Minutes of a Meeting of the War Cabinet held at 2, Whitehall Gardens, S.W., on Friday, July 13, 1917, at 3 P.M.

Present:
The Right Hon. the Viscount Milner, G.C.B., G.C.M.G. (in the Chair).
The Right Hon. G. N. Barnes, M.P.

The following were also present:

The Right Hon. C. Addison, M.D., M.P., Minister of Munitions.
Mr. Barlow, Ministry of Munitions.
Brigadier-General A. C. Geddes, Director of Recruiting.
The Right Hon. J. Hodge, M.P., Minister of Labour.
Sir D. J. Shackleton, Ministry of Labour.
Mr. C. F. Rey, Ministry of Labour.

Mr. I. G. Gibbon, Local Government Board.
Mr. N. Chamberlain, Director-General, National Service.
Mr. C. Beck, M.P., National Service.
Mr. E. A. S. Fawcett, National Service.
Sir H. Llewellyn Smith, K.C.B., Board of Trade.
Sir W. F. Marwood, K.C.B., Board of Trade.
Mr. G. Calthrop, Coal Controller.

Colonel E. D. Swinton, C.B., D.S.O., Assistant Secretary.
Captain the Hon. W. Ormsby Gore, M.P., Assistant Secretary.
Man-Power:*

Tenth Report of the Director-General of National Service.

1. THE War Cabinet had under consideration "The Tenth Report of the Director-General of National Service to the War Cabinet" (Paper G.T.-1176).

Mr. Neville Chamberlain stated that he still held to the opinion expressed therein, that all Government exemptions should be cancelled in the case of men of the younger classes. He pointed out that he had set up an elaborate organisation throughout the country for providing substitutes to fill the vacancies caused by men called up for service, but that few vacancies had been created, and that consequently few substitutes were wanted. Unless the Government were prepared to reverse their present policy in regard to the younger classes of men, he did not see that there was much object in the continued existence of his Department.

Dr. Addison was of the opinion that it was too early to judge of the working of the Report of Lord Rhondda's Committee (War Cabinet 103, Minute 2), the provisions of which, to all intents and purposes, did not come into operation until the 31st May, 1917. The process of conducting medical examinations and hearing appeals, &c., was slow, and, though a certain number of men were coming in, he could hold out no hope, as regards the Ministry of Munitions, that the full quota of men asked for by the War Office would be obtained. He considered that, although munition works obtained men of all grades through the Labour Exchanges, the National Service Department was useful as supplementing the work of those Exchanges.

As to the procedure of substitution, it was pointed out that the Labour Exchanges were applied to, in the first instance, to furnish the substitutes required, and that if these Exchanges could not find the men the demand was passed on to the Director-General of National Service. In this connection Sir David Shackleton stated that, out of 2,000 substitute vacancies which had been passed on to the Director-General of National Service, only 34 substitutes had been found. He admitted that there was a prejudice against the Labour Exchanges on the part of several of the more powerful and highly organised trades, and also that the demands for labour put forward by firms were often exaggerated and needed investigation.

Mr. Neville Chamberlain said that he was unable to accept the above statement as to the vacancies notified by the Minister of Labour and filled by the National Service Department. His Department had been placing on an average over 600 volunteers a week in various occupations. He added that the cream of his volunteers, including even general labourers, had been skimmed by transference to the Labour Exchanges as potential War Munition Volunteers, while the vacancies handed to him by the Labour Exchanges were those most difficult to fill.

Mr. Prothero informed the War Cabinet that the Agricultural Committees usually applied to the Labour Exchanges. He admitted that this might be due to the fact that farmers preferred the cheapest labour obtainable. In reference to the last paragraph of the Tenth Report of the Director-General of National Service, he reported that the women obtained by the Board of Agriculture, with the help of the National Service Department, were doing very good work, but that their selection, training, and distribution had been carried out by the Board of Agriculture.

2. Lord Milner stated that the question before the Cabinet, which was contained in the first four paragraphs of the Tenth Report of the Director-General of National Service, really turned upon the working of the schedule of groups to be released for Recruiting.

* The discussion under Minute 1 was commenced at the Meeting of the War Cabinet held in the morning (War Cabinet 184), but was adjourned to the afternoon in order to enable representatives of the other Departments concerned in the question of Man-power and Substitution to be present.
military service by Government Departments, which had been framed as the result of the Report of the Rhondda Committee. It was necessary therefore, in the first instance, to ascertain the actual situation in figures in regard to the numbers of men released and posted to the army under this schedule (Memorandum by the Adjutant-General to the Army Council regarding the Position and Prospects of Recruiting, May 31, 1917—Paper G.T.—965).

On the subject of the general position of recruiting, General Geddes stated that there were still 3,900,000 men of military age in civilian employment in Great Britain, of which a disproportionately large number were amongst the younger classes. In his opinion, under the existing policy, the incidence of recruiting was upon the older men, many of whom were of the professional classes or had businesses of their own, were married and had reached a certain stage of independence; whilst the younger men, the majority of whom were not married, and had not reached a stage of independence, but who had been caught in the factory system, were being protected. The latter contained a large number of Syndicalists, cowards, cranks of all sorts, and unskilled men. The policy being forced upon the War Office was, in his opinion, anti-national. Not only were the Tribunals unsympathetic to it, but the feeling of the whole country was growing more and more hostile to it as time went on. What was, in his opinion, still worse was that the present policy was providing unlimited grist for the pacifist mill. He considered that there was no possibility of maintaining the army under the existing system, and that it was destroying the independent class of the nation and protecting those, not so worthy of being preserved. So much was this feeling shared by the Tribunals that eleven of these bodies were actually on strike.

