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CONCLUSIONS of a Meeting of the Cabinet held at Admiralty House, S.W. 1, on Thursday, 13th April, 1961, at 11 a.m.

Present:
The Right Hon. HAROLD MACMILLAN, M.P., Prime Minister
The Right Hon. R. A. BUTLER, M.P., Secretary of State for the Home Department
The Right Hon. SELWYN LLOYD, Q.C., M.P., Chancellor of the Exchequer
The Right Hon. VISCOUNT HAILSHAM, Q.C., Lord President of the Council and Minister for Science
The Right Hon. IAIN MACLEOD, M.P., Secretary of State for the Colonies
The Right Hon. PETER THORNEYCROFT, M.P., Minister of Aviation
The Right Hon. REGINALD MAULDING, M.P., President of the Board of Trade
The Right Hon. EDWARD HEATH, M.P., Lord Privy Seal
The Right Hon. ERNEST MARPLES, M.P., Minister of Transport
The Right Hon. VISCOUNT KILMUIR, Lord Chancellor
The Right Hon. The EARL OF HOME, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs
The Right Hon. JOHN MACLAY, M.P., Secretary of State for Scotland
The Right Hon. Sir DAVID ECCLES, M.P., Minister of Education
The Right Hon. LORD MILLS, Paymaster-General
The Right Hon. JOHN HARE, M.P., Minister of Labour
Dr. The Right Hon. CHARLES HILL, M.P., Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster
The Right Hon. CHRISTOPHER SOAMES, M.P., Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food

The following were also present:
The Right Hon. JOHN PROFUMO, M.P., Secretary of State for War (Item 4)
The Right Hon. MARTIN REDMAYNE, M.P., Parliamentary Secretary, Treasury

Secretariat:
The Right Hon. Sir NORMAN BROOK
Mr. M. REED
Mr. W. Geraghty
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SECRET
1. The Home Secretary said that the House of Commons was to debate, later in the day, the position of Mr. Anthony Wedgwood Benn. After consultation with Government supporters in the House of Commons, he proposed to resist a motion that Mr. Wedgwood Benn be heard at the Bar of the House. It was clear that he was in fact a Peer, though not perhaps a Peer of Parliament, and there was no adequate precedent for a Peer's being heard at the Bar of his own volition, as distinct from being invited to give evidence. The Home Secretary would thereafter move that the House took note of the fact that Mr. Wedgwood Benn, on succession to the Viscountcy of Stansgate, had ceased to be a Member and agreed with the report of the Committee of Privileges, which had reached that conclusion and had recommended against the introduction of a retrospective Bill to enable him to remain a Member of the House of Commons.

Discussion showed that there was general agreement in the Cabinet with these proposals. It was also agreed that the Government should resist amendments advocating legislation to permit the renunciation of Peerages and to enable those who had renounced them to be Members of the House of Commons. If there was a case for amending the constitution of the House of Lords and the law of succession to Peerages, it should be examined as a whole, with all its implications, and not in the context of one particular instance.

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

2. The Prime Minister said that the United States Administration were now in full agreement with our view that the wiser course would be to seek a political settlement in Laos and to be content with a neutral régime which would be a buffer between Vietnam and Thailand. They might however face a difficult political dilemma. For, if they sought a political settlement and Laos in the end went over to the Communist side, their Republican opponents would be quick to accuse them of appeasement. Equally, if they were obliged to authorise military intervention, they would be criticised on the basis that, as in Korea, a Democrat Government had embarked on war. This difficulty could however be averted, for the time being at any rate, if the Soviet Government accepted our latest proposals for a cease-fire and a conference.

The Foreign Secretary said that the United States Government were now pressing the Soviet Government to expedite their reply. Their delay might be due to the fact that they were having difficulty with the Chinese. It was hoped, however, that a reply might be received by the end of the present week. In that event it might be possible for the conference to meet on 2nd May.

Meanwhile there had been some improvement in the military situation in Laos. The morale of the Royal Laotian troops had been stiffened, and they had made some limited advances.

