CABINET 18 (22).

CONCLUSIONS of a Meeting of the Cabinet held at 10, Downing Street, S.W., on Wednesday, 16th March 1922, at 11 a.m.

PRESENT:-
The Right Hon. A. Chamberlain, M.P.*
Lord Privy Seal. (In the Chair).


The Right Hon. S. Baldwin, M.P., President of the Board of Trade.

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

The Right Hon. R. Munro, K.C., M.P., Secretary for Scotland.

The Right Hon. The Viscount Birkenhead, Lord Chancellor.


The Right Hon. Sir Alfred Mond, Bart., M.P., Minister of Health.

The Right Hon. T.J. Macnamara, M.P., Minister of Labour.

The Right Hon. Sir Hamar Greenwood, Bart., K.C., M.P., Chief Secretary for Ireland.

THE FOLLOWING WERE ALSO PRESENT:-

Captain The Right Hon. F.E. Guest, G.B.E., D.S.O., M.P., Secretary of State for Air. (For Conclusion 2)


Mr. T. Jones. Principal Assistant Secretary.

Sir J. Chancellor, K.C.M.G., D.S.O., Principal Assistant Secretary, C.I.D.
The Part of the Air Force of the G.P. in the Air of the G.P.-F754).

THE LORD PRIVY SEAL stated that he had summoned the Cabinet in order to discuss the statement he proposed to make in the House of Commons on the following day in reply to an amendment to be moved by Admiral Sir Reginald Hall to the effect that a separate Naval Air Force should be established. He had spoken on the telephone to the Secretary of State for War on the subject of the line he proposed to take, which, though resulting from the Cabinet decision referred to above, was not entirely confirmed by the Cabinet Minutes, the discussion having been prolonged until a late hour and not completed. Sir Laming Worthington Evans had said that he must ask for a Cabinet decision on the matter. Unfortunately, owing to indisposition, Sir Laming was unable to be present that day. The line he (Mr Chamberlain) proposed to take in his statement in the House was that the Air Ministry was established during the War as the result of war experience; it was a statutory body, and therefore could not lightly be abolished. Although the weapon for the Air had made rapid progress during the War, it was still in its infancy, and it was impossible now to foresee the nature and extent of the developments of the future. He did not propose, therefore, to lay down a policy for all time, but to state that the present organisation of the separate Air Force was satisfactory and that the Government proposed to maintain it.

The general question of the relations of the Air Force with the Navy and Army had been discussed by the Standing Defence Sub-Committee of the Committee of Imperial Defence on the assumption that an independent Air Force was to be maintained, and the following general conclusions were formulated by Sir Arthur Balfour:--
(i) That the Air Force must be autonomous in matters of administration and education;

(ii) That in the case of defence against air raids, the Army and the Navy must play a secondary role;

(iii) That in cases of military operations by land or naval operations by sea, the Air Force should be in strict subordination to the General or Admiral in supreme command; and lastly,

(iv) That in other cases (such as the protection of commerce, and attack on enemy harbours and inland towns) relations between the Air Force and the other Services should be regarded rather as a matter of co-operation than that of the strict subordination necessary when aeroplanes are acting merely as auxiliaries.

He suggested that the Cabinet should accept these conclusions.

As regards the co-operation of the Navy, he proposed that an inquiry should be conducted into the proper method of effecting co-operation between the Navy and the Air Force, in order to ascertain how the Air Force can give to the Navy the air service which the Navy requires. He proposed to go on to state that another Committee had been appointed to make definite proposals for amalgamating as far as possible the common services of the Army, Navy and Air Force, such as the Supply, Transport, Education, and Medical/Chaplains departments, with a view to effecting economies in these services. He did not think the Secretary of State for War expected the Cabinet to come to a different decision. The Secretary of State for War had recognised that it was impossible to continue the present state of suspense involved by the further delay of a decision; but he argued that the feeling of the soldiers was so strong against the propositions contained in Sir Arthur Balfour's Memorandum that the scheme of a separate Air Force could not work.

