Minutes of a Meeting of the War Cabinet held at 10, Downing Street, on Tuesday, February 13, 1917, at 12 noon.

Present:

The PRIME MINISTER (in the Chair).

The Right Hon. the EARL CURZON OF KEDLESTON, K.G., G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E.

The Right Hon. A. HENDERSON, M.P.

The Right Hon. A. BONAR LAW, M.P.

In attendance:


The Right Hon. the EARL DERBY, K.G., G.C.V.O., C.B., Secretary of State for War.


Brig.-Gen. A. C. GEDDES, Director of Recruiting (for Minute 8).

N. CHAMBERLAIN, Esq., Director-General of National Service (for Minute 8).

The Right Hon. J. HODGE, M.P., Minister of Labour (for Minute 8).

The Right Hon. the LORD RHONDDA, President, Local Government Board (for Minute 8).

Admiral Sir J. R. JELLICOE, G.C.B., O.M., G.C.V.O., First Sea Lord of the Admiralty (for Minutes 1 to 7).

The Right Hon. C. ADDISON, M.D., M.P., Minister of Munitions (for Minute 8).

The Right Hon. SIR G. CAVE, K.C., M.P., Secretary of State for Home Affairs (for Minute 8).

The Right Hon. W. LONG, M.P., Secretary of State for the Colonies (for Minute 8).

The Right Hon. A. CHAMBERLAIN, M.P., Secretary of State for India (for Minutes 2 to 8).

The Right Hon. SIR A. STANLEY, M.P., President of the Board of Trade (for Minute 8).

The Right Hon. R. E. PROTHERO, M.P., President, Board of Agriculture and Fisheries (for Minute 8).

Lieutenant-Colonel Sir M. P. A. HANKEY, K.C.B., Secretary.

Major L. STORR, Assistant Secretary.

Mr. G. M. YOUNG, Assistant Secretary.
1. The First Sea Lord reported several further actions between British surface craft and enemy submarines, without certain results. The casualties on the previous day from submarines were as follows:—

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>British merchant-ships sunk</th>
<th>Armed</th>
<th>Unarmed Trawlers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nil.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

British merchant-ships attacked and escaped—

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Armed (torpedoed and beached)</th>
<th>Unarmed</th>
<th>1 neutral steamer and 1 sailing ship sunk.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. The War Cabinet again discussed the question of publishing the losses of merchant-ships, resumed from the previous day (War Cabinet, 63, Minute 3). They decided that—

The Admiralty should at once stop the publication of losses of Allied and neutral merchant-ships, and that the publication of the losses of British ships should be continued until the Admiralty shall have considered the whole question.

3. The War Cabinet discussed the matter of the general statements to be made in Parliament in regard to the destruction of enemy submarines (War Cabinet 54, Minute 12). They decided that—

A statement might be made in the sense that the Admiralty are not dissatisfied with the number of enemy submarines that they have reason to believe never returned home.

4. The War Cabinet further decided that:—

A general statement should be made in the course of debate in Parliament, based on, but not quoting, the figures since the present Government came into office, the said figures being as follows:—

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of merchant ships armed</th>
<th>7th December</th>
<th>1,194</th>
<th>11th February</th>
<th>1,681</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

5. The First Sea Lord undertook to furnish the War Cabinet with a statement comparing the losses in merchant ships for the first eleven days of January and February, 1917, respectively, with a view to a statement being made in Parliament, if considered advisable.

6. The War Cabinet had under consideration a Memorandum on the Railway Situation in the British Zone in France, prepared by the Imperial General Staff, dated the 12th February, 1917 (Appendix I).

