

LEADER'S STEERING COMMITTEE

Minutes of the 33rd Meeting held at 5.15 p.m. on Monday, 14th July, 1975 in the Leader's Room at the House of Commons.

Present: Mrs. Thatcher (In the Chair)

Mr. Whitelaw (later), Sir Keith Joseph,
Mr. Maudling, Sir Geoffrey Howe,
Mr. Gilmour, Lord Carrington,
Mr. Maude, Mr. Peyton.

Mr. Atkins.

Mr. Shelton, Mr. Patten, Mr. Ridley,
Mr. Nicholson (In attendance).

Apologies: Mr. Prior, Lord Thorneycroft.

1. M.P.s Salaries and Allowances

There was a discussion. It was reported that Mr. Thorpe felt strongly that the Liberals should not accept any increase above £6. The point was reiterated that, while a number of Conservatives thought that an increase beyond that amount should not be accepted, a number of others, who were hard pressed on present salaries, were reluctant to draw attention to their circumstances. It was agreed that Mr. Peyton, in replying to Mr. Short, who would make the statement, would emphasise that the Government had not consulted practically half the House of Commons on the subject, and would contrast the statement with Mr. Wilson's remarks ruling out special cases and, at the NUM conference, calling for "not a year for self, but a year for Britain". He might also ask whether M.P.s would be able to pay their secretaries more than £6 a week if the secretarial allowance increased beyond that limit.

2. Our Approach to the Debate on the White Paper

It was understood that there would definitely be a Motion to approve the White Paper.

There was discussion on order of speaking. It was agreed that Mrs. Thatcher would speak on the first day, and would speak after Mr. Wilson or Mr. Healey, as experience had shown this was more effective. If Mr. Wilson did not speak on the first day, we might draw attention to this. It was thought that Mrs. Williams would wind up for the Government on the first day and Mr. Foot would wind up on the Tuesday.

There was a discussion on how we should vote. Reference was made to the very small numbers of members wishing to vote outright against the Government and the slightly larger number wishing to support the Government. It was understood that Labour's left wing did not appear to be very energetic in a threat to divide the House against the Government, but Ulster Unionists and possibly the Liberals would be likely to divide the House.

It was agreed that the best way of ensuring the unity of the Conservative Party was to move a reasoned Amendment and then abstain. The amendment should welcome the Government's intention to act on inflation, but would regret the continuing nationalisation programme and the failure to cut public expenditure.

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There was then a discussion on the possibility of the Government making public expenditure cuts. It was understood that Mr. Healey was likely to refer to this in his speech and that, therefore, he might speak on Monday. It was agreed that it would be helpful to endeavour to discover some of the Government's intentions before the debate by tabling question for priority answer on Thursday.

The meeting closed at 6.20 p.m.



Mrs Thatcher's Office

MB

Copy to Mr Patten

The Chief Whip will be raising the attached letter from the Clerk to the Procedure Committee under any other business at Monday's meeting of the Steering Committee.

FY

Felicity Yonge

11.7.75

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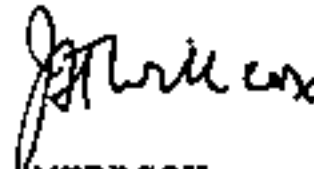
Dear Mr Atkins

The Chairman of the Procedure Committee has asked me to say that he hopes that the Committee will shortly be in a position to consider the question of a limitation on the length of Members' Speeches.

If you have any views on the matter which you would like the Committee to consider, the Chairman would be grateful if you would submit a Memorandum, following which the Committee might wish to hear oral evidence.

It would be convenient if you could send your Paper (if any) as soon as possible.

Yours sincerely



J. H. WILLCOX
Clerk to the Committee

Rt. Hon. H. Atkins, M.P.