

LEADER'S CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

Carroll

Minutes of the 53rd Meeting held at 5.00 p.m.
on Wednesday, 12th March 1975, in the Leader's
Room at the House of Commons

Present: Mrs. Thatcher (In the Chair)

Mr. Whitelaw, Sir Keith Joseph,
Lord Hallsham, Mr. Maudling,
Sir Geoffrey Howe, Mr. Gilmour,
Lord Carrington, Mr. Prior, Mr. Pym,
Mr. Peyton, Mr. Jenkin, Mr. St. John-
Stevas, Mr. Heseltine, Mr. Raison,
Mr. Buchanan-Smith, Mr. Edwards,
Mr. Neave, Mr. Younger, Mr. Fowler,
Mr. Maude

Mr. Atkins

Sir Michael Havers, Mr. Montgomery,
Mr. Shelton, Mr. Patten, Mr. Sherbourne
(In attendance)

Apologies: Lord Thorneycroft, Mrs. Oppenheim

1. Business of the Week

Mrs. Thatcher outlined the proposed business of the House
for the week 17th-21st March and Monday 24th March.

On Monday, on a Motion for the Easter Adjournment, there
would be the Consolidated Fund (No. 3) Bill, which would allow
a debate on subjects raised by Members.

On Tuesday, Mr. Ian Gow would seek leave to introduce
his Parliamentary Commissioner (Amendment) Bill under the
10 Minute Rule. This would be followed by the Second Reading
of the Housing Finance (Special Provisions) Bill, dealing with
Clay Cross (Mr. Raison and Sir Michael Havers). There would
be a three line Whip. This would be followed by a Motion on
the Prices Act 1974 (Continuation of Section 2) Order (Mr. Lamont).
A series of Consolidation Measures would then be taken.

On Wednesday, Mr. J. Ovenden would seek to introduce his
Social Security (Abolition of Wage Stop Rules) Bill under the
10 Minute Rule. This would be followed by the remaining stages
of the Oil Taxation Bill (Mr. Jenkin, Mr. McNair Wilson, Mr. Gray).
There would be a two line Whip.

On Thursday, there would be the Second Reading of the
Social Security Pensions Bill (Mr. Fowler, Mr. Clarke). This
would be followed by a Motion on the Census Order, which came
under the DESS - a discussion took place and it was agreed
that we might question the need for it without voting
against but that we really needed to find out more about it.
The remaining stages of the Reservoirs Bill (Lords) would

follow (Mr. Speed). This would be followed by a Motion relating to Charges on Firearm Holders.

Business on Friday would be devoted to Private Members' Motions.

On Monday 24th March, the House would debate a Motion on Financial Assistance to Opposition Parties (Mr. Peyton) until 7.00 p.m. There would be a debate on the Textile Industry on a Motion for the Adjournment.

Mr. Atkins announced that for the remainder of that week the provisional plans were as follows: on Tuesday 25th March, the Sex Discrimination Bill; Wednesday 26th March, a debate on Foreign Affairs; and on Thursday 27th March a debate on the Easter Adjournment.

2. Policy-Making, 1975 (LCG/75/68)

Sir Keith Joseph introduced his paper on Policy-Making 1975. He said that the questions were who was to be involved in policy-making, which themes did we need to identify and should any of the groups be opened up to the public?

Mrs. Thatcher said that a flexible framework for policy-making should be established and it was agreed that Sir Keith Joseph and Mr. Maude would discuss with individual Shadow Ministers the subjects and themes that would be covered and whether any of these should be treated in a different way and/or opened up to the public. Mrs. Thatcher recalled that when we had last been in Opposition a whole day had been devoted to a public debate on economic policy at Church House and that the proceedings had been published.

It was agreed that policy-making should be through the Backbench committees and that this should be discussed with Mr. du Cann. Lord Carrington thought there should be some representation from the Lords and Lord Hailsham thought that the Party outside should be represented. Mr. Whitelaw hoped that it would be possible to look at the Advisory Committee on Policy which was not satisfactory. It was agreed that outsiders would have to be brought in although there was a problem in that some people do not want to have their names made public.

On timing, it was agreed that the present stage of policy work should be completed within about a year so that the Party could, if it wanted to, produce a mid-term document for the 1976 Party Conference.

A discussion followed on whether or not there was a need for a Bill of Rights. Lord Hailsham spoke of some of the misconceptions and dangers of a Bill of Rights. Mr. Heseltine raised the question of the machinery of Government and it was agreed that Mr. Maude would look up an earlier report on the subject by Sir Edward Boyle. It was agreed that Sir Keith Joseph would collect views to see if any policy review on the machinery of Government was justified.

3. State Finance for Political Parties outside Parliament

It was agreed that, in response to Mr. Short's letter of 27th February to Mr. Atkins (LCC/75/67), we would propose somebody to sit on the Houghton Committee on the allocation of public funds to political parties outside Parliament.

4. Electricity Prices

Mr. Jenkin said that the rise of 30 per cent in electricity prices before Easter would soon be followed by a 12 per cent increase. It was agreed that we could not object to rational pricing for the industry but that this did not mean that we should accept the inefficiencies that made such price increases necessary.

5. Local Government

With the forthcoming Metropolitan District elections and Local Government Conference, a discussion took place on what lines we should take on the size of rate increases. This was urgent because leaflets for the elections were on the point of being drafted. Mr. Maude thought that the simple political point was that we wanted to see Local Government spending cut back in order to reduce the rates burden. Sir Geoffrey Howe said that this was all part of the wider problem of public expenditure as a whole.

It was agreed that Mr. Raison would produce a paper on Local Government issues for the next meeting of the Committee.

The meeting adjourned at 6.00 p.m.