The Chief of the Imperial General Staff stated that he attached great importance to a communication, in the sense indicated in his Memorandum before the Cabinet, being at once made to the French Government, because he was of opinion that the result of the projected operations will almost certainly govern, even if it does not actually decide, the final issue of the war. He reminded the War Cabinet that, at the Nivelle Conference, Field-Marshal Sir Douglas Haig had pointed out that by taking over so much additional line the training of the troops under his command would
be seriously interfered with, while he would have fewer troops for the attack. Further, both Sir Douglas Haig and Sir William Robertson had stated at the Conference that it would be unwise to launch such an important and vital offensive—provided the enemy allows us the choice—before we ourselves are ready and till all the Allied Armies are able to attack simultaneously. The War Cabinet, however, had decided against these views, and had requested the Field-Marshal to take over the whole of the additional line proposed by the French, and they had since ordered him to comply with General Nivelle’s wishes as to the date of the attack, “employing the forces available at the moment.” The Cabinet had further laid it down that “on no account” must the French be kept waiting for us “owing to our arrangements not being complete.” Sir William Robertson said that he had interpreted these instructions as meaning that Sir Douglas Haig is expected to attack whether he be ready or not.

The Chief of the Imperial General Staff added that he did not know whether the General Staff Memorandum of the 24th January had caused the War Cabinet to reconsider and modify their views, but if they still thought that the state of our preparations must be subordinated to the plans and wishes of the French, notwithstanding the breakdown in the French railway system, in his opinion it was clear that Sir Douglas Haig could only do his best to ensure the successful conduct of the operations, subject to the condition of the railways at the moment; but in these circumstances he felt that the War Cabinet would agree that the responsibility of the result of the operations could not fairly be borne by Sir Douglas Haig.

The War Cabinet decided that:—

The Foreign Office should communicate to the French Government the General Staff Memorandum, accompanied by a covering letter, to be drafted by the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, the latter to embody the representations made in Minute 9 of the 59th Meeting, and to explain the fact that the War Cabinet had supported General Nivelle’s plans against the views put forward by Sir William Robertson and Sir Douglas Haig, and that they had instructed the latter to comply with General Nivelle’s wishes. The War Cabinet, therefore, feel a great responsibility in the matter, and consider that they are fairly entitled to say how disappointed they are at the breakdown in the French railway system, because the feasibility of carrying out the plan of operations agreed upon must obviously be greatly affected by the railway facilities afforded, and they wish this point of view to be fully apprehended by the French authorities.

7. The Chief of the Imperial General Staff communicated to the War Cabinet the information regarding the German reserves in men (Appendix II), promised by him at the previous meeting (War Cabinet 63, Minute 7).

8. The War Cabinet had before them a Memorandum by the Army Council regarding the supply of men for the Army, dated the 10th February, a Memorandum by the Secretary of State for the Colonies on the same subject, dated the 10th February (Appendix III), and a Memorandum by the Minister of Munitions dealing with the relation between recruiting and the output of munitions (Appendix IV).

The War Cabinet decided that:—

(a.) Any dispute between the Recruiting Department of the War Office and any other Government Department as to whether men engaged on a particular occupation could,
Delay in Medical Examination.

The Minister of Munitions, having represented that only a small proportion of the men to be released for the Army from munitions work had up to the present been medically examined, the War Cabinet decided that—

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Estimated Number made available.

The Secretary of State for War, the President of the Local Government Board, the Minister of Munitions, the Minister of Labour, and the Director-General of National Service should confer with a view to ascertaining the number of men actually made available for the Army by the decisions of the War Cabinet, and that the Secretary of State for War should inform the Field-Marshal Commanding-in-Chief in France of the number of men they may expect to receive during the next few months; the said Conference to be convened by the Director-General of National Service.

Instructions to Tribunals.

The Secretary of State for War, the President of the Local Government Board, and the Director-General of National Service should confer at once to consider what amendments experience has shown to be necessary in the Military Service Acts, and to frame fresh instructions to Tribunals for the purpose of accelerating the release of men for military service.

Proposed Review of Exemptions.

The Home Secretary should not proceed with the draft Bill for the review of exemptions granted by Local Tribunals, which he had been instructed to prepare (War Cabinet 55, Minute 4).

2. The War Cabinet decided that—

Their decision of the 30th January (War Cabinet 48, Minute 11), with regard to Members of Parliament serving with the Expeditionary Forces, should apply to Members of the House of Lords as well as to Members of the House of Commons.

(Initialled) D. Ll. G.

2, Whitehall Gardens, S.W.,
February 13, 1917.

This decision is in accordance with previous decisions of the War Cabinet, properly to be called to the colours, should be referred to the Director-General of National Service, whose decision, subject to there being an appeal to the War Cabinet, should be final.

