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W.M. (43)

98th Conclusions.

WAR CABINET 98 (43).*CONCLUSIONS of a Meeting of the War Cabinet held in the Prime Minister's Room, House of Commons, S.W. 1, on Tuesday, 13th July, 1943, at 12.15 P.M.***Present :**

The Right Hon. WINSTON S. CHURCHILL, M.P., Prime Minister (<i>in the Chair</i>).	
The Right Hon. C. R. ATTLEE, M.P., Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs.	The Right Hon. ANTHONY EDEN, M.P., Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.
The Right Hon. Sir JOHN ANDERSON, M.P., Lord President of the Council.	The Right Hon. ERNEST BEVIN, M.P., Minister of Labour and National Service.
The Right Hon. OLIVER LYTTELTON, M.P., Minister of Production.	The Right Hon. HERBERT MORRISON, M.P., Secretary of State for the Home Department and Minister of Home Security.
The Right Hon. R. G. CASEY, Minister of State.	

The following were also present :

The Right Hon. Sir KINGSLEY WOOD, M.P., Chancellor of the Exchequer.	The Right Hon. VISCOUNT CRANBORNE, Lord Privy Seal.
The Right Hon. Sir ARCHIBALD SINCLAIR, Bt., M.P., Secretary of State for Air.	The Right Hon. THOMAS JOHNSTON, M.P., Secretary of State for Scotland.
The Right Hon. Sir STAFFORD CRIPPS, K.C., M.P., Minister of Aircraft Production.	The Right Hon. R. A. BUTLER, M.P., President of the Board of Education.
The Right Hon. ERNEST BROWN, M.P., Minister of Health (<i>Item 2</i>).	The Right Hon. the EARL OF SELBORNE, Minister of Economic Warfare.
The Right Hon. W. WHITELEY, M.P., Joint Parliamentary Secretary, Treasury.	

Secretariat:

Sir EDWARD BRIDGES.
Mr. NORMAN BROOK.

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Educational Reform.

(Previous Reference: W.M. (42) 150th Conclusions, Minute 3.)

1. The War Cabinet had before them a Memorandum by the President of the Board of Education (W.P. (43) 299) covering the draft of a White Paper setting out his proposals for post-war educational reform.

It was explained in the Memorandum that these proposals had been considered by the Lord President's Committee* and had their support. Substantial progress had been made with the preparation of the necessary legislation; but it was thought preferable that the general scheme of the proposed reforms should be presented to Parliament and the public, in the first instance, in the form of a White Paper, and that an opportunity should be given for public discussion and the formation of public opinion before the Bill was finally completed and introduced. It was therefore proposed that, if its terms were approved by the War Cabinet, the White Paper should be presented to Parliament on the 16th July, but that the Bill should not be introduced until the next Session.

The War Cabinet were informed that there would be a general desire to debate these proposals in the House of Commons before the end of the present Session. The intention was to offer facilities for a debate, if necessary over two days, about a fortnight after the presentation of the White Paper.

It had been suggested that the President of the Board of Education should give a broadcast talk on his proposals on the day of publication of the White Paper. It was, however, the general feeling of the War Cabinet that, as there was to be a full debate in the House of Commons, the President should make his first public explanation of his proposals on that occasion.

In paragraph 3 of the Appendix to the White Paper it was explained it was not proposed to introduce any of these proposals "until the end of the war in Europe." *The Chancellor of the Exchequer* suggested that the words "in Europe" should be omitted from this sentence. This suggestion was approved.

The Prime Minister asked what progress had been made in the use of instructional films in the schools. *The President of the Board of Education* undertook to send the Prime Minister a memorandum on this question.

The War Cabinet—

- (1) Endorsed the proposals for educational reform set out in the draft White Paper annexed to W.P. (43) 299; and approved the terms of that draft subject to the amendment suggested by the Chancellor of the Exchequer.
- (2) Authorised the President of the Board of Education to present the White Paper to Parliament on the 16th July and took note that arrangements would be made for these proposals to be debated in the House of Commons before the end of the present Session.

Parliament.

Redistribution of Parliamentary seats. (Previous Reference: W.M. (43) 89th Conclusions, Minute 6.)

