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C A B I N E T.

INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANISATION.

Proposal with regard to the Chairmanship of  
the Governing Body of the International  
Labour Organisation.

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NOTE BY THE MINISTER OF LABOUR.

ET. I circulate for the consideration of the Cabinet a  
Memorandum by the Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry  
of Labour with regard to the Chairmanship of the Governing  
Body of the International Labour Organisation.

I propose, unless any dissent is expressed by my  
colleagues, to support the proposal made in the last para-  
graph of the Memorandum.

(Intld.) T.J.M.

Ministry of Labour.

15th May, 1922.

INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANISATION.

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Memorandum by the Parliamentary Secretary to the  
Ministry of Labour.

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Chairmanship of the Governing Body of the  
International Labour Organisation.

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1. At the next meeting of the International Labour Conference in October the Governing Body of 24 will complete the present three years of office: and the Conference will elect (so far as the 12 employers' and workers' representatives are concerned) a new Governing Body. This will raise -

- (a) the question of the Chairman for the next three years;
- (b) the method of his election.

Under the present standing orders the Chairman is elected for a period of three years.

2. The present Chairman is M. Arthur Fontaine, the French Government representative on the Governing Body. It is possible that an attempt may be made to re-elect M. Fontaine as Chairman. Great Britain pays jointly with France the largest contribution to the League Budget, and on this and on general grounds has claims to the Chairmanship for the next period of three years; but it is by no means sure that these claims would result in the appointment by the new Governing Body of a British Chairman; and as certain other countries, e.g. Italy, have also claims, it is not impossible that the conflict of interests might result in the re-election of M. Fontaine.

3. M. Fontaine has been a not ineffective Chairman during the past three years; but his position is open to criticism on the grounds -

- (a) that he has not time to do the continuous work of Chairman of the Governing Body, and also of several of its Sub-Committees - and has to appoint substitutes for the latter;
- (b) that both he and the Director (M. Thomas) are Frenchmen.

4. The Government representation on the Governing Body requires to be strengthened; and the smaller States in particular do not send representatives of position and force sufficient to resist the demands of some of the more extreme Labour men.

5. I suggest, therefore, in order to obviate difficulties which have arisen with regard to the three years Chairmanship, and with a view to securing stronger and more responsible Government representation, that in future the Chair should be taken by each Government Member of the Governing Body in rotation and that each Member should be Chairman for one meeting only. This method has been adopted in the case of the Council of the League of Nations, and I understand that it works well in practice.

6. The Chairmanship of the Governing Body is by tacit consent of the employers and workers groups confined to the Government representatives; and this system of rotation, if adopted, would mean that with four meetings a year and a three years duration of office each of the 12 Government representatives would occupy the Chair at one meeting during the three years.

This should promote greater interest on the part of the 12 Governments represented and tend to secure more effective representation.

The proposal will require amendment of the Standing Orders of the Governing Body, and should be considered with other proposed amendments at the next meeting in July.

I anticipate that the proposal will meet with considerable and possibly general support in the Governing Body.

If no objection is taken by any member of the Cabinet may I

assume that I am authorised to put forward on behalf of the British Government the proposal that from October onwards the Chairmanship be held by each of the Government representatives in rotation, and that the Standing Orders be modified accordingly?

(Sgd). C.A. MONTAGUE BARLOW.

14th May, 1922.