(b.) The Minister of Munitions should instruct all employers within his jurisdiction to make representations to the recruiting authorities in every case where a man, who under the decision of the War Cabinet (W.C., 39, I (g) (i)) prima facie appears to be entitled to exemption on the ground of his occupation, receives his calling-up notice.

(c.) The Secretary of State for War and the President of the Air Board should confer together with a view to determining whether brass casters engaged in the manufacture of aeroplane parts could and ought to be spared from their present work.

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Memorandum on the Railway Situation in the British Zone in France.

1. THE Field-Marshal Commanding-in-Chief has drawn attention to the serious situation which has arisen in connection with the transportation facilities placed at the disposal of the British Armies in France, and to the effect which the failure of the railways may have upon the conduct of the forthcoming operations in so far as those armies are co-operating in them. It must be remembered that while the British authorities have assisted the French railways by supplies of rolling-stock and in other ways, the general understanding throughout the war has been that the responsibility for the management and operation of those railways, and for the adequate service of the British Armies in France by rail has rested with the French Military authorities.

2. From time to time discussions have taken place between representatives of the British and French Armies and War Offices. At those conferences the former have endeavoured to meet as far as circumstances permitted the demands for assistance, and in July last at the conclusion of a series of Conferences, General Belin, who presided, made the following statement as reported in the proces-verbal:—

"General Belin declares that the agreement is complete as regards rolling-stock; both on number and type to be supplied, as well as the time within which deliveries are to be made."

This declaration was understood by the British authorities to conclude the matter as it stood at that time, and since then they have taken every possible step to meet their obligations accordingly.

3. After the Somme offensive, when the railway situation began to cause some uneasiness, further Conferences were arranged, which took place in Paris in November and December last, attended by representatives of the Staffs of the two armies. It was at this time, and as a consequence of a communication by Marshal Joffre, then Commander-in-Chief of the French Armies, that it was first formally brought to the notice of the British Commanding-in-Chief that the French railways required more extensive and general assistance. Steps were immediately taken to render that assistance as fully as circumstances permitted, and the withdrawal of locomotives and rolling-stock from the British railways and their transfer to France was authorised, and is being carried out as rapidly as circumstances permit. These measures have only been made possible by drastic restrictions of railway facilities to the public in this country, and by the curtailment of imports of various kinds to set free shipping for the conveyance of rolling-stock on its wheels to France. At the same Conferences a programme of railway construction to be undertaken by both British and French on the railway system serving the British Armies was agreed to, and complete figures of tonnages to be carried were placed at the disposal of the appropriate French officials. The French authorities have, therefore, since November last been fully aware of the foregoing circumstances, and the matter has also been the subject of representations both verbal and written between Field-Marshal Sir Douglas Haig and General Nivelle from the 26th December until the present time.

4. It may be argued that British deliveries of rolling-stock in France have not fulfilled expectations owing partly to failure of Contractors, and also to the difficulties of cross-Channel shipping, including danger from enemy submarines, but against this there is evidence that the breakdown in January was mainly due to the lack of capacity of the lines, and exhaustion of the operating, personnel, and locomotives on the Nord system.

5. It was not until the 23rd January that the impending failure of the French railways to cope with the situation was definitely though verbally admitted at a Conference on other matters between the Directeur de l'Arrière and the Director-General of Transportation, and this informal intimation was immediately followed by drastic restrictions in traffic facilities afforded to the British Armies which are still partly in force with most serious consequences.

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APPENDIX I.

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British traffic on a scale of 200,000 tons import per week, in addition to the necessary local traffic, such as roadstone and timber required for the operations, and with this assurance Sir Douglas Haig hoped, even with the limited resources available, to be able to carry out the agreed plan of operations.

