WAR CABINET, 217.

Minutes of a Meeting of the War Cabinet held at 10, Downing Street, S.W., on Friday, August 17, 1917, at 11:30 A.M.

Present:

The PRIME MINISTER (in the Chair).

The Right Hon. the EARL CURZON OF KEDLESTON, KG., G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E.

The Right Hon. G. N. BARNES, M.P.

Lieutenant-General the Right Hon. J. C. SMUTS, K.C.

The following were also present:—


The Right Hon. the EARL OF DERBY, KG., K.C.V.O., C.B., Secretary of State for War.


The Right Hon. Sir A. STANLEY, M.P., President of the Board of Trade (for Minute 1).

The Right Hon. W. S. CHURCHILL, M.P., Minister of Munitions (for Minute 1).


The Right Hon. JOHN HODGE, M.P., Minister of Labour (for Minute 1).

The Right Hon. H. A. L. FISHER, LL.D., M.P., President of the Board of Education (for Minute 20).

Mr. PHILIP KERR (for Minute 16).

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

Mr. THOMAS JONES, Assistant Secretary.

Major L. STORR, Assistant Secretary.

Captain CLEMENT JONES, Assistant Secretary.

Railway Labour unrest. Threatened Strike.

1. (a) WITH reference to War Cabinet 206, Minute 2, and War Cabinet 215, Minute 1, the President of the Board of Trade read correspondence which had taken place between him and Mr. Bromley, the Secretary of the Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen (Appendix I). Sir Albert Stanley explained that he had written to Mr. Bromley so as to give the Union an opportunity of coming to the Board of Trade and of putting the men right with the Government and the country.
Mr. Bromley's reply was uncompromising, and it was desirable that the Government should be in a position to proclaim under the Munitions of War Act a strike, the moment it is known that a strike is about to take place. This would enable the Government to attach the funds of the Union and would make picketing illegal. The case could then go to arbitration by the Committee on Production by direction of the Ministry of Labour. Sir Albert Stanley said that he was against arresting the leaders of the strike unless there was intimidation and violence. The Associated Engineers and Firemen were not absolutely united, and Mr. J. H. Thomas had issued, on behalf of his Union (the National Union of Railwaymen), a strong circular against the strike, to which he had received not a single unfavourable reply. The Railway Executive were of opinion that if the National Union of Railwaymen remained firm, it would be possible to convey food, ambulance trains, some passengers, but the transport of war munitions would be affected.

The Minister of Labour believed that the strike would be of short duration, partly owing to the unpopularity of Mr. Bromley with his trade union colleagues, and partly because of the rivalry of the two railway unions mainly concerned.

The Minister of Munitions believed that as soon as the public realised that the strike would mean a shortage of food at home and of war supplies abroad, support for the Government would rapidly increase.

In reply to a question, Sir Albert Stanley explained that the granting of the 8-hours' day would now involve the country in an expenditure of 10,000,000/ per annum for increased overtime pay; the Board of Trade had undertaken that the Government control of the railways would continue for some time at least after the cessation of hostilities, and an opportunity would be given to have the hours question discussed. The Board of Trade had not refused to discuss the question of increased wages.

The War Cabinet decided that—

Preparations should be made by the Lord President of the Council and the Minister of Munitions, in association with the President of the Board of Trade, for the proclamation of the impending strike, and that steps should be taken by the Board of Trade to make clear to the public the issues involved.

(b.) With reference to the last paragraph in Mr. Bromley's letter, stating that Scotland Yard officers had sought admission to a conference of the Union, it was stated that two officers had been sent by Scotland Yard to the meeting, under the defence of the Realm Act, Regulation 51(b); Mr. Bromley had seen the officers and, after consulting the delegates, had refused to admit them, and the officers withdrew.

The Home Secretary said that this visit had taken place without his knowledge, and he would enquire into it. He thought the Government had given an undertaking not to apply Section 51(b) to trade union meetings.

2. The War Cabinet had before them a memorandum by the President of the Board of Trade (Paper G.T.-1672) on the subject of War Risks Insurance.

