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LEADER'S STEERING COMMITTEE

Minutes of the 39th Meeting held at 5.00 p.m.  
on Monday, 1st March 1976, in the Leader's  
Room at the House of Commons

Present: Mrs. Thatcher (in the Chair)

Mr. Whitelaw, Sir Keith Joseph  
Sir Geoffrey Howe, Mr. Pym  
Mr. Gilmour, Mr. Peyton  
Mr. Maude, Lord Thorneycroft

Mr. Atkins

In attendance: Mr. Hurd, Mr. Stanley  
Mr. Patten, Mr. Ridley  
Mr. Turner

Apologies: Lord Carrington, Mr. Maudling  
Mr. Prior

1. Direct Elections to the European Parliament

There was a full discussion on how best to deal with the issues raised in the Papers on Direct Elections to the European Parliament (LSC (76) 45 a and b), in view of the variety of opinions on this subject within the Parliamentary Party.

It was noted that the Government's Green Paper would be debated in the House of Commons on Monday, 15th March.

It was agreed that:

i) The Conservative Party was committed to the principle of Direct Elections.

ii) A meeting, probably to be chaired by Mr. Maudling, should be held, on Monday, 8th March if convenient, to which representatives of both sides of the argument should be invited. This should be followed by a further backbench discussion at the next meeting of the European Affairs Committee at 6.00 p.m. on Monday, 8th March. Mrs. Thatcher said that she would also call a small meeting, for a further discussion of the subject, with those principally concerned including Sir Peter Kirk.

2. Hereditary Tenancies

Mr. Pym introduced his paper LSC (76) 47 on hereditary tenancies.

There was a discussion, and it was agreed that the balance of the argument was probably in favour of not voting against the Government but making a critical speech and fighting the issue vigorously in committee. However, there were strong arguments on the other side and before taking a final view he should make certain that we had taken account of the views of all our backbenchers who were most closely concerned with this question, and have a full discussion at the next meeting of the Leader's Consultative Committee.