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It is requested that special care may be taken to ensure the secrecy of this document.

WAR CABINET 121 (41).

CONCLUSIONS of a Meeting of the War Cabinet held at 10 Downing Street, S.W. 1, on Friday, November 28, 1941, at 11 A.M.

Present:
The Right Hon. WinstoN S. CHURCHILL, M.P., Prime Minister (in the Chair).
The Right Hon. Anthony Eden, M.P., Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.
The Right Hon. Lord Beaverbrook, Minister of Supply.
The Right Hon. Anthony Eden, M.P., Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.
The Right Hon. A. Greenwood, M.P., Minister without Portfolio.
The Right Hon. Ernest Bevin, M.P., Minister of Labour and National Service.
The Right Hon. Sir Archibald Sinclair, Bt., M.P., Secretary of State for Air.
The Right Hon. James Stuart, M.P., Joint Parliamentary Secretary of the Treasury.
The Right Hon. Lord Moyne, Secretary of State for the Colonies.

The following were also present:
Captain the Right Hon. H. D. Margesson, M.P., Secretary of State for War.
The Right Hon. R. A. Butler, M.P., President of the Board of Education.
The Right Hon. Brendan Bracken, M.P., Minister of Information.
Sir Charles Craven, Director-General, Ministry of Aircraft Production.

Secretary.
Sir Edward Bridges.
Mr. N. Brook.
**WAR CABINET 121 (41).**

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1. The War Cabinet had before them the following documents:

(a) The Man-Power Situation generally and the National Service (No. 2) Bill.
   A Memorandum by the Prime Minister (W.P. (41) 291).
   A Memorandum by the Minister of Labour and National Service (W.P. (41) 254).
   Draft of the National Service (No. 2) Bill (W.P. (G) (41) 142).
   Draft White Paper on the Bill (W.P. (G) (41) 144).
   Memorandum on the Bill by the Home Secretary and Minister of Home Security (W.P. (G) (41) 143).

(b) Ministry of Supply Labour Requirements.
   Memoranda by the Minister of Supply (W.P. (41) 278 and 289).
   A Memorandum by the Minister of Labour and National Service (W.P. (41) 285).
   A Joint Memorandum by the Minister of Supply and the Minister of Labour and National Service (W.P. (G) (41) 138).

(c) Scheme for training Boys and Girls.
   A Report by the Lord President of the Council (W.P. (G) (41) 137).

(d) Women in Government Departments.
   A Report by the Lord President of the Council (W.P. (G) (41) 131).

(e) The Man-Power Position in the Civil Defence Services.
   A Memorandum by the Home Secretary and Minister of Home Security (W.P. (G) (41) 134).

The Prime Minister, at the outset, reviewed some of the points on which decisions had already been reached. For example, administrative measures had already been taken with a view to replacing the system of block reservation by occupation by a system of individual deferment based on the national importance of the work being performed by the individual. This was to be followed by a drastic review of existing deferments.

The Prime Minister said that he attached considerable importance to the timing of the review of existing deferments in relation to the other parts of the scheme, from the point of view of public opinion. It was well known that numbers of men under 41 and at present reserved should be combed out. It was important that this should be done soon, having regard to the obligations which the proposed legislation would place on other members of the community.

(2) Arrangements had already been made for giving effect to the decision that young men should in future be called up for the National Service at the age of 18. In this connection the view was very generally expressed that, in present circumstances, it was difficult to justify continuance of the practice whereby youths under 20 in the Army were not sent overseas. The assurance given in this matter had been that, if possible, before men called up under the National Service (Armed Forces) Act were sent out of the country under the age of 20, a statement should be made in the House explaining the circumstances which had rendered that course necessary. The Secretary of State for War was invited to consider whether the time had not come to change the practice in this matter, and to reduce the age at which soldiers could be sent overseas from 20 to 19.

* Hansard, 3rd September, 1939, Column 326.
The Principle of Compulsory Service for Women in the Auxiliary Services and Civil Defence Forces.

Exemption of Married Women from compulsory service in the Auxiliary Services or Civil Defence Forces.

Agreement was expressed with the view set out in paragraph 4 of the Prime Minister’s paper (W.P. (41) 291) that the upper age-limit in the Bill should be 51 and not 61.

(3) The War Cabinet next discussed the question of principle involved in the application to women of compulsion to join the Auxiliary Services or Civil Defence Forces.

