

SECRET

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LEADER'S CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

Minutes of the 101st Meeting held at 5.00 p.m.
on Wednesday, 3rd March 1976, in the Leader's
Room at the House of Commons

Present: Mrs. Thatcher (in the Chair)

Mr. Whitelaw, Sir Keith Joseph
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. Butler, Mr. Stanley
Mr. Patten, Mr. Ridley
Mr. Nicholson

Apologies: Lord Carrington, Lord Hailsham
Mr. Maudling

1. Proposed business for the week 8th-12th March

On Monday, 8th March, there would be a debate on Agricultural Tenancies until 7.00 p.m. (Mr. Pym, Mr. Jopling). This would be followed by a debate on Broadcasting the Proceedings of the House (Mr. Peyton), the Remaining Stages of the Trustee Savings Bank Bill (Mr. Finsberg) and the Remaining Stages of the Road Traffic (Drivers' Ages and Hours of Work) Bill (Mr. Fowler, Mr. Fry).

On Tuesday, 9th March, Mr. Farr would seek leave to introduce his Local Government Act 1972 (Amendment) Bill under the 10 Minute Rule. This would be followed by a Debate on the White Paper on Public Expenditure to 1979-80 (Command No. 6393) (Sir Geoffrey Howe, Mr. N. Ridley).

On Wednesday, 10th March, Mr. Rees-Davies would seek leave to introduce his Indecent Displays Bill under the 10 Minute Rule. This would be followed by the second day's debate on the White Paper on Public Expenditure (Sir Keith Joseph, Mr. Nott) and by the Lords Amendments to the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Amendment) Bill (Mr. Prior, Mr. Hayhoe).

On Thursday, 11th March, there would be the Second Reading of the Development Land Tax Bill (Mr. Raison, Mr. Page) followed by Motions on Northern Ireland Orders on Appropriation, Industrial and Provident Societies, Housing, Local Government and Planning, and on Members' Pensions (Mr. Neave, Mr. Biggs-Davison).

On Friday, 12th March, there would be Second Readings of Private Members' Bills, the first three being those of Mr. Watkins, Mr. Page and Mr. Marshall.

On Monday, 15th March, there would be a Debate on Direct Elections to the European Assembly (Mr. Maudling, Mr. Hurd).

2. Matters arising on business

a) Agricultural Tenancies

Mr. Pym reported on the position regarding the debate on agricultural tenancies on Monday, 8th March. After a discussion it was agreed that:

- i) The debate was taking place on a "take note" motion and we should not vote.
- ii) Mr. Pym would make a speech strongly criticising the principle of the Agricultural (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill, pointing out that it went much further than we were prepared to accept and that we would seek to amend it on Committee and Report Stages where necessary. Mr. Pym would also say that, when returned to power, we would undertake a comprehensive review of all the legislation on agricultural holdings and would be prepared to make whatever changes then seemed desirable.

b) Development Land Tax Bill

Mr. Raison reported on the position regarding this Bill. It was agreed that:

- i) We should vote against it on a three line whip.
- ii) Mr. Raison would consult with his backbench committee whether, rather than simply voting against the Second Reading of the Bill, we should vote on a reasoned amendment of our own, pointing out that we thought the proposed rate of tax too high and indicating that a developer should be taxed on actual profit made rather than deemed profit before the gain was realised.

c) Northern Ireland

Mr. Neave reported that Mr. Merlyn Rees was to make a statement on Friday, 5th March, on the breakdown of the Northern Ireland Convention, and was likely to indicate that an indefinite period of direct rule was to ensue. Mr. Neave indicated the line he would take in reply, and there was a discussion. It was agreed that:

- i) Mr. Neave would indicate that we regretted the breakdown of the Convention and the likely absence of any kind of representative or advisory body in Northern Ireland. We feared that this political vacuum might lead to more people

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supporting the extremists of both communities. One positive suggestion we might put forward was that the leaders of the various parties represented in the Convention might appoint a small number of their leading members, drawn from that body, to sit on a Council which would advise the Secretary of State.

- ii) There would be a fuller discussion of the situation in Northern Ireland at a future meeting of the LCC.

The meeting closed at 6.10 p.m.