

LEADERS CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

79TH MEETING

5.00 p.m., Wednesday 22nd October, 1975

in the Leader's Room at the House of Commons

AGENDA

1. Minutes of the 78th Meeting - attached.
2. Future Business.
3. Industry Strategy - paper by Mr. Heseltine - LCC/75/84, to be circulated.
4. Any Other Business.

M. Supply NHS 3
Tu. legal Aid 2
Children

M. European Secondary leg. /
Kwita report.

W. Employment Protection 2.

Th. Policy Holders Post Bill. 2
fiscal land charges

F. S. Rhodesia

Conservative Research Department,
24 Old Queen Street, London, S.W.1.

CFP/SMW
17.10.75

Leader's Consultative Committee

Minutes of the 78th Meeting held at 5.00 p.m.
on Wednesday, 27th October 1975, in the Leader's
Room at the House of Commons.

Present: Mrs. Thatcher (In the Chair)

Mr. Whitelaw, Sir Keith Joseph,
Lord Hailsham, Mr. Maudling,
Sir Geoffrey Howe, Mr. Gilmour,
Lord Carrington, Mr. Jenkin,
Mr. Peyton, Mr. St. John-Stevas,
Mr. Heseltine (for item 3),
Mr. Raison, Mr. Maude, Mr. Buchanan-Smith,
Mr. Edwards, Mr. Neave, Mr. Younger,
Mr. Fowler, Mrs. Oppenheim,
Mr. Jopling, Lord Thorncroft.

Mr. Atkins.

Mr. Higgins (for item 2), Mr. Hayhoe,
Mr. Montgomery, Mr. Shelton, Mr. Fatten,
Mr. Ridley, Mr. Nicholson (In attendance).

Apologies: Mr. Prior.

1. Proposed Business for the week 27th October to 3rd November.

On Monday, 27th October, there would be a supply day with a debate on an Opposition motion on the National Health Service (Mr. Fowler, Dr. Vaughan). This would be followed by a Prayer on Direct Grant Schools (Cessation of Grant) Regulations (Mr. St. John-Stevas).

On Tuesday, 28th October, Mr. Jack Ashley would seek leave to introduce his Legal Aid and Advice Bill under the 10 minute rule, and this would be followed by the remaining stages of the Children Bill (Mr. Fowler, Dr. Vaughan).

On Wednesday, 29th October, Mr. J. Loveridge would seek leave to introduce his Armed Forces (Protection in Respect of Accidents) Bill under the 10 minute rule, and this would be followed by the Lords' amendments to the Employment Protection Bill (Mr. Hayhoe, Mr. Madel, Mr. Brittan).

On Thursday, 30th October, there would be the remaining stages of the Policyholders Protection Bill (Mr. Higgins) and of the Land Charges Bill (Mr. G. Page).

On Friday, 31st October, there would be the Southern Rhodesia 1965 (Continuation) Order 1975 (Mr. Maudling).

On Monday, 3rd November, there would be debates on the 1st Report from the Procedure Committee on European Secondary Legislation and on the Renton Report on the Preparation of Legislation (Mr. Peyton).

2. Matters Arising from Business

There was a discussion on voting on the Policyholders Protection Bill. Mr. Higgins explained that the Bill had been greatly amended and many of the objectionable features had been removed. It was agreed that we should not support any amendment to the Bill on the subject of the Nationalife policyholders; they would probably obtain similar compensation to that which they might have been entitled to under the Bill. We should not decide whether to abstain or to vote with the Government against such an amendment until more information about backbenchers' views was available.

Lord Carrington explained that it was not possible to pray against the Direct Grant Schools Regulation in the Lords on 3rd November; there was to be further consideration of Lord Goodman's amendments about the freedom of the press on that day. If the Regulation was considered by the Lords after it had already been accepted by the Commons it would be undesirable to take the fairly unprecedented step of rejecting it, at the same time as the House of Lords were challenging the Government over a Bill. There was a discussion on whether the Prayer on the Regulation could be taken in the Commons on some day other than next Monday, 27th October, so that the Direct Grant Schools lobby might have enough time to make new arrangements now that their plans for the Lords debate had had to be cancelled. It was agreed, however, that as there was no other Monday on which there would be a three line Whip, and as we would need to vote in strength on the Prayer, we should have to take the Prayer the following Monday.

3. Industrial Policy: Paper by Mr. Heseltine(LCG/75/04)

Mr. Heseltine introduced his Paper, pointing out that his proposals were designed to improve communications between the Party and industry and to attract more managers and trade unionists to the Party. He did not necessarily expect any substantial assistance to policy-making from the exercise, but there was something to be gained from showing that we were open to advice. The following points were made in discussion:

(a) Many MP's would be unhappy at being given guidance from the Shadow Cabinet on making contact with industry in their constituencies.

(b) There had been successful meetings between MP's and the leading businessmen in their constituencies arranged by the CBI.

(c) It would also be helpful to use weekend Conferences with industrialists, which had originally been thought about in the context of discussions on tax, to discuss wider issues.

(d) It might be unwise to advertise, as it were, a long list of policy areas on which the Party wanted advice: this might suggest that we proposed to make sweeping and radical changes when what most businessmen really wanted was stability and the chance to get on with the job of making profits.

It was agreed that Mr. Heseltine's first proposal, to mount a public exhibition of employee communications, should go ahead, subject to each company being informed of any use that was to be made of its communications. While special interest meetings were important and should continue to take place, the possibility of involving MP's and candidates more widely should be looked at again and discussed with the Chief Whip before any action was taken. Nothing definite would be arranged until our contacts

with the CBI had been further developed. Mr. Heseltine and Sir Geoffrey Howe would discuss with the Chairman of the Party the plans for regional conferences for industrialists.

4. Other Business

Mr. Whitelaw said that the Government's White Paper on devolution was expected shortly after the Queen's Speech and he would prepare a short paper for discussion on 12th November on how we should react to the proposals.

It was agreed that the Research Department should prepare a list of increases in current Government expenditure. Backbenchers would help by tabling questions on increases in the numbers of people employed in Government Departments, in office space taken and required, in numbers of vacancies notified and number of circulars issued, and so on.

The Research Department should also compile examples of conspicuous waste in central and local government so that when our spokesmen were asked where we would cut expenditure, they could start by supplying one or two examples of waste.

The meeting closed at 6.10 p.m.