The Minister of Supply said that he did not favour this proposal, for the following reasons: First, that better results would be obtained if the Army were themselves to undertake a comprehensive recruiting campaign on a voluntary basis. Secondly, that the measure would give rise to dissatisfaction. Thirdly, that it was a mistake to have a separation between industry and the Army: either direction, or the process of compulsion, should be applied in all cases. Fourthly, that, when women in large numbers were needed in industry, it was a mistake to recruit so many women into the Army. He believed that substantial numbers of men could be released by the Supply Departments, provided women could be found to replace them.

The Prime Minister said that it was essential to replace men by women in certain non-mobile military jobs, such as the Balloon Barrage, and work in connection with anti-aircraft guns. Looking at the problem as a whole, there was no likelihood of there being more men available than were wanted.

The Secretary of State for Air feared that the proposal to apply compulsion to join the Auxiliary Services would give rise to dissatisfaction among the men in the Services. He thought that, if the power of direction of women into the factories was more drastically exercised, the result would be that many more would volunteer for the Services.

The Minister of Labour and National Service said that one of the gravest difficulties which he now had to meet was the fact that he was using indirect pressure to get women to join the Services. This was much resented, and he was sure that a direct approach would be far better received.

The First Lord of the Admiralty was opposed to applying the principle of compulsion.

The Secretary of State for the Colonies thought that it would be better to start with proclaiming the age group 20–35, or, say, 25–35. Otherwise he saw no objection to the proposal to apply compulsion.

All the other Ministers present favoured the application of the principle of compulsion to women to join the Auxiliary Services and Civil Defence Forces, which was adopted.

(4) General agreement was expressed with the view that married women should not be called up for the auxiliary Services or Civil Defence Forces, although they should be allowed to volunteer.

The War Cabinet also agreed with the statement of the position set out in paragraphs 14 and 15 of the Prime Minister’s Memorandum (W.P. (41) 291), subject to the insertion of the words “(or Civil Defence Services)” after “an industrial job,” in paragraph 14 (e).

The Secretary of State for War feared that, if married women were exempt from being called up for the Auxiliary Services, he would find it difficult to resist the claim to allow the release of married women already in those Services.

The general view was that this position could be maintained, more especially since a single woman who was called up and posted to one of the Auxiliary Services under the new legislation proposed,
Option open to Women compulsorily recruited into the Auxiliary Services or Civil Defence Forces.

and who subsequently married, would not be released. Any other course would put a premium on reckless marriages.

Reference was made to the position of women in the Services who became pregnant. The Secretary of State for War said that they were always released.

It was agreed that it might be as well to make this fact clear to the House.

(5) Considerable discussion took place on the proposal in paragraph 7 of the Prime Minister's Memorandum (W.P. (41) 291) that women, on being called up, would be given an option between:

(a) the Auxiliary Services;
(b) the Civil Defence Forces;
(c) certain specified jobs in industry, e.g., filling factories which, owing to their location, could only be filled by women transferred from a distance.

General agreement was expressed with the view that this option was desirable. There was great advantage in people having a say in deciding the jobs for which they were best suited, more particularly in its application to the novel problems now being dealt with.

Fears were expressed by some Ministers, that the great majority of women would opt for industrial employment; by others, that nearly all would opt for the Auxiliary Services.

The general view taken was that so many varying factors would enter into the choice made by individual women (e.g., location, family circumstances, and so forth) that it was unlikely that there would be any very pronounced swing in one direction. In these circumstances, the right course would be to start by allowing, at the outset, a free option between the three types of services set out in paragraph 7; if being understood that if the exercise of this option became unworkable, the matter would have to be reviewed.

Discussion ensued as to which jobs in industry should be included within the option under paragraph 7 (c) of the Prime Minister's Memorandum.

The Minister of Supply asked that it should be confined to the filling factories.

The Minister of Labour thought that it might be necessary to include certain other factories in the congested areas, and further, that the point was one which had best be left flexible for adjustment between the Production Ministers.

After some discussion, the Prime Minister suggested, and the War Cabinet agreed, that the wording of paragraph 7 (c) should be amended to read as follows:

"Such specified jobs in industry as the Minister of Labour may direct."

For the time being it should be understood that the Minister of Labour's instructions from the War Cabinet were to give priority in this matter to the filling factories, subject to it being understood that these instructions could be revised or modified by the War Cabinet at a later date.

(6) The Secretary of State for Air pressed for the continuance of an option between the three Services. The general view of the War Cabinet was that there would be great practical difficulties in combining such an option with the option given between the three types of Service set out in paragraph 7 of the Prime Minister's Memorandum, more especially seeing that the real difficulty throughout had been to find recruits for the A.T.S. Moreover, it was relevant that all women had had an opportunity to volunteer for any of the three Services, and that those outside the ages
proclaimed would still be able to do so after the passing of the proposed legislation.