7. The following are the approximate figures of tonnages to be handled:

(a.) Total weekly demands of the British Armies—

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tons.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Import..</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local traffic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>350,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(b.) Actual weekly traffic handled at end of January—

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tons.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Import..</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local traffic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>240,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(c.) Weekly traffic which General Nivelle, at meeting on the 29th January, expressed the ability of the French railways to carry by special efforts—

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tons.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Import..</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local traffic</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From correspondence subsequently received by the Secretary of State for War from Sir Douglas Haig, however, it appears that the understanding reached at the Conference on the 29th January between himself and General Nivelle can only be realised gradually, and after an indefinite period of time, and that even so it is only thought possible by the French if considerable British assistance is given to execute works now proposed for the first time, or which the French had previously undertaken to construct themselves.

8. It is obvious that the situation which has arisen is an extremely serious one, and justifies any steps, however drastic, that may be practicable to ameliorate it. It is therefore recommended:

1. That the French Government be requested to furnish a full statement of the import and local traffic separately, which they are prepared to guarantee to carry week by week until their capacity shall have reached the full requirements of the British Armies, as notified at the Conferences in November last.

2. That civilian traffic of all kinds in the zone serving the British Armies shall be restricted to an absolute minimum. There are grounds for believing that a very considerable civilian traffic is now passing on the railways, and that this is by no means confined to the absolute essentials of life.

3. That steps be taken to evacuate from the zone of the British Armies such civilian and refugee population as is necessary to relieve the railways of the excessive demands for the support of this population.

4. That the French Government should immediately take steps to provide all the labour that can be usefully employed on the works which their officers consider necessary for the proper working of the full notified traffic of the British Armies, and, further, to withdraw from other parts of France such rolling-stock, locomotives, and personnel, as may be required from time to time to deal adequately with the British traffic on the lines serving those Armies.

5. That the British authorities should be kept fully advised from time to time of the progress of such works.

9. So far as the British authorities themselves are concerned, arrangements are being made to augment still further the labour on roads and railways for the construction and maintenance of which the British Armies are now taking responsibility, and to expedite as much as possible the despatch of locomotives, rolling-stock, and permanent way for France. If, thereafter, it is found possible to place labour at the disposal of the French authorities for new construction or for works for which they undertook the responsibility, this can be done. It is satisfactory to note that, at the recent Conferences between Field-Marshals Sir Douglas Haig and General Nivelle, it
was agreed that experienced technical railway officers of the British forces should collaborate with the officials of the Nord Railway in obtaining the best use of the railway facilities available, and there are good grounds for the hope that considerable improvement can be obtained by this means, provided such co-operation is encouraged to the fullest extent.

10. In a communication to the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, dated the 9th February the Field-Marshal Commanding-in-Chief reports that the construction programme undertaken in the British area by his Transportation Department is making satisfactory progress. He points out, however, that the heavy calls on the fighting troops for labour, have seriously interfered with training, and continue to do so.

11. As regards the effect of the railway situation on the plan of operation decided upon at the London Conference on the 15th and 16th January, he makes the following remarks:

"I have no means of knowing to what extent the railway situation has delayed preparations for the French offensive, nor do I know what proportion of the railway facilities has been retained by the French for their own use.

"In the absence of full and reliable information as to future railway prospects it is not in my power to give a date by which it will be possible to carry out my attack on the scale I had intended.

"At my meeting with General Nivelle on the 29th January, 1917, it was agreed that my Transportation Department should be brought into closer touch with the French railway experts, and I hope that this will lead to a fuller knowledge of what facilities I can rely on, and when they will be available.

"Meanwhile, if the French commence their operations on the 1st April—and still more if they commence earlier than that—I can only comply with the War Cabinet's instructions, as to combination with them, to the extent of a very modified attack. This course, so far as the British Armies in France are concerned, could have no more than a very local and temporary effect on the enemy, and would use up resources which would prejudice the success of subsequent operations."

12. From the foregoing review of the situation it is apparent that when the plan of operations was decided on at the London Conference on the 15th and 16th January, the whole situation both as to railway capacity and the demands of the British Armies was before the competent French authorities, who had even allotted to the British armies, at considerable inconvenience to themselves, adequate port accommodation to deal with the total forecast tonnage which their railways are now unable to carry. Nevertheless, within ten days of that Conference the French authorities were compelled to put into force drastic restrictions of the railway traffic at the disposal of the British Armies in France, which have not yet been wholly removed. It is, therefore, essential to the effective conduct of the projected operations, whether in a modified form, or at a later date than that originally mentioned, that the French authorities should definitely state, for the information and guidance of the British commander, to what extent they can be responsible for carrying the traffic of the British Armies, as communicated to them in November last.

