CABINET.

REPORT OF THE COAL COMMISSION.

Position in regard to the various recommendations of the Royal Commission on which Government action is required or has been promised. (See Cabinet 41 (26), Conclusion (c)).

Memorandum by the Secretary for Mines.

Note: The recommendations set out below are in the order in which they appear in the Report.

CHAPTER III - UTILISATION OF COAL.

1. THAT THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD GIVE SYMPATHETIC CONSIDERATION TO ANY PROPOSALS OF THE FUEL RESEARCH BOARD FOR THE FURTHER INVESTIGATION OF PROCESSES OF LOW TEMPERATURE CARBONISATION ON A COMMERCIAL SCALE.

2. THAT AN ANNOUNCEMENT SHOULD BE MADE BY GOVERNMENT THAT IF AND WHEN THE FUEL RESEARCH BOARD IS ABLE TO REPORT THAT A SMOKELESS SEMI-COKE IS AVAILABLE AS SUITABLE AS RAW COAL THE DEPARTMENTS WHICH ARE LARGE USERS OF COAL SHOULD BE INSTRUCTED TO PURCHASE THE SEMI-COKE IN PREFERENCE.

3. THAT A NATIONAL FUEL AND POWER COMMITTEE SHOULD BE FORMED FOR THE PURPOSE OF A CONTINUOUS AND COMPREHENSIVE SURVEY OF THE HEAT, LIGHT AND POWER REQUIREMENTS OF THE COUNTRY.

These three recommendations were referred for consideration to the Committee of Civil Research under the Chairmanship of the Minister of Labour. The Committee reported in April substantially in favour of giving effect to all of them, but their report has not yet been considered by the Cabinet (C.P. 141 (26)). The responsibility for taking action on these recommendations, when approved, rests primarily with the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research (Nos. 1 & 2) and with the Committee of Civil Research (No.3).
CHAPTER IV - RESEARCH

4. THAT THE RESEARCH ORGANISATION OF THE COLLIER OWNERS SHOULD BE EXPANDED WITH INCREASED FUNDS PROVIDED PARTLY BY THE OWNERS AND PARTLY BY THE DEPARTMENT OF SCIENTIFIC AND INDUSTRIAL RESEARCH.

5. THAT THE WORK OF THE FUEL RESEARCH DIVISION OF THE DEPARTMENT OF SCIENTIFIC AND INDUSTRIAL RESEARCH SHOULD BE PRESSED FORWARD AND PROVIDED WITH AMPLE FUNDS.

6. THAT THE DEPARTMENT OF SCIENTIFIC AND INDUSTRIAL RESEARCH SHOULD BE MADE RESPONSIBLE FOR CO-ORDINATING THE VARIOUS BRANCHES OF RESEARCH WORK.

These recommendations are also dealt with in the Report of the Committee of Civil Research and here also administrative action rests with the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research.

CHAPTER V - STRUCTURE OF THE INDUSTRY

7. THAT LEGISLATION SHOULD BE PASSED TO FACILITATE DESIRABLE AMALGAMATIONS.

This is dealt with in the Mining Industry Bill.

8. THAT LEGISLATION SHOULD BE PASSED GIVING THE MINES DEPARTMENT POWER AFTER A PERIOD OF THREE YEARS TO IMPOSE COMPULSORY AMALGAMATIONS.

The Prime Minister announced in his speech on the 15th June that this would be done, but it was subsequently decided to omit this provision from the Bill. As introduced it merely requires the Mines Department to make a Report to Parliament at the end of three years.

CHAPTER VII - ROYALTIES.

9. THAT COAL ROYALTIES SHOULD BE ACQUIRED BY THE STATE.

It is not proposed to proceed with this at present (see Cabinet 41(26) Conclusion (g)).
10. THAT LOCAL AUTHORITIES SHOULD BE EMPOWERED TO TRADE IN COAL.

The form of legislation to be adopted for this purpose was referred to a Cabinet Sub-Committee who reported before the end of April (Appendix to C. P. 122 (26)). This Report is to be considered by the Cabinet Coal Committee on Thursday, June 24th. The Secretary of State for War has instructed the Parliamentary Draftsman to draft legislation on the lines of the Sub-Committee's Report with a view to the question being considered whether it should be inserted in the Mining Industry Bill at Committee stage.

11. THAT "COLLIERS WOULD BE WELL ADVISED TO ESTABLISH CO-OPERATIVE SELLING ASSOCIATIONS".

The Government have undertaken to set up a Committee on this subject. Proposals as to personnel and terms of reference will be submitted in due course, but it is desirable that further consultation should take place with representatives of the Industry before this is done.

