



(c) crown copyright

Printed for the Cabinet. June 1956

SECRET

Copy No. 41

C.M. (56)

40th Conclusions

CABINET

*CONCLUSIONS of a Meeting of the Cabinet held at 10 Downing Street, S.W. 1,
on Thursday, 7th June, 1956, at 11 a.m.*

Present:

- | | |
|---|--|
| <p style="text-align: center;">The Right Hon. Sir ANTHONY EDEN, M.P., Prime Minister.</p> <p>The Most Hon. the MARQUESS OF SALISBURY, Lord President of the Council.</p> <p>The Right Hon. HAROLD MACMILLAN, M.P., Chancellor of the Exchequer.</p> <p>The Right Hon. GWILYM LLOYD-GEORGE, M.P., Secretary of State for the Home Department and Minister for Welsh Affairs.</p> <p>The Right Hon. the EARL OF HOME, Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations.</p> <p>The Right Hon. Sir WALTER MONCKTON, Q.C., M.P., Minister of Defence.</p> <p>The Right Hon. Peter Thorneycroft, M.P., President of the Board of Trade.</p> <p>The Right Hon. Sir DAVID ECCLES, M.P., Minister of Education.</p> <p>The Right Hon. the EARL OF SELKIRK, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster.</p> | <p>The Right Hon. R. A. BUTLER, M.P., Lord Privy Seal.</p> <p>The Right Hon. the VISCOUNT KILMUIR, Lord Chancellor.</p> <p>The Right Hon. JAMES STUART, M.P., Secretary of State for Scotland.</p> <p>The Right Hon. A. T. LENNOX-BOYD, M.P., Secretary of State for the Colonies.</p> <p>The Right Hon. DUNCAN SANDYS, M.P., Minister of Housing and Local Government.</p> <p>The Right Hon. D. HEATHCOAT AMORY, M.P., Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.</p> <p>The Right Hon. IAIN MACLEOD, M.P., Minister of Labour and National Service.</p> <p>The Right Hon. PATRICK BUCHAN-HEPBURN, M.P., Minister of Works.</p> |
|---|--|

The following were also present:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <p>The Right Hon. NIGEL BIRCH, M.P., Secretary of State for Air (<i>Item 6</i>).</p> <p>The Most Hon. the MARQUESS OF READING, Q.C., Minister of State for Foreign Affairs.</p> <p>The Right Hon. Sir REGINALD MANNINGHAM-BULLER, Q.C., M.P., Attorney-General (<i>Item 10</i>).</p> | <p>The Right Hon. R. H. TURTON, M.P., Minister of Health (<i>Items 8 and 9</i>).</p> <p>The Right Hon. ANTHONY NUTTING, M.P., Minister of State for Foreign Affairs (<i>Items 5-9</i>).</p> <p>The Right Hon. EDWARD HEATH, M.P., Parliamentary Secretary, Treasury (<i>Items 1-4</i>).</p> |
|--|---|

Secretariat:

The Right Hon. Sir NORMAN BROOK.
Mr. H. O. HOOPER.

CONTENTS

<i>Minute No.</i>	<i>Subject</i>	<i>Page</i>
1	Soviet Union Prime Minister's Visit.	3
2	Parliament	3
3	Parliament Remuneration of Members.	3
4	Economic Situation Meetings with Representatives of Employers and Workers. Agricultural Wages.	4
5	Disarmament	5
6	Jordan Air Force.	6
7	Egypt	6
8	Nuclear Radiations	6
9	Nuclear Weapons Tests in 1957.	7
10	8
11	Education Capital Investment.	9
12	Trinidad Oil Company	9
13	Cyprus	10
14	Agricultural Policy	10

Soviet Union.
Prime
Minister's Visit.
(Previous
Reference:
C.M. (56) 31st
Conclusions,
Minute 7.)

