CONCLUSIONS of a Meeting of the Cabinet, held at 10, Downing Street, S.W.1, on FRIDAY, OCTOBER 15, 1920, at 3-15 p.m.

PRESENT:—

The Prime Minister (in the Chair).

The Right Hon. A. Bonar Law, M.P.,
Lord Privy Seal.

The Right Hon. A. Chamberlain, M.P.,
Chancellor of the Exchequer.

The Right Hon. the Earl Curzon of Kedleston, K.G., G.C.S.I.,
G.C.I.E., Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.

The Right Hon. W. Long, M.P.,
First Lord of the Admiralty.

The Right Hon. H.A.L. Fisher,
M.P., President of the Board of Education.

The Right Hon. Sir L. Worthington Evans, Bart., M.P.

The Right Hon. E. Shortt, K.C., M.P.,
Secretary of State for Home Affairs.

The Right Hon. the Viscount Milner, G.C.B., G.C.M.G.,
Secretary of State for the Colonies.

The Right Hon. Sir Robert Horne,
G.C.B., K.C., M.P., President of the Board of Trade.

The Right Hon. Lord Lee of Fareham,
G.C.B., G.C.B., Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

The Right Hon. Sir E. Geddes,

The following were also present:—


Lieut.-Colonel Sir M.P.A. Hankey, G.C.E., Secretary.

Mr R.B. Howorth, Assistant Secretary.
(1) The Cabinet met as a matter of urgency in view of the impending coal strike.

The President of the Board of Trade reported that the strike notices would take effect on Saturday, October 16th. At today's meeting of the Miners' Delegates, Messrs. Smillie and Hodges had been given full powers to treat with the Government on any question which might arise, and had been authorised to call off the strike in the event of the Government conceding the 2/- per shift advance.

No evidence was at present forthcoming of any movement on the part of the Transport Workers to join in the strike. At present the Executive of the Transport Unions had no power to call a strike without first taking a ballot of the men.

There was also no evidence of any intention on the part of the Railwaymen to join in the strike. The Railwaymen's Executive was to meet on the following day, and had power to declare an immediate strike. In this connection the Cabinet were reminded that on previous occasions the Railwaymen had resorted to lightning strikes, with very little or no notice.

The Cabinet were informed by the Minister of Transport that at an interview on the previous day with Mr. Cramp the latter had taken the line that a prolonged miners' strike would mean heavy unemployment among the railwaymen, with consequential depletion of the Union's funds. It might, therefore, be to the railwaymen's advantage to join in the strike with a view to securing some pecuniary benefit by so doing. Moreover, if the railwaymen joined in, the strike was more likely to be short and sharp.

On the other hand, it was pointed out that the railwaymen were generally averse from striking, and would prefer, in the event of unemployment, to be in position to draw their Unemployment Insurance.

Attention was drawn to the ignorance of the public (in spite of the Government's propaganda) in regard...
facts of the dispute; e.g., it was generally believed that the men were striking for 2/- a week, and not for 12/- a week.

It was generally agreed that extensive propaganda by large posters should be adopted throughout the country.

The Chairman of the Supply and Transport Committee reported that the following action had already been taken on the recommendations of that Committee:

(i) All exportation of coal had been stopped:

(ii) The erection of a Wireless Telegraphy Station in Hyde Park had been ordered, which would take ten days to complete.

As from Saturday, October 15th., restrictions on the supply of coal, gas and electric light would come into force, and steps would be taken to recruit for the Special Constabulary and for other essential services.

During the meeting, further information was received to the effect that the proposal contained in that morning's "Daily Mail", that the Government should give the men an advance of 1/-, had been discussed at the Miners' Delegates meeting, and that Messrs Smillie and Hodges had been empowered to accept an offer on this basis. Also that Mr Smillie had announced his intention to resign, and had with difficulty been persuaded to retain his position in the Federation temporarily.

There was some discussion as to the procedure to be adopted in Parliament in respect to the crisis, and it was generally agreed that the President of the Board of Trade should make a full statement of the Government's position as early as possible after the recess of the House.
The Cabinet agreed—

(a) To approve the action already taken on the recommendation of the Supply and Transport Committee:

(b) To authorise the Supply and Transport Committee to put into immediate operation, as and when the situation requires, the measures concerted to meet the contingency of a strike, and generally to supervise their execution:

(c) That the Chairman of the Supply and Transport Committee should have authority to arrange with the Chairman of the Sub-Committee on this subject for further propaganda, and that he should take into careful consideration the early and extensive employment of large posters.

(2) The Cabinet were informed that the Chief of the Imperial General Staff wished to send two Battalions from Portsmouth to Liverpool on the afternoon of the following day.

It was generally agreed that this action might be regarded as provocative, and the Chief of the Imperial General Staff was informed that arrangements would be made to move the Battalions in question by rail when necessary, or, failing this, that the Admiralty would be prepared to transport the men by sea.

The Cabinet were informed by the Chief of the Imperial General Staff that he had made arrangements to move one Battalion from Port George to Stirling, two Battalions of Guards from Pirbright to London, and that he had stopped all leave.