Imperial General Staff, War Office.
February 12, 1917.

APPENDIX II.

SIR BERNARD MALLET'S Committee on "Enemy Personnel" reported on the 9th September last that—

"Germany would appear to have had at the end of May 1916 the following reserves, which may be expected to take the field during the calendar year:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In depots</td>
<td>1,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1918 class</td>
<td>500,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1,500,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
British traffic on a scale of 200,000 tons import per week, in addition to the necessary local traffic, such as roadstone and timber required for the operations, and with this assurance Sir Douglas Haig hoped, even with the limited resources available, to be able to carry out the agreed plan of operations.

7. The following are the approximate figures of tonnages to be handled:

(a.) Total weekly demands of the British Armies—

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Tons</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Import</td>
<td>250,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local traffic</td>
<td>100,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>350,000</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(b.) Actual weekly traffic handled at end of January—

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Tons</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Import</td>
<td>150,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local traffic</td>
<td>60,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>210,000</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(c.) Weekly traffic which General Nivelle, at meeting on the 29th January, expressed the ability of the French railways to carry by special efforts—

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Tons</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Import</td>
<td>All required</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local traffic</td>
<td>All required</td>
</tr>
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</table>

From correspondence subsequently received by the Secretary of State for War from Sir Douglas Haig, however, it appears that the understanding reached at the Conference on the 29th January between himself and General Nivelle can only be realised gradually, and after an indefinite period of time, and that even so it is only thought possible by the French if considerable British assistance is given to execute works now proposed for the first time, or which the French had previously undertaken to construct themselves.

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1. That the French Government be requested to furnish a full statement of the import and local traffic separately, which they are prepared to guarantee to carry week by week until their capacity shall have reached the full requirements of the British Armies, as notified at the Conferences in November last.

2. That civilian traffic of all kinds in the zone serving the British Armies shall be restricted to an absolute minimum. There are grounds for believing that a very considerable civilian traffic is now passing on the railways, and that this is by no means confined to the absolute essentials of life.

3. That steps be taken to evacuate from the zone of the British Armies such civilian and refugee population as is necessary to relieve the railways of the excessive demands for the support of this population.

4. That the French Government should immediately take steps to provide all the labour that can be usefully employed on the works which their officers consider necessary for the proper working of the full notified traffic of the British Armies, and, further, to withdraw from other parts of France such rolling-stock, locomotives, and personnel, as may be required from time to time to deal adequately with the British traffic on the lines serving those Armies.

5. That the British authorities should be kept fully advised from time to time of the progress of such works.

9. So far as the British authorities themselves are concerned, arrangements are being made to augment still further the labour on roads and railways for the construction and maintenance of which the British Armies are now taking responsibility, and to expedite as much as possible the despatch of locomotives, rolling-stock, and permanent way for France. If, thereafter, it is found possible to place labour at the disposal of the French authorities for new construction or for works for which they undertook the responsibility, this can be done. It is satisfactory to note that, at the recent Conferences between Field-Marshal Sir Douglas Haig and General Nivelle, it
was agreed that experienced technical railway officers of the British forces should collaborate with the officials of the Nord Railway in obtaining the best use of the railway facilities available, and there are good grounds for the hope that considerable improvement can be obtained by this means, provided such co-operation is encouraged to the fullest extent.

10. In a communication to the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, dated the 9th February, the Field-Marshal Commanding-in-Chief reports that the construction programme undertaken in the British area by his Transportation Department is making satisfactory progress. He points out, however, that the heavy calls on the fighting troops for labour, have seriously interfered with training, and continue to do so.

11. As regards the effect of the railway situation on the plan of operation decided upon at the London Conference on the 15th and 16th January, he makes the following remarks:

"I have no means of knowing to what extent the railway situation has delayed preparations for the French offensive, nor do I know what proportion of the railway facilities has been retained by the French for their own use.