Sir Albert Stanley summarised the points referred to in his memorandum. He pointed out that the Government War Risks Insurance scheme for hulls and cargo, which was solvent as a whole till the autumn of last year, has since been steadily losing money, and at the end of June the estimated deficit on hulls was about 13,000,000/., and on cargo about 19,000,000/.

As nearly the whole of the British Merchant fleet had now been taken over by the Government, and was at the risk of the Government, the
insurance of the ships themselves could, for the moment, be put on one side. But some alteration must be made in the scheme for the insurance of cargo. Under the present scheme all the better risks were going to the open market, while the bad risks and the big risks which the market could not take were being left with the Government.

The only way in which unnecessary loss and waste could be prevented was for the Government in effect to take over the whole war risk insurance of the country. The leaders of the London insurance market had been sounded, and recognised that something of this kind was inevitable. It was therefore proposed that the Board of Trade should make an arrangement with the insurance market under which, after a certain date, no war risks will be written by anyone in the United Kingdom except through one central body acting on behalf of the Government.

Sir Albert Stanley said that, as this proposal involved a radical departure, he wished to have the instructions of the Cabinet.

The Board of Trade and Treasury being in agreement, the War Cabinet approved Sir Albert Stanley's scheme in principle, but requested him, before putting it in operation, to confer with the leading underwriters in the matter.

3. The War Cabinet had under consideration a memorandum by the Secretary (Paper G.T.-1710) on the subject of the ultimate custody of the Cabinet documents issued to Ministers (Appendix II).

The War Cabinet agreed with the Secretary, for the reasons pointed out in his memorandum, as to the importance of having secret documents returned by Ministers when they go out of office.

It was pointed out that the danger was not confined to the possibility of Cabinet documents getting into the hands of foreigners, as, for instance, in the case of an ex-Cabinet Minister having a wife of foreign extraction who might be his executrix, and who might elect to reside in the country of her birth, for there was also a risk of Cabinet papers finding their way into sale-rooms and second-hand book-shops, as had occurred in the past. In fact, if precautions were not taken, the whole inner history of the war would, in a few years' time, leak out through these means. It was probably impossible for Ministers to hand back the whole of the vast mass of their papers, but it would be well if the Secretary could make a list of the more secret papers and get them returned from Ministers when they vacate office.

The Prime Minister referred to the importance of constant reference to previous papers, and the War Cabinet agreed that there should be no question of a Minister returning Cabinet documents during his term of office.

The War Cabinet, who approved of the Secretary's suggestions in principle, decided that—

(a.) Cabinet documents should be the property of His Majesty's Government, and that the Cabinet should have the right to insist on the return of any confidential Government document.
(b.) This arrangement should date from the formation of the present Government in December 1916, when for the first time records of Cabinet meetings were kept.
(c.) An ex-Minister should at any time be allowed to have access at the War Cabinet offices to Cabinet documents to which he had had access during the time when he was in office.
(d.) Upon leaving office, the normal course should be for a Minister to hand over his papers to his successor, and
that these documents should be regarded as the property of the office, and not of the individual.

(e.) The Secretary, in conjunction with Lord Curzon, should prepare a list of certain specified documents (including War Cabinet Minutes and Imperial War Cabinet Minutes of great secrecy, which, if not handed over to his successor, should be returned by a Minister on vacating office.

(f.) It should be the duty of the Secretary to collect such documents from ex-Ministers as are not handed over to their successors.

(g.) In future, all War Cabinet documents, whether printed or otherwise, should contain a statement that "This document is the property of His Britannic Majesty's Government."

The Western Front. 4. The Director of Military Intelligence gave particulars in regard to the attack to the North of Ypres. Two French and eight British divisions had attacked on a front of about eleven miles. They had been opposed by a force of nine German divisions. On the left the attack had been completely successful, and all the objectives gained. On the right, however, there had been strong opposition, and counter-attacks had been delivered by the enemy. The enemy still occupied the high ground, but we had made good progress as far as just to the East of St. Julien. We had taken 1,860 prisoners, but, owing to the nature of the ground, it is not to be expected that the numbers of prisoners will be as large as in the Somme and Arras regions. In the latter districts prisoners had been taken in dug-outs, but in the wet ground near Ypres this was not possible. The proportion of killed to prisoners at Ypres was probably much greater.