Mr Chamberlain added that Lord Beatty had seen him on this question and had stated that he had learned that
Mr Chamberlain's view was that the Admiralty were not disposed to develop the Air arm and were jealous of the Air Force. Lord Beatty said that that was not true; the Navy was most anxious to develop the Air arm, they had already made great progress with it, and they would readily co-operate with the Air Force in future developments. He had replied to Lord Beatty that he was misinformed as to his view: all that he had said was that in former discussions the Navy had conveyed the impression that the Admiralty did not fully realise the importance of the Air arm.

The Secretary of State for Air assured the Cabinet that the Air Force was desirous of co-operating with the other Services to the fullest possible extent. He requested that the Terms of Reference to the proposed Committee as regards co-operation with the Navy should be so worded as to exclude from discussion the question of the establishment of a separate Naval Air Force.

The Lord Privy Seal concurred, and said that what he submitted to the Cabinet was that the question of the abolition of the separate Air Ministry was not now a question for discussion. That he had in his mind was that a Sub-Committee of the Committee of Imperial Defence should be appointed, with a Minister as Chairman, who should not be the Head of one of the three Fighting Services, and that the Committee should lay down principles similar to those which had been laid down by Sir Arthur Balfour in respect of the co-operation of the Air Force with the Army.

The Cabinet agreed—

That the Lord Privy Seal's statement should be based on the following policy:
(a) That, while the Government did not propose to lay down a policy for all time, the separate Air Ministry should be maintained:

(b) That the following principles, formulated by Sir Arthur Balfour as the result of an enquiry by the Standing Defence Sub-Committee of the Committee of Imperial Defence, should be approved:

(i) That the Air Force must be autonomous in matters of administration and education:

(ii) That in the case of defence against air raids, the Army and the Navy must play a secondary role:

(iii) That in cases of military operations by land or naval operations by sea, the Air Force should be in strict subordination to the General or Admiral in supreme command and lastly,

(iv) That in other cases (such as the protection of commerce, and attack on enemy harbours and inland towns) relations between the Air Force and the other Services should be regarded rather as a matter of co-operation than that of the strict subordination necessary when aeroplanes are acting merely as auxiliaries.

(c) That a Sub-Committee of the Committee of Imperial Defence should be appointed to enquire into the existing system of naval and air co-operation and to advise as to the way in which the Air Force can give to the Navy the Air service which the Navy requires:

(d) That the Lord Privy Seal should consult with the Prime Minister as to the precise constitution of the Sub-Committee.
The Secretary of State for Air stated that he desired to bring to the notice of the Cabinet the new programme of aerial construction that had just been approved by the French Government. It was proposed to increase the establishment of long-range bombing squadrons from 62 to 140. The French were now building 150 machines per month while we were building 25 per annum. We had at present only one bombing squadron in the home establishment, but if the Estimates for 1922–23 were approved another squadron would be added.

It was generally agreed that the French air development constituted a formidable danger to this country, and the Secretary of State for Air was requested to circulate a Memorandum to the Cabinet on the subject.

It was pointed out that the Standing Sub-Committee of the Committee of Imperial Defence was now examining the question of the Continental air menace.

The Secretary of State for Air was requested to communicate the information as regards recent French aerial developments to that Sub-Committee, which was requested to expedite its enquiry on this subject.
With reference to Cabinet 15 (22), Conclusion 10, the Cabinet had before them a Memorandum by the Chief Secretary for Ireland (Paper C.P.-3829), a Memorandum by the Chancellor of the Exchequer (Paper C.P.-3823), and a copy of a telegram from General Macready to the Secretary of State for War (Paper C.P.-3843), dealing with proposals for the treatment of the Royal Irish Constabulary on disbandment.

The Cabinet were informed that the subject had been considered by the Provisional Government of Ireland Committee, which had failed to reach agreement.

