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LEADER'S CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

208TH MEETING

5.00 p.m., Wednesday, 7th June 1978, in the
Leader's Room at the House of Commons.

AGENDA

1. Future Business.
2. Forthcoming Events.
3. General political discussion.
4. Any other business.

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

CFP/MHM
6.6.78

LEADER'S CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

Minutes of the 208th Meeting held at 5.00 p.m. on Wednesday, 7th June, 1978, in the Leader's Room at the House of Commons.

Present: Mrs. Thatcher (in the Chair)

Sir Keith Joseph, Lord Carrington
Lord Thorneycroft, Sir Geoffrey Howe,
Mr. Pym, Sir Ian Gilmour, Mr. Jenkin,
Mr. Davies, Mr. Neave, Mr. Heseltine,
Mr. St. John Stevas, Mr. Maude,
Mr. Edwards, Mr. Nott

Mr. Atkins

In attendance: Sir Michael Havers, Lord Denham,
Mr. Jopling, Mr. Stanley, Mr. Patten,
Mr. Wolfson, Mr. Ridley, Mr. Nicholson

Apologies: Mr. Whitelaw, Lord Hailsham, Mr. Prior,
Mr. Peyton, Mrs. Oppenheim, Mr. King,
Mr. Taylor

1. Proposed Business for the Week 12th-19th June

On Monday, 12th June, there would be a Supply Day. This would be devoted to a debate on the First Report from the Expenditure Committee, Session 1976-77, on Preventive Medicine, and on the Government Observations.

On Tuesday, 13th June, Mr. A. Bennett would seek leave to introduce his Water Services Charges (Rebates) Bill under the 10 Minute Rule. This would be followed by the remaining stages of the State Immunity Bill (Sir Michael Havers) and of the Community Service by Offenders (Scotland) Bill (Mr. Taylor). These would be followed by proceedings on the Tuvalu Bill and on the Export Guarantees and Overseas Investment Bill and the Oaths Bill, and by a Motion on EEC Documents R/95/76 and R/467/78 on Non-Life Assurance.

On Wednesday, 14th June, Mr. M. Morris would seek leave to introduce his Direct Labour (Restriction of Works) Bill. This would be followed by a Supply Day, with subject to be decided.

On Thursday, 15th June, there would be a Supply Day; the Royal Navy, on a Motion for the Adjournment (Mr. Wall, Mr. Pattie).

On Friday, 16th June, there would be a debate on the First Report from the Select Committee on Violence in the Family and the Government Observations.

On Monday, 19th June, there would be a further Supply Day.

The following day a change of business was announced, following the decision to have a Debate on the Economy on Wednesday, 14th June.

2. Subjects for the Supply Days

There was a discussion and it was agreed to debate fisheries on the first half of the supply day on 14th June. In the second half, there would be a debate on the Official Secrets Act. We would not vote on either of these subjects.

Mr. Jopling reported Mr. Peyton's views on fisheries given to the Backbench Committee. He had argued that we should in this debate insist that Mr. Silkin should threaten that, if no agreement were reached with our EEC partners, the Government should take unilateral conservation measures in British waters. This was agreed, and it was also agreed that it was desirable to have a further debate on fisheries after Mr. Silkin's visit to Brussels, when we should vote, and seek to obtain the support of all the minority parties. Mr. Peyton would open the fisheries debate.

3. Future Supply Days

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

(i) If the mortgage interest rate were increased this Friday, it would be desirable to have a debate on housing on Monday, 19th June. A final decision on this would be taken at the next meeting.

(ii) It was suggested that the other subjects for debate might be: Quangoes (the Research Department were asked to investigate what work had already been done, apart from Mr. Holland's series of questions); the derelict land in inner cities owned by public authorities; the work of the Redundancy Payments Act; the role of private enterprise in job creation; and nationalisation of banks and insurance companies (which it would be desirable to preface with a letter to the Prime Minister asking him what sections of Labour's Programme and which Labour Conference resolutions he supported).

4. Scotland and Wales Bills

There was a short discussion and the following points were agreed:-

(i) The Lords' amendment limiting the voting rights of Scottish members on subjects of exclusively English concern was satisfactory.

(ii) There should be a further discussion on the line to be taken on the Lords' amendments in general.

5. Policy Work

Mrs. Thatcher reported that it would be desirable for the Shadow Cabinet to clear a draft of the Manifesto before the Summer Recess. There was a discussion and the following points were agreed:-

(i) In view of recent leaks, the security arrangements for all such documents should be tightened.

- (ii) The remaining policy groups should be wound up as soon as possible - and certainly by the Summer Recess - and all papers held by outside members should be located and returned.
- (iii) Members were requested, in the interests of security, to "shred" earlier or interim policy group reports. The Chairman of each policy group would be responsible for reminding members to do this.
- (iv) There should be an early meeting of the Leader's Steering Committee to discuss Mr. Heseltine's paper on rates, and meetings were also required to discuss regional policy, short-term benefits, sale of council houses and other outstanding subjects.

6. The Political Situation

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

- (i) The economy was expected to show signs of deterioration in the coming weeks and it was vital for us to take every opportunity to bring this to the attention of the public.
- (ii) Displays of disunity were damaging. It was vital to reiterate the policies on which we were agreed and not to refer in public to points on which it was accepted that there might be differences of view. In particular, it was important for all members to attack the Cabinet's economic forecasts and to emphasise that the Government's temporary expedients were wholly inadequate: a totally new approach was required.
- (iii) No member of the Shadow Cabinet was to appear on television or engage in public debate against another Conservative MP. Mr. Atkins would ensure that this rule was observed.

7. Working Dinner at No.10

Mrs. Thatcher reported that members of the Shadow Cabinet had received, or were likely to receive, an invitation from the Prime Minister's office to a working dinner on 10th July to meet representatives of the NEB and the Scottish and Welsh Development Agencies. It was agreed that all members of the Shadow Cabinet and front-bench spokesmen would refuse such an invitation.

8. Foreign Affairs

There was a short discussion. Members were invited to read Mr. Davies's speech in the foreign affairs debate. It was agreed that Mr. Davies would circulate a background paper on Southern Africa at an early date, in preparation for a full discussion of this question.

The meeting closed at 6.10 p.m.