

LEADER'S STEERING COMMITTEE

Minutes of the 44th Meeting held at 5.00 p.m.  
on Monday 15th November 1976 in the Leader's  
Room in the House of Commons.

Present: Mrs. Thatcher (In the Chair)  
  
Mr. Whitelaw, Sir Keith Joseph,  
Lord Carrington, Mr. Maudling,  
Sir Geoffrey Howe, Mr. Prior,  
Mr. Pym, Mr. Gilmour, Mr. Peyton,  
Lord Thorneycroft  
  
Mr. Atkins  
  
In Attendance: Mr. Patten, Mr. Nicholson,  
  
Apologies: Mr. Maude

1. Final Report of the Forestry Policy Group

Mr. Pym introduced the report and there was a discussion. It was agreed that further investigations were required into the amount of import substitution that might be feasible and the group would contact representatives of the timber industry, while a copy of the paper would be sent to the Party spokesman on Trade. It was also agreed that the subject would be taken off the Agenda for the Shadow Cabinet meeting on Wednesday 17th November.

2. Parliamentary Situation and Prospects for the next Session.

There was a discussion on various points, in particular the operation of the closed shop, devolution and House of Lords reform. The following points were agreed:

i) While it was not desirable to make personal attacks on TUC leaders, and while we accepted that a Conservative Government would have minimal recourse to the law in tackling industrial relations problems, we should seek to draw TUC leaders' attention to the more outrageous cases of individual employees being victimised as a result of the operation of the closed shop. The idea would be to challenge the TUC leaders to tackle this problem, which most people felt was giving rise to severe injustices. The Research Department would assemble a file on the various cases.

ii) It was necessary to have a full discussion very soon on our detailed approach to the Devolution Bill and on how we should vote on Second Reading. Mr. Whitelaw would prepare a paper setting out the various options, which would be discussed at the meeting of the Shadow Cabinet arranged for Tuesday next week.

iii) A study group should be established on the question of House of Lords Reform. Members were invited to indicate to Mrs. Thatcher their views on who should sit on the group.

iv) In view of the fact that so much of the next Session would be taken up by Bills on constitutional matters, the Opposition

Supply Days assumed even greater importance in giving us the opportunity to condemn the Government's mismanagement and set out our alternative policies.

The Meeting closed at 6.30 p.m.

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