

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

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

2. The giving of evidence by the Conservative Party

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

