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SECRET.

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WAR CABINET, 115.

*Minutes of a Meeting of the War Cabinet held at 10, Downing Street, S.W., on
Friday, April 6, 1917, at 11.30 A.M.*

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. the VISCOUNT MILNER,
G.C.B., G.C.M.G.

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

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

The following were also present :—

The Right Hon. A. J. BALFOUR, O.M., M.P.,
Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs
(for Minutes 1 to 7 and 10).

Admiral SIR J. R. JELlicoe, G.C.B., O.M.,
G.C.V.O., First Sea Lord of the
Admiralty (for Minutes 1, 2, 4 to 8).

The Right Hon. the EARL OF DERBY, K.G.,
G.C.V.O., C.B., Secretary of State for
War (for Minutes 1, 2, 4 to 7).

General SIR W. R. ROBERTSON, G.C.B.,
K.C.V.O., D.S.O., Chief of the Imperial
General Staff (for Minutes 1, 2, 4 to 7).

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

Mr. THOMAS JONES, *Assistant Secretary*.

The United States
of America :
Decision of
Congress.

1. THE Prime Minister stated that information had just been received that Congress had adopted the resolution committing the United States of America to war with Germany. The War Cabinet decided that—

The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs should approach the King, with a view to a message being sent by His Majesty to President Wilson.

The British
Emissary to the
United States of
America.

2. With reference to War Cabinet 113, Minute 13, the War Cabinet discussed and decided (subject to a favourable reply from the United States of America) the date of the departure of the Emissary to the United States of America.

The King having expressed his consent, the War Cabinet decided that—

Mr. Balfour should be the British representative.

There was also some discussion as to the experts to accompany him, and a strong view was expressed in favour of Mr. Layton being

the representative of the Ministry of Munitions, if Dr. Addison could spare him.

Instructions to
Press Bureau.

3. In view of the fact that the proposal that a British Emissary of the highest status should proceed to the United States of America has become known outside, the Secretary was directed to instruct the Press Bureau to give orders that no reference should be made in the press.

Medical Assistance
from the United
States of America.

4. The War Cabinet decided that—

The British Emissary to the United States of America should press the United States Government immediately for medical and hospital assistance.

Salonica:
Possible
Co-operation by
the United States
of America.

5. The Chief of the Imperial General Staff reported that the American Military Attaché at Athens had proposed to his Government that the Americans should send troops to Salonica. General Sarrail has expressed entire approval.

In view of the fact that the United States of America military forces were not yet organised for service of this kind, the War Cabinet decided that—

No immediate action was necessary.

Visit of
M. Painlevé.

6. The Prime Minister stated that M. Painlevé, the French Minister of War, was coming to London by aeroplane very shortly.

Hospital Ships:
Reprisals.

7. The First Sea Lord read a communication from the Naval Attaché, Paris, to the effect that the French Government had decided to place distinguished prisoners and interned persons on board all their hospital ships, and to convoy them, but the ships would carry lights as usual. Admiral Jellicoe stated that the Admiralty were now trying to arrange for hospital ships to sail between Brest and Avonmouth, which route was outside the proclaimed zone.

The War Cabinet asked—

The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs to telegraph to Paris to inform M. Painlevé that His Majesty's Government would be glad to learn from him exact details of the French policy in the matter of hospital ships and reprisals.

Mine-laying.

8. With reference to Imperial War Cabinet 8, Minute 7, the First Sea Lord reported that the missing submarine had returned from her mine-laying expedition in the Heligoland Bight.

Labour Grievances
and Sedition.]

9. The Prime Minister mentioned to the War Cabinet that he had received indications from several sources of a very considerable and highly-organised labour movement with seditious tendencies, which was developing in many industrial centres. At bottom there appeared to be genuine and legitimate grievances, but there was a danger of these being exploited by violent anarchists.

The War Cabinet decided that—

As soon as further evidence was forthcoming the Government should endeavour to remove the grievances without delay, in order, as far as possible, to forestall trouble.

Ceuta and
Gibraltar.

10. The War Cabinet had before them the recommendation of the Sub-Committee on Territorial Changes with reference to the possible exchange of Ceuta and Gibraltar (Third Interim Report, Paper G.-118 (b), Paragraph 47).

The War Cabinet decided that—

An Interdepartmental Committee with Naval, Military, and Diplomatic Representatives should enquire into the subject and report.

Lord Curzon consented to act as Chairman, with Colonel E. D. Swinton as Secretary.

