

THE NATIONAL UNION OF CONSERVATIVE AND UNIONIST ASSOCIATIONS

Minutes of a Meeting of the National Union Executive Committee

Thursday 12th April 1984

The Committee met at 32 Smith Square, Westminster on Thursday 12th April, 1984 at 2.15 p.m. under the chairmanship of Sir Russell Sanderson and the names of 93 members present are recorded.

1. Chairman's opening remarks

The Chairman asked members to stand in memory of three former Ministers who had died recently - Rt. Hon. Lord Brooke of Cumnor, CH, Rt. Hon. Sir Hugh Fraser, MBE and Rt. Hon. Viscount Macmillan of Ovenden.

He referred to the forthcoming by-elections on 3rd May in Stafford, South-West Surrey and Cynon Valley and best wishes were conveyed to the candidates concerned.

The Chairman welcomed Rt. Hon. Lord Beloff as the new representative of the Conservative Peers. He congratulated County Councillor W.D. Morton on being appointed High Sheriff of Northamptonshire, Mrs. Sue Prendergast, OBE, JP, as the new GLA Chairman, Mr. John Guthrie as the new YCNAC Chairman, and Mrs. Margaret Fry, OBE, as the newly elected Chairman of CWNC, and expressed thanks to the retiring Chairmen concerned, Mr. Ian McLeod, Mr. Phil Pedley and Mrs. Joan Seccombe, JP. The Committee's thanks were also expressed to Councillor Peter Hutchinson, CBE on his retirement as Chairman of the Northern Area and to Mr. Jim Spicer, MP, MEP as the retiring representative on the Committee from the EDG.

The Chairman congratulated the FCS on their Conference at Loughborough. He had asked the Standing Review Committee to look again at the question of validation of representatives to this Conference. It was agreed this should be referred.

He referred to the paper issued at the meeting in regard to the North West Hampshire dispute prior to its consideration later in the agenda and he stressed the need for such papers and the general business conducted at Executive and General Purposes Committee meetings to be treated strictly as private and confidential.

2. Apologies for absence

Apologies from 36 members were noted and recorded.

3. Minutes of the last meeting held on 16th February 1984

Minutes of the meeting held on 16th February 1984, having been circulated with the agenda, were approved and signed by the Chairman.

4. Business arising from the Minutes

The Chairman reported that a letter had been sent to Constituency and ECC Chairmen and Agents on 15th March concerning the selection of candidates on the lines of the specific recommendation from the YC NAC as agreed at the last meeting.

The Spa Pavilion, Felixstowe had been provisionally booked for 21st/22nd March 1986 for the annual meeting of the Central Council and it was agreed that the Committee should confirm this reservation, as recommended by the Eastern Area, provided the facilities were found to be suitable.

5. Central Council Meeting : 23rd/24th March 1984

The Secretary presented a report on this successful Council meeting at the Birmingham Metropole, with an attendance between 600 and 1400, with 700 for the Open Forum on the Saturday afternoon. 36 speakers took part in the six debates. The Financial Appeal was made by Mr. Michael Price and a collection of £1,720 resulted. Copy of this report is lodged with the Minutes.

Members expressed approval of the arrangements made for the Council meeting involving an overnight stay. In answer to a question, the Secretary explained that a supplementary agenda was issued only when amendments were received by seven days before the meeting.

Arising from the report, the Chairman referred to an article in the Daily Telegraph on 26th March which indicated that the Charter Group might demand a special meeting of the Council by obtaining 100 signatures from members and then the Executive Committee would be obliged to summon a meeting forthwith under Rule 11. If this happened the Chairman asked for the Officers to be authorised to take any necessary action, perhaps before the next meeting, as the special Council meeting could be convened immediately following the first afternoon of the Women's Conference at the Barbican Centre on 23rd May, and this was agreed.

6. Dispute within the North West Hampshire Association

The Chairman presented the conclusions of the National Union Officers on this dispute after a hearing on 22nd March and members considered the paper issued at the meeting and lodged with these Minutes. After due consideration, Mr. Michael Taylor proposed and Mr. Gordon Shattock seconded a motion that these conclusions should be communicated to the Association's Executive Council as the Executive Committee's settlement of this dispute in accordance with National Union Rule 13(8) and the Association's Rule 16. This was carried unanimously.