1. *The Prime Minister* recalled that, before the Soviet leaders left London, they had pressed him to make a return visit to the Soviet Union. With his colleagues' concurrence, he had accepted that invitation without fixing a definite date. He had recently given some further thought to the question of timing, in consultation with the Foreign Secretary, and had obtained the views of H.M. Ambassador at Moscow. The choice lay between the autumn of 1956 and the spring of the following year; and it was felt that the balance of advantage lay on the side of making the visit in April or May, 1957. H.M. Ambassador had also advised that it would be convenient if the date could be finally settled, and announced, in the near future. Subject to the Cabinet's views he proposed to suggest to the Soviet Government that a definite date for the visit should now be fixed, for April or May, 1957, and should be announced simultaneously in both capitals.

The Cabinet—

Took note with approval of the arrangements which the Prime Minister was proposing to make to visit the Soviet Union in April or May, 1957.

Parliament.

2. The Cabinet were informed of the business to be taken in the House of Commons in the following week.

Parliament.
Remuneration
of Members.
(Previous
Reference:
C.M. (56) 37th
Conclusions,
Minute 2.)

3. *The Lord Privy Seal* said that the Labour Party had now decided to make a formal request for the appointment of an independent committee of enquiry to advise on the pay and allowances of Members of Parliament. In his view it would be inexpedient to reject this request altogether: it would be wiser for the Government to take the line that they were unwilling to appoint such a committee during the current session. The Opposition might seek to have the matter debated: they had some reason to hope that a motion could be framed which some Conservative Members might be disposed to support. This, however, was not a matter which could be left to a free vote of the House: if it came to a debate, the Government whip should certainly be used.

Discussion showed that opinion in the Cabinet was divided on the expediency of holding such an enquiry. Arguments in favour of this were that it would gain some time; that it would provide some useful independent support for an increase in Members' remuneration; and that the final decision on the amount of the increase to be granted would still rest with the Government and Parliament. If a committee of enquiry were appointed, it was important that it should consist mainly of former Members of Parliament whose judgment would rest on personal and practical experience of the duties and problems of Members. The suggestion was also made that, if such an enquiry were held, it might also cover the position of Peers. On the other side, the view was strongly expressed that this was a matter which Parliament itself should decide, and that it would not accord with the dignity or the traditions of the House that an outside committee should be asked to advise on it. The majority of Government supporters in the House might be expected to take this view. It was also argued that it would be dangerous to remit this question to an outside body, which might well recommend levels of remuneration much higher than those which the Government would think justified.

The Cabinet were, however, fully agreed that no action should be taken during the current session to increase the remuneration of Members. In the coming session it might be possible to proceed with the comprehensive project for improving the remuneration of Members, increasing the salaries of junior Ministers and introducing a system of expense allowances for Peers. It might also be practicable to pass in that session legislation increasing the salaries attaching to minor judicial offices (County Court Judges, &c.). Meanwhile, the best line for the Government to take would be to express sympathy with these objects, to admit that on merits the case for some improvement was strong, but to argue that in view of the economic situation this was not a suitable moment at which to take action. To adopt any other course at the present time would be inconsistent with the Government's general policy of seeking to secure a period of stability in wages and prices.

The Cabinet—

Invited the Prime Minister to consider, in the light of their discussion and in consultation with the Lord Privy Seal and the Chief Whip, the terms of the reply which should be returned to the request of the Labour Opposition for the holding of an independent enquiry into the remuneration of Members of Parliament.

Economic Situation.
(Previous Reference: C.M. (56) 36th Conclusions, Minute 1.)

4. *The Prime Minister* said that, following the meeting which Ministers had held on 10th May with representatives of the Trades Union Congress, further meetings were due to be held with representatives of employers and of the nationalised industries. He doubted whether it would be possible to hold both of these meetings before the Minister of Labour went to Geneva on 15th June, and he would welcome the advice of his colleagues on the order in which the two meetings should be taken.

