CABINET 22 (24).

MEETING of the Cabinet to be held at 10, Downing Street, S.W.1., on Wednesday, March 26th, 1924, at 11 a.m.

AGENDA.

1. THE OMNIBUS AND TRAMWAY STRIKE AND OTHER INDUSTRIAL DISPUTES.
   (Minister of Labour to make a statement)
   Memorandum by the President of the Board of Trade on Wages negotiations in the Coal Mining Industry, (C.P. 205 (24) - already circulated).

2. POOR LAW AUTHORITIES IN NECESSITOUS AREAS IN SCOTLAND.
   Memorandum by the Secretary for Scotland (C.P. 189 (24) - already circulated)
   Memorandum by the Minister of Health, (C.P. 197 (24) - already circulated).

3. DOCKYARD DISCHARGES.
   Memorandum by the First Lord of the Admiralty, (C.P. 202 (24) - already circulated).

4. PROCEEDINGS OF THE RECENT COUNCIL OF THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS.
   Extracts from Letters from the Lord President of the Council to the Prime Minister. (C.P. 200 (24) - already circulated).

5. RENT RESTRICTION.
   (To ascertain the Position)
   Memorandum by the Minister of Health on Evictions, (C.P. 212 (24) - To be circulated).

6. HOUSING PROGRAMME.
   (To ascertain Progress).

7. TRAVELLING FACILITIES FOR MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT.
   (To be raised by the Prime Minister).
6. THE TRADES UNION CONGRESS GENERAL COUNCIL AND LEGISLATION.

Memorandum by the Minister of Labour,
(C.P. 204 (24) - already circulated).
Memorandum by the Home Secretary,
(C.P. 210 (24) - To be circulated).

9. THE COUNTY COURTS BILL.

Memorandum by the Lord Chancellor,
(C.P. 206 (24) - already circulated).

10. SUPPLY AND TRANSPORT ORGANISATION.

Note by the Home Secretary covering Conclusions of Sixth Meeting of Emergency Committee,
(C.P. 211 (24) - already circulated).

11. HOME AFFAIRS COMMITTEE.

Consideration of Recommendations on the following Subjects:

(a) The National Health Insurance Bill
   (H.A.C. 7th Conclusions (24) Minute 1).

(b) The British Empire Exhibition (Amendment) Bill
   (H.A.C. 7th Conclusions (24) Minute 2).

(c) The Imperial Institute Bill
   (H.A.C. 7th Conclusions (24) Minute 3).

(d) The Borough Councillors (Alteration of Number) Bill
   (H.A.C. 7th Conclusions (24) Minute 4).

(e) The Coast Guard Bill
   (H.A.C. 7th Conclusions (24) Minute 5).

(f) The Sale of Bread Bill
   (H.A.C. 7th Conclusions (24) Minute 6).

   (H.A.C. 7th Conclusions (24) - already circulated).

(Signed) M.P.A. HANKEY,
Secretary, Cabinet.

Whitehall Gardens, S.W.1.
25th March, 1924.
CONCLUSIONS of a Meeting of the Cabinet
held at 10, Downing Street, S.W.1.,
on WEDNESDAY, MARCH 26th, 1924,
at 11 a.m.

PRESENT :-
The Right Hon. J. Ramsay MacDonald, M.P.,
Prime Minister and Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs. (In the Chair).

The Right Hon.
Viscount Haldane, K.T.O.M.,
Lord Chancellor.

The Right Hon.
Philip Snowden, M.P.,
Chancellor of the Exchequer.

The Right Hon.
J.H. Thomas, M.P., Secretary of State for the Colonies.

The Right Hon.
Lord Olivier, K.C.M.G., C.B.,
Secretary of State for India.

The Right Hon.
Viscount Chelmsford, G.C.M.G.,
G.C.I.E., G.C.I.E., G.B.E.,
First Lord of the Admiralty.

The Right Hon.
John Hearley, M.P.,
Minister of Health.

The Right Hon.
Noel Buxton, M.P., Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

The Right Hon.
William Adamson, M.P.,
Secretary for Scotland.

Col. The Right Hon.
J.C. Wedgwood, D.S.O., M.P.,
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster.

The Right Hon. F.W. Jowett, M.P.,
First Commissioner of Works.

THE FOLLOWING WERE ALSO PRESENT :-

Mr. H. Gosling, C.H., M.P., Minister of Transport. (For Item 2 only).
Mr. E. Shinwell, M.P., Parliamentary Secretary, Mines Department.
(For Item 1 only).

CONCLUSIONS of a Meeting of the Cabinet, held at 10, Downing Street, S.W.1, on WEDNESDAY, MARCH 26, 1924, at 11 a.m.