The Chief Secretary for Ireland stated that the compulsory disbandment of the Force had become inevitable and was taking place more suddenly than had been anticipated, with the result that the check in the careers of the men was taking place at very short notice. The men themselves had put up demands for compensation which, if granted in full, would cost about £6,000,000. The Chief of Police and Mr Cope had formulated a scheme which would cost about £1,250,000. His own proposal was much more modest: it was that a gratuity in respect of disturbance should be granted to the men, at a cost of approximately £300,000, this gratuity to be in addition to the terms promised under the Government of Ireland Act, and in addition to the further benefits to which the Treasury had agreed. These further benefits were that pensioners who stay in Ireland would be allowed to commute, in favour of a quarterly annuity for two years, so much of their pension as would increase their emoluments for the first two years during which it is conceivable that they might have some difficulty in obtaining employment if they remained in Ireland. Also, any man who wished to leave South Ireland would receive a...
Disturbance Allowance for removal, the total cost of which was estimated at anything from £200,000 to £500,000. He was prepared to admit that the terms which the Treasury had agreed to were generous terms, but, in view of the very exceptional circumstances in which these men found themselves, and in view of the Prime Minister's pledge (August 19, 1921) that "the loyalty and gallantry of their services have been such that it would be a dishonour for any Government or any Party to neglect their interests", he maintained that the additional gratuity for which he pleaded was thoroughly justified. Sixteen members of the Force had been murdered and a large number of them wounded. He believed the concession for which he asked, if granted, would facilitate the passage of the Irish Treaty Bill through the House of Lords. He wished to remind the Cabinet that under the Treaty the money for the payment of the pensions would be found by the Irish Free State, and he understood that the machinery of the Irish Free State would be employed to pay the pensions direct to the members of the Force. This last point constituted a serious objection in the minds of the men, as their whereabouts would be fully known to the Irish Free State. A decision was urgent, in order to bring the matter to a conclusion before the end of the present financial year. The disbandment had been delayed at the request of Mr Michael Collins.

THE LORD PRIVY SEAL held that the Prime Minister's pledge in effect was a pledge that the Force would be treated not less favourably than under the 1920 Act; it was not a pledge that they would be treated more favourably.

THE CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER said that in view of the demand of the men for a scheme which would cost £5,000,000, it was not probable that the grant of the gratuity asked for by the Chief Secretary would in fact
appease them. The men were being treated most generously. Each member would have twelve years added to the actual number of years served in calculating his pension, and the Treasury had agreed to commute the pension or to make advances on account in order to help men who found themselves in special difficulty.

The Secretary of State for the Colonies said that he was to see a Deputation on the subject that afternoon, and in his view the Government had a good case on the basis of the terms conceded by the Treasury. Mr Churchill then read out a large number of illustrative comparisons of the terms proposed for the Royal Irish Constabulary and the terms which other State servants would receive on retirement. For example, an Irish Constable with five years actual service would receive a pension of £1:7:0 per week, whereas a Civil Servant with similar service would be dismissed with a gratuity of £121, a Policeman £87, an Army soldier £100, a War Pensioner, with total disability, £100. Again, an Irish Constable, after 15 years' service, would receive £2:17:0 per week for life, whereas a Civil Servant with similar service would receive £1:5:1, an English Policeman £1:8:1, an Army Pensioner 13s.1d. In effect, the Royal Irish Constabulary was being treated almost doubly as well as any other class of persons. In addition, it had been agreed to set up a strong impartial tribunal to consider individual cases of special hardship, with power to recommend additional grants. He thought the special tribunal should interpret its duties broadly in cases where men were being subjected to a regular vendetta. There was, in his opinion, no force in the argument that the Free State would pay the pensions, as the British Government guaranteed the payment.
THE LORD PRIVY SEAL reminded the Cabinet that under the Government of Ireland Act, 1920, compensation would not have been paid to men offered re-employment. In the present case they had asked to be disbanded. He thought the Treasury proposals met the pledges which had been given, and that the terms were handsome.

THE PRESIDENT OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION said that when the terms were embodied in the 1920 Act they were thought to be most generous.

THE LORD PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL concurred.

THE MINISTER OF LABOUR said it was important that the tribunal should in fact operate, and operate swiftly.

The Cabinet agreed —

To adopt the proposals put forward by the Treasury (Paper C.P.-882), including the appointment of a special tribunal to consider individual cases of special hardship, with power to make recommendations for additional grant.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR THE COLONIES briefly referred to the personnel of the Commission which it was proposed to set up to hear and determine claims in respect of injuries arising out of the conflict terminated by the Irish Treaty.