Mr. Hayes Fisher endorsed the view that the Tribunals were anxious that the younger single men should be taken before the older married men, and stated that the question of the calling up of those conducting a one-man business might very shortly be raised in Parliament in a very acute form.

The Adjutant-General stated that he entirely shared General Geddes's views, as did the Secretary of State for War. The class of men that the Army wanted was the younger men; but so serious was the recruiting situation, as far as mere numbers were concerned, that the Army authorities could not afford to reject any man they could legally obtain, however old he might be.

3. Dr. Addison pointed out that the schedule of Protected Occupations (M.M. 130) had been designed to secure the release of a number of young men, but that the agreement between the Government and the Trade Unions debars their release. This agreement lays down that the dilutees of military age who are fit for general service shall be released before any young man who is not a dilutee is taken. No man over 32, dilutee or other, can be released under the schedule, and the Government promised to consult the Unions before any alteration of the schedule. However, even if, after consulting the Unions, the age is raised from 32 to 41, the presence of dilutees in the absolutely protected trades of shipbuilding and marine engineering effectively prevents the working of the original intention of the schedule and the release of any young non-dilutees. In regard to the Ministry of Munitions, he anticipated that some 30,000 men might be obtained instead of the 124,000 required. Of these about 11,000 had been released up to date.

4. The Coal Controller stated that up to date 16,560 men had been released out of the two quotas, each of 20,000, that were required. The policy followed had been to take only those younger men who had entered the mining industry after the 4th August, 1914. The
whole of the number required could not be obtained by those means, and arrangements were now being made with the Miners' Federation to obtain the balance by ballot. There was a certain amount of unemployment in the anthracite trade, and in Northumberland and Fife. In the last-named area an average of four days' work a week was being done, but owing to the demand for increased output in the Midland coalfields it may be necessary to get miners from Fife and Northumberland to move to that area. The figures recently made public in Parliament in regard to South Wales, however, were inaccurate. He undertook that the full quota of 42,000 men would be furnished, but explained that there would be some delay in de-certifying men selected by ballot.

General Geddes stated that there were a little over 500,000 men of military age employed in the mines, and that the mines formed one of the largest pools which the Recruiting Authorities might have at their disposal. He urged that, in order to expedite matters, all miners under a certain age should be de-certificated forthwith, on the understanding that those subsequently selected by ballot to complete the quota would be called up.

The Coal Controller undertook to consult the Miners' Federation and to report by Wednesday next.

5. Sir Hubert Llewellyn Smith gave the figures for the men released from Railways and Docks (a summary of which is included in the table given below), and in regard to dock labour emphasised the difficulty that had arisen as the result of the increased employment of the Western ports, and owing to the opposition of the Transport Workers' Federation to the release of men.

6. In regard to the quotas to be furnished by the Police and Civil Service, General Geddes expressed himself as satisfied that the men would be forthcoming.

7. In regard to the 40,000 men in occupations other than those specifically detailed in the schedule, General Geddes intimated that none of these men would be available till September, but that he hoped to get a fair number by October. He doubted whether more than 10,000 men in all would be obtained under this head.

8. In reply to Lord Milner, Mr. Neville Chamberlain pointed out that the number of substitutes required would not necessarily be as many as the number of men released. He estimated that the number of substitutes that would be required to be found by his department to fill the places of men released would be between 100,000 and 150,000.

It was pointed out to the War Cabinet in this connection that there was more unemployment at the present time than there had been at any time since September, 1914, and that the present outlook in the woollen trade, owing to the curtailment of raw materials, would probably shortly bring about a considerable displacement of labour. Mr. Hodge informed the War Cabinet that there was a strong feeling amongst the labour classes in the country that the Government had been weak in its treatment of the recruiting problem, and that if any good result was now to be achieved it would be necessary for the Government to retrace its steps and consider the question of exemption de novo.
TABLE showing present position regarding Releases and Postings of Men to be Released for the Army by Government Departments as a result of the decision of the War Cabinet (War Cabinet 103, Minute 2):—

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Department or Group</th>
<th>To be Released for Military Service</th>
<th>Released to date by Departments</th>
<th>Actually posted, and now in the Army.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ministry of Munitions</td>
<td>124,000</td>
<td>90,000 names have been submitted, of whom 44,000 have been medically examined, and of these 29 per cent. have been found to be Class A. Of these, 9,000 men have been released (1,400 without substitutes)</td>
<td>4,000*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coal mines</td>
<td>42,000†</td>
<td>16,560</td>
<td>10,765</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Railways</td>
<td>12,000</td>
<td>10,250‡</td>
<td>9,800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>21,000</td>
<td>20,000</td>
<td>4,505</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>33,000</td>
<td>30,580</td>
<td>13,885</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Docks</td>
<td>7,000</td>
<td>2,728§</td>
<td>Nil, but about 2,000 now in sight.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civil service</td>
<td>2,000</td>
<td></td>
<td>All will be posted by August 15.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Police</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td>800</td>
<td>Practically all posted.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other certified occupations</td>
<td>40,000</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Postings will begin in September. 10,000 may be obtained in all.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Another 7,000 now in sight.
† 2,000 added to original allocation as result of undertakings not to take men of military age engaged in coal distribution in Metropolitan area.
‡ Includes platelayers sent to France as civilians.
§ 1,625 Class A.

It was agreed that the whole problem of recruitment and substitution was complicated by the recent undertakings given to the Trade Unions, and the Cabinet decided that—

The question as to what action was to be taken on the 10th Report of the Director-General of National Service should be left for the decision of a fuller meeting of the War Cabinet in the light of the information given above.

2, Whitehall Gardens, S.W.,
July 14, 1917.