Meeting of the Cabinet to be held in the Prime Minister's Room, House of Commons, S.W.1, on FRIDAY, May 7th, 1926, at 11 A.M.

AGENDA.

THE INDUSTRIAL CRISIS.

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

2 Whitehall Gardens, S.W.1.
6th May, 1926.
CONCLUSIONS of a Meeting of the Cabinet held in the Prime Minister's Room, House of Commons, S.W.1. on FRIDAY, May 7th, 1926, at 11.0 A.M.

PRESENT:

The Right Hon. Stanley Baldwin, M.P., Prime Minister.

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

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


The Right Hon. L.S. Amery, M.P., Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs and Secretary of State for the Colonies.

The Right Hon. The Earl of Birkenhead, Secretary of State for India.


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

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 Cabinet met to consider the present position in regard to the industrial crisis and the measures required to cope with the situation.

The reports before the Cabinet were to the effect that there were ample supplies of food, transport, and petrol, and that the Supply and Transport Organisation was working smoothly. The most serious need of the moment, however, was more protection, in view of the intimidation already carried out and threatened. The Trades Union Council had now prohibited the movement of flour, and the National Union of Railwaymen had ordered permits for the movement of foodstuffs to be cancelled. This meant that stronger measures would be taken in the direction of picketing the docks and other food supplies. In addition, it was known that certain Trades Unions not at present on strike would be called out, and it was by no means improbable that this would extend to postal workers, including telegraphists and telephonists.

Particulars were given to the Cabinet of certain plans made for protecting the movement of foodstuffs in the area normally fed from the Port of London, which involved, _inter alia_, the temporary use of troops in the London Docks area for protection purposes.

After considerable discussion, the Cabinet agreed—

(a) That the provision of further protection was the first essential in the present situation, and that, with a view to any possible developments, the forces available for this purpose should be expanded on a considerable scale:
(b) That the general principles on which protection should be based should be as follows:—

(i) Regular troops should only be used in the last resort, and should, as far as possible, be kept away from the disturbed areas until the moment for their use had arrived:

(ii) That the first line on whom fell the responsibility for providing protection was the regular Police, and that the Home Secretary should have authority to augment them by recruiting Special Constables on the present lines up to the largest scale deemed practicable and necessary, both in London and in the country. In London, for example, he was given discretion to announce that the number of Special Constables would be increased up to 50,000:

(iii) That in addition to the Military (who must be regarded as the last reserve) and the Special Constables, a specially Civil Force should be raised as part of the Police, which should be organised for action in units. In this latter connection the proposal which commended itself to the Cabinet was that units of the Territorial Army should be invited to volunteer as a whole for service in this Civil Force, should be sworn as Special Constables, and should form the nucleus of a special section of the Police forces:

(c) That a Cabinet Committee, composed as follows:—

The Chancellor of the Exchequer,
The Home Secretary,
The Secretary of State for War,
(Major Ismay, Secretary),

should meet in the Chancellor of the Exchequer's Room at the House of Commons at 3 p.m. on the same afternoon to work out details with regard to the Civil Force referred to above in (b)(iii) and to arrange the Departmental responsibility, with full authority from the Cabinet to put the arrangements concerted into immediate operation:

(d) That the reserves of the Fighting Forces should not be called out:
(e) That the Territorial Army as such should not be called out:

(f) That the Secretary of State for War should have authority to issue instructions to the General Officers Commanding permitting the use of "tear" gas in any case where a situation became so serious as to involve the alternative between that course and the use of firearms:

(g) To take note and approve the action of the Secretary of State for War in making available as many armoured cars as possible:

(h) That, with reference to the anticipated strike of postal employees, the Postmaster-General should have authority, whenever he deemed the moment appropriate, to issue a warning as to the consequences to established Civil Servants who deserted their posts. The question of whether he should state that they were not only liable to dismissal but whether he should also mention the loss of pension rights was left to his discretion:

(i) To take note that the First Lord of the Admiralty had already authorised the issue of a warning to certain Admiralty employees on strike:

(j) To take note that, while unnecessary expenditure is to be avoided, the Chancellor of the Exchequer will find the funds necessary for the measures authorised by the Cabinet:

(k) That a Cabinet Committee, composed as follows —

The Lord Chancellor, The Secretary of State for India, The Attorney-General, (Mr. R.B. Howorth, Secretary)

should meet to consider what legislation, if any, to strengthen the powers of the Government is necessary and possible, either at the present juncture or in the near future.

At an earlier stage of the Cabinet it had been arranged that the Home Secretary should discuss with the Attorney-General and the Secretary of State for India the question of whether recent action taken by certain Trades Unions to interrupt the carriage of foodstuffs was a breach of
the existing law and whether any action was required in consequence thereof. It is assumed that the Cabinet's intention is that the Home Secretary should discuss this question with the above Committee which is reviewing the same subject from a wider aspect.

Whitehall Gardens, S.W.1,
May 7, 1926.