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## LEADER'S CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

Minutes of the 91st Meeting held at 5.45 p.m. on Monday, 12th January 1976, in the Leader's Room at the House of Commons

Present: Mrs. Thatcher (in the Chair)

Mr. Whitelaw, Lord Hailsham
Mr. Maudling, Sir Geoffrey Howe
Mr. Prior, Mr. Peyton
Mr. St. John-Stevas, Mr. Heseltine
Mr. Raison, Mr. Maude
Mr. Edwards, Mr. Neave Mr. Younger, Mr. Fowler Mrs. Oppenheim, Mr. Jopling

Lord Thorneycroft

Mr. Atkins

In attendance: Mr. Montgomery, Mr. Butler

Mr. Patten, Mr. Ridley

Mr. Nicholson

Sir Keith Joseph, Mr. Gilmour Lord Carrington, Mr. Jenkin Apologies:

Mr. Buchanan-Smith

## 1. Northern Ireland Security

Mr. Whitelaw reported on the meeting that he and Mr. Neave had had with the Prime Minister on Wednesday, 7th January. Mr. Wilson had proposed that, in addition to the routine talks between the Government and Opposition on security, there should be two further tiers of consultations: first, involving seven or eight members each of the Government and of the Conservative party with one Liberal, Mr. Molyneaux and Mr. Fitt; and secondly, involving all the Northern Ireland MPs (excluding Mr. Maguire, the Independent Republican) and certain of the Northern Ireland Convention members.

It was agreed that we should react to these proposals in the light of our belief that the Government was trying to neutralise our criticisms and share responsibility for their failure to maintain adequate security in Northern Ireland, and that, since the proposed numbers to be included in the talks would make it almost impossible to keep information confidential, information conveyed would have to be somewhat limited. Mr. Whitelaw and Mr. Neave had not commented to Mr. Whitelaw and Mr. Neave had not commented to limited. the Prime Minister on his proposals. It was agreed that while it would be difficult to turn the proposal down out of hand, we should seek to enquire further what the discussions would be about and to avoid any commitment to their continuation.

## The giving of evidence by the Conservative Party 2.

Mrs. Thatcher said that the Party organisation had been asked by Mr. Short to give evidence on the Devolution White Paper. We had replied that the subject was not one for the Party organisation but concerned the Parliamentary Party, which

was debating the White Paper in Parliament. It was agreed that we should discuss further what line we should take towards similar requests for evidence, as the Labour Party was gaining considerable publicity from this process.

## 3. The Devolution Debate

It was agreed that we should draft an amendment which would seek to unite all sections of opinion within the Party. Mr. Whitelaw and Mr. Atkins would be responsible, in consultation with the Devolution team, and the amendment would be on the lines of urging the Government to reconsider their proposals before bringing forward legislation, since their present scheme threatened the unity of the United Kingdom and provided numerous opportunities for conflict between the various authorities proposed.

The meeting closed at 6.15 p.m.

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Conservative Research Department
24 Old Queen Street, London SW1

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