Meeting of the Cabinet, to be held in
THE PRIME MINISTER'S ROOM, HOUSE OF
COMMONS, S.W.1, on FRIDAY, APRIL 30,
1926, at 4 p.m.

A G E N D A.

1. THE COAL SITUATION.

2. THE SUPPLY AND TRANSPORT ORGANISATION (if required).

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

Whitehall Gardens, S.W.1,
April 30, 1926.
CONCLUSIONS of a Meeting of the Cabinet held in the Prime Minister's Room, House of Commons, S.W.1, on FRIDAY, APRIL 30th, 1936, at 4 p.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. Sir William Joynson-Hicks, Bt., M.P., Secretary of State for Home Affairs.

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

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


THE FOLLOWING WERE ALSO PRESENT:

- The Right Hon. The Right Hon. Sir William Lane-Fox, M.P., Mitchell-Thorns on, Bt., K.B.E., Secretary, Mines Department, Postmaster-General.
- Mr. E.A. Gowers, C.B., Permanent Under-Secretary, Mines Department, Board of Trade.
- Mr. A. Hankey, G.C.B., Secretary, Ministry of Labour.
- Mr. J. Wilson, K.C.B., Secretary, Ministry of Labour.
- Mr. C. Jones, Deputy Secretary.

* Left before the end of the Meeting to attend a meeting of the Privy Council.
* Present at the end of the Meeting.
1. The Prime Minister gave the Cabinet full particulars of the negotiations leading up to the present situation in the Coal Dispute. The exact position is indicated in the letter attached to these Conclusions, from the Prime Minister to the President of the Miners' Federation, transmitting an offer from the Coal Owners (Appendix I). At the moment the Cabinet met, the Prime Minister was awaiting an answer from the Miners' Federation.

Half an hour later, after the decisions recorded in Conclusion 2 had been taken, after the Lord President of the Council, the Lord Chancellor and the Home Secretary had left to attend a meeting of the Privy Council, and after a brief adjournment, the reply from the Miners' Federation, which amounted to a rejection of the Coal Owners' offer, was read to the Cabinet (Appendix II).

As the result of this discussion, the Prime Minister sent to the Trades Union Committee the question in Appendix III, with the object of removing all ambiguity as to the significance of the letter from the Miners' Federation.

The Prime Minister also informed the Cabinet that he had invited the Minister of Health and the Secretary of State for India to join him and the Minister of Labour and Secretary for Mines in carrying on the further negotiations.
2. In view of the improbability of a settlement the same day of the Coal Dispute, and the possibility of a general strike not confined to the coal mines but extending to many other Trades Unions the following morning, the Cabinet agreed —

(a) That the arrangements concerted by the Supply and Transport Committee should be put in operation as from midnight on Friday, April 30th, as zero hour, discretion being left to the Home Secretary, in consultation with the Prime Minister, to make such modifications as the immediate needs of the situation might necessitate (e.g., according to the number of Trades Unions which might associate themselves with the strike):

(b) That the situation was correctly set forth in the following extract from the Draft Proclamation about to be submitted to His Majesty the King in Council:

"AND WHEREAS the present immediate threat of cessation of work in Coal Mines does, in Our opinion, constitute a state of emergency within the meaning of the said Act":

(c) That it was desirable that the Meeting of the Privy Council, already fixed by His Majesty the King for 5-30 p.m., should be held, for the purpose of approving the Proclamation under the Emergency Powers Act, 1920, and the Regulations to be issued thereunder:

(d) That it was undesirable that the above Proclamation should be published in "The Gazette" until after midnight:

(e) That the nature of any announcement to be made in the Press in regard to the events leading up to a probable strike should be left to the Prime Minister, who had already given instructions for the preparation of the necessary material:

(f) That the Home Secretary should warn the Minister of Transport of the risk of sabotage (e.g., by dropping a spanner or other instrument in some delicate part of machinery) by electrical workers immediately before leaving work, which might dislocate the Government's emergency arrangements:
(g) To take note that the amount of coal required for the forthcoming Fleet Exercises was very small, and that these exercises could be stopped any time up to Tuesday, May 4th:

(h) To authorise the Postmaster-General, if necessary, to make arrangements for opening a recruiting office for volunteers in the courtyard of the Foreign Office:

(i) To take note that the question of whether Hyde Park would be closed or not would turn on whether there was a strike on the railways on the morrow involving the interruption of milk supplies.

...
10, Downing Street, S.W.1.
30th April, 1926.

Dear Mr. Smith,

I am communicating with you by letter because it is important to save time.

I have now received from the Coal Owners the offer which, as I told you last night, they have been considering in conjunction with their district representatives. The offer is as follows, namely, a uniform National Minimum of 20 per cent over 1914 standard on a uniform eight hour basis, with corresponding hours for surface men. (The representatives of North Wales do not wish to stand out of the National Agreement but feel that the pits in that area would be unable to work on this minimum).