"In the absence of full and reliable information as to future railway prospects it is not in my power to give a date by which it will be possible to carry out my attack on the scale I had intended.

"At my meeting with General Nivelle on the 29th January, 1917, it was agreed that my Transportation Department should be brought into closer touch with the French railway experts, and I hope that this will lead to a fuller knowledge of what facilities I can rely on, and when they will be available.

"Meanwhile, if the French commence their operations on the 1st April—and still more if they commence earlier than that—I can only comply with the War Cabinet's instructions, as to combination with them, to the extent of a very modified attack. This course, so far as the British Armies in France are concerned, could have no more than a very local and temporary effect on the enemy, and would use up resources which would prejudice the success of subsequent operations."

12. From the foregoing review of the situation it is apparent that when the plan of operations was decided on at the London Conference on the 15th and 16th January, the whole situation both as to railway capacity and the demands of the British Armies was before the competent French authorities, who had even allotted to the British Armies, at considerable inconvenience to themselves, adequate port accommodation to deal with the total forecast tonnage which their railways are now unable to carry. Nevertheless, within ten days of that Conference the French authorities were compelled to put into force drastic restrictions of the railway traffic at the disposal of the British Armies in France, which have not yet been wholly removed. It is, therefore, essential to the effective conduct of the projected operations, whether in a modified form, or at a later date than that originally mentioned, that the French authorities should definitely state, for the information and guidance of the British commander, to what extent they can be responsible for carrying the traffic of the British Armies, as communicated to them in November last.

Imperial General Staff, War Office.
February 12, 1917.

APPENDIX II.

German Man Power.

SIR BERNARD MALLETT'S Committee on "Enemy Personnel" reported on the 9th September last that—

"Germany would appear to have had at the end of May 1916 the following reserves, which may be expected to take the field during the calendar year:

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<td>In depots</td>
<td>1,000,000</td>
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<td>1918 class</td>
<td>500,000</td>
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<td>1,500,000</td>
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This figure is a minimum. It is possible that it may have to be increased by 700,000 (men released from industry), and, if the age limit is increased, by a further 500,000.

The maximum figure is, therefore, 2,700,000.

"If the war lasts till the spring of 1917, a further 500,000 youths from the 1919 class will be available."

The prediction regarding the number of men that would be absorbed during the year has been fulfilled, as net casualties have amounted to about 1,000,000 and the strength of the field units has been increased by about half a million.

The predicted possible increase of 700,000 additional men from industries and a further 500,000 by means of increasing the age limit has been more than realised owing to the introduction of the National Service Law giving the Government power to apply compulsion to all persons between the ages of 17 to 60. It is estimated that these changes in the law have resulted in making some 500,000 more men available now than the above-mentioned Committee anticipated as the maximum. The total figures now available may therefore be:

- Released from industry (vide Committee's report) 700,000
- Extending age limit 500,000
- 1919 class 500,000
- Additional as result of National Service Law 500,000

2,200,000

How these men are now distributed it is impossible to say, but the following distribution is probable:

- In depots and in new formations in Germany 800,000
- Not yet all called up, but the 1919 class (about 500,000 men) are in process of being called up 1,400,000

Total 2,200,000

General Staff, War Office, February 13, 1917.

APPENDIX III.

Memorandum by the Secretary of State for the Colonies, dated the 10th February, 1917

I am anxious to express my concurrence with the views expressed by the General Staff in their memorandum of the 8th February. I believe that unless drastic steps are taken, there will not be sufficient men to keep our Army in France up to strength in the Spring, and on this success or failure may easily depend. I agree with the Secretary of State for India in the memorandum circulated by him on the 6th February. I believe that without compulsory powers, the Director of Man-Power, notwithstanding the evidence he has given of his grasp of the whole subject, and the admirable nature of his proposals, will not be able to secure the necessary men for the colours. In this regard may I say that I contemplated with dismay the proposal arrived at by the Cabinet at their meeting on the 5th February, when they instructed the Home Office to prepare a Bill providing for the review by a new authority of the proceedings of the Tribunals. I am confident that any proposal of this kind will give mortal offence to our great local authorities, will tend to delay, not to expedite matters, and indeed I should be very much surprised if a Bill of this character could be passed through Parliament before Easter, in which case it could have no possible effect. I venture respectfully to hope, having been connected with the Tribunals from the beginning, and not having been consulted when this decision was arrived at, that the Cabinet may be willing to give so grave a question further consideration.