In the Lens area three Canadian divisions, who had captured Hill 70, had been opposed by three German divisions.

The weather on the Western front was bad.

Casualties. 5. The Director of Military Intelligence reported that our casualties in the Ypres fighting had amounted to roughly 9,000; namely, 432 officers and about 8,568 men. Our casualties since the 31st July numbered 1,176 officers and 45,000 other ranks.

German Reserves. 6. The Director of Military Intelligence reported that one satisfactory feature of the recent fighting appeared to be that the German reserves showed signs of weakening. There were only twelve fresh divisions on the Western front. Since we began our attack on the 31st July, only one German division, namely the Alpine Corps from Alsace, had been sent to Russia. Since the beginning of the Russian attack on the 1st July, eight divisions had been sent.

German Desertion. 7. The Director of Military Intelligence pointed out recent cases of desertion on the part of the enemy, indicating deterioration of moral in certain units. In the 200th German Division, composed of Prussian troops, at Verdun, on the left bank of the Meuse, a whole platoon of 40 men had deserted, and yesterday another batch of 70 men had deserted.

The Eastern Front. 8. The Director of Military Intelligence reported a telegram from Paris saying that General Weygand was of opinion that the German effort against Russia was coming to an end, apparently from lack of troops. General Ballard had sent similar news, to the effect that the enemy's attack was weaker, and that he was entrenching.
General Ballard also reported that the Russians were expecting an attack on the Bessarabia frontier between the Dniester and the Pruth, but there was, so far as he was aware, no particular concentration in this quarter.

At Okna the 2nd Roumanian Army were maintaining their position well. General Ballard reported that in the recent fighting the good point was that the Russians and Roumanians had put up a stout fight; the bad point was that mutual distrust and friction continued. General Ballard suggested that a rousing telegram should be sent to the King of Roumania. The War Cabinet approved this suggestion, and asked—

The War Office to supply the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs with materials for a telegram which the Secretary of State would, on behalf of the War Cabinet, advise His Majesty to send to the King of Roumania.

Austrian Troops. 9. The War Cabinet took note of the possibly significant fact that only one Austrian Division took part in the attack on Roumania.

East Africa. 10. The Director of Military Intelligence reported a message from General van Deventer, to the effect that the enemy had abandoned his pom-poms and was retreating southwards, and that our troops were in pursuit.

Russia. 11. The War Cabinet had under consideration a telegram from General Barter to the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, dated the 12th August, 1917 (Paper G.T.—1705), in which the suggestion was made that the Allied Powers should put pressure on the Russian Government to carry out General Korniloff’s conditions of accepting his appointment (War Cabinet 208, Minute 6), one of which was that the application of disciplinary measures and death penalty should be extended to all troops in the Empire.

The War Cabinet felt it would be unwise to put pressure on the Russian Government to adopt General Korniloff’s full programme, because it might be said that the British Government were urging the Russian Government to shoot soldiers. Such advice, it was pointed out, by an Allied Government, would, in similar circumstances, be strongly resented by a British Government.

The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs pointed out the delicacy of the situation having regard to Russian psychology, of which matter our Ambassador was the best judge.

It was pointed out that some careful message in support of discipline might be sent to Sir G. Buchanan, to be used at his discretion and after consultation with the representatives of the Allies.

The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs undertook to draft a message in this sense which he would submit to the Prime Minister for approval.

International Naval Conference. 12. With reference to War Cabinet 200, Minute 11, the First Sea Lord reported that Admiral Sims had received a telegram to the effect that Admiral Mayo and his Staff were sailing on the 18th August in the steamship “St. Louis” to take part in the Naval Conference.
The War Cabinet agreed that the Naval Conference should be held on Tuesday, the 4th September, and instructed—

The Admiralty to issue invitations to the Allies to send representatives, at the time informing them that Admiral Mayo and Admiral Sims will represent the United States of America.