2. In his Memorandum (W.P. (43) 274) the Home Secretary and Minister of Home Security had suggested that the proposed legislation providing for the immediate appointment of a Commission to recommend a scheme of redistribution should also create permanent redistribution machinery on the lines recommended in the Report of the Departmental Committee on Electoral Machinery.

At their meeting on the 28th June the War Cabinet had asked that this suggestion should be considered in the first instance by the Ministerial Committee on Electoral Machinery.

The War Cabinet now had before them a further Memorandum by the Home Secretary and Minister of Home Security (W.P. (43) 304) reporting that the Ministerial Committee fully endorsed the suggestion which he had put forward in his earlier Memorandum. He therefore sought authority to make an early statement in the House of Commons, in the terms of the draft annexed to W.P. (43) 304, announcing the Government's intention to introduce legislation making permanent provision for adjusting constituencies to future changes in the distribution of population.

* L.P. (43) 46th Meeting.

The Home Secretary and Minister of Home Security said that, when this matter had been before them on the previous occasion, the War Cabinet had been anxious to ensure that Parliament would retain control over all measures of redistribution. The Bill which he now proposed would set out the general principles on which any scheme of redistribution should be based, and would provide for the appointment of a standing body of Boundary Commissioners who would keep the state of the constituencies under review and would be in a position to prepare schemes of redistribution when occasion arose. The Commissioners would not, however, be empowered to make recommendations for redistribution until they had been authorised by Parliament on any particular occasion to do so, and the schemes which they prepared would have to be presented for approval by Parliament. It was not the intention that these reviews should take place at frequent intervals—as a rule it would not be necessary to hold more than one such review in the normal lifetime of a Parliament—and under the arrangements proposed complete control over all measures of redistribution would remain with Parliament.

The Secretary of State for Air said that, as mentioned in paragraph 4 of W.P. (43) 304, a number of Members of Parliament had tabled a Motion urging the appointment of a representative conference to consider the question of electoral reform. In any Debate on this Motion there would certainly be raised the question of proportional representation, which, if accepted, would affect redistribution; and he therefore suggested that the Government should not commit themselves as regards redistribution until Parliament had been given an opportunity for such a Debate.

The Home Secretary and Minister of Home Security said that this point had been considered by the Ministerial Committee on Electoral Machinery; and the majority of the members of that Committee had felt that Parliamentary discussion of proportional representation or other measures of electoral reform could not be prejudiced by an early announcement of the Government's intention to make permanent provision for redistribution. If at some later stage it were decided to introduce some measure of proportional representation, a major Bill would clearly be necessary, and any further amendments then required in respect of redistribution could be incorporated in that Bill. If this point were raised in Parliament on the occasion of the proposed statement about redistribution, it could be made clear that this proposal would not prejudice subsequent discussion of electoral reform.

The War Cabinet—

- (1) Approved the proposals in W.P. (43) 274 and 304 for the introduction of legislation making permanent provision for adjusting constituencies to future changes in the distribution of population.
- (2) Authorised the Home Secretary and Minister of Home Security to announce this decision in the House of Commons in the terms outlined in the Appendix to W.P. (43) 304.

Post-War Civil
Air Transport.
(Previous
Reference:
W.M. (43) 88th
Conclusions.)

3. *The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs* said that a reply had now been received from the Canadian Government to the telegram addressed to them on the 30th June (No. 114). They thought that it was inadvisable to hold a meeting between nations of the Commonwealth prior to a meeting with the United States, since, in their view, this would lessen the chances of getting substantial international agreement. The Canadian Government therefore regretted that they could not participate in meetings with representatives of other nations of the Commonwealth in advance of the proposed international meeting with the United States. The

Canadian Government also made clear that they had intended that the preliminary talks at Ottawa should be restricted to Officials, and should not be on the Ministerial level.

The view expressed by the War Cabinet was that we could not acquiesce in the position that there was anything objectionable in preliminary consultation between members of the British Commonwealth and Empire, before international discussions with other countries. One solution of the difficulty might now be that, in lieu of the Canadian Government issuing invitations to a Conference at Ottawa, we should issue invitations to a Conference to be held elsewhere.

It was proposed that our next step should be discussed at an early date by the Ministerial Committee on Post-War Civil Air Transport.

The War Cabinet—

Took note of these statements.

*Offices of the War Cabinet, S.W. 1.
13th July, 1943.*
