CABINET 29 (24).

Meeting of the Cabinet to be held at No. 10 Downing Street, S.W. (1), on Thursday, May 1st, 1924, at 11 A.M.

AGENDA.

1. AIRSHIP DEVELOPMENT.

Reference Cabinet 15(24) 6.

Note by Secretary of State for Air covering Report of Committee, (C.P. 237(24) already circulated).

2. POLICY IN IRAQ.

Memorandum by the Secretary of State for the Colonies, (C.P. 264(24) already circulated).

3. ANGLO-EGYPTIAN NEGOTIATIONS.

Memorandum by the Prime Minister dated April 9th, 1924 - (Foreign Office No. 3242/368/16 already circulated).

Conclusions of the Committee of Imperial Defence, (C.P. 280(24) already circulated).

4. LOANS TO HERRING FISHERIES IN SCOTLAND FOR THE PURCHASE OF NETS.

Memorandum by the Secretary for Scotland, (C.P. 250(24) already circulated).

Memorandum by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, (C.P. 232(24) already circulated).

5. ROYAL COMMISSION ON NATIONAL HEALTH INSURANCE.

Memorandum by the Minister of Health, (C.P. 246(24) already circulated).
6. **ROAD FUND FINANCE.**

Reference Cabinet 18(24) 4(11).

Joint Memorandum by the Minister of Transport and the Financial Secretary, Treasury.

(C.P. 268(24) - already circulated).

7. **REPRESENTATION OF THE PEOPLE ACT (1918) AMENDMENT BILL.**

Memorandum by the Home Secretary.

(C.P. 276(24) - To be circulated).

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

2, Whitehall Gardens, S.W.1.,
29th April, 1924.
CONCLUSIONS of a Meeting of the Cabinet held at 10, Downing Street, S.W.1., on THURSDAY, MAY 1st. 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. A. Henderson, M.P., Secretary of State for Home Affairs.

The Right Hon. Stephen Walsh, M.P., Secretary of State for War.

Brig.-General The Right Hon. Lord Thomson, C.B.E., D.S.O., Secretary of State for Air.

The Right Hon. Sidney Webb, M.P., President of the Board of Trade.

The Right Hon. Charles Trevelyan, M.P., President of the Board of Education.

The Right Hon. Tom Shaw, C.B.E., M.P., Minister of Labour.


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. John Wheatley, 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.


Lieut.-Col. Sir M.P.A. Hankey, G.C.B. Secretary.
1. The Cabinet had under consideration a Note by the Secretary of State for the Colonies, covering the recommendations of the Cabinet Committee on Airship Development (Paper C.P.-267 (24)), together with a Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Air suggesting certain amendments in these recommendations (Paper C.P.-274 (24)).

The Secretary of State for Air informed the Cabinet of the results of a Conference which he himself, accompanied by representatives of the Treasury and Air Ministry, had held with Commander Burney, at which progress had been made towards the conclusion of satisfactory financial arrangements with Commander Burney's group in the event of approval being given by the Cabinet to the proposals of the Committee.

The Cabinet agreed —

(a) That the Air Ministry should be authorised to proceed with research and experimental stages in regard to Airships, and the simultaneous construction of a 5,000,000 cubic foot capacity airship at Cardington, whose primary function should be naval reconnaissance. The design of this airship to be based on results obtained from this research and experimental work.
(b) That the conditions for training of personnel, etc., should, as recommended by the Cabinet Committee, be determined by the Committee of Imperial Defence:

(c) That their remaining recommendations should be referred back to the Cabinet Committee for further consideration in the light of the proposals of the Secretary of State for Air in C.P.-274 (24).
(b) That the conditions for training of personnel, etc., should, as recommended by the Cabinet Committee, be determined by the Committee of Imperial Defence:

(c) That their remaining recommendations should be referred back to the Cabinet Committee for further consideration in the light of the proposals of the Secretary of State for Air in C.P. 274 (24).
2. The Cabinet had before them a Memorandum by the Secretary of State for the Colonies in regard to Policy in Iraq (Paper C.P.-264 (24)).