THE COAL DISPUTE.

1. The Cabinet had before them a Note by the President of the Board of Trade, covering a Memorandum by the Secretary for Mines, on the wages negotiations in the coalmining industry (Paper C.P.-205 (24)).

The Secretary for Mines gave the Cabinet particulars as to the latest developments in the dispute.

The Prime Minister, on behalf of his colleagues, expressed the confidence of the Cabinet in Mr Shinwell's handling of the situation.

The Cabinet agreed --

(a) That the Secretary for Mines should be authorised to continue negotiations with both parties to the dispute, and that if he thought that the Prime Minister could usefully intervene by seeing either or both parties, he should advise him accordingly:

(b) That, in the event of a breakdown in the present negotiations, the Secretary for Mines should, in accordance with the previous decision of the Cabinet (Cabinet 19 (24), Conclusion 10), arrange an immediate meeting of the Prime Minister, the Minister of Labour, the President of the Board of Trade, and himself, to make all the necessary
arrangements for setting up a Court of Inquiry, and that he should bring to the meeting a draft of the proposed composition of the Court and Terms of Reference:

(o) That the Secretary for Mines should have authority to consult and, if possible, obtain the consent of both parties to the dispute to his draft of the Terms of Reference, and that he should also endeavour to secure the agreement of both sides to accept in advance the decision of the Court of Inquiry.
2. The Minister of Labour gave the Cabinet full particulars of the developments which had led to the present omnibus and tramway strike in London, and of the present position. He informed his colleagues that an extension of the Strike to the London Underground Railways was threatened.

The attention of the Cabinet was drawn to a Private Notice Question to the Prime Minister by Viscount Curzon, inquiring what action the Government proposed to take to deal with the breakdown of the transport arrangements in London.

The Cabinet were informed that the Prime Minister had, the same morning, written a private letter to Mr Ernest Bevin, the leader of the omnibus and tramway employees, expressing regret at the present situation and pointing out that any extension of the Strike was bound to draw in the Government.

During the meeting the Prime Minister received a reply from Mr Ernest Bevin stating that he had arranged to see the Press in regard to the Strike at noon, but that if desired, he would postpone the meeting and see the Prime Minister first.

Shortly after Noon the Prime Minister left the Cabinet for a few minutes in order to meet Mr Ernest Bevin and three of his colleagues. At this meeting the Prime Minister, with authority from the Cabinet, warned Mr Bevin and his colleagues that in the event of an extension of the Strike the Government could not stand aside any longer. He also showed them a copy of the draft answer to Viscount Curzon's Question, which had been approved by the Cabinet and which was to the same effect (See Conclusion (a) below). Mr Bevin and his
colleagues did not object to the draft Answer, but asked if the Prime Minister would add the following words thereto:

"particularly as I understand that last night the only outstanding point between the two sides was a matter of £130,000 per annum, and no question of principle."

After full consideration of the question in all its aspects, the Cabinet agreed —

(a) That the Prime Minister should reply to the Private Notice Question to the effect that the Government recognised its responsibility to study the needs of the London public, and that, in view of the threatened extension of the dispute the Emergency Committee which deals with these matters was meeting at once to present proposals to the Cabinet, but that the Prime Minister still hoped it would be unnecessary for any action to be taken, particularly as he understood that the points in dispute had been reduced to a very considerable amount.

(The words underlined were adopted by the Cabinet in lieu of the addition proposed by Mr Bevin and his colleagues.)

(b) That the Cabinet Emergency Committee on the Supply and Transport Organisation should meet the same afternoon at 4.30 to consider the position in view of the omnibus and tramway strike, and to prepare proposals for the consideration of the Cabinet:

(c) To take note of the bearing on this question (to which their attention was invited by the Minister of Labour) of a proposal in Lord Askwith's Trade Disputes (Private) Bill, that a truce of 30 days should follow the appointment of a Court of Inquiry.
3. The Minister of Labour informed his colleagues that, in addition to the London omnibus and tramway Strike and the Coal dispute, a number of serious industrial disputes were threatening.