Meetings with Representatives of Employers and Workers.

In discussion it was agreed that the projected meeting with employers' representatives was the more urgent, and that the meeting with representatives of the nationalised industries could be deferred until after the Minister of Labour had returned from Geneva. It was also agreed that these meetings should be presented to public opinion, not as a fresh initiative, but as the completion of the series of meetings on which Ministers had been engaged before the Whitsun recess.

Agricultural Wages.

Discussion then turned to the pending claim for an increase in agricultural wages. It was recognised that there was a significant gap between agricultural and industrial wages and that, on grounds of comparability, there was a case for some increase in the former. On the other hand there was a real danger that, if agricultural wages were now increased, this would provoke a fresh round of wage claims by industrial workers. It was important that the Agricultural Wages Board should have this consideration in mind. The Ministers concerned should consider whether any confidential approach could be made to the Board before the application came before them.

The Cabinet—

- (1) Took note that the Prime Minister would arrange for further meetings to be held with representatives of employers and of the nationalised industries on the need for a period of stability in wages and prices.
- (2) Invited the Chancellor of the Exchequer to consider, in consultation with the Agriculture Ministers and the Minister of Labour, whether any steps could be taken to

ensure that, in the consideration of the forthcoming application for an increase in agricultural wages, full account would be taken of the needs of the national economy.

Disarmament.
(Previous
Reference:
C.M. (56) 37th
Conclusions,
Minute 5.)

5. The Cabinet considered a memorandum by the Foreign Secretary (C.P. (56) 137) seeking approval for a new disarmament plan and authority to discuss it with the Governments of the United States, Canada and France in advance of the forthcoming meeting of the Disarmament Commission.

The Cabinet were in general agreement with the draft disarmament plan, which was based on the proposals in C.P. (56) 117 which the Cabinet had previously approved.

The following points were made in discussion:—

(a) *The Minister of Defence* drew attention to the risk that, if this plan were accepted, we might be required to cease the manufacture of nuclear weapons before we had built up an adequate stock of them. Even on the basis of our present programme, we should not have a sufficient stock of these weapons until 1970. Moreover, the extent to which we were to convert our tactical equipment to nuclear weapons had yet to be decided. The position would improve if the proposals for a new diffusion plant, now under consideration, came to fruition. The Foreign Secretary had, however, accepted his proposal that paragraph 11 of the draft plan should be amended to ensure that nuclear disarmament would not follow automatically on the completion of the remainder of the plan but would be considered in relation to the prevailing international situation. He was prepared to rest on this safeguard.

(b) The view was expressed that the danger which the Minister of Defence had foreseen might make it necessary for us at some later date to oppose the completion of the plan in regard to nuclear disarmament if the remainder of the plan had been put into effective operation before we had accumulated a sufficient stock of nuclear weapons. This might expose us to the charge of having been disingenuous in sponsoring the plan. It was pointed out, however, that the reservation we had entered in paragraph 11 of the draft was intended to give us an opportunity, when the time came, to consider our position in the light of the stocks we had accumulated and our need for these weapons at that time. This safeguard need not therefore involve us in embarrassment.

(c) The proposed International Control Organisation, for which the draft plan provided, was known to be unacceptable to the Soviet leaders, who disliked the proposal in principle and felt that it could not be made effective in such large countries as the United States and the Soviet Union. Nevertheless, the Cabinet agreed that effective machinery for inspection and control was one of the essential safeguards on which we must continue to insist.

(d) The United States Government were anxious that some provision should be made for restriction of the supply of nuclear material, so as to deny to the smaller countries the opportunity of manufacturing nuclear weapons. We should find it difficult to accept such a restriction, before we had built up our own stock of nuclear weapons, unless the United States would undertake to meet our needs.

The Cabinet—

Approved the draft disarmament plan annexed to C.P. (56) 137, and authorised the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs (Mr. Nutting) to seek the support of the Governments of the United States, Canada and France for a Four-Power initiative in the Disarmament Commission on these lines.

