Meeting of the Cabinet to be held at 10, Downing Street, S.W.1., on Wednesday, December 9th, 1925, at 11.30 a.m.

--------

AGENDA.

1. APPOINTMENT OF A ROYAL COMMISSION ON THE COURT OF SESSION IN SCOTLAND AND ON APPEALS FROM THE SHERIFF SUBSTITUTE TO THE SHERIFF.

Memorandum by the Secretary for Scotland, (C.P. 515 (25) - already circulated).

2. CHINA - THE TARIFF CONFERENCE.

Note by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs covering a Memorandum by the Foreign Office, (C.P. 518 (25) - already circulated).

3. FOOD SUPPLY IN WAR.

Note by the Secretary covering Proceedings of the Committee of Imperial Defence, (C.P. 455 (25) - already circulated).

ADDITIONAL ITEM TO AGENDA.

5. THE TITHE BILL.

(Reference Cabinet 57 (25) Conclusion 5).

Statement to be made by the Lord Privy Seal.

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

2, Whitehall Gardens, S.W.1.

7th December, 1925.
CONCLUSIONS of a Meeting of the Cabinet held at
10, Downing Street, S.W.1., on WEDNESDAY,
DECEMBER 9th, 1925, at 11.30 A.M.

PRESENT:-
The Right Hon. Stanley Baldwin, M.P.,
Prime Minister. (In the Chair).

The Right Hon.
Viscount Cave, G.C.M.G.,
Lord Chancellor.

The Right Hon.
The Marquess of Salisbury,
K.G., C.V.O., C.B.,
Lord Privy Seal.

The Right Hon.
Sir William Joynson-Hicks,
Bart., M.P., Secretary of State for Home Affairs.

The Right Hon.
Sir Samuel Hoare, Bart.,
C.M.G., M.P., Secretary of State for Air.

The Right Hon.
Sir Philip Cunliffe-Lister,
K.B.E., M.C., M.P., President of the Board of Trade.

The Right Hon.
W. Guinness, D.S.O., M.P.,
Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

The Right Hon.
Lord J untace Percy, M.P.,
President of the Board of Education.

The Right Hon.
Viscount Peel, G.B.E., First Commissioner of Works.

The Right Hon.
The Earl of Balfour, K.G., C.M.,
Lord President of the Council.

The Right Hon.
W. S. Churchill, C.H., M.P.,
Chancellor of the Exchequer.

The Right Hon.
Sir Laming Worthington-Evans,
Bart., G.B.E., M.P., Secretary of State for War.

The Right Hon.

The Right Hon.
Neville Chamberlain, M.P.,
Minister of Health.

The Right Hon.
Sir John Gilmour, Bart., D.S.O., M.P., Secretary for Scotland.

The Right Hon.
Sir Arthur Steel-Maitland,
Bart., M.P., Minister of Labour.

The Right Hon.
Sir Douglas Hogg, K.C., M.P.,
Attorney-General.

THE FOLLOWING WERE ALSO PRESENT:-
Sir William G. Tyrrell, G.C.M.G.,
K.C.V.O., C.B., Permanent Under Secretary
of State, Foreign Office.
(For Item 5).

Sir W. A. Hankey, G.C.B. .........................Secretary.
1. The Lord Chancellor reported that, as regards the Ireland (Confirmation of Agreement) Bill, arrangements had been made on the assumption that it would pass the House of Lords on December 9th and receive the Royal Assent on December 10th. He enquired whether this was desirable, since it might conceivably result in the British Bill being passed before the Irish Free State Bill.

The Prime Minister said that the Bill was to be passed through the Dail today, and consequently he thought the arrangements as regards the Royal Assent should stand.
2. The Cabinet had a short discussion as to the date on which Parliament should be asked to re-assemble after the Recess. The position was found to be that if financial business only was to be taken, February 9th would be an appropriate date, but that if legislation was required before Easter the House would have to meet on February 2nd.

