

CONFIDENTIAL

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LEADER'S CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

151ST MEETING

5.00 p.m., Wednesday, 16th February, 1977 in the
Leader's Room at the House of Commons.

REVISED AGENDA

1. Minutes of the 149th Meeting.
2. Future business.
3. Forthcoming events. G.
4. Housing (Homeless Persons) Bill. ←
5. Devolution: Conservative Policy,
a paper by Mr. Pym, LCC(77)155 -
attached.
6. Any other business.

LEADER'S CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

Minutes of the 151st Meeting held at 5.00 p.m.
on Wednesday, 16th February 1977, in the Leader's
Room at the House of Commons.

Present: Mrs. Thatcher (in the Chair)

Mr. Whitelaw, Sir Keith Joseph,
Lord Hallsham, Sir Geoffrey Howe,
Mr. Prior, Mr. Pym, Mr. Peyton,
Mr. Jenkin, Mr. Davies,
Mr. St. John Stevas, Mr. Heseltine,
Mr. Maude, Mr. Neave, Mr. Edwards,
Mrs. Oppenheim, Mr. Biffen,
Mr. King, Mr. Nott, Mr. Taylor,
Lord Thorneycroft.

Mr. Atkins.

In attendance: Lord Ferrers, Mr. Brittan,
Mr. Rossi, Mr. Butler, Mr. Stanley,
Mr. Douglas, Mr. Ridley, Mr. Nicholson.

Apologies: Lord Carrington, Sir Ian Gilmour.

1. Future Business for the Week 21st-28th February

On Monday, 21st February, there would be the Remaining Stages of the Covent Garden Market (Financial Provisions) Bill. This would be followed by a Motion on certain EEC Commission Documents on Textiles, listed in Hansard for 10th February (col. 1671).

On Tuesday, 22nd February, Mr. J. More would seek leave to introduce his Food and Drugs (Amendment) Bill under the 10 Minute Rule. This would be followed by further proceedings on the Scotland and Wales Bill (Mr. Pym and team).

On Wednesday, 23rd February, Mr. P. Viggers would seek leave to introduce his Service Widows (Equality of Pensions) Bill under the 10 Minute Rule. This would be followed by further proceedings on the Scotland and Wales Bill (Mr. Pym and team).

On Thursday, 24th February, there would be a Supply Day with subjects to be decided. This would be followed by the Remaining Stages of the Job Release Bill and debates on EEC Documents on Fisheries.

On Friday, 25th February, there would be the Second Readings of the following Private Members' Bills: Mr. W. Benyon's Abortion (Amendment) Bill, Mr. K. Lomas's House of Lords Reform Bill and those of Mr. E. Griffiths, Mr. R. Eyre, Mr. R. Adley and Mr. T. Litterick.

On Monday, 26th February, there would be a Supply Day with subjects to be decided.

(There was, at the time of this discussion, no indication that the Government would seek to introduce a timetable motion for the Scotland and Wales Bill on Tuesday, 22nd February).

2. Matters Arising on Business

There was a discussion and the following points were agreed:

(i) There would be a 3 line whip for the two days of proceedings on the Scotland and Wales Bill, which we could relax if necessary.

(ii) We would offer the Supply Day on the 24th February to the minor Parties and they would be told of this decision.

(iii) We would seek to postpone discussion of the Remaining Stages of the Job Release Bill and the EEC Documents on Fisheries, which were tabled for later on Thursday, 24th February.

(iv) It was likely that we would wish to debate personal taxation on the Supply Day on 28th February, but this decision would be confirmed at the next meeting.

(v) It was desirable to have a Supply Day on the cost of living in the coming weeks, as an acceleration in the Retail Price Index was likely to be announced shortly. It was also desirable to debate unemployment in Wales.

(vi) While it was necessary to debate the Motion standing in the names of Mr. Macmillan and others indicating that the ruling of the Deputy Speaker on the position of a referendum clause in a Bill should not be taken as a precedent, we would inquire within the Party whether it was felt we should vote if the Government refused to accept the Motion.

3. Devolution

Mr. Pym introduced his paper, "Devolution: Conservative Policy - A Proposal for an all-Party Convention on Devolution" (LOC 77/155) and Mr. Taylor introduced his paper, "Devolution - the Way Ahead" (LOC 77/156). There was a discussion and the following points were agreed:

(i) He could not be committed to setting up a convention if we were to return to power.

(ii) If the proposal to set up a constitutional convention were accepted, we were not committed, in those circumstances, to any particular constitutional solution for Scotland or Wales.

(iii) Subject to points (i) and (ii) above, Mr. Pym would advocate a constitutional convention at such time and in such a manner as he thought most expedient. In view of the Bill's difficult passage and the refusal of the Government to concede any of the points made by the Bill's critics in all Parties, and in view of the fact that if a guillotine were introduced the Bill would not be sufficiently discussed in the Commons, it was desirable to examine whether there was an alternative approach on which there might be more agreement between and within the various political Parties.

4. Other business

Lord Ferrers reported that the Examiners were likely to report the following day on the question whether the Aircraft and Shipbuilding Bill was hybrid.

Mr. Hoosie introduced a short discussion on the Housing (Homeless Persons) Bill which was supported by certain Conservative members. It was agreed that while we would not vote against the Bill we would ensure that the case against certain of the Bill's proposals was adequately put in the debate.

The meeting closed at 6.15 p.m.