Prince Souvanna Phouma had also been persuaded to visit Washington. It would be valuable if the authorities there could satisfy themselves, by conversations with him, that he was not in sympathy with the Communists.

The Cabinet—

Took note of these statements.
3. The Foreign Secretary said that no progress was now being made in the negotiations at Geneva on the cessation of nuclear weapons tests. The attitude of the Russians had hardened, and the prospects of securing a settlement seemed to be deteriorating. In particular, the Russians had made a new proposal that the single neutral Administrator of the International Control Organisation, which they had previously accepted, should be replaced by a tripartite administrative council with a representative from the Western side, the Communist side and the neutral bloc. This proposal was based on the argument that no single person could be objective as between Communist and non-Communist interests, and it followed the line which the Russians were taking in respect of the structure of the United Nations. This was a principle which neither we nor the United States could accept. It had therefore been agreed, with the United States Government, that we should now table our Treaty proposals in full so as to make it plain to world opinion how much had been agreed and how little remained outstanding. If the negotiations then broke down, this would help to make it plain that the responsibility for the breakdown lay with the Soviet Government.

The Cabinet—
Took note of this statement by the Foreign Secretary.

4. The Cabinet had before them a memorandum by the Lord Privy Seal (C. (61) 49) on future relations with Kuwait.

The Lord Privy Seal said that the Ruler of Kuwait had asked that the Exclusive Agreement of 1899, under which the United Kingdom Government assumed responsibility for the external affairs of Kuwait, should be replaced by an instrument reaffirming our friendship and support. There would be no change in our military or financial arrangements. Any new agreement of this kind should be made in a form which would not provoke the opposition of other Arab States. There were three alternative possibilities. The first would be an exchange of notes abrogating the 1899 Agreement, accompanied by an oral and unpublished assurance (which might be recorded in an aide-mémoire) that the United Kingdom Government recognised their continuing obligation to assist in maintaining Kuwait’s independence. The second would be an exchange of notes both abrogating the 1899 Agreement and stating that its abrogation did not affect our obligation to maintain the independence of Kuwait. The third would be a formal treaty, recording the same obligations, which would be subject to ratification. Whichever method were adopted, it would be desirable that the Ruler should also be offered a Treaty of Friendship and Commerce which would give additional emphasis to the full independence of Kuwait; but this would take some time to complete and the Ruler was anxious to replace the 1899 Agreement before the present Political Resident left the Gulf early in May.

The Lord Privy Seal said that it was not certain what the Ruler had in mind; he himself favoured the first alternative of a simple abrogation of the 1899 Agreement accompanied by an unpublished assurance of continued support for the independence of Kuwait. The Political Resident in the Persian Gulf had suggested that he should present to the Ruler the first and the second alternatives together, since to present the first alone might create the impression that we were seeking to reduce the extent of our support. The Lord Privy Seal recommended that this suggestion should be approved.

In discussion the following points were made:
(a) There was general agreement that the 1899 Agreement should be abrogated while the present Ruler’s position remained strong.
(b) A formal treaty would serve the interests neither of Kuwait nor of Her Majesty’s Government. Experience in Jordan and Iraq
indicated that the existence of such a treaty could be a standing temptation to its abrogation. It would be possible to express the change in relationship by combining abrogation of the 1899 Agreement with the reaffirmation of the assurances given in 1914, which included recognition that the Sheikdom of Kuwait was an independent Government under British protection; but explicit reliance on a 50-year-old formula might invite charges of imperialism.

(c) We should in any case retain our military obligation to go to the aid of Kuwait if she were threatened by Iraq. For this we relied on our military facilities in Aden and on our ability to provide reinforcements from Kenya. Our policy in Aden would continue to be directed towards retaining our facilities there, and certain constitutional changes would be sought before the Legislative Council reached the end of its term in 1963. Our military position in Kenya was somewhat less secure.