The War Cabinet's instructions to the Minister of Labour were, therefore, to allot women to the W.R.N.S., the W.A.A.F. and the A.T.S. on the basis of the needs of those services.

(7) The Lord President explained the proposals in his Report (W.P. (G) (41) 137) which had the support of the Departments concerned.

Boys of 16-18 would be enabled to play their part in manning the searchlights and anti-aircraft batteries, as a result of arrangements which the War Office were making to use the Home Guard on a part-time basis, for operational duties in A.D.G.B. The War Office had agreed that, for those Home Guard units which were to be employed in A.D.G.B., the age of enrolment should be reduced from 17 to 16.

There would be compulsory registration of all boys in the 16-18 age group. The particulars obtained on registration would be passed to the Youth Service Committees of the Education Authorities, who would arrange for the boys to be interviewed, and encouraged to join one or other of the existing organisations through which they could obtain the training required to fit them for national service. To cater for the larger numbers likely to be obtained by this means, there would be some expansion of the cadet movements, directly controlled by the Services, and also, so far as practicable, of the other voluntary organisations concerned with the welfare of young people.

In this connection the Lord President corrected a statement made in paragraph 4 of his Memorandum. He now understood that the Air Ministry were not at present disposed to reduce the lower age limit for the A.T.C. from 16 to 14; and he asked that this paragraph of his Memorandum should be taken as stating merely that "the Air Ministry would wish to be free to undertake a corresponding expansion of the A.T.C. by reducing the lower age limit from 16 to 14."

The requirement of compulsory registration would apply to girls as well as boys; but it was contemplated that the registration and interviewing of girls in the 16-18 age-group would not be undertaken until substantial progress had been made with the interviewing of boys in this age-group.

The War Cabinet approved the Lord President's Report.

(8) The question was raised whether power should be included in the National Service (No. 2) Bill to compel men to join the Home Guard. While this might raise controversial issues, it was felt that it would be anomalous to exclude the Home Guard altogether from legislation applying compulsion to all other Services.

The Secretary of State for War said that he did not contemplate applying compulsion for the Home Guard on any extensive scale. There were, however, certain rural areas, particularly in the Eastern and South-Eastern Regions, where the numbers of the Home Guard fell considerably short of requirements.

After discussion, it was agreed that power should be taken under the Bill to make a Regulation under which men could be directed to join the Home Guard, but that such a Regulation should not be made until there had been an opportunity of testing feeling in Parliament by a debate on this specific point.

(9) The Home Secretary and Minister of Home Security said that, for the reasons given in his Memorandum W.P. (G) (41) 148, he feared that some anomalies would arise from the application of two different methods of recruiting women compulsorily for Civil Defence. The present proposals would have the effect that, for those branches of Civil Defence which had been declared Civil Defence
...women could not be recruited compulsorily except through the calling up of age-groups; and this might mean that in these branches he would have to use younger women for work which older women were qualified to do. He was, however, prepared to face these anomalies if the Minister of Labour would give an assurance that, concurrently with the calling up of women for the Civil Defence "Forces," he would issue directions under the Defence Regulations to fill vacancies, as required, in the Civil Defence "Services."

The Minister of Labour pointed out that he could not guarantee to fill all vacancies in establishments determined by the Home Secretary, as this would give the needs of Civil Defence a priority over all other needs. He was, however, prepared to agree to a system by which the needs of the various departments would be examined interdepartmentally, probably by the Man-Power Committee, and allocations decided upon. Thereafter directions under the Defence Regulations would be issued in accordance with these allocations.

The War Cabinet agreed that a system on these lines should be introduced.

(10) The War Cabinet invited the Lord President's Committee to examine the new estimate of the numbers of men and women required in Civil Defence, as set out in the Memorandum (W.P. (G) (41) 134) circulated by the Home Secretary and Minister of Home Security, and to submit their recommendations to the War Cabinet.

(11) The Lord President explained that the recommendations in his Report W.P. (G) (41) 131 were accepted by the Departments primarily concerned.

The First Lord of the Admiralty asked whether the decision taken earlier at the meeting to call up women in the 20–30 age-group would affect the agreement which had been reached regarding the release, by Government Departments, of women clerical workers in this age-group. It was agreed that the new decision would not affect that agreement.

The War Cabinet endorsed the recommendations made in the Lord President's Report.

(12) The Prime Minister said that he proposed to open the Debate on Tuesday, the 2nd December, with a short statement outlining the Government's general policy for the further mobilisation of men and women for national service. The Minister of Labour would make a more detailed statement on the following day.

The Joint Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasury said that it was now proposed that the Bill should be introduced on the day following the debate, and its passage through the House of Commons completed in the week ending the 13th December.

