

CONFIDENTIAL

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LEADER'S CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

153RD MEETING

5.00 p.m., Wednesday, 2nd March 1977, in the Leader's  
Room at the House of Commons.

AGENDA

1. Minutes of the 151st meeting.
2. Future business.
3. Forthcoming events.
4. Any other business.

*Miscellaneous speeches  
attached.*

LEADER'S CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

Minutes of the 153rd Meeting held at 5.00 p.m.  
on Wednesday, 2nd March 1977, in the Leader's  
Room at the House of Commons.

Present: Mrs. Thatcher

Mr. Whitelaw, Lord Hailsham,  
Sir Geoffrey Howe, Mr. Prior,  
Mr. Pym, Sir Ian Gilmour, Mr. Peyton,  
Mr. Jenkin, Mr. Davies,  
Mr. St. John Stevas, Mr. Heseltine,  
Mr. Maude, Mr. Neave, Mr. Edwards,  
Mrs. Oppenheim, Mr. King, Mr. Nott,  
Mr. Taylor, Lord Thorneycroft,

Mr. Atkins.

In attendance: Lord Strathcona, Mr. Stanley,  
Mr. Butler, Mr. Douglas,  
Mr. Hooson, Mr. Nicholson.

Apologies: Sir Keith Joseph, Lord Carrington.

1. Future Business for the Week 7th-14th March

On Monday, 7th March, there would be Proceedings on the Consolidated Fund (No.2) Bill.

On Tuesday, 8th March, Mr. Cyril Smith would seek leave to introduce his Estate Agents (Agreements) Bill under the 10 Minute Rule. This would be followed by the remaining stages of the International Finance, Trade and Aid Bill (Mr. Parkinson) and by the remaining stages of the New Towns (Scotland) Bill (Mr. Younger) and by the remaining stages of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Bill (Mr. Younger).

On Wednesday, 9th March, there would be a ballot for Motions on 25th March. Mr. Bryan Davies would then seek leave to introduce his Corporation of the City of London (Abolition) Bill under the 10 Minute Rule. This would be followed by the remaining stages of the Job Release Bill (Mr. Madel, Mr. Silvester). This would be followed by a debate on Motion on the Chairman of Ways and Means and by a Motion on the Police (Withdrawn, Anonymous etc. Complaints) Regulations (Mr. Allison).

On Thursday, 10th March, there would be the remaining stages of the Water Charges Equalisation Bill (Mr. Jones, Mr. W. Roberts). This would be followed by Motions on the Northern Ireland Orders on Appropriation, Rates Amendment, Transport and Gas, (Mr. Neave, Mr. Biggs-Davison).

On Friday, 11th March, there would be the following Private Members' Motions: Mr. J. Dean's on Educational Deprivation in Inner City Areas, and those of Mr. Bruce George and Mr. P. Viggers.

On Monday, 14th March, there would either be a debate on the White Paper on Public Expenditure or a debate on any Reports from the various Select Committees.

## 2. Matters Arising on Business

..... There was a discussion and the following points were agreed:

(i) Mr. Atkins would seek to persuade the Government to refer the Motion on the Chairman of the Ways and Means, which was down for debate on 9th March, to the Select Committee on Procedure. If they refused we would have a free vote.

(ii) We would vote against the 10 Minute Rule Bill to abolish the Corporation of the City of London on 9th March.

(iii) We would seek to postpone the debate on the White Paper on Public Expenditure until Wednesday, 16th March.

## 3. Devolution

Mrs. Thatcher reported that the Prime Minister had written to invite her and Mr. Pym to discussions the following Monday to explore the possibility of widening the area of possible agreement among the Parties on the subject of devolution to Scotland and Wales. She had replied accepting this invitation. There was a discussion and the following points were agreed:

(i) These talks should not be on the basis of the Government's Bill but should range as widely as possible.

(ii) We favoured a joint Select Committee of both Houses which would hear evidence and seek to obtain agreement between and within the political parties on what options were open and what the arguments regarding them were.

(iii) We should take care in these talks not to compromise in our opposition to any form of elected assembly in Wales.

(iv) If the talks eventually failed to find any agreement on which the Government could proceed with legislation we should seek to avoid receiving the blame for the breakdown.

(v) If the Government did not agree to our request for a joint Select Committee the Shadow Cabinet would discuss the matter further and would consider any other proposal the Government might put forward. As an interim token of good faith to the people of Scotland, it might be possible to contemplate some interim arrangements by which the Scottish Grand Committee should meet in Edinburgh on Monday to debate Scottish Bills.

## 4. Press Releases of Speeches

Mrs. Thatcher opened a discussion on unsatisfactory aspects of the way in which Conservative speeches were communicated to the press. There was a discussion and the following points were agreed:

(i) Members of the Shadow Cabinet were asked not to concentrate their speech hand-outs on Fridays and Saturdays as this had resulted in the press receiving so much material from us that they were disinclined to publish much of it. Members were invited to issue statements or letters to their constituents during the rest of the week.

(ii) It was desirable that certain speeches of major importance - not more than three in any given week - should be designated "key note" speeches. These releases would be of a reasonable length and would be designed to set out Conservative policy and our reactions to certain developments. An attempt

would be made to notify the press of their contents some days in advance and the Central Office Press Department would promote such speeches with the news editors.

(iii) Other speech releases should not normally be longer than three pages.

(iv) Members should, where they considered it would be helpful, indicate the main points in their speeches which they wanted publicised. Often a short synopsis in which those points were highlighted would get more press coverage than a longer release.

(v) Members were encouraged to meet the editors of local newspapers whenever they made tours or visits outside London.

(vi) Lord Thorneycroft would circulate a paper suggesting means of implementing the conclusions of this discussion.

#### Other Business

It was agreed that Mr. Davies would prepare a paper on direct elections to the European Parliament which would be considered by the Steering Committee in about two weeks' time.

The meeting closed at 6.15 p.m.