CONCLUSIONS of a Meeting of the Cabinet held in the Prime Minister’s Room, House of Commons, S.W.1, on Wednesday, 9th February, 1955, at 4.30 p.m.

Present:
The Right Hon. Sir Anthony Eden, M.P., Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.
The Right Hon. Viscount Kilmuir, Lord Chancellor.
The Right Hon. Viscount Woolton, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster.
The Right Hon. Viscount Swinton, Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations.
The Right Hon. Duncan Sandys, M.P., Minister of Housing and Local Government.
The Right Hon. D. Heathcoat Amory, M.P., Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries and Minister of Food.
The Right Hon. Peter Thorneycroft, M.P., President of the Board of Trade.
The Right Hon. Osbert Peake, M.P., Minister of Pensions and National Insurance.
The Right Hon. Sir David Eccles, M.P., Minister of Education.
The Most Hon. the Marquess of Salisbury, Lord President of the Council.
The Right Hon. R. A. Butler, M.P., Chancellor of the Exchequer.
The Right Hon. Gwilym Lloyd-George, M.P., Secretary of State for the Home Department and Minister for Welsh Affairs (Items 3–4).
The Right Hon. Peter Thorneycroft, M.P., President of the Board of Trade.
The Right Hon. Osbert Peake, M.P., Minister of Pensions and National Insurance.
The Right Hon. Sir David Eccles, M.P., Minister of Education.
The Right Hon. Peter Thorneycroft, M.P., President of the Board of Trade.

The following were also present:
The Right Hon. J. P. L. Thomas, M.P., First Lord of the Admiralty (Items 1–3).
The Right Hon. Lord De L’Isle and Dudley, Secretary of State for Air (Items 1–3).
The Right Hon. the Earl of Home, Minister of State, Scottish Office.

Secretariat:
The Right Hon. Sir Norman Brook.
Mr. K. L. Stock.
Mr. F. A. Bishop.
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1. The Chancellor of the Exchequer said that in pursuance of the Cabinet's decision of 20th October, 1954, he had discussed with the Foreign Secretary and the Lord Privy Seal the proposals outlined in his memorandum C. (54) 313 on the remuneration of Ministers. He was satisfied that there was a very strong case on the merits for increasing the salaries of Junior Ministers, but he would be guided by the views of his colleagues on the question whether legislation for this purpose should be introduced in the lifetime of this Parliament. If it were decided to proceed with this in the present session, he would prefer that the legislation should deal only with the remuneration of Ministers of State and Parliamentary Secretaries: he did not think that the time was opportune for making the proposed increase in the remuneration of Cabinet Ministers.

In discussion it was agreed that the salaries of Junior Ministers ought to be increased. Discussion turned wholly on the question whether legislation for this purpose should be passed in the present session, with effect from the beginning of the new Parliament, or whether it should be deferred until a new Parliament had been elected. The balance of opinion in the Cabinet was against introducing this legislation in the present Parliament.

The Cabinet—

Agreed that legislation dealing with the remuneration of Ministers should not be introduced in the present Parliament.

2. The Lord President said that the Cabinet's decision to defer the improvement of Junior Ministers' salaries strengthened the case for early introduction of the projected scheme for granting allowances to Peers for attendance on their Parliamentary duties. A Peer appointed to be a Junior Minister had only the salary of that post, while Junior Ministers in the Commons continued to draw part of their Parliamentary salary and could claim income tax relief in respect of expenses. The case for introducing some system of allowances for Peers was very strong; and he had already stated in the House of Lords, with the Cabinet's authority, that the problem was one which must be faced at the earliest practicable date. He hoped that his colleagues would not close their minds to the possibility of introducing the projected scheme before the end of the present Parliament, and he suggested that the Cabinet should consider the matter again before the debate on House of Lords reform which Lord Samuel was due to open on 7th March.

