

LEADER'S CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

Minutes of the 182nd Meeting held at 5.00 pm.
on Wednesday, 7th December 1977, in the Leader's
Room at the House of Commons.

Present: Mrs. Thatcher (in the Chair)

Mr. Whitelaw, Sir Keith Joseph,
Sir Geoffrey Howe, Mr. Prior,
Mr. Pym, Sir Ian Gilmour,
Mr. Davies, Mr. Jenkin,
Mr. Peyton, Mr. St. John Stevas,
Mr. Maude, Mr. Edwards, Mr. Nott,
Mrs. Oppenheim, Mr. King,
Mr. Taylor.

Mr. Atkins.

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

Apologies: Lord Carrington, Lord Hailsham,
Lord Thorneycroft, Mr. Neave,
Mr. Heseltine.

1. Proposed Business for the Week 12th-16th December

On Monday, 12th December, there would be a Supply Day. This would be followed by Civil and Defence Votes on Account and Winter Supplementary Estimates, and by Motions on the European Communities (Definition of Treaties) (No.6) Order and related EEC Documents S/799/77 and S/1151/77 and on the Local Loans (Increase of Limit) (No.2) Order. These would be followed by the remaining stages of the Participation Agreements Bill (Mr. Gray).

On Tuesday, 13th December, there would be further progress in Committee on the European Assembly Elections Bill (Mr. Whitelaw and team). This would be followed by a Motion on EEC Document R/48/77 on Equal Treatment in Social Security.

On Wednesday, 14th December, there would be Proceedings on the Consolidated Fund Bill.

On Thursday, 15th December, there would be Motions on the Rate Support Grant Orders. These would be followed by Motions on the Social Security (Contributions Re-rating) Order and on the Dioceses Measure.

On Friday, 16th December, there would be Christmas Adjournment debates.

2. Matters Arising on Business

There was a discussion, and it was noted that, as the House would need to finish the business on whichever clause of the European Assembly Elections Bill was being debated on the 13th December before a motion could be debated to take Clause 3 (dealing with the system for such elections) out of turn

the House would need to sit very late that night. It was agreed that the House needed to decide on the system as soon as possible, so as to enable the Government to make the necessary preparations for first-past-the-post elections. There would be a free vote on the issue of the system of elections, and we would not vote on the motions on the Rate Support Grant Orders on 15th December.

3. Subjects for the Supply Day

It was agreed that we would debate the Polish Shipbuilding Order in the first half of the Supply Day on 12th December, with Mr. Nott opening and Mr. Lamont winding. The second half of the Supply Day would be devoted to a debate on the Government's amnesty for illegal immigrants (Mr. Whitelaw). There would be a 3 line whip at 7.00 p.m. and 10.00 p.m.

It was agreed also that we would debate the state of the livestock industry and that of the steel industry on early Supply Days in the new year.

(It was later decided after this meeting that the second half of the Supply Day should be offered to the Government for continuing the debate on the European Assembly Elections Bill so that the debate on Clause 3 and the vote would take place at a more reasonable hour.)

4. Government Assistance to Opposition Parties

It was agreed that we should accede to the Government's proposal to increase by 10 per cent the sum voted 2½ years ago for the Conservative Party's Parliamentary work (Leader's Office, Whips' Office, and Research Department).

5. Co-ordination between the Conservative Party at Westminster and Strasbourg.

Mr. Davies reported that liaison with the Conservative members of the European Parliament had not been satisfactory. There was a discussion and it was agreed that he would explore various means to improve the co-ordination, in particular, possibly through the European Policy Committee.

6. Rhodesia

Mr. Davies reported that he had not made the speech that he was preparing on this subject (see Minutes, LCC/77/181, Section 5) as there had been a number of developments since that discussion. It was agreed that it was even more important that we should encourage the Government to give a fair wind to Mr. Smith's initiative in the light of Dr. Kaunda's reactions against the Government's White Paper policy.

7. Pay

There was a discussion. It was agreed that our policy on private sector pay was that employers and unions were bound by the Phase 2 policy but when that expired there was no agreed Phase 3, and we could point out that the Government's general 10% guideline was far more than was likely to be justified by general increases in productivity. Our view was that some groups should get more and some get less than the 10% average, depending on productivity, the need to attract labour and the need for a proper pricing and competition policy.

8. Other business

Mrs. Thatcher reported on her visits to NATO, the EEC Commission, and to Belgrade.

Mr. Maude reported that the Secretary of the London CPC had written to MPs urging them to expedite progress on the European Assembly Elections Bill so that the elections could take place next May. It was noted that Mr. Maude had communicated that it was improper for party organisations such as the CPC to circularise MPs on official notepaper in this way.

The meeting closed at 6.12 p.m.