Various suggestions were made as to suitable persons who might be chosen for the post of Chairman of the Commission.
The Cabinet had before them a Memorandum by the First Lord of the Admiralty dealing with the proposal to close Haulbowline Dockyard (Paper C.P.-3817). The Admiralty had made arrangements for the closing of the Dockyard, and had made no provision in the forthcoming year's Estimates for its continuance. The cost of keeping the Dockyard open would amount to £15,000 a month. Strong representations, however, had been received by the Secretary of State for the Colonies from Éireannach Collins pressing that the Admiralty should defer the closing of the Dockyard for a few months, as the Provisional Government hoped in the interval to prepare plans for the continuance of the Dockyard under the control of the Irish Free State.

In the course of the discussion it was pointed out that it was desirable to help the Provisional Government as much as possible, especially in County Cork, and that if the Admiralty could arrange to send a ship to Haulbowline for repair it would be welcomed by the Free State Government. On the other hand, it was but fair that the Provisional Government should undertake the expenses of maintaining the Dockyard after March 31st.

The Cabinet agreed —

(a) That the closing down of Haulbowline Dockyard should be postponed for the present;

(b) That the First Lord of the Admiralty should arrange that a ship should be sent for repair to Haulbowline Dockyard;

(c) That the Secretary of State for the Colonies should arrange with the Provisional Government for the maintenance of the Dockyard after the end of the present financial year, any sums advanced after March 31st by the British Government to be recovered as part of the general financial settlement.
With reference to Cabinet 15 (22), Conclusion 11, the Cabinet agreed —

To request the Secretary of State for War to take the place of the late Secretary of State for India as a member of the Committee on Overseas Settlement.
The Cabinet had before them a Memorandum by the Postmaster General dealing with the proposed diversion of a cable recently acquired from the Direct United States Cable Company (C.P.3826), referred to the Cabinet by the Provisional Government of Ireland Committee.

The Postmaster General explained that the cable had been purchased in 1920 for £570,000, chiefly with a view of providing an alternative in case of breakdown of the Imperial cable. It was located in County Kerry and connected with London by a telegraph line. The traffic was remunerative and in order to admit of its being worked in the most economical manner it was proposed to cut its connection with Ireland and extend it to Penzance, and use it there as an adjunct to the Imperial cable. It had always been the intention, quite apart from the Irish political situation, to remove the cable from Ireland before the Post Office took over its working, but in view of the creation of the Irish Free State he had thought it proper to consult the Cabinet before giving instructions to cut the connection with Ireland. From the strictly business standpoint the sooner the cable was joined to Penzance the better.

The Secretary of State for the Colonies said it was important to do nothing which would endanger the friendly co-operation of this country with the Free State and that to cut the cable outside the territorial waters and join it to England would be an act capable of being represented as having a sinister significance.

The Chief Secretary said that such an act would certainly be regarded as a challenge to the good will of the Government and it would also have the effect of throwing a number of people out of work in a remote
part of Ireland.

THE CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER said that it should be brought home to the Provisional Government that if the cable is continued as at present it would involve a financial loss to this country.

The Lord Privy Seal suggested that the Chancellor's point should be used to bring pressure to bear on the Irish Free State not to charge the full transit rates which they would technically be entitled to do.

The Cabinet agreed:—

That the Postmaster General should, if necessary, raise the matter again after the Parliamentary Elections in Southern Ireland had been held.
With reference to Cabinet 17 (22) Conclusion 4, the Minister of Labour informed the Cabinet of the present position of the dispute between the masters and men in the Engineering trades. The General Council of Trade Unions and the Parliamentary Labour Party had met on the previous day and were consulting the Executive of the Amalgamated Engineering Union that morning. The upshot of these conferences would probably be that strong pressure would be brought to bear on the Government to put in motion the Industrial Courts Act and institute an enquiry thereunder. To refuse to do this would play into the hands of the supporters of Direct Action and throw to their side a number of moderate men. In accordance with the wishes of the Cabinet he was resisting the request for an enquiry and would continue to do so as long as possible on the ground that a ballot of the allied unions was in progress and that nothing should be done in the meantime to prejudge the results of that ballot. These results would not be announced until March 25th.

The Cabinet took note of the statement of the Minister of Labour and requested Dr Macnamara to bring the matter again to the notice of the Cabinet before agreeing to the appointment of a Court of Enquiry.

2, Whitehall Gardens, S.W.1.
March 15, 1922.