

THE NATIONAL UNION OF CONSERVATIVE AND UNIONIST ASSOCIATIONS

Minutes of the Executive Committee Meeting

Thursday 28th April 1983

The Committee met at 32 Smith Square, Westminster on Thursday 28th April 1983 at 2.15 p.m. under the chairmanship of Sir Russell Sanderson and the names of the 108 present are recorded.

1. Chairman's opening remarks

a) The Chairman referred to the tragic death in March of the Viscount Boyd of Merton, a former Colonial Secretary and President of the Western Area, and members stood in silent tribute.

b) He expressed the Committee's gratitude to Mr. Simon Coombs who would be retiring as Chairman of the Wessex Area and to Mr. Geoffrey Campbell, M.B.E., who would retire as C.T.U. national Chairman in May.

2. Apologies for absence

Apologies from 26 members were noted and recorded.

3. Minutes of the last meeting

Minutes of the meeting held on the 17th February 1983, having been circulated with the agenda, were approved and signed by the Chairman.

4. Business arising from the Minutes

The Secretary reported on arrangements for the visit to the European Parliament from 26th to 28th October 1983, about which he would be writing in due course.

No other points were raised.

5. Central Council Meeting, 26th March

The Secretary reported on this Central Council Meeting which was attended by about 650 Central Council Members - more than the usual number - but fewer additional representatives, the maximum attendance being 850 for the Prime Minister's speech. There were 42 speakers from the floor in the five debates. The Chairman commented and congratulated Mr. Michael Craig-Cooper, C.B.E., T.D., Joint Honorary Treasurer of Greater London Area, on his very successful financial appeal which resulted in a collection of £2,158. The Committee signified its approval of the Central Council moving around the country rather than remaining in London, the next two meetings being at Birmingham and Newcastle.

6. Local Government Elections, 5th May

Mr. Tony Durant, M.P., Chairman of the National Local Government Advisory Committee, reporting on the Local Government Elections, said that they were hopeful of gains in the North and East Midlands rather than in the South where there are largely Conservative-controlled councils at present and a danger from Alliance candidates if the Labour vote collapsed. Some discussion ensued and the Chairman stressed the special significance of these elections.

7. Conservative Commonwealth and Overseas Council

Mr. Tim Renton, M.P., was invited to report on the amalgamation of the Conservative Commonwealth and Overseas Council with the Party's Overseas Committee to form a new Conservative Foreign and Commonwealth Council for which Rules had been agreed. He gave details. The Chairman thanked Mr. Renton and Mr. Peter Lane, J.P., for their efforts in this connection.

8. Resolutions received from Area, Constituency and other organisations

Approval was given to the action taken on seven resolutions received since the last meeting and circulated with the agenda (copy lodged herewith), replies having been received to five of these.

9. Federal German Elections, March 1983

The Chairman called on Dr. Alistair Smith, C.B.E., Deputy Chairman of Scotland, to give a report on these elections. He said that the C.W.D.U./C.S.U. had achieved their best result since 1957 with 48.8% of the poll and the new Government under Chancellor Kohl should be a stable one. The Greens had achieved an appreciable advance. They were a combination of "radical" and "anti" groups concentrated on the Cruise missile, nuclear power and acid rain, rather similar to our C.N.D. Dr. Smith spoke of lessons to be learnt from these elections but concluded that they were an encouragement to us. An interesting discussion followed.

10. Discussion on Defence Policy

Rt. Hon. Michael Heseltine, M.P., Secretary of State for Defence, said that Defence would be a major issue at the General Election and he gave the Committee some very valuable ammunition which might be used during the campaign whenever it occurred. It was necessary to stress the deterrent value of nuclear arms within the NATO Alliance and the fact that this had maintained peace for 38 years. To take it away would be a great gamble. However, a distinction should be drawn between leaders and the "led" over unilateral nuclear disarmament. Mr. Heseltine dealt with four questions and was thanked by the Chairman.