Jordan.

(Previous
Reference:
C.M. (56) 32nd
Conclusions,
Minute 4.)
Air Force.

6. The Cabinet considered a memorandum by the Foreign Secretary and the Secretary of State for Air (C.P. (56) 136) on a request for the supply of British swept-wing aircraft to the Royal Jordanian Air Force (R.J.A.F.).

The Minister of State for Foreign Affairs (Mr. Nutting) said that neither Hunter nor Gnat aircraft could be supplied, nor could their pilots be trained, as quickly as King Hussein wished. Moreover, it was not clear how the re-equipment programme, which would cost £2½ millions if carried out with Hunters and £1½ millions if carried out with Gnats, was to be financed. Nevertheless, the intention to bring the R.J.A.F. up to date was in itself a sound aim and there was a risk that King Hussein would be inclined to turn to the Soviet Union for aircraft if he had cause to feel that there would be undue delay in obtaining British equipment. The present proposal was therefore designed to gain time by putting forward an alternative plan for the re-equipment of the R.J.A.F. and inviting the Jordan Government to indicate how the programme would be financed.

Discussion showed that the Cabinet were in agreement with this proposal. It was suggested that, in view of the prospective cost of re-equipping the R.J.A.F., King Hussein might be encouraged to review the relative strategic importance, in present conditions, of his land and air forces.

The Cabinet—

Approved the proposal put forward in paragraph 9 of C.P. (56) 136.

Egypt.

(Previous
Reference:
C.M. (56) 37th
Conclusions,
Minute 8.)

7. *The Minister of State for Foreign Affairs* (Mr. Nutting) said that the Egyptian Government had decided to hold on 19th June ceremonies celebrating the terminal date of the Anglo-Egyptian Agreement in pursuance of which British troops had been withdrawn from the Canal Zone. They had further decided that this day should be celebrated annually as Egypt's National Day. All the Heads of diplomatic Missions in Cairo would be invited to attend the ceremony on 19th June, and it would be inexpedient for H.M. Ambassador to absent himself from it. It was therefore proposed that he should attend, though he had warned the Egyptian authorities that Her Majesty's Government would take it amiss if it were made the occasion for any demonstration of anti-British sentiments.

The Governments of Iraq and Jordan had decided not to send special delegations to Cairo for these celebrations.

The Cabinet—

Took note of this statement by the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs.

Nuclear Radiations.

(Previous
Reference:
C.M. (56) 39th
Conclusions,
Minute 3.)

8. The Cabinet had before them a memorandum by the Lord President (C.P. (56) 132) covering the report of a Committee of the Medical Research Council which had assessed the hazards to man of nuclear and allied radiations.

The Lord President recalled that this Committee had been appointed because of the widespread public anxiety about the genetic effects of test explosions of nuclear weapons. That particular anxiety would be allayed by the Committee's findings. Two other problems emerged, however, from the report. First, it disclosed a new risk from thermo-nuclear explosions, viz., the absorption, through food, of radio-active strontium which accumulated in human bones and would, if test explosions continued indefinitely, eventually increase human liability to cancer and other diseases of the bone. This point had been fully explained to the Cabinet at their meeting on 5th June, and it had then been accepted that there were no

sufficient grounds for immediate anxiety on this account. Nevertheless, it was to be expected that this part of the report would provoke much discussion and some public alarm. Secondly, the report showed that a more significant and immediate risk arose from the extensive use of radiology in medicine and dentistry. This also would arouse public anxiety, and the problem was one which clearly needed further examination.

This was a highly technical report, and care would be needed in presenting it to the public. It would be laid before Parliament on 12th June, and a short statement about it would be made in both Houses on that day. The general line of this statement would be that the report would require much study by all concerned and that, to the extent that it concerned Government Departments, the necessary consideration would proceed without delay. The report would be explained to representatives of the Press at conferences with Lobby correspondents and scientific correspondents.

