

LEADER'S CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

Minutes of the 145th Meeting held at 3.00 p.m. on Monday, 10th January 1977, in the Leader's Room at the House of Commons.

Present: Mrs. Thatcher (in the Chair)

Sir Keith Joseph, Lord Carrington, Lord Hailsham, Sir Geoffrey Howe, Mr. Prior, Mr. Pym, Mr. Gilmour, Mr. Davies, Mr. St. John Stevas, Mr. Heseltine, Mr. Maude, Mr. Neave, Mr. Edwards, Mrs. Cppenheim, Mr. Biffen, Mr. King, Mr. Nott, Mr. Taylor, Lord Thornycroft.

Mr. Atkins.

In attendance: Sir Michael Havers, Mr. Brittan, Mr. Stanley, Mr. Butler, Mr. Douglas, Mr. Hooson, Mr. Ridley, Mr. Nicholson.

Apologies: Mr. Whitelaw, Mr. Jenkin, Mr. Peyton.

1. It was agreed that in the event of Lord Avon's death, we should expect the Government to adjourn Parliament for a day in the customary tribute.

2. Voting on amendments to the Scotland and Wales Bill

Mr. Pym introduced a discussion based on his paper, LCC/76/151. The following points were agreed:

(i) We were not expecting to whip on most of the amendments to the Bill, but there would be three line whips in support of our major amendments, such as to prevent the establishment of a Scottish executive and to exclude Wales.

(ii) We recognised that the Bill was so bad that there was not much hope of bringing it into line with our own proposals.

(iii) We would table and support amendments to prevent the Scottish Assembly from interfering with human rights or the international obligations of the U.K.

(iv) We should normally leave amendments on the Welsh sections of the Bill to groups of backbenchers and we should be careful not to support amendments which could prove embarrassing, such as any to set up an advisory assembly for Wales.

(v) We should not put down amendments to reduce the proportion of seats allocated to Scotland and Wales in the Westminster Parliament. The Speaker's Conference was the correct forum for such a discussion, and in this context it was noted that the Speaker's Conference was not yet set up because the Government would not concede our wish to have the under-representation of England and Northern Ireland discussed.

(vi) With regard to the Government's request for co-operation over a timetable for the Bill (see Leader's Consultative Committee Minutes LCC/76/144, paragraph 3) it was noted that Mr. Atkins had given no undertaking except to say that we would consider any representations from the Government and maintain customary contact with the Government's business managers as the Bill progressed.

(vii) We would support amendments to preserve for the Shetland islands the special status which they have by virtue of the Zetland County Council Act 1974.

It was agreed to continue this discussion at the next meeting which would be on Wednesday, 12th January at 5.00 p.m., and Mr. Atkins would seek to discover what attitude the Speaker was taking to the amendment put down by Mr. Abse, Mr. Steel and others.

3.4 Any other business

Mrs. Oppenheim reported on the situation in the bread industry and on the action taken by delivery van drivers. There was a discussion. It was agreed that we should not vote against the Bread Prices (No.2) Order 1975, which was likely to be debated later that evening. The Research Department was instructed to prepare a short paper making the basic political points on the issue, and that copies of this would be left in the Whip's office.