In discussion it was argued that the considerations which had led the Cabinet to defer the introduction of legislation on Ministerial salaries pointed to the conclusion that the introduction of Parliamentary allowances for Peers should be similarly postponed.

The Cabinet—

Agreed to consider again in a fortnight's time whether a scheme of allowances to Peers for attendance on their Parliamentary duties in the House of Lords should be introduced before the end of the present Parliament.
3. The Cabinet had before them a memorandum by the Minister of Defence (C. (55) 29) submitting for the approval of the Cabinet the draft of the annual Statement on Defence, which he proposed to present to Parliament as a White Paper on 17th February. They also had before them a report by the Home Defence Committee (C. (55) 30) on the cost of defence preparations by Civil Departments in 1955.

The Minister of Defence said that the draft White Paper had been considered by the Defence Committee and incorporated a number of amendments which they had suggested. He had in preparation a separate White Paper dealing in greater detail with the difficulties which had been met in developing the supply of Service aircraft, and a draft of this would be submitted for the Cabinet's consideration later in the week.

In discussion of the draft White Paper the following points were made:

(a) The Cabinet confirmed their decision of 4th February that the modification of the atomic weapons programme should be announced in the Defence White Paper and approved, subject to a drafting amendment, the terms in which this decision was stated in paragraph 3 of the draft annexed to C. (55) 29.

(b) By the terms of paragraphs 70-72 of the draft White Paper the Government would be committed to maintaining the current period of two years' whole-time National Service. When the draft was under consideration by the Defence Committee, it had been suggested that some reduction of the period might be justified on military grounds. It was however argued that, even if this were so, it would be inexpedient to hold out any hope at the present time that it might become possible to reduce the period. If any such indication were given now, the period of National Service would become a matter for political manoeuvring between the Parties. The Cabinet approved the terms of paragraphs 70-72 of the draft White Paper.

(c) The new scheme for developing a Mobile Defence Corps manned by members of the Armed Forces had made it necessary to readjust the earlier scheme for training Class H reservists of the Royal Air Force in Civil Defence duties. Means of making this adjustment had now been worked out, and the terms of paragraph 118 of the draft would be revised to take account of them.

The Secretary of State for Air suggested that in redrafting this paragraph it should be borne in mind that the reorganisation of the Territorial Army might provide a fresh source of reservists, in addition to the Class H reservists of the R.A.F., for training in Civil Defence duties.

(d) The references to the risk of major war, in paragraph 55 of the draft, should be reconsidered in the light of recent developments in the international situation.

(e) The point should be made in paragraph 10 that the agreements resulting from the London and Paris conferences would, among other advantages, make independent recourse to war impossible for any of the countries which were parties to them.

(f) The reference in paragraph 100 to co-operation with other Commonwealth countries on defence matters should be expanded in the light of the consultations which had taken place during the recent Commonwealth Meeting in London.

The Cabinet—

(1) Invited the Minister of Defence to revise the draft White Paper to take account of the points noted above and other drafting suggestions approved in the Cabinet's discussion, and authorised him to publish the White Paper, as so revised, on 17th February.

(2) Took note of the report of the Home Defence Committee (C. (55) 30) on the cost of defence preparations by Civil Departments in 1955.
4. The Cabinet considered a memorandum by the Lord President (C. (55) 31) covering the draft of a White Paper outlining the programme, which had already been approved by the Cabinet, for the development of power from atomic energy for civil purposes.

The Lord President drew the Cabinet's attention to the fact that it was disclosed in the White Paper that the power station at Calder Hall was designed to produce fissile material for military purposes, as well as electricity for civil use. According to the advice of Her Majesty's Ambassador in Washington, this disclosure would not be unwelcome to the United States Government.

The Cabinet—

Authorised the Lord President to present to Parliament on 15th February a White Paper on civil uses of atomic energy in the terms of the draft annexed to C. (55) 31.

Cabinet Office. S.W. 1.
10th February, 1955.
PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE

Reference

CAB 128/28

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