The Lord President said that a corresponding enquiry had been conducted in the United States and, by arrangement, its report would also be published on 12th June. Its findings were on much the same lines as those of the Medical Research Council. It raised, however, one further matter, viz., the disposal of radio-active waste; and proposed that an international conference should be convened to consider the problems arising from the disposal of this waste in the sea.

In discussion the following points were raised:—

(a) *The Minister of Health* said that some public comment must be expected on the degree of occupational risk to which workers in atomic energy establishments were exposed.

The Lord President said that steps were already being taken to reduce this risk by varying the duties of workers in these establishments. A public statement could, if necessary, be made about the precautions which were being taken.

(b) *The Minister of Health* said that the title of the report, with its reference to "the hazards to man," was itself likely to cause undue public alarm. He hoped that the wording of this title would not be unnecessarily stressed in any public announcements.

The Cabinet—

- (1) Took note of the report by a Committee of the Medical Research Council on the hazards to man of nuclear and allied radiations.
- (2) Took note of the arrangements which the Lord President had made for the publication of this report.
- (3) Invited the Lord President to arrange for the Departments concerned to proceed without delay with their consideration of the various issues raised by the report.

**Nuclear
Weapons.**
Tests in 1957.
(Previous
Reference:
C.M. (56) 39th
Conclusions,
Minute 3.)

9. *The Prime Minister* invited the Cabinet to consider the revised draft of a statement which he was proposing to make in the House of Commons, later in the day, about the tests of nuclear weapons which were to be held in the Pacific in the spring of 1957.

The Prime Minister said that the United States Government had shown continuing concern about the consequences of a fresh initiative for international discussion of the means of limiting test explosions of nuclear weapons. They feared that, if the announcement were made in the form originally proposed, this might become an issue in the forthcoming Presidential Election. He still thought it necessary to indicate the Government's readiness to discuss methods of limiting test explosions; but, in view of these representations, he had decided to confine himself in this announcement to a repetition of his earlier offer to join in such discussions. He therefore proposed to recall that,

in a statement in the House of Commons on 6th December, 1955, he had made it clear that the United Kingdom Government were prepared to discuss methods of regulating and limiting tests; to say that this remained the policy of the United Kingdom Government; and to assure the House that the Government would seek every opportunity to put it into effect.

Discussion showed that the Cabinet were in full agreement with the line which the Prime Minister proposed to take on this point.

The Cabinet—

Approved the revised draft of the announcement which the Prime Minister proposed to make in the House of Commons later that day about the tests of nuclear weapons which were to be held in the Pacific in the spring of 1957.

354

PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE

Group/Class CAB 128

Piece 30

CM(56)40K Conclusions Item 10

CLOSED
UNTIL

2057

Under LCI 78

5 NOV 1998

(date) _____

(Signed) *Smith*

Education.Capital
Investment.(Previous
References :C.C. (54) 80th
Conclusions,
Minute 4, and
C.M. (56) 14th
Conclusions.)

11. The Cabinet had before them memoranda by the Chancellor of the Exchequer (C.P. (56) 135) and the Minister of Education (C.P. (56) 134) on the extent to which the school building programme should be retarded because of the general economic situation.

The Minister of Education said that the problem had arisen because, since the Cabinet had approved the proposals put forward in February in connection with the economic situation, it had emerged that £32 millions instead of £20 millions of building work which was due to have been started in the previous year had been brought forward for commencement in the current year. This was a new factor which could not have been foreseen. The proposals in C.P. (56) 135 would involve a much more serious retardation of the programme than had been contemplated in February, and would mean the loss of 200,000 instead of 100,000 school places in 1958 when the numbers in secondary schools would increase most sharply. It would be difficult to present such a further economy merely as a delay in the building programme and not as a cut in it. Moreover, such a decision would be seen to be inconsistent with the Government's programme for technical education which depended on the proper development of secondary education and the Government would be exposed to criticism on that score.