The Cabinet agreed --

That the Minister of Labour should circulate a Memorandum in regard to these disputes.
4. After consideration of a Memorandum by the Secretary for Scotland (Paper C.P.-189 (24)) presenting the special case for making an Exchequer grant to Parish Councils in necessitous areas in Scotland, and of the remarks of the Minister of Health thereon (Paper C.P.-197 (24), and after hearing the objections of the Chancellor of the Exchequer to the proposal of the Secretary for Scotland, the Cabinet agreed —

That they could not differentiate between Scotland and England by approving an Exchequer grant to Parish Councils in necessitous areas in Scotland.
After consideration of a Memorandum by the First Lord of the Admiralty, suggesting that if the Cabinet desired to avoid the discharge of some 1,600 men in the Dockyards now under notice, the cost should be included in a Supplementary Estimate (Paper C.P. 202 (24)), the Cabinet agreed --

That, as the work which the Admiralty could give to the men about to be discharged was not represented as essential, they would not be justified in approving proposals which would involve a Supplementary Estimate, more especially as the facts of the case were within the knowledge of the Admiralty when the Estimates were approved only a few weeks ago. Consequently they could not reverse the decision to discharge the men in the Dockyards now under notice.
LEAGUE OF
NATIONS.

Proceedings
at the
Council.

ADMISSION
OF GERMANY
TO THE
LEAGUE.

6. After consideration of extracts from letters of
the Lord President of the Council to the Prime Minister,
giving an account of the proceedings at the recent Meetings
of the Council of the League of Nations at Geneva (Paper
C.P.-200 (24)), and after hearing from the Lord President
some further particulars of the Meetings, the Cabinet
agreed --

(a) To take note with satisfaction of the report of the Lord President of the
Council in regard to the proceedings
of the recent Council of the League
of Nations:

(b) To take note that the Lord President
had found that the general opinion
of the representatives on the Council
was in favour of the admission of
Germany to the League of Nations.
7. After consideration of a Memorandum by the Minister of Health on recent evictions under the Rent Restriction Act (Paper C.P.-212 (24)), and after hearing from the Minister particulars of the causes of these evictions, the Cabinet agreed —

To approve the proposals of the Minister of Health and to authorise the Minister to prepare for introduction in Parliament a short Bill providing for —

(a) the repeal or modification of paragraphs (iv) and (v) of Section (5)(d) of the Rent and Mortgage Interest Restriction Act, 1923, so as to extend to persons who were landlords before the 29th June, 1922, the necessity, which already applies to persons who became landlords after that date, to prove either that there is alternative accommodation or "greater hardship" as a condition precedent to an eviction order;

(b) the prohibition of evictions owing to non-payment of rent in cases where the non-payment is due to unemployment, unless the landlord can satisfy the Court that greater hardship would be caused by refusing to grant an order for possession than by granting it.
8. The Cabinet agreed —

That in regard to travelling facilities for Members of Parliament, the Prime Minister should be authorised to communicate to the House of Commons the figures of cost of free travelling facilities for Members between London and their constituencies, which had resulted from an inquiry by the Government, namely:— for first-class travel, approximately £70,550 per annum, and for third-class travel approximately £47,000. At this stage he should give no indication of the views of the Government, but should state that nothing could be decided until Parliament had discussed the question. When pressed, he should intimate that the Government would give facilities for a discussion on the subject.
After consideration of Memoranda by the Minister of Labour (Paper C.P.-204 (24)) and the Home Secretary (Paper C.P.-210 (24)) in regard to representations from the Trades Union Congress General Council asking to be furnished with copies of the Government's Unemployment Insurance, Washington Hours Convention, and Factory Bills, the Cabinet agreed—

(a) That it would not be in accordance with the usual practice of Government Departments to furnish to outside bodies copies of Government Bills before they were communicated to Parliament, and that the request of the Trades Union Congress General Council should not be acceded to:

(b) To approve the draft letter included in the Memorandum by the Home Secretary (Paper C.P.-210 (24)), subject to the substitution, in the second paragraph, of the word "Parliament" for the word "Departments":

(c) That the reply to a Private Notice Question by Mr. Neville Chamberlain, inquiring as to the communication to the Press on the previous evening of copies of the London Traffic Bill before copies were available for Members of Parliament, should be as follows:

"I regret this occurrence. The explanation is that it was felt, in view of the bearing of this Bill upon the present traffic dispute, that it was desirable that the public in general should have the provisions of the Bill before it this morning at the same time as the Bill itself was in the hands of Members of Parliament. Apparently it was not made clear to the Press that the copy communicated to it late last night should not be used for any messages circulated before this morning, and I am informed that a little after 10 o'clock today the contents of the Bill appeared on the tape."

NOTE. During the meeting of the Cabinet, a telephone message was received from the Trades Union Congress General Council, asking if the Prime Minister would receive a deputation on this subject.
10. The Cabinet agreed —

To meet for the discussion of the remaining subjects on the Agenda on Thursday morning, March 27th, at 10-30.

2, Whitehall Gardens, S.W.1,
March 26, 1924.