

CONFIDENTIAL

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LEADER'S CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

144TH MEETING

5.00 p.m., Wednesday, 22nd December 1976, in the
Leader's Room at the House of Commons.

AGENDA

1. Future Business.
2. Fortncoming Events.
3. Devolution - papers by Mr. Pym
have been previously circulated.
4. Any Other Business.

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CFP/MMM
20.12.76

LEADER'S CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

Minutes of the 144th Meeting held at 5.00 p.m. on Wednesday, 22nd December 1976, in the Leader's Room at the House of Commons.

Present: Mrs. Thatcher (in the Chair)

Mr. Whitelaw, Sir Keith Joseph, Lord Carrington, Lord Hailsham, Sir Geoffrey Howe, Mr. Pym, Mr. Gilmour, Mr. Jenkin, Mr. Peyton, 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: Sir Michael Havers, Mr. Britten, Mr. Stanley, Mr. Butler, Mr. Patten, Mr. Hooson, Mr. Nicholson.

Apologies: Mr. Prior.

1. Future Business for the Week 10th-17th January, 1977

On Monday, 10th January, there would be a debate on Developments in the European Communities May-October 1976 Command No. 6695. This would be followed either by Motions on EEC Documents R/3592/74, R/1820/75 and R/2146/75 on Banking or the Second Reading of the Transport (Financial Provisions) Bill, with the possibility of a wider debate on the Consultation Document on Transport Policy, and the EEC document on Taxation of Commercial Vehicles.

On Tuesday, 11th January, there would be the Second Reading of the Covent Garden Market (Financial Provisions) Bill. This would be followed by a Motion on the Social Security (Contributions Re-rating) Order.

On Wednesday, 12th January, there would be a Ballot for Motions on Friday, 21st January, followed by a Supply Lay, with subject to be decided. This would be followed by Motions on the Double Taxation Relief (Taxes on Income) (United States) Orders (Mr. Horder).

On Thursday, 13th January, there would be Progress in Committee on the Scotland and Wales Bill (Mr. Pym and team).

On Friday, 14th January, there would be the Private Members' Motions of Mr. Finsberg, Mr. Shaw and Mr. L. Hunt.

On Monday, 17th January, there would be the Second Reading of the Water Charges Equalisation Bill.

2. Matters Arising on Business

There was a discussion on various points and the following was agreed:

(i) We should express a desire to have a debate on general Transport policy before considering the Transport (Financial Provisions) Bill.

(ii) We should vote against the Motion on the Social Security Contributions (Re-rating) Order on 11th January on a two-line whip.

(iii) We should debate defence on the Supply Day on 12th January and we should vote on a three-line whip on a Motion to reduce the Secretary of State's salary. If, however, the situation in the baking industry were seriously to deteriorate we might wish to debate that.

(iv) A three-line whip would be required on 13th January if the House were likely to reach our amendment to exclude Wales from the Scotland and Wales Bill.

3. The Committee Stage of the Scotland and Wales Bill

Mrs. Thatcher reported on an enquiry by the Government as to whether we were prepared to commit ourselves not to obstruct further progress on the Scotland and Wales Bill. There was a discussion, after which it was agreed that we could not so commit the Conservative Party as a whole. It was also agreed that Mr. Pym, taking account of the views expressed, should decide whether to respond to the Government's enquiry in writing or orally, and on the timing and specific terms of such a response.

4. Proportional Representation in a Scottish Assembly

There was a discussion on whether it would be desirable to have a system of proportional representation for elections to the Scottish Assembly. It was agreed that

(i) We should not put down an amendment on the subject.

(ii) The question of whipping should be discussed at a later date.

5. Direct Elections to the European Assembly

There was a short discussion on this subject introduced by Mr. Davies, and it was noted that if Britain were to default on her commitment to make preparations for direct elections in 1978, this would automatically cause the introduction of direct elections to be deferred and would considerably damage Britain's relations with the other members of the Community.

6. Date of Next Meeting

It was agreed that the LCC should meet at 3.00 p.m. on Monday, 10th January, 1977.