The Cabinet took note of and approved these arrangements.

(3) The First Lord of the Admiralty drew attention to the fact that Naval Ratings could not legally be called upon to perform certain functions, such as pumping, etc. The men knew their legal position, and had been urged by Bolshevik agents to refuse to obey orders in the event of a strike.

The Cabinet were reminded that the Emergency Powers Bill had been drafted to meet this difficulty, and that...
Bill had not been introduced into the House of Commons before
the Recess as it was thought that such action would be
recorded as provocative.

It was generally agreed that if the railwaymen went
on strike on the following day, the Leader of the House of
Commons, in consultation with the Minister principally con­
cerned, should have authority to introduce the Emergency
Powers Bill on Tuesday next, or later, with a view to its
passage into law as quickly as possible, Parliament being
asked, if necessary, to suspend the Standing Orders. If,
however, the railwaymen remained at work, the general view
was that it would be better to introduce and pass the Bill
into law in the ordinary way.

(4) Speaking on behalf of his colleagues, the Prime
Minister congratulated the President of the Board of Trade
on the patience, tact, skill and judgment shown by him in
conducting the negotiations with the miners. The public had
been greatly impressed by the way in which the Government's
case had been conducted, and the hands of the Government had
also been greatly strengthened.

The Prime Minister also requested Ministers to give
every possible assistance to the Minister of Transport, on
whom would fall the main burden of meeting the greatest
hold-up strike by which the country had hitherto been con­
fronted.
(5) With reference to Cabinet 55 (E0), Conclusion 9, the Cabinet had under consideration a suggestion made by the Dean of Westminster that the remains of one of the numerous unknown men who fell and were buried in France should be exhumed, conveyed to England, cremated if necessary, and given an imposing military funeral in Westminster Abbey on November 11th, the date of the unveiling of the Cenotaph. A copy of the proposals is attached hereto (See Appendix).

After some discussion, in the course of which the Chief of the Imperial General Staff informed the Cabinet that the Army might be assumed to be unanimously in favour of the proposal, which was regarded as the greatest honour that could be paid by the nation, the Cabinet agreed —

(a) To accept in principle the proposals contained in the Appendix, and to request a Committee, composed of——

Lord Curzon (in the Chair),
Lord Lee of Fareham,
Mr Churchill,
Mr Walter Long,
Mr Shortt, and
Sir Alfred Mond,

with Colonel Storr (Cabinet Office) as Secretary,

in consultation with Sir Douglas Dawson, the Dean of Westminster and the Government Departments concerned, to make proposals for carrying into effect the arrangements both as regards this proposal and the ceremony for the unveiling of the Cenotaph, and to report to the Cabinet:

(b) That the announcement of this decision should be made by the Prime Minister in the House of Commons on the re-assembling of Parliament.
The Cabinet were informed that on October 27th arrangements had been made for entertaining the Prince of Wales at the Guildhall in connection with his recent Imperial tour.

The Cabinet took the view that, having regard to the industrial situation, it was desirable that the entertainment should be postponed.

The Secretary of State for the Colonies undertook to convey this expression of opinion to the quarters concerned.

3, Whitehall Gardens, S.W.1.
October 15, 1920.
APPENDIX.
MEMORANDUM.

DEAN OF WESTMINSTER'S SUGGESTION.

1. Briefly:-

That the remains of one of the numerous unknown men who fell and were buried in France should be exhumed, placed in a shell; conveyed to England; if necessary, cremated; escorted by soldiers, as military funeral procession, to Westminster Abbey; and there, after short impressive Funeral Service, be buried in the Nave; a central position having been granted by the Dean, fairly opposite the great West Door so as to be easily seen and identified by people in all future time:

That, afterwards, a very short, simple inscription be cut on the stone, which would be applicable to all branches of H.M. Services, for example:-

A BRITISH WARRIOR
WHO FELL IN THE GREAT WAR
1914-1918
FOR KING AND COUNTRY.

The idea has been submitted to the King, who, approving generally, desired the Dean to consult the Prime Minister; and he has done so. The Dean has consulted Field Marshal Sir Henry Wilson, who warmly supports the suggestion: recommended for the inscription a neutral word like "Warrior", so as to include Naval, Air Force, as well as Army: and promised kind assistance.

3. The time is short. But Sir Henry Wilson gave the Dean to understand that there need be no difficulty in carrying out the necessary arrangements with promptitude.

4. It might be possible to combine such a ceremony with the unveiling of the Cenotaph: having the Funeral Service, e.g., at 12 or 12:30.

5. The objections have been made:

(a) That it is too late:
But not too late if carried out about the same date as the Cenotaph.

(b) That it is sensational.
But any appeal to national sentiment is open to this charge.

6. The advantage would be that it would generally be acceptable to the people: that it would do honour to the great mass of fighting men; that it would furnish a Memorial to them in Westminster Abbey, without singling out for such distinction any one known man. At present Westminster Abbey has no memorial of the Great War.