The Secretary of State for the Colonies pointed out that the proposals in his Memorandum had been based on the assumption that the Iraq Constituent Assembly would accept the Treaty, the Protocol and Subsidiary Agreements. Information had now been received, however, which led him to think that in all probability the Iraq Constituent Assembly might adjourn without either accepting or rejecting the Treaty.

After discussion, the Cabinet agreed —

(a) That, in the event of the acceptance by the Iraq Constituent Assembly of the Treaty, etc., the following conclusions, based on the recommendations of the Secretary of State for the Colonies (Paper C.P.-264 (24)), should be adopted:

(i) That the Cabinet should agree in principle to ratify the Treaty, Protocol and Subsidiary Agreements;

(ii) That as soon as the Iraq Constituent Assembly has "accepted" the Treaty, etc., an opportunity should be given to Parliament to discuss the whole question prior to the exchange of ratifications, and that in the meantime the text of the Protocol and Agreements should be published as a Parliamentary Paper;

(iii) That the principle of the proposed "Guarantee Bill" should be accepted, the preparation of the draft Bill being left to the Departments concerned (namely, the Treasury and Colonial Office);

(b) That, to meet the case of the Iraq Constituent Assembly adjourning without accepting the Treaty, Protocol and Subsidiary Agreements —

(i) The Prime Minister, the Secretary of State for the Colonies, and the Lord President of the Council (as British Representative on the Council of the League of Nations)
should confer as to the desirability of approaching the League of Nations in regard to the future of the quasi mandatory position which Great Britain at present holds in regard to Iraq:

(ii) That, in the contingency contemplated, the decisions recorded above in Conclusion (a)(i) should not be announced:

(c) That the Committee of Imperial Defence should enquire into the military implications on the assumption that the Iraq Treaty is not accepted by the Constituent Assembly.
3. The Cabinet had before them a Memorandum circulated by the Prime Minister as Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, dated April 9, 1924, in regard to the Anglo-Egyptian negotiations (Foreign Office No. 3242/368/16) and a Despatch dated April 12, 1924, from Field-Marshal Lord Allenby (Foreign Office, No. E. 3534/22/16), together with the Conclusions of the Committee of Imperial Defence on the subject of the Anglo-Egyptian Negotiations (Paper C.P.-260 (24)).

The Prime Minister gave his colleagues a summary of the latest developments of the situation, in the course of which he mentioned that any agreement with Egypt would have to be ratified by Parliament, and that from a Parliamentary point of view the following points were essential:

(i) That it would not be possible for Great Britain to evacuate the Sudan and to disinterest herself in that region, since it was clear that if the Egyptian Government attempted to make its authority felt in the Sudan there would be a rebellion.

(ii) That a very great military problem arose out of the desire of the Egyptian Government for the evacuation of Cairo by the British forces. It might not be essential, from the military point of view, to remain in Cairo itself, since our vital interests might be safeguarded by the occupation of other positions which would be less provocative to Egyptian sentiment.

There was no question, however, but that the safety of the Suez Canal and of essential Air Stations must be guaranteed effectively in some shape or form.

The Prime Minister also informed his colleagues of indications of Italian propaganda in Egypt, and of difficulties in regard to water-supply, affecting cotton production in Egyptian territory, arising out of Italian action on the upper waters of the Blue Nile.
The Prime Minister asked the Secretary of State for War to furnish him with a Memorandum, which had already been prepared by the General Staff, in regard to the Anglo-Egyptian negotiations, and expressed his intention to avail himself of the services of a War Office adviser when the actual negotiations began.

The Cabinet agreed —

That the Secretary of State for the Colonies should have authority to keep the Dominions informed as to the development of the negotiations and the intentions of the British Government.
4. The Cabinet had before them a Memorandum by the Secretary for Scotland, submitting a scheme for assisting herring fishermen in Scotland to purchase nets, on the general basis of loans of 50 per cent. of the cost, bearing interest at 5 per cent. (Paper C.P.-250 (24)), together with a Memorandum by the Chancellor of the Exchequer setting forth the financial objections to the scheme (Paper C.P.-262 (24)).

