

HARRIS

10th July, 1981

All Party Repeal Group

Thank you so much for having sent to me a copy of your Memorandum dated 6th July, and of the Minutes of the Meeting held on 1st July.

These I have read with great interest.

May I suggest that you might approach the following Members of our House:-

John Townend (Bridlington)
Bob Dunn (Dartford)
Keith Wickenden (Dorking)
John Ward (Poole)
Ralph Howell (Norfolk North)
Ivor Stanbrook (Orpington)

With best wishes.

The Lord Harris of High Cross,
Institute of Economic Affairs,
2 Lord North Street,
Westminster, London SW1



ALL-PARTY REPEAL GROUP

Aide Memoire of exploratory meeting
(Wednesday, 1st July 3.30 - 5pm)

Present: Lady Trumpington, Lords Renton, Robbins, Vaizey, Monson, McFadzean of Kelvinside, Halsbury, Orr-Ewing; and for part of the meeting Lords Beloff and Drumalbyn.

Apologies: Lords Spens, Shawcross, De L'Isle, Glenkinglas, Boardman, Boyd-Carpenter, Noel-Buxton; and Lady Saltoun.

PURPOSE

Lord Harris recalled the aim to explore the scope for some form of concerted action to tackle obsolete or restrictive statutes by simple repeal rather than by elaborate amendment.

Among possible targets suggested during the discussion were: the Shops Acts (proposed by Lady Trumpington, Truck Acts and rent control (Lord Vaizey), sale of spectacles (Lord Orr-Ewing), Wages Councils (Lord Spens), Licensing laws (Lord Harris), aspects of planning control, Equal Opportunities Commission and Exchange Control (Lord Monson), air fares (?), Central Council for Education and Training in Social Work and other quangos (Lord Renton).

METHOD

Lord Renton suggested the first step was to draw up a batting order, which Lord Robbins thought should give priority to less controversial issues such as Truck Acts, Shops Acts and sale of spectacles.

Lords Halsbury and Orr-Ewing proposed an omnibus bill tackling these three restrictions under some such title as the Obsolete Laws Repeal Bill.

Other more contentious issues would then be left to be tackled by separate repeal bills.

P T O



TIMING

Lord Orr-Ewing urged the need to attract early publicity for the campaign, in part to elicit support among MPs who might be alerted to take appropriate action in the Commons.

Lord Halsbury suggested that a Bill should be introduced in the present Session so as to be read a first time and printed in October, as a preparation to re-introducing the Bill at the opening of the new Session. At some stage it would be wise to consult with Sir Peter Henderson and the Whips.

NEXT STEP

It was agreed that an effort should be made to widen the Group, in particular by seeking participation from the Labour, Social Democrat and Liberal benches.

Among people suggested for invitation to the next meeting were:

Labour: Lords Houghton, Northfield (spectacles);
Lady Phillips (Shops Acts).

Social Democrat: Lords Donaldson (spectacles), Harris of Greenwich,
Young of Dartington; Lady Burton (air fares).

Liberal: Lords Wigoder, Wade, Mackie of Benshie, Tanlaw.

Crossbench: Lords Roberthall, Hankey, Rugby (spectacles),
Simon of Glaisdale (Shops Acts).

Conservative: Lady Sharples; Lords Ellenborough, Campbell of Alloway,
Gisborough (Sunday trading).

DATE OF NEXT MEETING: Thursday, 23rd July at 4pm.

(Room 4 has been provisionally reserved.)

RH:2nd July 1981.

From Lord Harris of High Cross



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For information
2 Lord North Street,
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6th July 1981

I recently took the initiative in calling an informal meeting of a dozen fellow-Crossbench and Conservative peers to consider the prospects for a series of Private Members' Bills to repeal outright laws that might be considered obsolete or unduly restrictive of personal freedom.

There was no question of expecting a group of independent-minded peers to agree to act together over a wide range of issues. But one merit of the repeal approach is that Second Reading debates would enable supporters and opponents to focus on the principles of radical change, as in Lord Wade's Bill of Rights.

Among a wide range of possible targets that emerged were such relatively uncontroversial (or at least, non-party) measures as repealing all or parts of the Truck Acts, the Shops Acts, and the prohibition on free sale of spectacles. Other more contentious issues were aspects of the law on Licensing, planning and rent control, wages councils, air fares, the Equal Opportunities Commission, and selected quangos.

It was thought that some kind of concerted action might be appropriate for the less controversial issues, perhaps by means of an omnibus measure under some such title as the Obsolete Laws Repeal Bill, leaving other issues to be brought forward by individual peers who felt strongly about them. For the next meeting it was thought desirable to widen participation and form an all-Party group to include people from the Labour, Social Democrat and Liberal benches.

Your name was among a dozen suggested for invitation to the meeting arranged for Thursday, 23rd July at 4pm, provisionally in Room 4. Would you be good enough to let me know whether you are interested and, if so, whether you can join us at that time? If you cared to propose further measures we might consider for repeal, it would be helpful in preparing an agenda. I should also be glad to have suggestions of other possible participants.