(Initialed) W. H. L.
APPENDIX IV

MUNITIONS OUTPUT AND RECRUITING.

Memorandum by Dr. Addison.

I DESIRE to call the attention of the War Cabinet to the effect upon the output of essential munitions which is being caused by the operation of their recent decisions with regard to the calling up of munition workers for military service.

The decisions are as follows:

January 19, 1917

1 (g) (i). That, subject to the decisions in paragraphs (a) to (d), the Director should proceed, as in Part I of his Report, by releasing for the Army all men of 18 to 22, but scheduling as exempt from military recruiting within those ages men in those occupations which are found to be of vital national importance, i.e., men employed in the production of steel, in the occupations covered by the trade card scheme, and in agriculture, mines and quarries, railway shops, transport work, and shipyards.

February 5, 1917.

2 (b). The attention of the Director-General of National Service and the War Office should be called to the fact that paragraph 1 (g) (i) refers to “occupations covered by the Trade Card Scheme,” and not to individual holders of the card.

(c.) Paragraph 1 (g) (i) should be read as applying only to men who are fit for general service.

2. In pursuance of these decisions, notices to present themselves for medical examination have been sent not only to semi-skilled and unskilled men, but also to skilled men between the ages of 18 and 23 years who are engaged in the production and manufacture of brass, copper, aluminium and other important metals, tubes, sheet-iron, wire, springs, bolts and nuts, chains, chemicals, aeroplanes, aeronautical woodwork, glass; also to men engaged in the manufacture of machinery and tools, guns, motor lorries, and in other industries. We have received the most vigorous representations on the subject from large numbers of firms all over the country.

3. It therefore appears that a more precise definition of the War Cabinet’s decisions is required, for the interpretation which at present is being given to them will not cover a large part of the industries necessary to the production of essential munitions.

I am, of course, fully desirous of furnishing to the Army in the field from munitions industries the largest quota of general service men compatible with the maintenance of such an output of munitions as the Army considers essential to its success, but it is my duty to inform the War Cabinet that there is at present a danger of a serious fall in the output of certain essential munitions under the present interpretation of the decisions quoted.

4. For instance, it appears that the output of brass may be reduced by an amount which means the loss of 300,000 fuses and 200,000 cartridge cases per week.

Again, with regard to copper, it would appear that 8 per cent. of the skilled men engaged in the production of copper may be taken; the resulting less in output would be proportionately greater than the loss of labour. Amongst other important raw materials which may be similarly affected are aluminium, spelter, lead, and antimony.

5. The uncertainty which at present prevails may be illustrated by the case of aeroplanes. The production of aircraft is threatened by the possible removal of men engaged on the manufacture of such essential components as aluminium, tubes, highly specialised woodwork, springs, bolts and nuts, dope, wire, castings and stampings, and optical instruments.

6. Again, the Army is relying on our fulfilling a large programme of new guns and of repair and relining of existing guns, for which latter demands considerable extensions of existing shops have to be carried out. Men in the existing shops and men engaged on machines for the equipment of new shops are now being called up. The arming of merchant ships will also be affected. Attached is a letter from a large
firm of gun manufacturers which illustrates this point. In this connection I should like to recall an agreement made between my predecessor and the late Secretary of State for War embodied in the following note:—

"In anticipation of War Office sanction I have given instructions that every gunmaker in the United Kingdom is to be kept up to maximum capacity till further notice. Additional plant must be laid down for repair. A promise can be given that we will do our utmost to give gunmakers material and labour.—E. S. M., 9.11.16. I entirely approve.—D. Ll. G., 9.11.16."

7. Again, large numbers of skilled chemists may be called up from explosives factories. The Explosives Department estimate that 15 per cent. of the works chemists are under 23 years of age. The effect of their removal will be a reduction not only in quantity, but also, it is feared, in quality of explosives. It may be pointed out that we are at the present moment making the greatest possible effort to increase the output of explosives in this country so as to avoid purchase in America and its transport to this country. The War Office released 150 chemists from the Army for work in explosives factories in view of the importance of this work.

