

CONFIDENTIAL

COPY NO. 1000

LEADER'S CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

77TH MEETING



3.30 p.m., Wednesday, 1st October, 1975
in the Leader's Room at the House of Commons

AGENDA

1. Minutes of the 74th, 75th and 76th meetings.
2. Future Business.
3. Party Conference. - *Electoral Reform*
4. "The House of Lords and the Housing Finance Special Provisions Bill" - paper by Lord Carrington, LCG/75/03 attached. Lord St. Aldwyn will introduce this paper.
5. Northern Ireland.
6. Any other business.

LEADER'S CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

Minutes of the 77th Meeting held at 3.30 p.m. on Wednesday, 1st October 1975, in the Leader's Room at the House of Commons.

Present: Mrs. Thatcher (In the Chair)

Sir Keith Joseph, Lord Hailsham, Mr. Whitelaw, Mr. Maudling, Mr. Peyton, Mr. Maude, Mr. Raison, Mr. Fowler, Mr. Buchanan-Smith, Mr. Neave, Mr. Edwards, Mrs. Oppenheim, Mr. Jopling

Mr. Atkins

Lord St. Aldwyn, Mr. Hayhoe, Mr. Montgomery, Mr. Shelton, Mr. Patten, Mr. Ridley, Mr. Forman, Mr. Nicholson (in attendance)

Apologies: Sir Geoffrey Howe, Lord Carrington, Mr. Prior, Mr. Heseltine, Mr. Jenkin, Mr. St. John-Stevas

1. Proposed Business for the week 13-20th October

On Monday 13th October there would be the first day of the remaining stages of the Community Land Bill (Mr. Raison, Mr. Rossi and team).

On Tuesday 14th October there would be the final day of the remaining stages of the Community Land Bill.

On Wednesday 15th October there would be the Lords' amendments to the Sex Discrimination Bill (Mr. Gilmour, Mr. Alison), followed by motions on the Price Code Orders (Mrs. Oppenheim, Mr. Ismont) and a motion on the Incumbents (Vacation of Benefices) Measure.

On Thursday 16th October there would be the Lords' amendments to the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Amendment) Bill (Mr. Hayhoe, Mr. Brittan).

On Friday 17th October there would be a debate on EEC agricultural matters - the Common Agricultural Policy, the Green Pound Markets, Wheat, Milk products and Fish (Mr. Jopling, Mr. Scott-Hopkins).

On Monday 20th October there would be a debate on the report of the Finer Committee on one parent families (Command no. 5269) (Mr. Fowler, Mr. Clarke), followed by the remaining stages of the Inheritance (Provision for Family and Dependents) Bill (Mr. Awdry) and all stages of the Iron and Steel (Consolidation Measure) Bill (Mr. Awdry).

2. Matters Arising on Business

It was noted that the Government was preparing to postpone the State Opening to 19th November so as to ensure the passage of the Community Land Bill. It was agreed that in view of the addition of several new clauses to this Bill, we should protest at having to take it on 13th October, and seek to postpone consideration for as long as possible. It was agreed that there should be a three line whip on the second day of the Community Land Bill, and that a decision would be taken on the whip for the first day when the Government's new clauses had been examined: we should not wish to put the Party on a three line whip if there were not likely to be any significant votes. There would be a three line whip to support all the Lords' amendments to the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Amendments) Bill.

It was noted that there would be a Supply Day on 27th October, and Members were asked to consider subjects for debate.

3. Party Conference

It was noted that the two balloted motions were on freedom of the individual, to which Mr. Gilmour would reply, and on EEC and overseas affairs, to which Mr. Maudling would reply, while Mr. Younger would reply to the Defence Debate.

There was a discussion on the note we would wish to strike throughout the Party Conference. The points made included:

- (a) We should constantly relate the growing breakdown of the economy and the social services and the strains on society to Socialism and the record of the present Government.
- (b) We should not be apologetic about our past record, but we should concentrate on showing how Conservative principles would enable us to tackle the problems of the future.
- (c) We should ensure that our policies appealed to moderate trade unionists who would become increasingly disillusioned with the Labour Government.

On the question of supplementary benefits to strikers' families, it was agreed that Mr. Fowler would work out a form of words for his reply to the debate, in collaboration with Mr. Prior and Mr. Hayhoe.

There was a discussion on whether or not we should repeat the October Manifesto pledge that, if elected, we would set up a Speaker's Conference on electoral reform. It was agreed that in his reply to the Conference Debate Mr. Maude should say that the Government had undertaken to set up a Speaker's Conference and we would go along with this decision; if it proved absolutely necessary, he could go further and refer to the last Manifesto.

...../ It was noted

It was noted that Lord Thornycroft would explain to the Conference that the Party faced a considerable deficit, and that constituencies would have to increase their income and their contributions to the centre. Reference was made to the remarkably poor performance of certain constituencies in meeting their quota, and how this was angering those constituencies which were more successful.

It was agreed that before, during and after the Conference Members of the ICC should reject requests to appear in broadcast discussion programmes with other members of the Party in which a sharp difference of opinion about policy might appear to emerge.

4. The House of Lords and the Housing Finance (Special Provisions) Bill

Lord Hailsham explained his view that the Lords should insist on their amendments to the Bill, referring to the arguments for this course of action set out in Lord Carrington's paper (ICC/75/83). Lord St. Aldwyn then put the case against insisting on the amendments, referring to the arguments in the paper, and to the conclusion which he and Lord Carrington had reached, that on balance it would be best not to press the issue further.

There was a discussion. Among the points raised were the following: it was disgraceful that rate payers should be penalised to exonerate Labour's law breakers; even if the Government got their way, the names of the councillors who had broken the law and placed larger burdens on their rate payers would be publicised in the District Auditor's report; it might be possible to obtain support in the press, for example from Bernard Levin, for the Lords insisting on the amendments; it was possible that some Liberals and cross-benchers might vote with us if we pressed the amendments, but on the other hand a few might conceivably press the matter to a division if we chose not to do so.

It was agreed that when Lord Carrington and Lord St. Aldwyn met the Independent Unionist Peers on 14th October, they would consult with them without putting too strongly the case against insisting on the amendments and try to arrive at a consensus which would minimise the chances of a divided vote, and the prospect, for example, of Conservative Peers defeating the Government against the advice of their official leaders. Lord Carrington would report on this discussion to the ICC on 15th October.

5. Northern Ireland

Mr. Neave reported on the situation following the recent sectarian violence. There was a discussion, in which Mr. Neave's proposed line was agreed: we should continue support for the bi-partisan agreement, and for keeping the constitutional convention together after 8th November if necessary, but we should, where necessary, criticise the Government for neglecting security, bearing in mind that

Labour's support for the bi-partisan policy had not prevented them from criticising us in Government on a number of matters.

6. Policy Group

Sir Keith Joseph said that it was proposed that the Policy Sub-Committee of the LCC should meet every month or so over lunch to discuss with the appropriate Policy Group Chairmen.

The meeting closed at 6 p.m.