The Cabinet agreed —

(a) Subject to no Supplementary Estimate being required, to approve in principle that assistance should be given to the herring fishermen in Scotland:

(b) That the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Secretary for Scotland should examine and report at the next Meeting of the Cabinet as to the best method of giving help without the necessity of a Supplementary Estimate, whether by means of a guarantee, by the use of the Development Fund, the Trade Facilities Act, the formation of Co-operative Societies, the use of the local Boat Clubs for the purchase of the nets, or otherwise.
The Cabinet had before them a Memorandum by the Home Secretary on the subject of the Representation of the People Act, 1918, Amendment (No. 2) Bill, 1924, presented by Mr. Rendall, M.P., and to be discussed in Parliament on the following day.

The Prime Minister read the following letter he had received from Mr. Asquith on the subject:

"My dear Prime Minister,

At a full meeting of the Liberal Parliamentary Party this afternoon it was decided with unanimity that I should write to you to express our strong feeling that the Bill for Proportional Representation, which is coming up for Second Reading on Friday, should receive official Government support, and have the facilities for passing into law this Session, which only the Government can furnish, with a view to securing that the scheme for the renewal and adjustment of the electoral system which that Bill would provide should be brought into actual operation in the course of the present year.

My supporters feel strongly that, if the announcement of a Cabinet decision to this effect could be made, it would greatly ease the situation, both inside the House and in the constituencies, without in any way compromising the independence of either side, or the vigorous propaganda of our respective Parties.

Yours sincerely,

(Signed) H.H. ASQUITH."

The Cabinet agreed —

(a) That a Meeting of the Labour Party should be summoned the same evening at 7.30 p.m., at the House of Commons, for the purpose of a conference on this question;

(b) (By a considerable majority) That the Government should recommend to the Party that a Second Reading be given to the Bill.
6. After consideration of a Memorandum by the Minister of Health in regard to the proposed Royal Commission on National Health Insurance (Paper C.P. 246 (24)), the Cabinet agreed —

(a) That the Terms of Reference should be as follows:—

"To inquire into the scheme of National Health Insurance established by the National Health Insurance Acts, 1911-1922, and to report what, if any, alterations, extensions or developments should be made in regard to the scope of that scheme and the administrative, financial and medical arrangements set up under it."

(b) That the Commission should be composed entirely of impartial persons.

(c) That the Minister of Health should be authorised to announce the Terms of Reference in reply to a Parliamentary Question. If pressed to amend the Terms of Reference, he should have discretion to express his willingness to consider suggestions for minor alterations.
7. After consideration of the recommendations contained in a joint Memorandum by the Minister of Transport and the Financial Secretary to the Treasury on the subject of Road Fund Finance (Paper C.R.-268 (24)), the Cabinet agreed —

That the Memorandum should be referred for consideration by the Unemployment Sub-Committee of the Cabinet Committee on Housing and Unemployment.
The First Lord of the Admiralty informed the Cabinet that there was a proposal to hold a review of the Fleet on July 26th. The actual holding of the review would not involve the Admiralty in serious expense, but the question of hospitality to representatives of the Dominions and India, Members of Parliament, etc., required consideration.

The Cabinet agreed —

That the question of hospitality should be referred to a Cabinet Committee composed of —

The Chancellor of the Exchequer,
The First Lord of the Admiralty,
The First Commissioner of Works.
NEXT MEETING OF CABINET.

9. The Cabinet agreed —

That the next Meeting of the Cabinet should be held on WEDNESDAY, MAY 7th, at 11 a.m.

Notice was given of the following questions which would be raised:—

Irish Political Prisoners.
(Previous Reference: Cabinet 24 (24), Conclusion 6.)

THE QUESTION OF IRISH PRISONERS
(by the Home Secretary)

GOVERNMENT POLICY IN REGARD TO NEW BILLS
(by the Secretary of State for the Colonies)

THE SETTLEMENT OF EUROPE
(by the Prime Minister).

...