In putting before you this proposal from the Coal Owners I would remind you that, as I explained to you yesterday, it is contemplated that the 1919 (Seven Hours) Act should remain on the Statute Book and that there should be legislation providing temporarily for the working of the additional hours. The Government would set up a Commission not later than 31st December, 1926, to advise whether as a result of re-organisation of better trade, or both, the condition of the Coal Industry has improved to an extent that makes a reversion to the standard hours justifiable.

There would, of course, be a National Agreement on the lines of the Owners' draft which has already been submitted to you, amended, however, to provide for a National Minimum.

I should like to hear from you what is your considered view upon this proposal.
It will be seen that a uniform National Minimum is possible if there is for the time being a modification of the present hours. If, however, a temporary modification of hours is ruled out the Owners do not feel able to put forward proposals which differ from those which they have already submitted. They are, however, prepared to negotiate the matter with you, in the first place nationally in accordance with the Report.

There would, of course, be the National Agreement as already indicated. The Government has already intimated its general acceptance of the Report of the Royal Commission provided it was accepted also by the Mine Owners and the Miners; and although unfortunately there has not been on the part of the Mine Owners and the Miners the same unqualified acceptance, the Government desire nevertheless to reaffirm their willingness to give effect to such of the proposals in the Report as we believe will be of benefit to the Industry. In particular, the Government propose in my case at once to arrange an authoritative enquiry into the best method of following up the recommendations of the Commission with regard to selling organisations, and amalgamations.

If the proposals now before you are not acceptable, I should be glad to receive from you any counter proposal and I am holding myself available to meet you again as soon as you let me know that you are ready for further discussion.

I am sending a copy of this letter to Mr. Pugh.

Yours very truly,

(Signed) STANLEY BALDWIN.
LETTER TO THE PRIME MINISTER FROM THE MINERS' EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE.

30th April, 1926.

Dear Mr. Prime Minister,

The proposals of the Coal owners, delivered by messenger this afternoon, (April 30th) have been considered by our Executive Committee, and also by the Conference, which, as you are aware, has been in London since Wednesday, to which we are empowered to send the following reply:

REPLY.

The Miners note with regret that although the report of the Coal Commission was issued on the 6th March, 1926, the Mine-owners have only submitted a proposal for a National Wage Agreement, and a National Uniform Minimum percentage as late as April 30th at 1-15 p.m. Then at least two-thirds of the mine-workers in the coal field are already locked out by the coal-owners.

The proposals, stated briefly, provide for a reversion to the minimum percentage of 1921, i.e., 20% on 1914 standard wages, which means a uniform reduction of $\frac{1}{3}$rd cent of the standard wages of the miners, and further, conditional upon the extension of the working day for over three years, such an adjustment to be reviewed after December, 1929.

The reply of the Miners, after considering the proposals in the light of the present situation, is therefore as follows: They are unanimously of the opinion that the proposals cannot be accepted, but on the other hand feel that the statement of proposals submitted (as enclosed) to the Trades Union Congress, affords a reasonable basis...
of negotiations and settlement.

Our views on the question of extended hours are well-known to you, and it is only necessary to say that the present hours:

(a) are long enough to supply all the coal for which a market can be found;
(b) are as long as man should be expected to pursue such a dangerous and arduous calling; and
(c) that to extend hours in present circumstances is simply to swell the ranks of the unemployed;
(d) that to increase hours is to invite similar measures on the part of our foreign competitors;
(e) that such a proposal is contrary to the Findings of the Royal Commission.

As to counter-proposals we can only say that we will co-operate to the fullest extent with the Government and the Owners in instituting such re-organisation as is recommended by the Commission.

Until such re-organisation brings greater prosperity to the industry, the Miners should not be called upon to surrender any of their present inadequate wages and conditions.

On behalf of the Miners' Federation,

Yours faithfully,

(Signed) HERBERT SMITH (PRESIDENT.)

T. RICHARDS (VICE-PRESIDENT).

W.P. RICHARDSON (TREASURER).

A.J. COOK (SECRETARY).

The Rt. Hon. Stanley Baldwin, M.P.
There has been no indication during the discussion that the Minors' Representatives are prepared to negotiate upon the basis proposed by the Report so far as regards wages; on the contrary, the Miners' declarations have made it plain that they are unable to accept any departure from the 1934 minimum, such as is included in the Commission's recommendations.

Will the Trades Union Congress Committee obtain assurances that, if further time were available for negotiation, the Miners' Representatives would enter into those negotiations accepting the Commission's recommendations on this point printed at the top of p.236 of the report.