

LEADER'S CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

Minutes of the 201st Meeting held at 5.00 p.m. on Wednesday, 26th April 1978, in the Leader's Room at the House of Commons.

Present: Mrs. Thatcher (in the Chair)

Mr. Whitelaw, Sir Keith Joseph,
Lord Hallsham, Lord Thorneycroft,
Sir Geoffrey Howe, Mr. Prior,
Mr. Pym, Sir Ian Cilmour,
Mr. Peyton, Mr. Davies, Mr. Jenkin,
Mr. Healdline, Mr. St. John Stevas,
Mr. Haude, Mr. Edwards, Mr. Nott,
Mrs. Oppenheim, Mr. King,
Mr. Taylor.

Mr. Atkins.

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

Apologies: Lord Carrington, Mr. Neave.

1. Proposed Business for the Week 2nd-8th May

On Tuesday, 2nd May, Sir Anthony Meyer would seek leave to introduce his Bank Holidays (Amendment) Bill under the 10 Minute Rule. This would be followed by a Supply Day and by Debates on the Enlargement of the European Community (Mr. Hurd and Mr. Rippon), on EEC Document R/3/77 on Commercial Agents and on a Motion relating to the Milk (GB) (Amendment) Order (Mr. Jopling).

On Wednesday, 3rd May, Mr. R. Adley would seek leave to introduce his Trades Unions (Freedom of Political Association) Bill under the 10 Minute Rule. This would be followed by the Report Stage of the Wales Bill (Mr. Pym and team).

On Thursday, 4th May, there would be a Motion to refer to the Committee of Privileges the issues relating to the Speaker's ruling on 21st April. This would be followed by a debate on Rhodesia.

On Friday, 5th May, there would be the Private Members' Bills of Mr. T. Fletcher, Mr. T. Skeet and Mr. S. Ross.

On Monday, 8th May, there would be the 1st day of the Committee Stage of the Finance Bill (Sir Geoffrey Howe and team).

2. Matters Arising on Business

There was a discussion and the following points were agreed:

- (1) We should seek to have the Motion on the Speaker's ruling on 21st April and the Committee of Privileges moved to Tuesday, 2nd May.

(ii) With regard to the Committee of Privileges issue we should seek to keep the question of the future of the Official Secrets Act out of this debate. While we noted that Members were at liberty to refer to alleged breaches of rules of the House by four individual Labour Members until the issue had been referred to the Committee of Privileges, once the Motion had been accepted by the House we should exercise restraint on this subject.

(iii) We should not vote in the debate on Rhodesia on Thursday, 4th May. Mr. Davies was invited to be present at the Business Committee after the meeting of the LCC to explain our position in that debate. Members were invited to read Lord Home's speech on the subject delivered that afternoon in the House of Lords.

(iv) We should not vote on any of the European issues arising on Tuesday, 2nd May.

3. Committee on the Finance Bill

Sir Geoffrey Howe reported on the discussions in the Finance Committee and the line which he thought it best for us to take. Mr. Atkins reported on the likely attitudes of the Nationalists and Ulster Unionists. There was a discussion and it was agreed that we should move amendments to reduce the standard rate of income tax by 1p and for consequential cuts in the higher rates. We should seek to explain fully to the country our reasons for taking this course rather than moving no tax-cutting amendments or seeking to make more extensive tax cuts. We should also emphasise that we wished to pay for these cuts by savings in public spending, although it would also be possible for the Government to raise the rate of VAT to 10%. It was important not to give either the Government or the TUC an opportunity to blame us for the likely increase in the rate of inflation later in the year.

Colleagues were urged to say nothing about this matter to the press that evening; Sir Geoffrey Howe would explain it in full in his speech on the Finance Bill the following day.

4. Other Business

The appropriate members of the Shadow Cabinet were requested by Lord Haileham to give some consideration to the issues that they wished to debate further on the Scotland and Wales Bills as a result of Lords' amendments.

The meeting closed at 6.10 p.m.