This Naval Conference must be distinguished from the Transport Conference, which would probably not take place (War Cabinet 208, Minute 3).

13. The First Sea Lord reported four cases in which Special Service Ships, formerly known as Decoy or "Q" ships, had been lost. He stated that the day of the Special Service Vessel appeared to be over. Two of these ships, the "Prize" and the "Bergamo," had been sunk off the North-West of Ireland. He gave particulars of the action and the ultimate loss of one of these Special Service Vessels, which had fought a particularly gallant fight with a submarine. The Officer in Command of the ship had already received the V.C. and two D.S.O.'s. While, owing to the secret nature of the craft, it would be impossible to publish the details, the War Cabinet asked—

The First Sea Lord to express to the Officer commanding the ship the appreciation of the War Cabinet for the gallant conduct of all concerned.

14. The First Sea Lord reported that Commodore (T) had attacked a number of German Minesweepers, and, he thinks, sunk two of them and damaged a destroyer. On his return he captured a Dutch ship carrying coal from Rotterdam, outside territorial waters.

15. The First Sea Lord reported that a successful bombing raid had been carried out at Ostend and Ghistelles, where the aerodromes and railway stations had been heavily bombed. An enemy two-seater had been driven down. All our own machines had returned safely.

16. The attention of the War Cabinet was drawn to telegram No. 1258, dated the 15th August, 1917, from Sir George Buchanan, with reference to complications which have arisen in Petrograd as a result of the correspondence between the Prime Minister and Mr. Arthur Henderson on the subject of the Stockholm Conference, and of the action taken by the Russian Minister in London.

It was pointed out that neither in the correspondence with Mr. Henderson nor in his statement in the House of Commons has the Prime Minister stated that M. Kerensky was opposed to the holding of the Conference.

With reference to a suggestion put to Sir George Buchanan by some journalists that the Russian Government should request His Majesty's Government to allow British Socialists to attend the Stockholm Conference, it was urged that it was most undesirable that any such request should be made. His Majesty's Government and the Allied Governments of France, Italy and the United States, had to consider public opinion in their respective countries, just as the Russian Government had to consider public opinion in Russia.
The action of M. Nabokoff had been fully considered by the War Cabinet on the 13th August, and it was important to adhere to the undertaking then given (War Cabinet 213, Minute 14).

Mr. Philip Kerr was requested to draft a telegram on the above lines to Sir George Buchanan, for submission to the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.

The War Cabinet had under consideration a Memorandum by the Secretary of State for War (Paper G.T.—1720) stating that General Allenby had telegraphed to say that it would be necessary for him to issue from time to time proclamations in occupied enemy territory, and that it would guide and assist him in drafting such proclamations if he were clearly informed as to the policy of His Majesty's Government in regard to Palestine.

Sir Mark Sykes pointed out that this contingency had been foreseen and provided for before he himself assumed the duties of Chief Political Officer to the Expeditionary Force. A document entitled "The Status and Functions of the Chief Political Officer and French Commissioner" had been prepared and approved by the British and French Governments, which clearly defined the position and duties of those two officers. It was possible that General Allenby was not aware of the existence of this document.

General Allenby had, however, attached to his Staff, as Chief Political Officer, General Clayton, who had succeeded Sir Mark Sykes, and who would always be consulted in the first instance where matters of policy were involved.

The War Cabinet decided that—

(a) The Secretary of State for War should inform the General Officer Commanding-in-Chief Egypt, that, so far as political considerations were concerned, he had authority to issue Proclamations without reference to His Majesty's Government, as prescribed in the instructions to the Chief Political Officer; and that, in all cases of military necessity or urgency, he had a free hand.

(b) The despatch as a whole should be remitted to the War Office for further and drastic revision, in the light of contemplated future operations.
19. The War Cabinet considered a Memorandum by Mr. Prothero on the desirability of the British Government securing supplies of frozen fish from Newfoundland and Canadian Companies at an agreed price and subject to inspection, for the period of the war and for a year or eighteen months afterwards (Paper G.T.—1709).

