

LEADER'S CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

189TH MEETING

5.00 p.m., Wednesday, 8th February 1978, in
the Leader's Room at the House of Commons.

AGENDA

1. Minutes of the 188th Meeting.
2. Future Business.
3. ~~Forthcoming Events~~
4. A Policy for Prices, Incorporating the Report and Recommendations of the Competition Policy Group, LCC(78)169 - attached.
5. Any Other Business.

Campbell
Boyle

LEADER'S CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

Minutes of the 189th Meeting held at 5.00 pm.
on Wednesday, 8th February 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 Thorncroft,
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,
Mrs. Oppenheim, Mr. King, Mr. Taylor.
- Mr. Atkins.
- In attendance: Sir Michael Havers, Mr. Butler,
Mr. Stanley, Miss Bulloch,
Mr. Nicholson, Mr. Hopkinson.
- Apologies: Lord Hailsham, Mr. Edwards.

1. Proposed Business for the Week 13th-20th February

On Monday, 13th February, there would be a Supply Day. This would be followed by a Motion on Financial Aid to Opposition Parties (Mr. Pym).

On Tuesday, 14th February, Mr. Ashley would seek leave to introduce his Criminal Offences (Appeals) Bill under the 10 Minute Rule. This would be followed by the Report Stage of the Scotland Bill (Mr. Pym and team).

On Wednesday, 15th February, Sir George Young would seek leave to introduce his Social Security (Kidney Patients) Bill under the 10 Minute Rule. This would be followed by the Report stage of the Scotland Bill.

On Thursday, 16th February, there would be the remaining stages of the European Assembly Elections Bill (Mr. Whitelaw and team)

On Friday, 17th February, there would be the Private Members' Bills of Mr. Buchan, Mr. Madel, Mr. Whitelock, Mr. P. Morrison and Lord James Douglas-Hamilton.

On Monday, 20th February, there would be the Second Reading of the Employment Subsidies Bill and of the Home Purchase Assistance and Housing Corporation Guarantee Bill.

2. Matters Arising on Business

There was a discussion of certain points and it was agreed that:

- (1) There was no need for a frontbench speech on the motion for financial aid to Opposition parties.

(11) There would be a 2 line whip at 6.00 p.m. on both Tuesday and Wednesday on the Report Stage of the Scotland Bill.

(111) We should adopt a critical tone on the Second Reading of the Employment Subsidies Bill on 20th February, pointing out the danger that subsidies, allegedly intended to be temporary, may well become permanent.

It was noted that those of our members who had doubts about the amendment requiring 40% of the Scottish electorate to vote for an assembly in a referendum would be likely to be content to vote to keep that amendment on Report Stage as the Government were reported to be seeking to pressurise their own members to vote against it.

It was also noted that the Post Office Workers (Industrial Action) Bill was believed simply to spell out, rather than extend, the existing law, but a text of the draft Bill was not yet available.

3. Subject for the Supply Day

There was a discussion and it was agreed that we would devote the whole of the Supply Day on 13th February to debating a motion calling on the Government to withdraw the proposed new contract clauses which had been announced by Mr. Hattersley during the debate on the previous day on Government "blacklisting" of firms that were alleged to have broken the pay guidelines. Sir Geoffrey Howe and Mr. Prior would be our speakers and there would be a 3 line whip.

It was noted that debates on hospital waiting lists and on the construction industry were desirable on Supply Days in the near future.

4. Immigration

Mr. Whitelaw reported that his paper setting out the options for our immigration policy would be ready by the weekend. It was agreed that members of the Steering Committee would be able to collect their copies from Mrs. Thatcher's office on Monday, 13th February. It was emphasised that the highest security should be observed in handling this paper at all stages.

There was a discussion on the likelihood of immigration arising as an issue at the Young Conservative Conference that weekend. It was agreed that Mrs. Thatcher would seek, in her speech, to make a short, positive statement about the record of the Conservative Party in encouraging good race relations, possibly referring to Mr. Callaghan's record over the Kenyan Asians and possibly indicating our distaste towards the National Front and its policies. Mrs. Thatcher and Mr. Whitelaw would liaise over the details of this statement.

5. Prices and Competition Policy

Mrs. Oppenheim introduced her paper, "A Policy for Prices", LCC(78)169. The following points were agreed:

(1) The proposals in the paper were generally very helpful as a guide to what we would want to do in government. We should,

however, be extremely careful as to what we said over the coming months, and it was preferable to keep to the line set out in "The Right Approach to the Economy". In particular, there was a problem about indicating that we would abolish certain institutions and set up others; people would speculate about our motives for abolition and, as with local government reorganisation, fear that such changes might only lead to more bureaucracy.

(ii) We should examine, the possibilities of widening the existing Ombudsman's terms of reference to deal with consumer complaints rather than to create a new Ombudsman to deal with the nationalised industries.

The meeting closed at 6.10 p.m.

LEADER'S CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

Arrangements for future meetings of the Leader's Consultative Committee in the Leader's Room at the House of Commons will be as follows:

Monday, 20th February at 5.00 p.m. - for a discussion on immigration.

Wednesday, 22nd February at 5.00 p.m. - for discussion of future business.

N.B. Mrs. Thatcher has requested that members of the Committee should collect the paper on immigration from her office on the morning of Monday, 20th February.

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CFP/MMM
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