The Cabinet were informed that the King had decided to hold a meeting of the Privy Council on Wednesday, December 16th, with the object of passing the Prorogation Order, and that it was consequently necessary to take a decision in regard to the date of the re-assembly of Parliament before the expiration of the present week.

The Cabinet agreed —

(a) That each Minister, from his respective standpoint, should notify the Prime Minister immediately as to what legislation (if any) it was essential to pass before Easter:

(b) That the Prime Minister should decide the question, in consultation with the Chief Whip, after hearing from Ministers, and that he should, if possible, make arrangements for the meeting of Parliament on the later date, namely, February 9th.

The Prime Minister undertook not to overlook a suggestion that, if necessary, the time of Private Members should be taken before Easter, which could possibly be recouped to them subsequently:

(c) That the Chancellor of the Exchequer should confirm a belief he had expressed to the Cabinet that the necessity of repealing the Bowles Act could be avoided by arranging that new Customs Dues should date from the day on which a Finance Bill was introduced, instead of from the date on which the Bill received the Royal Assent, thus enabling Customs Dues to be collected retrospectively on imported goods and so discouraging dumping.
3. A Memorandum by the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries in regard to the Tithe Bill was handed round at the outset of the Meeting (Paper C.P.-521 (25)).

The Lord Privy Seal made a verbal report to the Cabinet in regard to a meeting of the Cabinet Committee on the Tithe Bill which had been held the same morning.

The Cabinet agreed —

(a) That, in view of the fact that no satisfactory suggestion had been made for meeting the admitted temporary hardship to Universities involved in the Bill, which would not either destroy the basis of the Bill or involve a permanent charge on the Exchequer, the Government spokesman in the House of Lords should not accept any amendment to the Bill:

(b) That the Government spokesman should have authority to remind the House that the Government had made considerable increases in the grants to Universities during the previous financial year, amounting to an aggregate of £500,000, and to throw out the suggestion that the possibility should be examined of some arrangement by which the Universities which have the benefit of the increased Government grant might give temporary relief to the Colleges (in regard to their annual contributions to the University or otherwise) during the period in which the Colleges will suffer from the effect of the Tithe Bill.

(The Lord Privy Seal, as Leader of the House of Lords, informed the Cabinet that this decision might result in a defeat of the Government in the House of Lords.)
4. The Cabinet approved a proposal contained in a Memorandum by the Secretary for Scotland for the appointment of a Royal Commission to consider the whole law touching the Court of Session in Scotland, including the constitution of the Court and its procedure as a Court of first instance, and as the Appeal Court from the Sheriff Court (Paper C.P.-515 (25)).
5. The Cabinet took note of, and approved, the general policy being pursued in China by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, as set forth in the Memorandum attached to Paper C.P.—518 (25)).

The President of the Board of Trade informed the Cabinet that his Department was in close touch and in complete agreement with the Foreign Office on this question. He emphasized the importance of keeping the United States of America and France informed of our intentions in regard to a Commercial Treaty.

Sir William Tyrrell, who was present in the absence of the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs during this discussion, said that there was no intention of not keeping these Governments informed.
6. The Cabinet had before them the following documents in regard to Food Supply in Time of War:

A Note by the Secretary in regard to the proceedings of the Committee of Imperial Defence on this subject, in which attention was drawn to two points which had been reserved for the Cabinet by the Committee of Imperial Defence, namely:

(i) Whether legislation should be introduced with a view to securing more accurate information in regard to food stocks; and
(ii) Whether, when the Government's policy on Agriculture is announced, a statement should be included to the effect that a subsidy for food supplies is not justified on grounds of Defence Policy.

(Paper C.P.-455 (25).

A Copy of a Letter from the Secretary of the Board of Trade to the Secretary of the Committee of Imperial Defence covering a Memorandum on Stocks of Meat in Cold Storage (C.I.D. Paper No.609-B):

A Note by the Secretary of the Committee of Imperial Defence (C.I.D. Paper No.646-B):

A Letter from the Admiralty to the Secretary of the Committee of Imperial Defence slightly qualifying the opinions expressed at an earlier date as to their power to deal with the submarine menace (C.I.D. Paper No. 639-B):

An Extract from the Minutes of the 204th Meeting of the Committee of Imperial Defence, held on October 29, 1925.

