

LEADER'S CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

147TH MEETING

5.00 p.m., Wednesday, 19th January 1977, in the  
Leader's Room at the House of Commons.

AGENDA

1. Minutes of the 145th and 146th Meetings.
2. Future business.
3. Forthcoming events.
4. Any other business.

LEADER'S CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

Minutes of the 147th Meeting held at 5.00 p.m. on Wednesday, 19th January 1977, in the Leader's Room at the House of Commons.

Present: Mrs. Thatcher (in the Chair)

Mr. Whitelaw, Sir Keith Joseph,  
Lord Carrington, Sir Geoffrey Howe,  
Mr. Pym, Mr. Peyton, Mr. Gilhaour,  
Mr. Davies, Mr. Prior,  
Mr. St. John Stevas, Mr. Heseltine,  
Mr. Maude, Mr. Neave, Mr. Edwards,  
Mr. Biffen, Mr. King, Mr. Nott,  
Mr. Taylor, Lord Thorncroft.

Mr. Atkins.

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

Apologies: Lord Hailsham, Mr. Jenkin, Mrs. Oppenheim.

1. Proposed Business for the Week 24th-31st January

On Monday, 24th January, there would be the Second Reading of the Water Charges Equalisation Bill (Mr. Jones, Mr. Speed). This would be followed by the Road Vehicles (Registration and Licensing) (Amendment) Regulations.

On Tuesday, 25th January, Sir Brandon Rhys Williams would seek leave to introduce his Companies (Audit Committees) Bill under the 10 Minute Rule. This would be followed by further progress in Committee on the Scotland and Wales Bill (Mr. Pym and team).

On Wednesday, 26th January, Mr. Eldon Griffiths would seek leave to introduce his Dismissal of Employees (Redress of Grievances) Bill under the 10 Minute Rule. This would be followed by further progress in Committee on the Scotland and Wales Bill (Mr. Pym and team).

On Thursday, 27th January, there would be a Supply Day, with subjects to be decided, followed by a resumed debate on the Services' Committee Report on the Printing of Hansard.

On Friday, 28th January, there would be the Second Readings of eight private members Bills, the first two of these being Mr. Jack Page's Insurance Brokers (Registration) Bill and Mr. D. Smith's Town and Country Planning (Amendment) Bill.

On Monday, 31st January, there would be the Second Readings of the International Finance, Trade and Aid Bill (Mr. Parkinson and Mr. Borden), and of the Reduction of Redundancy Rebates Bill.

## 2. Matters Arising on Business

There was a discussion of various points and it was agreed that:

(i) The two 10 Minute Rule Bills on 25th and 26th January were designed to draw attention to important issues where we had a good case, and if the Bills were opposed we should vote to give them a first reading.

(ii) There would be a free vote for Conservative members on any amendments to the Scotland and Wales Bill designed to secure proportional representation for the elections to the Scottish and Welsh Assemblies, but members of the Shadow Cabinet would not vote on such amendments. Mr. Pym would set out the various arguments for and against proportional representation in Assembly elections, and argue that the supporters of proportional representation would have to prove the case for change.

(iii) Mr. Pym would advise whether the Shadow Cabinet should abstain on free votes on amendments other than the ones on proportional representation.

(iv) There would be a two line whip in favour of our amendments to reduce the number of Assembly seats.

(v) There would be a two line whip against the Liberal amendment designed to promote a federal system.

## 3. Subject for the Supply Day

There was a discussion and it was agreed that Mr. Prior would consult with Mrs. Chalker (in the absence of Mr. Jenkin) as to whether enough information was available to make it worthwhile our debating the action taken by the National Union of Public Employees against the work of voluntary organisations in psychiatric day centres and elsewhere. If this subject was not thought appropriate for debate at the moment, then we should debate crime, on which we would not vote.

## 4. The Position of the Attorney General

Sir Michael Havers reported on the likely developments following the decision of the Appeal Court judges to grant Mr. Gouriet an injunction to prevent the Union of Post Office Workers from holding up postal communications with South Africa, and on their criticism of the Attorney General. It was noted that if the case went against the Attorney General he was likely to appeal to the House of Lords and there would be a delay of some weeks before a final decision was made. It was also noted that the sub judice rules were likely to be strictly enforced in the meantime. It was agreed that we should decide at the appropriate time what action to take in Parliament.

It was noted that there did not appear to be any examples of a similar case occurring which involved a Conservative Attorney General.

## 5. Meeting with the TUC

Mrs. Thatcher reported that on Monday, 17th January, certain members of the Shadow Cabinet had met certain members of the TUC General Council who sat on the NEC, and that, as arranged at the meeting, we had only released details of this to the Press when they had specifically asked about the meeting. It was noted that these discussions had been harmonious. It was agreed that future meetings might usefully take place, but on an ad hoc basis.

6. House of Lords Reform

Mrs. Thatcher reported that we were setting up a policy group to study the reform of the House of Lords. The Chairman would be Lord Home of the Hirsel and the group would include four members of the Lords, four of the Commons and one constitutional lawyer. It was agreed that Lord Home would be consulted as to whether it would be desirable to release this information to the Press.

7. Other Business

Certain other points were discussed and it was agreed that

(i) On the Committee Stage of the Scotland and Wales Bill we would oppose the closure of particular debates only if the circumstances appeared to warrant it.

(ii) With regard to a request from the Liberal Party for our support in pressing for an increase in the "Short" money made available for Opposition parties in respect of their Parliamentary activities, Mrs. Thatcher and Mr. Atkins would draft a reply indicating that there was no assumption at the time that this money had been granted on an inflation-proofed basis, and that we would oppose such an increase.

(iii) We should consider in due course whether to have a half Supply Day to press the Government to pass the legislation on direct elections to the European Parliament in this session, on the grounds that, if the Government failed to do this, either progress on direct elections would inevitably be held up, or the drawing of constituency boundaries in Britain would be done hastily and there would be a danger of gerrymandering.

The meeting closed at 6.15 p.m.