12. THAT THE QUESTION SHOULD BE EXPLORED OF ESTABLISHING AN OFFICIAL SYSTEM FOR THE SAMPLING AND ANALYSIS OF COAL.

Before anything can be done in this direction, long and difficult discussion with our own traders and foreign importers will be necessary and clearly this cannot usefully be initiated at present.

CHAPTER IX - CONVEYANCE OF COAL.

13. THAT A JOINT COMMITTEE OF THE MINISTRY OF TRANSPORT AND THE MINES DEPARTMENT SHOULD BE APPOINTED IN ORDER TO DO WHAT IS POSSIBLE TO EFFECT A GREATER MEASURE OF STANDARDISATION OF WAGONS; AN INCREASED PROVISION OF WAGONS OF LARGER CAPACITY, AND AN EXTENSION OF THE PRINCIPLE OF COMMON USER.

This has been discussed between the Ministry of Transport.
and the Mines Department, and the Minister of Transport will shortly submit definite proposals.

CHAPTER XII - WAGES

14. THAT PROFIT-SHARING SCHEMES SHOULD BE MADE COMPULSORY AT ALL COLLIERIES.

It is obviously impossible to give full effect to this recommendation until the owners and men have reached agreement upon it. But a Clause has been inserted in the Mining Industry Bill to facilitate the establishment of a profit-sharing scheme at any colliery that desires to have one. The Government have also undertaken to appoint a Committee to examine the profit-sharing proposals of the Commission and also the question of family allowances. But it is hardly practicable to proceed with this until the stoppage is over.

15. THAT "THERE MAY BE AN ADVANTAGE IF THE TWO PARTIES AGREE IN HAVING A NATIONAL WAGES BOARD WHICH SHALL BRING IN ALSO IMPARTIAL ELEMENTS OUTSIDE THE COAL INDUSTRY ITSELF."

In view of the strong dissent of the parties, the Government have decided not to proceed with this at present.

CHAPTER XIII - HOURS

16. THAT GREATER ELASTICITY SHOULD BE INTRODUCED INTO THE LAW GOVERNING THE HOURS OF WORK UNDERGROUND.

This question has been merged in the larger question of the length of the working day.

CHAPTER XV - RECRUITING AND PERSONNEL

17. THAT THE MINEOWNERS AND MINERS SHOULD CONFERENCE TOGETHER WITH A VIEW TO CONSIDERING, IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE MINISTRY OF LABOUR, PRACTICABLE STEPS FOR SECURING THE
TRANSFER OF UNEMPLOYED MINERS FROM ONE DISTRICT TO ANOTHER AND FOR GIVING SUCH MINERS THE FIRST CHANCE OF OBTAINING SUCH COLLIERY EMPLOYMENT IN PREFERENCE TO THE RECRUITING OF OUTSIDE LABOUR.

The Mining Industry Bill gives the Minister of Labour power to make regulations on this subject.

18. THAT THE MINES DEPARTMENT SHOULD CONSIDER THE REGULATIONS GOVERNING THE QUALIFICATIONS OF MINE MANAGERS.

This has already been taken up with the Board for Mining Examinations who are arranging conferences with the educational authorities concerned.

CHAPTER XVII - HOUSING.

19. THAT THE STATE AS ROYALTY OWNER SHOULD ENSURE THAT ADEQUATE PROVISION WILL BE MADE FOR THE HOUSING OF THE WORKERS.

The Government have undertaken to set up a Committee on Housing in colliery districts. Administrative action on this rests primarily with the Ministry of Health.

CHAPTER XVIII - WELFARE.

20. THAT ROYALTIES SHOULD CONTRIBUTE TO THE WELFARE FUND AND THAT PITHEAD BATHS FINANCED OUT OF THE WELFARE FUND SHOULD BE MADE GENERALLY COMPULSORIY.

Part III of the Mining Industry Bill gives effect to this recommendation.

CHAPTER XIX - ASSOCIATION OF THE WORKERS.


The Government have never committed themselves to legislation on this subject. All they have undertaken
to do is "to prepare a scheme for the establishment of pit Committees". The mineowners have indicated that they are willing to see if arrangements cannot be made for the general provision of pit committees on a voluntary basis, and in these circumstances it is clear that no action can be taken by the Government until there has been an opportunity of discussing the matter with both sides of the Industry.

CHAPTER XXI - THE PRESENT SITUATION.

22. THAT THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD BE READY TO TAKE ALL PRACTICABLE MEASURES FOR THE ASSISTANCE OF ANY LABOUR THAT MAY BE DISPLACED OR FOR FACILITATING ITS TRANSFER AND TO PROVIDE SUCH FUNDS AS MIGHT BE REQUIRED FOR THOSE PURPOSES.

This is a matter for the Ministry of Labour. The situation will presumably have to be met as it arises.

G.R.L.F.

Mines Department.

June 22nd, 1926.