Iron Ore from
Spain.

11. With reference to War Cabinet 63, Minute 8, the reports of experts on the transport of ore from Spain having shown that at present nothing useful can be done owing to the shortage of rolling stock, the War Cabinet decided—

To take no action at present, although, if rolling-stock should eventually appear likely to be available, the question should be reopened.

Proposed Ministry
of Health.

12. The War Cabinet decided that—

The question of the establishment of a Ministry of Health, raised in a memorandum by Lord Rhondda, dated the 27th March, 1917 (Appendix I), should be referred in the first instance to Lord Milner and Mr. Henderson, in consultation with—

Lord Rhondda.
Sir Edwin Cornwall.
Dr. Addison.
Dr. Fisher.
Mr. G. N. Barnes.
Mr. Montagu.

Mr. G. M. Young to act as Secretary.

(Initialled) D. Ll. G.

2, Whitehall Gardens, S.W.,
April 6, 1917.

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APPENDIX I.

G.T.-361.

THE URGENT NEED FOR A MINISTRY OF HEALTH.

Memorandum by the President of the Local Government Board.

1. PUBLIC opinion is now keenly aroused on the existing deficiency and inefficiency of our public medical services, especially for maternity and infant welfare. There is a widespread insistent demand for improvement. The working of the Insurance Act has shown what can be achieved by a systematic provision of medical services, but these are admittedly inadequate, particularly for the crucially important needs of women and children. Yet directly the Local Government Board proposes a Bill for giving new powers to local authorities to provide improved services for maternity and infant welfare obstacles are raised: firstly, because it is alleged the new steps can in fact only be made effective if fitted in closely with the existing insurance services; this, however, it is almost impossible to achieve under present conditions, since the latter are under a different organisation and direction; and, secondly, because the insurance people say that, unless *their* services are developed at the same moment, the new Local Government Board step will be prejudicial to Health Insurance work.

2. There are several other grave difficulties resulting from the existing chaos in our health services; *e.g.*, in providing medical services for discharged soldiers and their widows and orphans, in the obstacles hampering the development of the needed specialist services for insured persons, large numbers of whom are discharged soldiers; in the constant drag on the improvement of tuberculosis services; and in the quarrelling over maternity and infant welfare schemes. These and other crying evils can only be remedied by the immediate establishment of one Central Ministry of Health, in place of the two or three separate and competing Government Departments, which at present separately supervise various elements in the national health problem.

3. Further, the services of the Local Sanitary Authorities and of the Local Insurance Committees, at present working on different lines and often as rivals, need to be co-ordinated and developed in close co-operation, instead of being (as now) supervised by two separate and rival Central Departments, on differing lines of policy. This, again, can only be achieved by combining into one Central Ministry the medical functions of the Local Government Board and of the Insurance Department.

4. This combination could be effected in various ways, some of which would raise large issues that should probably be considered carefully by the Reconstruction Committee, and dealt with legislatively at a later date. But there is a simple and small step which should be taken *at once* (without prejudice to larger plans of reconstruction) and which would suffice to establish a real Ministry of Health for England and Wales. All that is wanted is a three-clause Bill establishing a "Ministry of Health and of Local Government" to supersede the Local Government Board, and transferring to it the medical and sanatorium functions (but, for the present, no others) of the English and the Welsh Insurance Commissions, and giving to it the necessary powers for bringing into existence the needed new medical services; coupled with provision of adequate Exchequer funds (as was proposed by Mr. Lloyd George in his 1914 Budget) for making suitable grants to the local bodies so as to get the work promptly commenced and efficiently done.

5. Under this plan the English and Welsh Insurance Commissions would continue, with all their other functions; the Joint Committee, and its chairman, and the Scotch and Irish Commissions would not be affected. It would be a first-step, involving the minimum of change for the moment, and leaving the larger developments to be worked out carefully by the Reconstruction Committee, to whom that problem should at once be remitted.

6. The Bill would be popular and would raise no party controversies. It would be essentially a war emergency measure for making possible the immediate development of the maternity and infant welfare and other services above described, for which public opinion is already clamouring, and which have become doubly needed by reason of the war-havoc, and doubly urgent if they are to be started before the difficulties of demobilisation render such an initial step both too late and impossible. It is, therefore, earnestly desired that this small but supremely useful step be sanctioned forthwith, so that the Bill may be introduced in the House of Lords at once, with the promise of substantial Exchequer grants.

RHONDDA.

March 27, 1917.