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LEADER'S STEERING COMMITTEE

There will be a meeting of the Leader's Steering Committee in the Leader's Room at the House of Commons on Monday, 27th February at 5.00 p.m. to discuss a paper on strategy which will be circulated before the weekend.

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CFP/MMH  
23.2.78

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LEADER'S STEERING COMMITTEE

54TH MEETING

5.00 p.m., Monday, 27th February 1978, in the  
Leader's Room at the House of Commons.

AGENDA

1. Strategy over the next few months - papers attached.
2. Any other business.

Conservative Research Department,  
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LEADER'S STEERING COMMITTEE54th MEETING

Minutes of the 54th Meeting held at 5.00 p.m.  
on Monday, 27th February, 1978, in the Leader's  
Room at the House of Commons

Present: Mrs. Thatcher (in the Chair)

Sir Keith Joseph, Lord Thorneycroft,  
Mr. Pym, Sir Ian Gilmour, Mr. Peyton,  
Mr. Davies, Mr. Maude

Mr. Atkins

In attendance: Mr. Butler, Mr. Stanley, Mr. Patten,  
Mr. Ridley, Mr. Nicholson

Apologies: Mr. Whitelaw, Lord Carrington,  
Sir Geoffrey Howe, Mr. Prior

Strategy

There was a discussion related to the paper by Mr. Patten, "Further Thoughts on Strategy", LSC(87)65 and to that by Mr. Maude on "Themes", LSC(78)66. The following points were agreed:

(i) The "Stepping Stones" exercise should proceed as planned in the light of the earlier discussion on 30th January, and parallel to our pursuing the proposals in Mr. Patten's paper. Mr. Whitelaw would continue to co-ordinate the "Stepping Stones" exercise while Mr. Prior would handle all subjects related to the trade union issue. One of the functions of the "Stepping Stones" exercise was, assuming an election in October, to prepare draft articles and speeches.

(ii) In all our speeches and other communications we should avoid giving the impression that we could transform the economy or social attitudes overnight.

(iii) The Government would obviously exploit the fact that it had reached its goal of single figure inflation; we should reply by drawing attention to the total inflation rate under Labour. We should not let the electorate forget Mr. Healey's 8.4% claim.

(iv) We should not lose sight of the need to keep a balance between the economic and non-economic issues.

(v) In getting across the greatly contrasted economic records of Conservative and Labour Governments since the War, we should remember that the electorate had largely forgotten the high growth rate and low inflation rate of the 1951-64 period.

(vi) We should seek to get across the simple equation between the revenue from North Sea oil and the need to pay for the deficits of British Steel and British Leyland.

(vii) We should point out that Labour conceded in 1974-5 almost every demand of the trade union leadership, and yet the resulting policies had worked against the interests of trade union members.

(viii) Among our positive themes, perhaps the most important were the "ownership theme" (whether of homes, pensions or shares), and the value of "dispersed ownership" with its relation to choice in jobs, services, etc.

(ix) We should refer not to "Labour's Programme 1976" but simply to "Labour's Programme" or "Labour's Programme for Britain". In this respect Mr. Atkins would recommend a debate on Labour's Programme to Mr. John Cope who had come top of the ballot for Private Members' Motions for Friday, 10th March.

(x) A recent article by Lord Hailsham in the Sunday Express of 1st January, 1978, dealing with the subject of "envy" was recommended as containing valuable arguments.

The meeting closed at 6.00 p.m.

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