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LEADER'S CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

218TH MEETING

5.00-7.30 p.m., Monday, 31st July 1978, in
the Leader's Room at the House of Commons.

AGENDA

1. First draft of the Manifesto, LCC(78)183
- previously circulated.
2. Report of the Conservative Party Committee
on the Referendum, LCC(78)184 - to consider
publication of this Report as a discussion
document.

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

CFP/MMM
28.7.78

LEADER'S CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE ✓

Minutes of the 218th Meeting held at 5.00 pm on Monday, 31st July 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,
Sir Geoffrey Howe, Mr. Prior,
Mr. Pym, Sir Ian Gilmour,
Mr. Jenkin, Mr. Peyton, Mr. Davies,
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, Mr. Fowler,
Mr. Butler, Mr. Stanley, Mr. Patten,
Mr. Wolfson, Mr. Ridley, Mr. Houston.

Apologies: Lord Thorneycroft.

1. Election Speaking Arrangements *one*

There was a discussion of speaking engagements of members of the Shadow Cabinet during the election. It was agreed that arrangements should be coordinated to ensure that particular constituencies and organisations would not have too generous a supply of Shadow Cabinet speakers while others were neglected.

2. Discussion of the Manifesto Draft

Mrs. Thatcher pointed out that because a large number of "nuggets" were being inserted in the Manifesto at the last minute, we were in danger of losing our credibility on the reduction of expenditure. She proposed that the next Manifesto draft should put the main emphasis on a few central objectives on which everything else depended: a) the cutting of taxes and b) strengthening internal and external defence. It should be stressed that the fulfilment of our other spending pledges was conditional on our meeting these pledges first.

Ownership and Responsibility

(i) The emphasis in our housing policy must be on the sale of council houses. We could not afford completely to drop references to the £1 for £2 grant scheme for first time buyers but we must now regard this commitment as subject to the qualification of "when economic circumstances permit". We should stress that reducing tax gives people a greater opportunity to save for their deposits.

(ii) We must make it clear that we were aware of the importance of keeping interest rates down.

(iii) For the reasons explained by Mr. Whitelaw, the register of immigrants should be extended to cover all non-patrial Commonwealth heads of households deriving their rights under the 1971 Immigration Act.

(iv) The paragraph under "effective control" on page 30 of the Manifesto draft should be rephrased to express a warmer appreciation of the contribution of ethnic minorities, but the sentence concerning the "Labour lie" should be retained.

(v) Restriction of the conditions under which people from overseas can come to work in the UK could be applied only to those outside the EEC.

Raising Educational Standards

(i) The first paragraph of the education section should be expanded to refer to values, standards and parental influence and choice.

(ii) We must refer to the need to keep schools of proven worth as in the previous draft.

(iii) There must be a recognition of the contribution which independent schools make to education and of the right of parents to more choice.

(iv) The details of all our proposals on the arts should not be included in the Manifesto.

(v) There should be a reference to our interest in encouraging sport but no detailed proposals should be included.

Tackling the crisis in the Welfare State

(i) We should not pick a fight with the unions on a minor issue by a crude commitment on strikers' benefits. We should give guidance on this issue to candidates through Questions of Policy.

(ii) We should keep the special addition to child benefit for one parent families.

(iii) We should initiate a feasibility study on family courts.

(iv) We must promise to change the procedure whereby pensions are not paid to the war widows of other ranks.

(v) Our proposals for the disabled should be outlined only in general terms referring to the need for a coherent system.

(vi) We should leave out the references to tax credits on page 40. Sir Geoffrey Howe and Mr. Jenkin would discuss a new draft.

Liberty and Order

(i) A reference was needed to the Edmund Davies Report on policy pay, welcoming it and promising to implement its proposals in full.

(ii) Lord Hailsham would send Mr. Maude a re-draft of the paragraph under constitutional issues on page 43 bearing in mind the need to show our awareness of people's concern that our system of Government does not seem to be working.

(iii) We would not commit ourselves to set up a Speaker's Conference on electoral reform.

(iv) The last sentence of the section on the House of Lords on page 45 should be deleted.

The Defence of Britain

(i) The reference to Helsinki in the third paragraph on page 51 should be deleted.

(ii) The second sentence of the fourth paragraph on page 51 should be amended.

(iii) We should strengthen the reference to the Commonwealth on page 52.

3. Discussion of the Scottish Manifesto

(i) There was a discussion of the wording proposed on fishing and it was agreed that a small group under Mr. Whitelaw should agree on a form of words.

(ii) There was a discussion on the implications for England and Wales of abolishing tolls on bridges in Scotland. It was pointed out that the same arguments would be used for abolition of tolls on commuter bridges throughout Great Britain but it was felt that we should make a gesture of our concern for Scotland's problem. The proposal to abolish the tolls on the three major bridges in Scotland was agreed.

(iii) It was agreed that we could not put forward a proposal for a Scottish Development fund as it was likely to involve additional expenditure rather than a reallocation of existing expenditure.

4. Publications

There was a discussion on proposals for publications and the following points were agreed:

(i) the paper on referendums by Mr. Edwards' committee should be published to act alongside Lord Home's paper on the House of Lords as a contribution to discussion. Mr. Patten would investigate the possibility of publishing it as an Old Queen Street Paper.

(ii) Because of the difficulty of publishing a housing document which did not give details of our terms for council house sales, and which did not have further implications for expenditure, Mr. Rossi's proposed pamphlet should only be published if there was no election in the autumn.

(iii) The proposed Law and Order pamphlet by Mr. Whitelaw and Mr. Howell should be held in readiness for publication before the Party Conference if there was no election.