7. European Parliament Elections, 14th June

Mr. Patrick Lawrence, CBE, National Union Vice-Chairman and Chairman of the European Co-ordinating Committee, lead a discussion on these Elections, which he said would be important in regard to jobs, peace and security. The Party must fight hard to achieve a good turn-out of electors. Miss Angela Hooper, Chief Executive European Elections, gave details of the campaign and the full back up being provided by Central Office. During the ensuing discussion, Mr. R.V. Porter stressed the importance of Westminster MPs giving their support during the campaign; Mrs. Joyce Billings spoke of the danger from the SDP; Mr. Iain McCrone of the current problems in regard to Agriculture and Mr. John Guthrie of the need to demonstrate the achievements of our MEPs and the advantages of the EEC.

Mr. David Hunt, MBE, MP, Party Vice-Chairman, replied to the discussion. He said it was necessary for us to make a strong contribution to the EEC in order to establish the kind of Europe which we wanted.

8. Local Government Elections, 3rd May

The Chairman welcomed the Rt. Hon. Patrick Jenkin, MP, the Secretary of State for the Environment. Mr. Jenkin said that these Elections would be the first major test of opinion since the General Election and would be a forerunner to the European Elections so they were very important and we hoped to win back seats lost four years ago. The emphasis would be on getting value for money in Local Government and giving services back to the District Councils. He outlined various points.

Mr. Ian McLeod asked what was being done about public money being expended on political campaigns. Mr. Eric Pickles asked for more regard to be paid to the record of Conservative Councils in curbing expenditure when the Rate Support Grant was decided. Cllr. Neville Bosworth, CBE, stated that the adjustments in housing benefits were causing major concern amongst voters. Mr. Anthony Durant, MP, said that it was important to make the point that left-wing authorities were defying the Government. After several other points were raised, the Chairman thanked Mr. Jenkin and the Committee indicated its unanimous support for the Secretary of State in his execution of Government policy.

9. Area Chairmen's reports

(a) Mrs. Alma Hill, CBE, Chairman of the West Midlands Area, stated that the industrial position in the Midlands was more encouraging. Much bitterness and hatred was being shown between miners. There was little interest in the European Elections at present. Mutual aid for the Stafford by-election was absolutely vital.

(b) Mr. Stanley Odell, Chairman of the Eastern Area, said that the Eastern Area showed the fastest growth rate of any part of the country. The Alliance had been second in 9 seats at the General Election. Rate capping had presented difficulties, particularly in Cambridgeshire and Essex. He referred to the CND movement and to agricultural problems. Mr. Odell concluded that morale was high in the Area but that they could not be complacent.

In reply, Mr. Michael Spicer, MP, Deputy Chairman of the Party, spoke of the danger of internal strife, particularly at Westminster, and of the new initiatives being taken by the Party which were all directed towards constituencies and increasing their membership and influence. They were certainly not complacent about the parliamentary by-elections.

10. Standing Review Committee

The Chairman asked Sir Donald Walters, Chairman of the Standing Review Committee, to report on a meeting of this Committee held in the morning. The Committee suggested that the present £2.00 registration fee for the Conference should be reviewed in 1985; a paper, written by Dame Ann Springman, DBE with proposals for a new balloting system had been approved at the meeting; it was the unanimous view that the Question and Answer session should be discontinued; representation from the Anglo-Asian and Anglo-West Indian Societies had been discussed. These recommendations would be presented to the G.P. Committee and then the Executive Committee in June. The Chairman thanked Sir Donald.

11. Resolutions received from Area, constituency and other organisations

Approval was given to the action taken on the five resolutions which had been circulated with the notice and the five on the supplementary agenda, issued at the meeting (copy lodged herewith). Replies had been received to two of these.

12. Business for the next meeting on Thursday 21st June

The Chairman asked the Committee for any suggestions for business and speakers. It was agreed that Rt. Hon. Michael Jopling, MP, should be asked to speak.

13. Any other business

The Chairman asked for authority to pay the annual contribution of £250 to the Joint Committee Against Racism and this was agreed. Sir Anthony Garner reported on proposals of the Select Committee on Home Affairs and a White Paper regarding possible changes in electoral law. These proposals evoked a mixed reception and it was decided to ask Mr. David Mellor, MP, to speak on this subject at the June meeting.

There being no further business, the Chairman closed the meeting at 4.45 p.m.