The War Cabinet agreed that the proposals appeared on the surface to be sound, and referred them for full examination and report to the following Committee:—

- The Food Controller (Chairman),
- A Representative of the Board of Agriculture and Fisheries,
- A Representative of the Ministry of Shipping,
- A Representative of the Board of Trade,
- A Representative of the Colonial Office,
- A Representative of the Treasury,
- Mr. Thomas Jones (Secretary).

20. The War Cabinet considered a Memorandum on Pensions for Teachers, by the President of the Board of Education (Paper G.T.—1601).

Mr. Fisher thought that the establishment of a scheme of pensions for Secondary and Technical School Teachers already authorised by the War Cabinet (War Cabinet 75, Minute 10) would be certain to lead to a demand for similar arrangements for Elementary School Teachers. It was desirable that all teachers should be covered, as this would not only improve the attractions of the profession but make mobility between the different grades more frequent. In Germany the pension of the teacher was equal to his salary on retirement; there was therefore little difficulty in retiring a man. He suggested that the scheme might provide for pensions equivalent to two-thirds of the salary, and for a retiring age at 60, and he estimated the additional contribution of the State would be about one million pounds per annum—if Elementary Teachers were included.

The War Cabinet were impressed with the importance of raising the quality of the teaching profession and removing from it all reasonable cause of discontent inasmuch as at present revolutionary movements were to no small extent fomented by dissatisfied school teachers.

The War Cabinet decided—

To approve in principle the recommendations of the President of the Board of Education in favour of a Pensions system for Elementary Teachers, subject to the agreement of the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

2, Whitehall Gardens, S.W.,
August 17, 1917.
Dear Mr. Bromley,

August 15, 1917.

I HEREBY enclose a copy of question and answer which was given in the House of Commons yesterday, and which I feel it my duty to communicate to you in order that your Delegates may be under no misapprehension as to the serious view the Government take with regard to any stoppage of the railways. Having regard to the fact that Parliament is about to adjourn for the autumn recess, members will very naturally expect a statement of the latest development before the adjournment, and, what is more important, an intimation, if possible, that having regard to the great crisis through which the nation is passing, no attempt to hamper or interfere with our efforts will be made by any section of railwaymen. If, therefore, you can give me such intimation, it will be welcomed by the House and the country, and I am satisfied that such a course will ultimately prove to the best interest of the men when the time comes to discuss questions of shorter working days.

I should, therefore, be obliged if you have any communication to make that it may reach me in time so that I may be able to communicate with Parliament to-day.

Yours very truly,

(Signed) A. H. STANLEY.

J. Bromley, Esq.

ASSOCIATED SOCIETY OF LOCOMOTIVE ENGINEERS AND FIREMEN,
8, PARK SQUARE, LEEDS.

Grafton Hotel,
Tottenham Court Road, London, W. 1.

August 16, 1917.

Dear Sir Albert,

I HAVE received your favour of yesterday's date delivered to me by hand to-day.*

I quite appreciate the desire of the Government to be enabled to assure the House of Commons and the country that there will be no trouble on the railways as a result of the refusal to concede to the railway locomotivemen the principle of the 8-hour day, but unfortunately I regret to say that the very reverse will be the case in the very immediate future unless the above principle is conceded to the railway locomotivemen of the country.

Your letter has been submitted to our Conference of Delegates now sitting, and I am instructed to assure you that the minds of the locomotivemen are made up. We have endeavoured by every means in our power to come to an amicable settlement, having failed to do so, there is but one course open to us. I may say that we have ample evidence to lead us to believe that yourself and the Railway Executive Committee have been very much deceived as to the determined strength in the country behind our demand, and possibly as to the power of others to control the locomotivemen, that however is no fault of ours, and if any belief in our want of the strongest support, not only from our own members, has been engendered; we can only regret it.

I may respectfully assure you that we are prepared for any and every eventuality which may arise, when the final step is taken. I regret I cannot give you a different reply, but the very serious nature of the position demands the greatest frankness.