Summing up, the Prime Minister said that the Ruler wanted a new agreement, but other Arab States might affect to be offended by the conclusion of a formal treaty. Any new agreement must recognise our right to intervene if Kuwait's independence were threatened and this would, it seemed, equally involve recognising our obligation to do so. The first two courses described by the Lord Privy Seal would each have the same effect, but by adopting the first we could avoid publicly declaring, or registering with the United Nations, the protection which we would continue to extend to Kuwait. It would be possible, if questions were raised in the House of Commons or elsewhere, to point out that the 1914 Agreement remained valid.

The Cabinet—

Invited the Lord Privy Seal to instruct the Political Resident in the Persian Gulf to inform the Ruler of Kuwait that Her Majesty's Government accepted his wish to replace the Exclusive Agreement of 1899 by a new agreement, to offer him a choice of the two courses approved in discussion and to seek his agreement to the first of those courses.

5. The Cabinet had before them a memorandum by the Secretary of State for Scotland (C. (61) 53) about the pay claim of teachers in Scotland.

The Secretary of State for Scotland said that the National Joint Council for Teachers' Salaries in Scotland (N.J.C.) had submitted to him an agreed recommendation for a general increase of 12½ per cent. on the current salaries of all grades of teachers, coupled with a reduction of all scales to 12 or 10 years. The total cost of the recommendations would be about £6½ millions representing an increase of 18 per cent. on the present cost of teachers' salaries in Scotland. The recommendation was unacceptable, not only because of the amount and cost of the proposed increase and its damaging impact on the parallel negotiations in the Burnham Committee on the salaries of teachers in England and Wales, but also because it failed to provide differential increases in favour of those sections of the profession in which it was necessary to stimulate recruitment. The Secretary of State therefore proposed that the local authority representatives on the Burnham Committee should be informed in confidence that they must not assume that the N.J.C.'s recommendations would be accepted; and that he should inform the N.J.C. that he could not accept their recommendations and would himself put alternative proposals before them.

In discussion there was general agreement that the recommendations of the N.J.C. should be rejected in terms which left the way open
to further negotiations. The Council might therefore be informed that
the Secretary of State agreed that some increase in teachers' pay was
justified (although the current rates had been in operation for no more
than 15 months) and would put alternative proposals before them
providing for differential increases designed to improve the quality of
the education service. This decision might be announced in reply to
a Parliamentary Question on 18th April. It was for consideration
whether the Secretary of State should at the same time give some
indication of the aggregate increase he would be prepared to entertain.
This would put the Government in a stronger position in relation to
the threatened strike of teachers in Scotland, due to begin on 8th May.
But, if the figure were higher than the 10 or 11 per cent. which the
English local authorities were at present intending to offer, the
negotiations in the Burnham Committee would be prejudiced.
Meanwhile the English local authority representatives, who were to
meet on the following day, should at once be informed in confidence
that the Government would not be willing to approve an aggregate
increase of as much as 18 per cent.

In further discussion the following points were made:

(a) The N.J.C. had not recommended any date of operation for
the proposed pay increases. The Cabinet had agreed at their meeting
on 24th January that this should be not earlier than 1st January, 1962,
but the Council would certainly press for a date in the near future.

(b) The Cabinet's decision would precipitate the threatened strike
of teachers in Glasgow, which was now likely to be supported by the
leaders of the teaching profession in Scotland and might be expected
to spread to other parts of the country. It was, however, important
that the Government should not make concessions under threat of
strike action.

(c) The suggestion that non-graduate men teachers should be
introduced in Scotland, which had been put forward for discussion
among the interests concerned, was now likely to have to be deferred
because of the opposing views which had been expressed. Since one
of the objects of the threatened strike was to protest against this
suggestion, it might be preferable to announce its deferment before the
strike took place.

(d) The recurring embarrassments caused by the interaction of
English and Scottish negotiations on teachers' pay made it desirable
that, if the two negotiating bodies could not be integrated, the timing
of the settlements reached in the two countries should in future be
synchronised.

The Cabinet—

(1) Invited the Minister of Education to inform the local authority
representatives on the Burnham Committee, in confidence,
that the Government would not be willing to approve
aggregate pay increases for teachers of as much as 18 per
cent.