(13) It was agreed that there would be advantages in laying a White Paper summarising the Government's policy and setting out the main changes proposed. This, however, should be laid together with the Bill after the debate had taken place. This would afford an opportunity for revising the text of the White Paper, if need arose, in the light of the discussion during the debate.

The War Cabinet's Conclusions were as follows:

(1) Approval was given to the introduction of legislation imposing on all persons of either sex a liability to National Service, whether in the Armed Forces, in Civil Defence, in industry, or otherwise. As regards service...
in the Armed Forces or Civil Defence Forces, the age-limits would be 18 to 50 (and not 50 as provisionally decided on the 10th November*).

(II) The Secretary of State for War was invited to consider whether the time had come to reduce the age at which soldiers could be sent overseas from 20 to 19.

(III) Approval was given to the introduction of legislation compelling single women to join the Auxiliary Services or Civil Defence Forces, subject to the safeguards and provisions agreed upon by the War Cabinet on the 10th November.

(IV) The position of married women in regard to their liability for National Service was reaffirmed. The summary of the position given in paragraphs 13–15 of W.P. (41) 291 was approved, subject to the amendment set out at "X."

(V) Women, on being called up, should be given an option between—

(a) The Auxiliary Services;
(b) The Civil Defence Forces;
(c) Such specified jobs in Industry as the Minister of Labour and National Service may direct. (It being, of course, understood that, if, for any reason, the exercise of this option became unworkable, the matter would have to be reviewed.)

(VI) For the time being, the Minister of Labour and National Service would give priority to the filling factories in filling the "specified jobs in industry" referred to in the preceding conclusion, it being understood that these instructions could be revised or modified by the War Cabinet at a later date.

(VII) Women compulsorily recruited into the Auxiliary Services would not be given an option between W.R.N.S., W.A.A.F. and A.T.S. The Minister of Labour and National Service would allot women to these Services on the basis of their needs.

(VIII) The proposals for the training of boys and girls in W.P. (G) (41) 137 were approved.

(IX) Power should be taken by the Bill to make a Regulation under which men might be directed to join the Home Guard. But such a Regulation should not be made operative until there had been an opportunity for testing the feeling in Parliament by a Debate on this specific point.

(X) A distinction between Civil Defence "Forces" and Civil Defence "Services" would have to be maintained. But an arrangement would be made whereby the needs of the various Departments would be examined inter-departmentally, and allocations decided upon. Thereafter, the Minister of Labour and National Service would issue directions in accordance with these allocations.

(XI) The new estimate of the numbers of men and women required in Civil Defence, as set out in the Memorandum by the Home Secretary and Minister of Home Security (W.P. (G) (41) 164) should be examined by the Lord President's Committee.

(XII) The recommendations in the Report by the Lord President of the Council (W.P. (G) (41) 151), as to the employment of women by Government Departments, were approved. These recommendations were not affected by the decision to call up women in the 20–30 age-group.

* W.M. (41) 110th Conclusions, Minute 1.
A White Paper, summarising the Government's policy and setting out the main changes proposed, should be issued, but not until after the debate which was to take place in the following week. The draft submitted to the War Cabinet (W.P. (G) (41) 144) should be revised, if need be, in the light of the debate.

2. In discussion on the previous item, the hope was expressed that the National Service (No. 2) Bill would pass through all its stages in the House of Commons during the week ending the 13th December. If, however, the House of Lords was unable to complete its discussions of the Bill by Thursday, 18th December, there might be difficulty in arranging for any Lords' amendments to be considered in the Commons without prolonging the sittings of the House into the following week.

The War Cabinet—

Invited the Lord Privy Seal, the Leader of the House of Lords and the Chief Whip to review the Parliamentary time-table and to consider whether it would be necessary for Parliament to meet on one or more additional days (Mondays or Fridays) in order to complete outstanding business in the week ending Saturday, the 20th December.

3. In connection with the question of the option to be given to women to take up work in certain specified jobs in industry (see Minute 1, paragraph (5)), discussion took place as to the need for improving transportation facilities to factories in remote areas. This involved not merely services from the neighbouring towns and villages to the factories, but also improvement in the local distribution of the services in the neighbouring towns.

Some discussion ensued as to the practicability of making more buses or army lorries available for the purpose.

The Prime Minister asked the Service Ministers to submit particulars of the buses they had available, showing how many were in running order and how many were laid up for repairs. He hoped that some scheme might be devised which would enable more transport to be made available for the purpose in question. It might be necessary for the matter to be examined by a small Committee.

Great George Street, S.W. 1.
November 28, 1941.