



(c) crown copyright

CONFIDENTIAL

THIS DOCUMENT IS THE PROPERTY OF HER BRITANNIC MAJESTY'S GOVERNMENT*Printed for the Cabinet. July 1962*

C. (62) 125
27th July, 1962

Copy No. 62

CABINET

**REPORT OF THE ROCHDALE COMMITTEE ON THE MAJOR PORTS IN
THE UNITED KINGDOM**

MEMORANDUM BY THE MINISTER OF TRANSPORT

My colleagues will remember that, following consultation with them, I appointed a committee in March 1961 under Lord Rochdale with the following terms of reference:

“To consider to what extent the major docks and harbours of Great Britain are adequate to meet present and future national needs; whether the methods of working can be improved; and to make recommendations.”

2. Lord Rochdale has now presented me with his report. It will take about two months to print. It is, of course, anxiously awaited by the interests concerned, particularly the port authorities and the shipping companies.

3. The annex to this paper summarises the main conclusions. (There are, in addition, over 100 detailed recommendations.) These conclusions raise a number of major issues which will require careful consideration and discussion with the outside organisations. The present situation in the docks as disclosed by the report is clearly unsatisfactory. I am anxious we should reach some decisions quickly. In particular, I think that we ought probably to set up some form of National Ports Authority on a non-statutory basis pending legislation to set it up on a statutory basis.

4. I propose, therefore, (a) that discussion should proceed between officials of the Departments concerned during August and September, (b) that I should discuss with the outside bodies concerned as soon as the report has been published, and (c) that we should aim at taking at any rate some decisions as to the action to be taken in late October or early November.

E. M.

*Ministry of Transport, S.E. 1,
26th July, 1962.*

CONFIDENTIAL

ANNEX

MAIN CONCLUSIONS OF THE ROCHDALE REPORT

The Rochdale report will contain over 100 detailed recommendations. Its main conclusions will be that:

- (i) The turn-round of ships at British ports is slow; the costs of handling cargo are high; and there are not enough berths for large dry cargo ships.
- (ii) The reasons are inadequacies in:
 - (a) investment in works and equipment;
 - (b) labour arrangements.
- (iii) The main reason why investment has been inadequate is that port authorities have preferred to keep port dues low. Most ports are not taking enough revenue to cover depreciation, still less to service the cost of new development. A relevant factor is that there are so many ports.
- (iv) Two main remedies are proposed in the organisational field:
 - (a) A National Ports Authority should be set up, not to operate any port but to advise, urge and in the last resort compel port authorities towards greater efficiency, particularly through more investment. Among other things, it would seek to carry through "a national plan of port development" by encouraging investment at some ports and discouraging it at others.
 - (b) Ports should be reorganised in estuarial groups (as the Port of London Authority replaced three separate undertakings on the Thames) so as to allow of rationalisation.
- (v) The estuarial groups would take over nearly all the major ports owned by the British Transport Commission (Grangemouth, Middlesbrough, Hull, Immingham, Goole, Grimsby, Cardiff, Swansea, Barry, Newport and Port Talbot). The few remaining British Transport Commission ports (of which Southampton is the only large one) would be handed over to other local bodies.
- (vi) The higher level of investment would be made possible by higher port dues, by better use of existing resources (*e.g.*, selling inadequately used land) and by better management. Government subsidies should not be provided "save in very exceptional circumstances". Within groups of ports, unprofitable undertakings should not be supported by the profitable, but should be overhauled or closed down.
- (vii) The membership of port boards should be much smaller than at present.
- (viii) Dock labour should be decasualised to the greatest possible extent.

July 1962.