**PART II.**

8. On the 19th January the War Cabinet decided:—

1. (d.) That 50,000 semi-skilled and unskilled men now engaged in munitions works should be made available for general service by the end of January, and that the Ministry of Munitions should proceed with the measures already in operation for this purpose."

This decision refers to the general service men aged 18 to 30 inclusive to be released from munitions works under what is known as the Substitution Scheme. Comparatively few men have so far been released under this scheme, partly because the machinery since the Army Council Instruction of the 23rd December was issued has taken some time to get into operation. The main cause of delay, however, has been slowness in medical examination.

9. Up to the 2nd February, according to figures supplied by the Employment Exchanges, returns covering the names of 576,161 men had been sent to the military authorities. These men were to be medically classified, in order to discover those fit for general service. On that date the number returned as having been medically examined was 41,766, of whom only 12,664 were placed in Class "A."

10. A forcible illustration is furnished by the state of affairs at Barrow. There are in this place 12,000 men to be medically examined. A medical board has been engaged there for the last three weeks, and during that period they have examined only 1,700 men. At the present rate of progress, the examination of the men at Barrow will not be concluded until some time during May.

11. It is quite impossible for the Ministry to make substantial progress with the release of the 50,000 men until they are informed which men are to be Class "A." but, provided a sufficient supply of suitable substitutes is forthcoming, the Ministry see no reason why this system should not give good and more accelerated results.

**PART III.**

12. On the 5th February the War Cabinet decided—

2. (a). The men to be released for the Army from munition works under paragraph 1 (g) (i) are additional to the 50,000 men to be released under paragraph 1 (d)."

On the basis of the estimate obtained from the War Office as to the percentage of men who may be expected to be found fit for general service, and excluding men engaged in those munitions industries which the War Cabinet have already decided to treat as essential, and the men who hold trade cards or who are in occupations covered by the Trade Card Scheme, it appears that between the ages of 23 and 30 inclusive there are only 21,000 to 26,000 men available for general service.
13. Any considerable number of general service men in excess of the 50,000 can only be obtained from munition works—

(a.) If the War Office are prepared to accept for general service purposes men over the age of 31; or

(b.) If skilled men under the age of 31 are removed from munition work; or

(c.) If the age of military service is raised above 41 and the War Office are prepared to accept for general service men over that age.

February 12, 1917.

C. ADDISON.

The Secretary,
Ministry of Munitions of War,
Whitehall Place, S.W.

Sir,

Vickers House, Broadway, Westminster,

We have the honour to refer to the latest Government measure with regard to Man-Power to withdraw men between the ages of 18 and 22 years from all industries without any intention of replacing the labour thus withdrawn.

We have closely investigated the results which may be expected to accrue if this proposition is carried into force, and although the time at our disposal has been exceedingly short, we are greatly alarmed at the disastrous consequences which will ensue should men between 18 and 22 years of age be permanently or temporarily withdrawn without substitution.

We have been in close consultation with the whole of our works and several of our most important sub-contractors, and the opinion is absolutely unanimous, that an enormous reduction in output will immediately accrue.

This reduction in output will vary, and the following is a short résumé of the investigations made at our various works, viz. :

Barrhead.—Reduction of from 30 to 65 per cent.
Sheffield.—Will paralyse the whole works.
Brith.—Will cripple production considerably.
Grayford.—Paralyse output of mines and Admiralty work of the extremest urgency.
Beyer Peacock.—Will entirely cripple the output, as men of this age are vital to their getting out their work.
Electric and Ordnance Accessories Company (Limited).—Very serious reduction in output will result.
Wolseley Motors (Limited).—Will greatly add to difficulties.

From the above you will gather that if the proposal to withdraw the men referred to is put into effect, the result so far as output is concerned will be most disastrous and far reaching, and we beg respectfully to notify the Department that all promises of delivery in connection with contracts which we have now in hand are unreservedly withdrawn.

We have, &c.

(For Vickers, Limited),
(Signed) V. CAILLARD, Director.