

LEADER'S CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

Minutes of the 160th Meeting held at 5.00 p.m. on Wednesday, 27th April 1977, in the Leader's Room at the House of Commons.

Present: Mrs. Thatcher (in the Chair)

Mr. Whitelaw, Sir Keith Joseph, Lord Carrington, Lord Hailsham, Lord Thorneycroft, Sir Geoffrey Howe, Mr. Prior, Mr. Pym, Sir Ian Gilmour, Mr. Jenkin, Mr. Peyton, Mr. Davies, Mr. Neave, Mr. Heseltine, Mr. St. John Stevas, Mr. Maude, Mr. Edwards, Mr. King, Mr. Taylor.

Mr. Atkins.

In attendance: Sir Michael Havers, Mr. Butler, Mr. Stanley, Mr. Patten, Mr. Ridley, Mr. Hooson, Mr. Nicholson.

Apologies: Mr. Nott, Mrs. Oppenheim.

1. Future Business for the Week 2nd-9th May

On Monday, 2nd May, there would be a Supply Day. This would be followed by the Remaining Stages of the Redundancy Rebates Bill (Mr. Hayhoe).

On Tuesday, 3rd May, Mr. P. Goodhart would seek leave to introduce his Diplomatic Cars Bill under the 10 Minute Rule. This would be followed by the Second Reading of the Criminal Law Bill (Sir Michael Havers) and possibly by a debate on the proposed deportation of Messrs. Agee and Rosenball.

On Wednesday, 4th May, there would be the Presentation of Addresses in Westminster Hall. Mr. Scott-Hopkins would seek leave to introduce his Local Authorities (Discretionary Grants to the Disabled) Bill under the 10 Minute Rule. This would be followed by a further Supply Day: a debate on the Royal Air Force on a Motion for the Adjournment.

On Thursday, 5th May, there would be a debate on the Fourth Report from the House of Commons (Services) Committee on the Size of Hansard. This would be followed by a further debate on Sport and Recreation (Mr. Monro).

On Friday, 6th May, there would be the Private Members' Bills of Mr. N. Carmichael, Mr. M. Ward, Mr. G. Janner and Mr. A. Steen.

On Monday, 9th May, there would be progress on the Committee Stage of the Finance Bill (Sir Geoffrey Howe, Mr. Howell).

## 2. Matters Arising on Business

There was a discussion and the following points were agreed:

(i) We would ask at Business Questions the following day for debates on agriculture and on the coming Belgrade Conference on the Helsinki Agreements.

(ii) Mr. Atkins would find out whether Ministers would be wearing formal dress for the Presentation of Addresses in Westminster Hall on the morning of 4th May.

(iii) If Labour's Left divided the House on the expulsion of Messrs. Agee and Hosenball, we would vote with the Government.

## 3. Subject for the Supply Day

There was a discussion, and it was decided to debate rural transport until 7.00 p.m. and the construction industry after that time on the Supply Day on 2nd May. We would vote on a 3-line whip at the end of both debates, and those concerned would be responsible for drafting a motion on rural transport as it was not desirable to adjourn the House at 7.00 p.m. and thus lose the second half of the supply day. Mr. Fowler and Mr. Moate would speak on the debate on rural transport and Mr. Speed and Mr. Rossi on that on the construction industry.

It was also agreed that useful subjects for future supply debates would be the dispute in the press in the East Midlands and the Government's failure to produce a charter to protect the freedom of the press; the provision of money to the Kirkby Co-operative; the nuclear power issue (the Flowers Report and President Carter's statement) and also the Belgrade Conference and agriculture - if the Government failed to provide time for debating these two questions.

## 4. Devolution

Mr. Pym reported on the talks he had recently had with Mr. Foot. It was agreed that our line for the Scottish Party Conference would remain that there had to be a completely fresh approach to the problem on the basis of agreement between and within the parties at Westminster, but after that Conference we would have to consider a further refinement of our policy.

## 5. Our Reaction to Stage III

It was noted that Sir Geoffrey Howe would prepare a paper as soon as possible.

## 6. Forthcoming Events

It was noted that Mr. Benn was making what might be a significant speech the following Sunday which was May Day. Members were invited to look out for chances of making statements that day which could be reported in the Monday papers along with the Benn speech.

## 7. Other Business

There was a discussion of our preparedness for a General Election and the following points were agreed:

(i) The Campaign Guide was being published on 9th May. We should take this opportunity of pointing out that this was evidence of the Party's preparedness for an election whenever it might come, while emphasising that the Campaign Guide was not a statement of policy but a vital compendium of political information.

(ii) We should direct attention to our policy work by producing a succession of particular documents, including those promised in "The Right Approach". Among the subjects that might be covered in this way were industrial training, foreign practice in employee participation and the Health Service.

(iii) The Committee should discuss at an early date presentation of our policy on certain key areas including industrial policy, rates and immigration.

The meeting closed at 6.10 p.m.