

LEADER'S STEERING COMMITTEE

Minutes of the 34th Meeting held at 4.15pm  
on Wednesday 10th September, 1975 in the  
Chief Whip's Office at the House of Commons.

Present: Mrs. Thatcher (in the Chair)

Sir Geoffrey Howe, Lord Carrington,  
Mr. Gilmour, Mr. Maudling, Mr. Neave,  
Mr. Younger, Mr. Peyton,

Mr. Atkins

Mr. Biggs-Davison

Mr. Ridley, Mr. Houston (in attendance)

Apologies: Mr. Whitelaw, Sir Keith Joseph,  
Mr. Maude, Lord Thorneycroft

1. Northern Ireland

It was reported that in view of developments in Northern Ireland Mr. Neave would not accompany Mrs. Thatcher to America, but would visit the Province with Mr. Biggs-Davison within a week to assess the situation.

There was a wide discussion. Concern was expressed on the security situation and the Government's overall policy. It was agreed that withdrawal was not a solution to violence in either Northern Ireland or in Britain. It was agreed that a United Ireland was not feasible. Repartition was discussed, and views expressed for and against. The difficulties of large-scale population movement and of agreeing a new boundary with the Dublin Government were referred to, though it was felt that the idea needed careful examination. Direct Rule was thought inevitable, at least in the short term, if the Convention broke down.

The security situation, and the loss of up to date intelligence due to the great reduction in searching and screening during the "ceasefire" were causing considerable anxiety. Reference was made to the existence of "No-Go" areas in South Armagh, and the difficulty of raising the army profile generally without increasing Catholic support for the IRA. The possibility of introducing martial law and pursuing the "Templer type" solution was considered. Criticisms of the Government's failure to arrest Seamus Twomey, the Provisional IRA leader, were expressed. It was agreed that Mr. Younger would issue a statement urging the implementation of existing law against illegal organisations or the introduction of more effective legislation.

There was a discussion on the bi-partisan policy. It was agreed that the right to criticise Government failures must be reserved, but that bi-partisanship should be maintained if possible. The difficulties of proposing an alternative policy while in Opposition were recognised. It was agreed that any possibility of the Convention succeeding must not be damaged.

/... There was a

There was a discussion on the London bombings and the Scotland Yard search for McKearney. It was recognised that the police had a very difficult task, but concern was expressed on the handling of the McKearney affair.

2. Clay Cross - Amendments in the Lords

The value of fighting another battle on the Clay Cross issue was discussed. It was agreed that a paper would be prepared and a full discussion would take place at the meeting of the Shadow Cabinet on 1st October.

3. White Paper on Race Discrimination

There was a discussion on how Mr. Gilmour should respond to the White Paper. The strengthening of powers in relation to working men's clubs, and the difficulty of defining a 'private place' were discussed. It was agreed that our response should be muted.

The meeting closed at 5.35 p.m.

Conservative Research Department,  
24 Old Queen..Street, S.W.1.

JH/JWF  
15.9.75