* The first paragraph of Mr. Bromley's letter is due to a mistake in the date at the top of Sir Albert Stanley's letter, which should have been dated the 16th August.
I am sorry to inform you that this reply to your letter has been delayed owing to Scotland Yard officers seeking admission to our Conference which however the delegates refused. I think I ought to say that if our Conference is interfered with by the Authorities, the stoppage of work will be precipitated without any further act by ourselves.

Yours faithfully,
(Signed) J. BROMLEY, General Secretary.

Sir Albert Stanley,
President of Board of Trade,
Whitehall Gardens, S.W.

APPENDIX II.

G.T.-1710.

THE CUSTODY OF WAR CABINET DOCUMENTS.

Note by the Secretary.

AN important question of principle as to the ultimate custody of War Cabinet documents issued to Ministers is raised by the resignation of Mr. Henderson and Mr. Austen Chamberlain.

2. I am informed that the immemorial custom has been for Cabinet documents to remain the personal property of Cabinet Ministers on their vacating office. I feel it my duty, however, to draw the attention of the War Cabinet to the fact that there are many differences between the peace conditions in which this practice grew up and those under which the present War Cabinet works.

3. In the first place it must be remembered that before the war nearly all papers dealing with national defence, foreign policy, and kindred subjects, were issued by the Committee of Imperial Defence. By a decision of that Committee taken on the 14th May, 1908 (Minutes of the 99th Meeting) (Appendix) all papers issued were subsequently to be returned to the Secretary, the only exception being in the case of a very limited number of Permanent Officials in the Admiralty, War Office, Treasury, Foreign Office, Colonial Office, and India Office. By the same decision ex-Members of the Committee were allowed access to C.I.D. Papers prepared during their term of membership. Considerable use has been made of this latter provision. Now, however, the War Cabinet has absorbed the Committee of Imperial Defence, so that a very large category of highly secret papers is issued to Members, documents corresponding to which in times of peace would, by the rules of the Committee, have been returned to the Secretary. Before the war a small organisation was maintained in the Committee of Imperial Defence for ensuring the recovery of documents, and in the vast majority of cases they were, in fact, recovered.

4. The second new factor is that, probably for the first time in the history of the country, certainly for many decades, Cabinet Minutes are kept. This introduces a new class of document in which many very secret matters are dealt with.

5. Thirdly, the number of documents issued to the War Cabinet is very much larger than it was before the war. For example, I calculate on a rough estimate that Mr. Arthur Henderson must have not much less than 1,500 documents. It must be remembered also that the War Cabinet has always made a very great point of receiving the fullest information from all Departments. Anyone who has been through the war from its commencement up to the present time knows that there is no comparison between the amount of secret information placed at the disposal of the War Cabinet now, and before the present Government assumed office. This in itself is a strong argument for the adoption of special measures to ensure secrecy. If the Admiralty, War Office, and Foreign Office believe there is a danger of their secrets leaking out they will be so much the more reluctant to give frank and full information.

6. Finally, the importance of secrecy in time of war is greater than in time of peace. In the aggregate the War Cabinet documents contain very complete information on nearly every aspect of our war policy and aims.

7. I am particularly anxious not to suggest for one moment that any Cabinet Minister, past or present, would be so indiscreet as deliberately or unintentionally to allow national secrets to leak out, or to permit unauthorised persons to have access
Every Cabinet Minister is bound by his Privy Councillor's oath to—

"keep secret all matters committed and revealed unto me or that shall be treated of secretly in Council."

This is not the danger to be apprehended. There are, however, other risks. When an ex-Cabinet Minister dies his secret papers become the property of his executors. These are bound by no Privy Councillor's oath, and are not necessarily persons of the same discretion as the Cabinet Minister himself. It is easy to imagine a good many cases in which information in Cabinet documents might leak out, whether by accident or design, without any technical infringement of the Official Secrets Act. For example, there might be a case of an ex-Cabinet Minister having a wife of foreign extraction who would become his executrix and might elect to reside in the country of her birth, in which case the documents would pass with her beyond the control of the Government.

8. There is therefore I submit, a strong case for re-consideration of the whole question. Elaborate precautions are taken in this and other offices to prevent leakage. To allow national secrets to pass beyond the control of the Government is seriously to impair the value of these precautions.