The Prime Minister said that, in his view, cuts in expenditure which were made necessary by the economic situation should fall on education only in the last resort when it was clear that other means of saving would not yield enough. The public would be prepared to accept the need for the measures demanded by the economic situation if they were satisfied that economy was not being pursued at the expense of their children's education.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer said that the average rate of new school building in the previous year had been £4.6 millions a month. He had been reluctant, in view of the economic situation, to accept the need which the Minister of Education's proposals contemplated for an actual increase in this monthly rate in the current year and the following year. He agreed, however, that in view of the arguments which had been put forward there must be some compromise in the matter. He was prepared therefore to accept the figure of £55 millions as the total of new school building which should be started this year and he proposed that the corresponding figure for 1957-58 should be £25 millions in each half-year. Local authorities could be authorised to plan on this basis and could be informed that the figure would be further increased if the economic situation justified it.

The Cabinet—

Approved the proposals with regard to new school building which the Chancellor of the Exchequer had put forward in their discussion.

**Trinidad Oil
Company.**

12. *The Chancellor of the Exchequer* said that the Texas Oil Company of the United States had offered to buy, for £63 millions, the British stockholding in the Trinidad Oil Company. Treasury consent would be required for this transfer of the ownership to a United States Company. Before a final decision was taken, he would wish to seek the views of his colleagues in the Cabinet. Meanwhile, however, he was to be asked that afternoon in the House of Commons, by Private Notice Question, whether he had any statement to make. He proposed to say in reply that the matter was under consideration.

The Cabinet—

Took note that the Chancellor of the Exchequer would submit for the Cabinet's approval his considered

recommendation on the question whether consent should be given for the transfer to the United States of the British stockholding in the Trinidad Oil Company.

Cyprus.
(Previous
Reference:
C.M. (56) 39th
Conclusions,
Minute 1.)

13. *The Prime Minister* said that, since the Cabinet's discussion on 5th June, indications had been received that there was much public misapprehension in Canada about the basis of British policy in Cyprus. The Commonwealth Secretary was anxious to take all practicable steps to correct these misunderstandings. Factual material was being supplied to him by the Colonial Office. It would also be helpful if extracts from Ministers' speeches on Cyprus could be forwarded to the Commonwealth Secretary for transmission to Canada.

The Cabinet—

Agreed that Ministers who were proposing to refer to Cyprus in their public speeches should, in addition to prior consultation with the Colonial Secretary, send extracts to the Commonwealth Secretary for transmission, as appropriate, to Canada and other Commonwealth countries.

**Agricultural
Policy.**
(Previous
Reference:
C.M. (56) 31st
Conclusions,
Minute 5.)

14. *The Minister of Agriculture* said that he was to answer, in the House of Commons that afternoon, several Questions about the action taken by his Department in dispossessing Lady Garbett of her agricultural property in Sussex. Most of these were concerned with questions of fact, but one raised the general question of legislation on this subject. As his colleagues were aware, he was holding confidential consultations with leaders of the farming industry, in pursuance of the Cabinet's conclusion of 26th April, on the disciplinary powers under the Agriculture Acts and the provisions for security of tenure for tenant farmers. In his opinion, however, it would be premature to disclose the Government's plans for dealing with this general problem in reply to this particular Question. Subject therefore to the Cabinet's views he proposed to avoid making any public reference at this stage to the general enquiries which the Government were conducting on this subject, and to confine himself to pointing out the difficulties of undertaking legislation on this question at the present time.

The Cabinet—

Agreed that the Minister of Agriculture should, if possible, defer for the time being any general statement of the Government's intentions in respect of the disciplinary powers under the Agriculture Acts and the provisions for security of tenure for tenant farmers.

*Cabinet Office, S.W. 1,
7th June, 1956.*