

LEADER'S CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

Minutes of the 175th Meeting held at 2.30 p.m.  
on Thursday, 6th October 1977, 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. Neave, Mr. Haseltine,  
Mr. Maude, Mr. Edwards, Mr. Nott,  
Mrs. Oppenheim, Mr. King, Mr. Taylor.  
Mr. Atkins.

In attendance: Sir Michael Havers, Mr. Hurd,  
Mr. Hayhoe, Mr. Butler, Mr. Hooson,  
Mr. Greenland, Mr. Nicholson,  
Miss Bulloch, Mr. Cropper, Mr. Britto.

Apologies: Lord Thorneycroft, Mr. Davies,  
Mr. Peyton, Mr. St. John Stevas.

1. Lord Thorneycroft

Mrs. Thatcher reported that Lord Thorneycroft was having to undergo an operation. It was agreed that the National Union should decide whether anyone should speak to the Party conference in place of Lord Thorneycroft.

2. The Right Approach to the Economy

Copies of this document had been circulated to members of the Shadow Cabinet. It was agreed that we would make clear to the press that the document consisted of proposals from four members of the Shadow Cabinet; it had not been discussed by the full Shadow Cabinet, and the proposals could not be presented as Shadow Cabinet commitments. There could be no guarantee that all the proposals in the document would be included in our Manifesto for the next election. It was also agreed that those responsible would co-ordinate replies to possible questions about our regional policy.

3. Preparations for the Party Conference

General: The following points were agreed:

(i) As always, the tone of the Party Conference was most important, and in particular a clear impression should be given of a united Party, especially after the relatively quiet Labour Party Conference.

(ii) Our speeches would seek to show that the current "recovery" was only from a disastrous starting point, viz. the situation created by Labour in 1974-6.

(iii) The Research Department would circulate a brief note setting out the key facts and attacking points on the economy to assist members who were speaking or appearing on television.

(iv) Each member replying to a debate should endeavour to include one or two phrases that might make a suitable headline for the press.

Industrial Relations: It was agreed that Mr. Prior would set out our policy on the closed shop as it was defined on pages 28-9 of "Questions and Answers". It would be emphasised that this was the policy agreed by the whole Shadow Cabinet. Mr. Prior would also refer to particular industries which would be most adversely affected by a closed shop: the press, where we might refer to the proposed Press Charter; and the Civil Service, where we would indicate that we were opposed to any Government acquiescence in the establishment of a "union membership" agreement. With regard to a closed shop in local government, councils should be guided by their own judgement; the Shadow Cabinet could only advise them against it. If picketing was raised, Mr. Prior might deplore the lawlessness at Grunwick, indicating that the law was clear but that it was desirable to draw up a code of practice governing picketing. We were against allowing pickets to stop vehicles and favoured restraint in numbers of pickets. In his speech, Mr. Whitelaw would indicate that it was important for governments to uphold the whole law, not just the parts they liked, and would criticise the activities of so-called Labour moderates like Mr. Mulley and Mrs. Williams.

Economic Policy: It was agreed that Sir Geoffrey Howe would seek to argue against too much euphoria being generated by the Government's optimistic statements, would seek to claim credit on behalf of the Conservatives for the fact that the Government was now, at the behest of the IMF, carrying out Conservative policies and would refer to the present poor performance of the real economy.

Agriculture and Fishing: It was agreed that an amendment on fishing for a marginal seat in Scotland would be taken for debate and Mr. Taylor would liaise with Mr. Hurd over how the amendment should deal with our demand for an exclusive fishing limit of up to 50 miles.

Home Affairs: It was agreed that Mr. Whitelaw would indicate that in order to restore police morale and recruitment the Government should accept that the police were a special case and should therefore obtain a pay increase above the Government's 10% guidelines, although no figure should be mentioned.

Foreign Affairs and Defence: It was agreed that Mr. Maude should write to Mr. Davies suggesting that his speech should contain an adequate reference in reply to all the motions on forces' pay and conditions.

The Constitution: It was agreed that Mr. Pym should argue that there should be a strong, effective Second Chamber and, more generally, that the main reason why the constitution was not working in certain respects was that one side, viz. Labour, was misusing the rules. With regard to direct elections for the European Parliament, it was also agreed that we should continue to press the Government to provide adequate time for the Bill. If we were asked about support for a guillotine, we would indicate that such a decision could only be taken in full knowledge of the circumstances at the time. The Research Department would circulate to members a list of occasions last winter and spring when Mr. Thatcher pressed the Government to expedite this Bill.

National Federation of the Self Employed: It was agreed that it was desirable for a member of the Shadow Cabinet to speak at the meeting during the Conference of this Federation. Sir Keith Joseph offered to speak if no other member found it convenient.

The meeting closed at 4.20 p.m.