11. Area Chairmen's Reports

Reports were given as follows:

- a) Scotland; Mr. David Mitchell, S.C.U.A. President, gave the present political situation and regional breakdown in Scotland showing the contrast between the East and West of Scotland.
- b) Northern Area; Mr. Peter Hutchinson, spoke of the situation in the Local Government Elections and the significant details of the Darlington Parliamentary By-Election.
- c) Wales; Mr. Zach Brierley, C.B.E., said the overall situation in Wales was good and they hoped to win two extra seats at the General Election but there were problems at present in Clywd North West and Bridgend.

Rt. Hon. Cecil Parkinson, M.P., the Party Chairman, commenting briefly on these reports, expressed thanks to Constituency Associations and Areas for the rapid way in which they had achieved re-organisation following Redistribution with amazingly little trouble. He also referred to the selection of candidates which had gone extremely well, the lessons learned from Darlington, the dangers of intervention by Alliance candidates and the need for absolute preparation for the General Election.

12. Report from Standing Review Committee

Sir David Davenport-Handley, O.B.E., J.P., D.L., Chairman of the Standing Review Committee, reported on the Committee's recommendations which were considered as follows:

a) N.U.E.C. Standing Order No. 7

Sir David proposed, seconded by Mr. Hugh Simmonds, and it was agreed to insert after "Committee" in line 6 the words "and the Chairman of the C.P.C. National Advisory Committee" and to delete "four" in line 7 and insert "three" so that the C.P.C. National Chairman would be an ex-officio representative on the Advisory Committee on Policy. It would be recommended to the Policy Committee that the senior Vice-Chairman of the National Union should be co-opted to that Committee.

b) National Union Rule XII(5)

Sir David proposed that this Rule concerning the constitution of the Executive Committee should be amended to read "The President, the Hon. Treasurer and four other representatives of the Scottish Conservative and Unionist Association including at least one woman". This was seconded by Mr. David Mitchell and carried as a recommendation to the Central Council.

c) Area C.P.C. Chairmen

The Standing Review Committee recommended that there should be no change in rules but Areas should consider the election of their C.P.C. Chairman as one of the representatives to the N.U.E.C. Some dissent was expressed about tying the hands of Areas, but it was agreed that this was merely a recommendation so that the matter was left to Areas to decide.

d) Sir David reported that the Standing Review Committee had considered the proposed alteration to National Union Rule XII(3)(c) which had been referred to it, and recommended no further action. It was agreed that no change should be made to this rule which would be taken to refer only to "Westminster" Association Officers and not E.C.C. Officers, in relation to Area representatives to the Executive Committee.

13. Alleged discrimination in membership by Conservative Clubs

The Chairman called on Mr. Peter Murphy (G.L.A.) who had given notice that he wished to raise this matter. Mr. Murphy alleged that there was discrimination by certain Conservative Clubs against women and ethnic minorities and this was a time bomb within clubs which could cause substantial damage to the Party at national level. Sir Donald Kaberry Bt., T.D., D.L., M.P., the Chairman of the Association of Conservative Clubs, pointed out that there were 1,400 Conservative Clubs with 500,000 members and they were anxious that these clubs should discriminate to ensure that their members were Conservative supporters and subscribing Association members. The law in the Sex Discrimination Act and the Race Relation Act was quite clear and must be observed, as was frequently pointed out to the clubs by the A.C.C. In many clubs women could become associate or full members. After discussion the Chairman said that any specific complaints about such discrimination must be referred to the A.C.C. for investigation as it was obviously against the interests of the Party. He expressed the Committee's appreciation of Sir Donald Kaberry's long service to the Parliamentary Party and the A.C.C.

14. Business for the next meeting

Rt. Hon. Tom King, M.P. was suggested as a possible speaker for the next meeting on 9th June unless it was cancelled by a General Election.

There being no other business the meeting closed at 4.30 p.m.