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SECRET.

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W.M. (43)

162nd Conclusions.

WAR CABINET 162 (43).

CONCLUSIONS of a Meeting of the War Cabinet held at 10 Downing Street, S.W. 1, on Friday, 26th November, 1943, at 11.30 p.m.

Present :

The Right Hon. C. R. ATTLEE, M.P., Deputy Prime Minister (*in the Chair*).

The Right Hon. Sir JOHN ANDERSON,  
M.P., Chancellor of the Exchequer.

The Right Hon. ERNEST BEVIN, M.P.,  
Minister of Labour and National  
Service.

The Right Hon. OLIVER LYTTTELTON,  
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. LORD WOOLTON,  
Minister of Reconstruction.

The following were also present :

The Right Hon. VISCOUNT CRANBORNE,  
Secretary of State for Dominion  
Affairs.

The Right Hon. LORD BEAVERBROOK,  
Lord Privy Seal.

The Right Hon. Sir ARCHIBALD  
SINCLAIR, Bt., M.P., Secretary of  
State for Air.

Major the Right Hon. G. LLOYD  
GEORGE, M.P., Minister of Fuel and  
Power.

The Right Hon. BRENDAN BRACKEN,  
M.P., Minister of Information.

The Right Hon. LORD CHERWELL,  
Paymaster-General.

LORD BRUNTISFIELD, Parliamentary  
Secretary, Admiralty (*Item 1*).

*Secretariat :*

Sir EDWARD BRIDGES.  
Mr. NORMAN BROOK.

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Coal.  
 Man-Power  
 for the  
 Coalmining  
 Industry.  
 (Previous  
 Reference:  
 W.M. (43) 187th  
 Conclusions,  
 Minute 6.)

1. The War Cabinet considered a Memorandum by the Lord President of the Council (W.P. (43) 531) regarding the need for increasing the labour force in the coal-mining industry.

It was explained in the Memorandum that the plans for increasing the labour force by voluntary means had not yielded sufficient results, and it was now necessary to arrange to call up compulsorily to the coal-mines fit men of military age who would otherwise be called up for the Armed Forces. The method of applying this selective compulsion had been carefully considered by the Minister of Labour and National Service, who had reached the conclusion that the selection must be made by ballot. This conclusion had been endorsed by the Lord President's Committee. The method by which the ballot would be conducted was outlined in the Memorandum.

*The Parliamentary Secretary to the Admiralty* said that he had been asked by the First Lord to refer again to the point which he had raised when this matter had come before the Lord President's Committee, viz., whether persons who had volunteered for, and been accepted by, one of the Services before reaching the age of compulsory military service would be excluded from this ballot.

*The Minister of Labour and National Service* said that men who were already in the Armed Forces would, of course, be excluded from the ballot, even though they had joined up as volunteers before reaching the age of compulsory military service. He could not, however, give an assurance which would have the result that any person below the age of call-up could escape the ballot for the coal-mines by volunteering to join one of the Armed Forces. Youths who volunteered in this way were placed on a deferred list, and sometimes remained on this list for a substantial period before they were drafted into the Service by which they had been accepted. At times the numbers on this deferred list were considerable; and there was likely to be discontent if all the young men in this position were automatically excluded from the ballot. His whole purpose was to secure a scheme which would be, and appear, fair to all; and this purpose would be defeated if the ballot could be avoided by volunteering for one of the Armed Forces before reaching the age of compulsory military service. He had already undertaken to ensure that a limited number of young men with special qualifications would be excluded from the ballot, *i.e.*, men who had been accepted for flying duties in the Royal Air Force and the Fleet Air Arm, or as artificers in submarines, and men in the short list of highly skilled occupations and the "Y" Scheme; and his Department would consider with the Admiralty what categories of tradesmen, &c., required for the Navy could be excluded under this head.

The view of the War Cabinet was that the scheme outlined in the Memorandum would be acceptable to the public generally only if the basis of selection were such as to win public confidence in its impartiality; and on this account it was essential to limit to the minimum the special classes which would be excluded from the ballot.

The War Cabinet—

Approved the proposals outlined in W.P. (43) 531; and took note that the Minister of Labour and National Service would announce the scheme in a statement to be made in the House of Commons on Thursday, the 2nd December.

NOTE.—Subsequent to the meeting it was suggested that there was grave doubt whether men accepted for the Services could legally be brought within the scope of the ballot; and that, for this reason, it would be necessary to place some restrictions on the acceptance by the Services of young men volunteering before reaching the age of compulsory military service.

Eire.  
The *Kerlogue*  
Case.

2. *The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs* reported that an Eire ship, *Kerlogue*, when on her way to Spain, had been attacked on the 23rd October by British aircraft. The master and seamen of the crew had been wounded—the master seriously.

This ship had been carrying a British cargo and the master had, for many years, been on service in British ships. Enquiry had shown that the vessel had been given instructions to follow a course which would take her well to the west of the Prohibited Area, but that at the time the vessel was attacked she was well off her course, steering to enter the Prohibited Area, but had not entered it.

We had informed the Eire Government of the results of our enquiries into this matter, and had stated that we could not accept any liability. We had now been asked whether we would grant any *ex gratia* compensation to the injured members of the crew. Sir John Maffey was anxious that this should be done, since it would facilitate his negotiations for the release of the remaining British airmen interned in Eire.

*The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs* sought the advice of the War Cabinet as to whether there was any political objection to making *ex gratia* grants in these cases.

One suggestion made in discussion was that we might dispose of the matter by giving *ex gratia* grants, under such conditions that the fact that we had done so would not be made public.

The view of the War Cabinet was that there was no reason why we should not make *ex gratia* grants openly in this case, seeing that the matter arose out of a mistake, and that the ship had been engaged in carrying a British cargo at the time.

*Offices of the War Cabinet, S.W. 1,  
26th November, 1943.*

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