9. From the point of view of the Secretariat of the War Cabinet, the only really satisfactory decision would be to apply to the War Cabinet the rules of the Committee of Imperial Defence (Appendix), that is to say, to insist on the return of all Cabinet documents, subject to the right of ex-Ministers to have access to those prepared during their term of membership. The Minutes of the late War Committee had printed upon them the following notice—

"To be returned to The Secretary, Committee of Imperial Defence, 2, Whitehall Gardens, S.W."

In the first month of the War Cabinet's existence the same notice was printed on War Cabinet Minutes. The difficulties of obtaining recovery, however, proved insuperable, both in the case of the War Committee and the War Cabinet, and the notice, which had no Government sanction beyond the decision of the Committee of Imperial Defence, which was not strictly applicable, was abandoned.

10. If the War Cabinet cannot see their way to approving this drastic solution, I would at least ask for authority to take the following action in the case of all War Cabinet Ministers going out of office:

(1.) To ask them to return certain specified documents of great secrecy. In this category would be included: Minutes of the War Cabinet; documents of the War Policy Committee; documents dealing with naval, military, and foreign policy; Terms of Peace; any documents containing unpared cipher telegrams, and others which I am not in a position to specify until I have carefully scrutinised the list of documents furnished to Mr. Henderson and Mr. Austen Chamberlain. In asking for the return of these documents it is proposed, subject to the approval of the War Cabinet, to state that the outgoing Cabinet Minister can have access to any document issued to him during his term of office;

(2.) To ask that the outgoing Cabinet Minister should make such testamentary dispositions as would provide for the immediate return of the documents to the Secretary on his demise.

11. It is necessary to draw a distinction between a Member of the War Cabinet, such as Mr. Henderson, and a member of the Government outside the War Cabinet, such as Mr. Austen Chamberlain. I understand that Mr. Chamberlain considers that the War Cabinet Minutes and other documents are his personal property, although he has lent them temporarily to his successor. I would submit that the intention of the War Cabinet in their decision of the 12th December last, to issue copies of the War Cabinet Minutes and other documents to certain Ministers was to send them for the use of the office and not for the individual. The War Cabinet Minute on the subject designates the persons to whom Minutes are sent by their official titles and not by name.

12. Every case, however, will be provided for if the War Cabinet can see their way to adopt the rules of the Committee of Imperial Defence which are attached in
the Appendix. I would most strongly urge, as the result of 9 years' experience under very varying conditions, that this course should be adopted. Failing this, I would ask—

(a.) For authority to take the action referred to in paragraph 10 in the case of outgoing members of the War Cabinet; and

(b.) For a decision that War Cabinet documents supplied to members of the Government, who are not members of the War Cabinet, should be regarded as the property of the office and not of the individual.

(Initialled) M. P. A. H.

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

APPENDIX.

Extract from the Minutes of the Ninety-ninth Meeting of the Committee of Imperial Defence, held on the 14th May, 1908.

The Committee recommend that—

(1.) Files of C.I.D. Papers shall be retained for Departmental use by the following:

- The First Sea Lord of the Admiralty.
- The Director of Naval Intelligence.
- The Chief of the General Staff.
- The Director of Military Operations.
- Permanent Secretary to the Treasury.
- Permanent Under-Secretary of State to the Foreign Office.
- Permanent Under-Secretary of State to the Colonial Office (Colonial Papers only).
- Permanent Under-Secretary of State to the India Office (Indian Papers only).

These files are to be kept in the personal custody of the officials to whom they are issued and transferred to their successors in office.

(2.) The issue of papers to the other members of the Committee shall be governed by the following rules:

(a.) Papers dealing with questions about to be discussed by the Committee be circulated to all regular members.

(b.) The Secretary is also authorised to supply all regular members of the Committee with any papers they may ask for.

(c.) Papers so issued are to be returned to the Secretary after the discussion.

(d.) Ex-Members of the Committee may have access to the C.I.D. Papers prepared during their term of membership.