Arising on Business

(a) Mr. Spearing's Motion

There was a discussion on our attitude to Mr. Spearing's Private Member's Motion on 28th November which restricted the scope for Ministers to agree to draft legislation or other proposals emanating from the EEC Commission without such proposals being debated by Parliament. It was noted that the Government were not likely to be able to accept Mr. Spearing's Motion, and as he had said he would not withdraw it, the Government were likely to vote for the closure. It was agreed that in these circumstances we would not vote but that Sir David Renton, who would speak from our Front Bench, would indicate that if we were in Government we could not accept the Motion, and that we believed that any changes in the powers of the European Assembly as determined by the Treaty of Rome, would require British Parliamentary legislation; he might also suggest that there was perhaps an excessive amount of over-zealousness in seeking to obtain detailed harmonisation between the EEC members and that what would be really desirable would be for the other members to seek to imitate those countries which had the least legislation rather than the most. It was also desirable for the House of Commons to debate EEC directives at a reasonable time. He would seek to embarrass Mr. Foot and Mr. Shore in the light of what they had said in earlier debates.

(b) The Sheriff (Removal from Office) Order

There was a discussion about this motion on 30th November. It was agreed that Sir Michael Havers would discuss the legal issues arising with Lord Hailsham, and would also seek to find out more from the Secretary of State for Scotland, in particular, the consequences (eg. loss of pension rights, etc.) of the Sheriff's removal from office.

(c) Other matters

It was agreed that there would be a 3 line whip for 7.00 p.m. and 10.00 p.m. for the Committee Stage of the Scotland Bill on 30th November; in particular, we would vote against the clause setting up the Executive. It was also agreed that there would be no whip for the Committee Stage of the European Assembly Bill on 1st December but that colleagues and backbenchers would be warned as to the likely timing of the vote on the system of election to the European Assembly.

3. British Leyland

It was reported that the TUC had refused the proposal, backed by the British Leyland shop stewards and a majority of those employees voting, to establish a "synchro-pay arrangement" in return for the waiving of the 12 Month Rule. It was agreed that we should be very cautious in any remarks we made on this issue.

4. Firemen

Mr. Whitelaw reported that he and Sir Ian Gilmour had visited the troops in London who were assisting the authorities in dealing with fires. It was noted that, while the morale of the troops was high, their living conditions were extremely bad; and that while at present they had not got enough to do, they did not have the equipment to cope with a major fire. It was also argued that Conservative local authorities would find it difficult to pay the firemen more than the 10% they had already been offered, particularly as this might help to give support to further excessive claims from local authority workers. The following points were agreed:

(i) We should say that the Government was at fault in delaying in asking the Navy and RAF for technical assistance.

(ii) The Shadow Cabinet were united in opposing striking for higher pay, and in urging the Government to negotiate a settlement.

(iii) It was necessary in future to establish a way of dealing with the legitimate pay grievances of those in the public sector where strikes might threaten national security or life - the armed forces, police and firemen - and that there was a case for index-linking their pay to the average industrial wage provided they gave a guarantee not to strike.

The meeting closed at 6.10 p.m.