(2) Invited the Secretary of State for Scotland, after further
consultation with the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the
Minister of Education, to reject the recommendation of the
National Joint Council for Teachers' Salaries in Scotland
on the lines agreed in their discussion.

(3) Invited the Secretary of State for Scotland and the Minister
of Education to put before the Wages Committee proposals
for differential increases in the pay of teachers.

(4) Invited the Secretary of State for Scotland and the Minister of
Education to give further consideration to the possibility
of closer co-ordination between the bodies responsible for
negotiating teachers' pay in the two countries.
6. The Cabinet had before them a memorandum by the Paymaster General (C. (61) 52) about the weekly hours of work of railwaymen.

The Paymaster General said that the railways were now almost the only major industry with a 44-hour week and the railway unions had submitted a claim for a reduction of four hours in the standard week, without loss of pay. The British Transport Commission proposed to offer a reduction of two hours: they considered that this concession would be fair in comparison with other industries, would secure the goodwill of the unions and would, in any event, be awarded if the claim went to arbitration.

The Wages Committee were of the opinion that a negotiated settlement would be preferable to arbitration and recommended that the Transport Commission should be authorised to offer a reduction of not more than two hours, on condition that the effective date should be 1st January, 1962, if possible and in any case not earlier than the introduction of the next winter's schedules, and that satisfactory new rosters were introduced.

In discussion it was generally agreed that, while the Government should try to avoid giving the impression that they accepted the principle of comparability irrespective of its financial consequences, and although there was no hope that the proposed concession could avert the wage claim which was shortly expected, the balance of advantage lay on the side of accepting the Transport Commission's proposal. Satisfactory new rosters could not, however, be devised without the use of work studies—which, indeed, offered the only hope of achieving significant economies in the operation of the railways. For this reason it would be useful if the Commission would agree that Dr. Beeching, the Chairman-Designate, should be associated with the negotiations. The introduction of work studies would be strongly resisted by the railway unions and the Government would be well advised to make in advance their preparations against the industrial action which must ultimately be expected.

The Cabinet—

(1) Approved the proposals in C. (61) 52 for a reduction in the weekly hours of work of railwaymen.

(2) Invited the Minister of Transport to convey this decision to the British Transport Commission.

7. The Cabinet had before them a memorandum by the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (C. (61) 50) on the trawler strike at Hull and Grimsby.

The Minister of Fisheries said that the strike had been started by the Grimsby Trawler Officers Guild. It had spread to Hull, but was now confined to Grimsby. It was directed primarily against the landing of Icelandic fish, but the strikers had also raised points relating to their wages and conditions of service. The trawler-owners were determined not to seek any alteration in the Paris Agreement of 1956, in accordance with which Icelandic fish was landed in this country; they realised that the maintenance of that Agreement was an essential part of the recent settlement resumed with the Icelandic Government on fishing limits. They were willing to discuss the other points at issue if the strikers returned to work. The stoppage at Grimsby was not complete; a few ships had sailed in spite of the strike, and the hundred or so ships on the fishing grounds would complete their trips before they were asked to join the strike. Landings at Hull were mainly of coarse fish and at Grimsby of better quality fish. There might be some reduction in supplies of coarse fish for a few days as a
result of the Hull strike, but in general there should be no shortage
over the next two or three weeks; thereafter there might be some
scarcity of better quality fish. No useful purpose would be served by
Government intervention at this stage, but he would keep his colleagues
in touch with the developments.

The Cabinet—

Took note of this statement by the Minister of Agriculture,
Fisheries and Food.

Washington
Talks

8. The Prime Minister made a preliminary report to the Cabinet
on the discussions which he had held during his recent visit to
Washington and the impressions he had formed of President Kennedy
and the members of his Administration.

The Prime Minister said that he would arrange for the records of
his formal meetings with President Kennedy to be circulated to all
members of the Cabinet. He proposed that the main issues arising
from those meetings should be considered at a special meeting of the
Cabinet in the following week.

Cabinet Office, S.W. 1,
13th April, 1961.