

10 March

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LEADER'S CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

102ND MEETING

5.00 p.m., Wednesday 10th March 1976, in the
Leader's Room at the House of Commons

AGENDA

1. Minutes of the 101st Meeting
- 2 ✓ Future Business
3. Forthcoming events
4. Direct Elections to the European Parliament -
paper by Mr. Hurd and background note by
the Research Department LCC/76/102a and b -
previously circulated
5. Any other business

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CFP/GSB
4.3.76

LEADER'S CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

Minutes of the 102nd Meeting held at 5.00 p.m.
on Wednesday, 10th March 1976, in the Leader's
Room at the House of Commons

Present: Mrs. Thatcher (in the Chair)

Sir Keith Joseph (item 4)
Lord Carrington, Lord Hailsham
(items 1,2,3)
Mr. Maudling, Sir Geoffrey Howe
Mr. Prior, Mr. Pym, Mr. Gilmour
Mr. Jenkin, Mr. Peyton
Mr. St. John Stevas, Mr. Heseltine
Mr. Raison, Mr. Maude
Mr. Buchanan-Smith, Mr. Edwards
Mr. Neave, Mrs. Oppenheim
Mr. Biffen, Lord Thorncroft
Mr. Atkins

In attendance: Mr. Hurd, Mr. Butler, Mr. Stanley
Mr. Douglas, Mr. Nicholson

Apologies: Mr. Whitelaw

1. Proposed Business for the Week 15th - 22nd March

(The following is Business as proposed at the time of the LCC meeting. As a result of the Government defeat later that evening, and the loss of the business on 11th March, the business for Monday, 15th March and Tuesday, 16th March was significantly altered.)

On Monday, 15th March there would be a Supply Day with subject to be decided. At 10.00 p.m. the debate on Broadcasting the Proceedings of the House, would be resumed (Mr. Peyton).

On Tuesday, 16th March, Mr. Luce would seek leave to introduce his Transport (Amendment) Bill under the 10 Minute Rule. This would be followed by the Second Reading of the Weights and Measures &c Bill (Mrs. Oppenheim, Mr. Lamont) and a Motion on the Local Loans (Increase of Limit) Order (Mr. Nott).

On Wednesday, 17th March Mr. N. Ridley would seek leave to introduce his Coal Industry (Amendment) Bill under the 10 Minute Rule. This would be followed by a Supply Day with subject to be decided. At 10.00 p.m. there would be the Remaining Stages of Housing (Amendment) (Scotland) Bill (Mr. Buchanan-Smith, Mr. Taylor) and of the Education (School-leaving dates) Bill (Mr. St. John Stevas, Dr. Hampson).

On Thursday, 18th March until about 7.00 p.m. there would be consideration of Lords Amendments to the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Amendment) Bill (Mr. Prior) followed by the Consolidated Fund (No. 2) Bill.

On Friday, 19th March there would be Private Members' Motions, the motions being those of Mr. Alison on Teaching of Religion in Schools (Mr. St. John-Stevan), Mr. Davies on Educational Reform and Mr. Heffer on Referendum on Devolution and Independence.

On Monday, 22nd March there would be a Motion on EEC Document R/210/76 on Energy (Mr. Biffen).

2. Matters arising on Business

a) Subjects for the Supply Days

There was a discussion. It was agreed that:

i) We should offer Monday, 15th March to the minority parties and thus discharge our intention of letting them have two of our Supply Days.

ii) We should devote half of the Supply Day on Wednesday, 17th March to a debate on private rented housing, upon which we should vote, and the second half to a debate on commuter rail services, on which we should not vote and not disclose our policy in any detail.

iii) We should seek to debate personal taxation on a further supply day if one arose before the Budget.

b) Weights and Measures & Bill

Mrs. Oppenheim reported on the discussion in Steering Committee on Monday, 8th March, and in the backbenchers' Prices and Consumer Affairs Committee.

It was agreed that:

i) We should vote against the Bill on a reasoned amendment with a two line whip.

ii) The reasoned amendment would indicate that we condemned the Government's handling of the issue, and their failure to provide adequate information regarding safeguards and exceptions. The final drafting and a decision on whether the amendment would refer to specific exclusions, such as for milk, petrol and beer, would be left to Mrs. Oppenheim, in consultation with Mrs. Thatcher, Sir Geoffrey Howe and Mr. Atkins.

c) Trade Union and Labour Relations (Amendment) Bill

It was agreed that:

i) Mrs. Thatcher and Mr. Prior would discuss what line we should take towards the Press in the debates on this Bill in the light of legal advice.

ii) The Research Department would prepare a list of the number of times we have voted on freedom of the press and the issues of freedom of conscience with regard to the closed shop in the debates on this Bill, for circulation within the Party.

d) Other points

It was agreed that:

- i) We should protest at having to vote at 11.30 p.m. on Monday, 15th March on the subject of Broadcasting the Proceedings of the House.
- ii) Members of the Shadow Cabinet might vote in support of Mr. N. Ridley's Coal Industry (Amendment) Bill on Wednesday, 17th March.
- iii) We should ask the Government to take the EEC Document R/253/76 on siting the joint European Torus together with the EEC paper R/210/76 on Energy.

Changing the Public Expenditure White Paper

It was agreed that we should vote against the main Government motion on the White Paper on Public Expenditure that night, irrespective of how the Tribune Group decided to vote.

4. Direct Elections to the European Parliament

Mr. Maudling and Mr. Hurd reported on the situation, indicating that there was a possibility of delay in the EEC Prime Ministers reaching agreement on points of detail, and that the target date of 1978 might not be met.

There was a discussion. It was agreed that:

- i) We should emphasise in all speeches on the subject that we were committed in principle to direct elections to the European Assembly, and that we wished these to take place as soon as a sensible system could be developed, and as soon as difficulties regarding, for example, the balance between urban and rural areas, and the links between the European Assembly and the Westminster Parliament could be overcome.
- ii) The question of the link between the European Assembly and the Westminster Parliament was vitally important.
- iii) There should be a paper on how liaison between the Conservatives and other European parties would affect this question, and it was understood that one was being prepared.

The meeting closed at 6.10 p.m.