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Printed for the War Cabinet. May 1917.

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WAR CABINET, 129.

*Minutes of a Meeting of the War Cabinet held at 10, Downing Street, S.W., on
Tuesday, May 1, 1917, at 7 P.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. A. HENDERSON, M.P.
The Right Hon. the VISCOUNT MILNER, G.C.B., G.C.M.G.	

The following were also present:—

The Right Hon. W. LONG, M.P., Secretary of State for the Colonies.	The Right Hon. A. CHAMBERLAIN, M.P., Secretary of State for India.
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Lieutenant-Colonel SIR M. P. A. HANKEY, K.C.B., *Secretary*.Major L. STORR, *Assistant Secretary*.Captain L. S. AMERY, *Assistant Secretary*.Future Sessions of
the Imperial War
Cabinet.

THE Prime Minister brought before the War Cabinet the question of the renewal of the system of Imperial War Cabinets in the future. He considered that a suggestion to this effect should come from the British Cabinet. He had had some discussion with Sir Robert Borden with regard to the possibility of General Smuts informally representing the other Dominions on the War Cabinet, and had realised that this would not be feasible. He was generally in favour of the proposal for an annual session of the Imperial Cabinet set forth in a memorandum by the Secretary of State for the Colonies, but wished to make it clear that in an emergency a special session of the Imperial Cabinet might be summoned at any time.

The Secretary of State for the Colonies pointed out that it was desirable to fix, normally, a definite period for such sessions in order that the Prime Ministers of the Dominions should, as far as possible, come to this country at the same time. If they came one by one at different times and expected, as they naturally would, to take part in the deliberations of the War Cabinet, no true balance of overseas opinion would be arrived at by such discussions. He had discussed the alternative suggestion of a continuation of the Imperial War Cabinet by deputy Ministers left in London with the Dominion representatives and found them unanimously opposed to it; it was essential that whoever sat in the Imperial War Cabinet should either be a Prime Minister or one who had his absolutely unqualified confidence; they were not in favour of the presence of a

representative who might commit them to things they did not approve.

The Secretary of State for India said that as regards the future representation of India the representative might either be the Secretary of State himself or, if it were considered better that the Secretary of State should be treated as one of the Imperial Ministers, then there should be one other representative of India. Both he and Lord Curzon expressed themselves in favour of the latter alternative. If the meetings of the Imperial Cabinet were to be annual, there would be no difficulty in varying the representation so as to have a representative of the Hindoo community one year, of the Moslems another year, of the Rulers of the Native States another, and so on.

Mr. Henderson, while agreeing with the nature of the permanent machinery proposed, considered that it would have been desirable in the immediate future to have had Dominion Ministers available who could be called in at any time. In any case, if Mr. Hughes came over in the next few months he would have to be admitted to the War Cabinet. It was, however, pointed out by the Secretary of State for the Colonies and other members of the War Cabinet that both General Smuts and Sir Robert Borden had specifically rejected the idea of a continuous session of the Imperial War Cabinet with Deputy-Ministers in attendance.

There was general agreement that the objects of the new sessions of the Imperial Cabinet should be the discussion of foreign affairs, defence, and questions of common interest generally, and that it should be a body quite distinct from the British Cabinet. If the present War Cabinet were hereafter superseded by a Cabinet on the old lines, then only those members of the Cabinet who dealt directly with Imperial affairs should take part in the Imperial Cabinet.

The Secretary was instructed to draft, on the lines of Mr. Long's memorandum, a proposal from the British War Cabinet to the Dominion representatives.

2, Whitehall Gardens, S.W.,
May 2, 1917.