The President of the Board of Trade informed the Cabinet that the Food Council were now receiving satisfactory information in regard to food supplies, and that it might prove unnecessary from their point of view to introduce legislation even in regard to stocks of meat.
The Cabinet agreed —

(a) That the President of the Board of Trade should report early in the new year to the Cabinet in regard to the extent and usefulness of the information then being received by the Food Council, and that in the meantime a decision as to legislation on the question of food stocks should remain in abeyance:

(b) That the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries should have authority to make a discreet statement in regard to food supply in time of war, in the course of which, without endeavoring to reassure public opinion unduly, he should point out the relatively small effect which would be exercised on the food supply by comparatively elaborate and costly measures for stimulating wheat production in this country.
The Cabinet had before them the following documents relating to Air Raids Precautions:—

A Note by the Secretary in regard to the proceedings of the Committee of Imperial Defence on Air Raids Precautions, in which attention was drawn more particularly to two points which had been reserved by the Committee of Imperial Defence for the Cabinet, namely:—

(i) The question of the education of public opinion:

(ii) The question of whether further investigation should continue as to the possibility of its becoming necessary in the contingency of war to move the seat of the Government:

(Paper C.P.-456 (25)).

The Report of a Sub-Committee of the Committee of Imperial Defence on Air Raids Precautions (C.I.D. Paper No. 135-A):


An Extract from the Minutes of the 204th Meeting of the Committee of Imperial Defence, held on October 29th, 1925.

The attention of the Cabinet was drawn to the large volume of the Papers circulated by the Committee of Imperial Defence in regard to matters of this kind, which seemed to indicate that, notwithstanding a great diminution of the war risks to which the British Empire was exposed, the activities of the Committee exceeded the pre-war standard.

The First Commissioner of Works informed the Cabinet that the contingency of the removal of the seat of government was one which, if it were to be properly prepared for, would involve considerable expenditure.
In view of the great advance in the pacification of Europe which has resulted from the conclusion of the Locarno Agreements, the Cabinet agreed --

(a) That the present moment was ill-timed for undertaking the education of public opinion in regard to the danger of air raids, and that the policy of the Government in this matter was well represented by the following extract from the remarks made at the 204th Meeting of the Committee of Imperial Defence by Sir John Anderson, Chairman of the Sub-Committee on Air Raids Precautions:

"There were some signs that the public were gradually realising the significance of air attack. His Committee did not advocate that any considerable steps should be taken at once with the object of creating a wider knowledge of attack from the air and its unavoidable consequences, but rather that the process of education in this respect should be slow and gradual, so as to eliminate as far as possible the chance of creating undue alarm."

For the moment, the gradual dissemination of knowledge through the inquiries by Government Departments and Sub-Committees of the Committee of Imperial Defence into the different aspects of the air raids question was felt to provide a sufficient safeguard in this matter:

(b) That the Committee of Imperial Defence should keep the question of the education of public opinion under consideration and review it periodically:

(c) That the question of moving the seat of the Government should remain in abeyance for the present.
8. Reverting to the Report of the Committee appointed to consider the application concerning brooms and brushes under the Safeguarding of Industries Procedure which he had circulated on the 3rd December (Paper C.P.-514 (25)), the President of the Board of Trade informed his colleagues that he proposed to print and publish the Report at once, and that, if asked what course the Government intended to pursue, he would reply that no action was contemplated.

The Cabinet approved this course.
9. The Minister of Labour informed the Cabinet that the conclusions of the National Wages Board in regard to the wages disputes on the railways would be signed that afternoon. He gave the Cabinet a forecast of those conclusions, with a request that they might be regarded as strictly confidential until published.

Mehall Gardens, S.W.1,
December 9, 1925.