

LEADER'S STEERING COMMITTEE

Minutes of the 61st Meeting held at 5.00 p.m. on Monday, 15th January 1979, in the Leader's Room at the House of Commons.

Present: Mrs. Thatcher (in the Chair)  
 Mr. Whitelaw, Sir Keith Joseph,  
 Lord Carrington, Lord Thorneycroft,  
 Sir Geoffrey Howe, Mr. Prior, Mr. Pym,  
 Sir Ian Gilmour, Mr. Poyton,  
 Mr. St. John Stevas, Mr. Maude.  
 Mr. Atkins.

In attendance: Mr. Fowler, Mr. Brittan,  
 Mr. Percival, Mr. Butler,  
 Mr. Stanley, Mr. Patten,  
 Mr. Wolfson, Mr. Ridley,  
 Mr. Nicholson, Mr. McDermott.

1. Preparation for the Debate on the Current Industrial Dispute

There was a discussion about the points which should be made in the debate the following day, Tuesday, 16th January, on the current industrial disputes, and on the issues and policy points arising from these developments. The following points were agreed:

(i) Mrs. Thatcher would, in her speech, emphasise the overriding national interest, the fact that the nation as a whole was threatened by disputes and threatened disputes, and that it was in everyone's interest to find common ground for dealing with these problems. There were the immediate short-term problems of ensuring that essential supplies reached those who needed them, especially the old and the sick, and the longer-term issues which had been highlighted by the picketing. She would suggest to the Government that they could count on Conservative support if they took a firmer line on picketing and, in particular, if they were prepared to introduce legislation to outlaw secondary picketing and encourage secret ballots in union elections. Another matter on which we should indicate support for the Government if they would act was if they sought to reach "non-aggression" agreements by which unions would abstain from striking in certain essential services in return for safeguards for the pay position of those employed in them.

(ii) We should not emphasise at this stage the various issues concerning payment of social security to strikers' families and the taxation of short-term benefits.

(iii) We should not, on the whole, be divisive or partisan in the debate the following day, but it might be appropriate to suggest to the Prime Minister that he might now have doubts about his role in 1969 in bringing about the withdrawal of the Wilson Government's proposals in "In Place of Strife".

(iv) The following morning Mr. Peyton would brief Mrs. Thatcher on the latest reports from the NFU and UKASTA, and Sir Keith Joseph would brief her on the latest reports from the CBI. A copy of the reports on the crisis in food and agriculture would be sent to Mr. Prior.

(v) The Research Department would send Mrs. Thatcher the various Callaghan quotes on the closed shop, picketing and secret ballots.

(vi) Reference might be made to the proposals in "In Place of Strife" for secret ballots.

(vii) The main aim of the debate was to probe the Government on what they were doing, and make the suggestions outlined above, indicating our support if they took firm action. We would not otherwise spell out our various proposals in detail.

(viii) Lord Cockfield would be invited to examine the proposal to change the tax year so that it coincided with the calendar year.

## 2. Other Business

There was a discussion on whether we should revise our arrangements for the Party Political Broadcast on the evening of Wednesday, 17th January. It was agreed that we should not use the script that had been prepared and that Mrs. Thatcher would broadcast on the industrial crisis.

The meeting closed at 6.30 p.m.