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**SECRET.**

Copy No. 52

W.M. (44)

17th Conclusions.

**WAR CABINET 17 (44).**

*CONCLUSIONS of a Meeting of the War Cabinet held at 10 Downing Street, S.W. 1, on Wednesday, 9th February, 1944, at 7.30 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., Lord President of the Council.	The Right Hon. ANTHONY EDEN, M.P., Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.
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.	The Right Hon. THOMAS JOHNSTON, M.P., Secretary of State for Scotland ( <i>Items 1-2</i> ).
The Right Hon. Sir STAFFORD CRIPPS, K.C., M.P., Minister of Aircraft Production.	The Right Hon. H. U. WILLINK, K.C., M.P., Minister of Health ( <i>Items 1-2</i> ).
The Right Hon. BRENDAN BRACKEN, M.P., Minister of Information.	The Right Hon. LORD CHERWELL, Paymaster-General.

*Secretariat :*

SIR EDWARD BRIDGES.  
MR. NORMAN BROOK.  
MR. W. S. MURRIE.

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**H.R.H. Princess  
Elizabeth.**

1. *The Prime Minister* informed the War Cabinet that he had been in communication with His Majesty The King in regard to the suggestion which had been made in some quarters that a title should be conferred on H.R.H. Princess Elizabeth on the occasion of her 18th birthday. The Prime Minister asked the War Cabinet to agree that he should tender advice to His Majesty in favour of the issue from Buckingham Palace in the near future of a short official announcement that The King did not contemplate any change in the style and title of H.R.H. Princess Elizabeth on the occasion of her approaching 18th birthday.

The Prime Minister said he understood that this would be in accordance with His Majesty's own wishes in the matter.

The King's Private Secretary would, of course, inform the Governors-General of the Dominions of the proposed announcement before it was made.

The War Cabinet—

Approved the course proposed.

**National Health  
Service.**

2. The War Cabinet had before them a Memorandum by the Minister of Reconstruction, the Minister of Health and the Secretary of State for Scotland (W.P. (44) 74) regarding the scheme for a National Health Service. Attached to the Memorandum were the draft of a White Paper on the scheme, and a shorter Memorandum which was to be issued as a Stationery Office publication.

*The Minister of Reconstruction* explained the main features of the scheme, which was the result of many months of work by the War Cabinet Committees concerned with reconstruction. There had been differences of opinion on a number of points, as was inevitable in the consideration of so extensive and complex a problem; but the scheme now put forward had the unanimous support of the Reconstruction Committee. He sought the authority of the War Cabinet to publish the documents circulated with the Memorandum, not as representing the Government's final decisions in this matter, but as a basis for public discussion of the scheme.

Points in discussion were:—

(a) The scheme did not involve the abolition of private medical practice. Although the public service would provide free medical treatment for all who cared to avail themselves of it, it would be inexpedient to prevent those who so desired from making private arrangements for treatment. Equally, it would have been wrong to exclude any class of persons from treatment under the public service merely on the ground that they could afford to pay for treatment as private patients.

(b) It must be recognised that the scheme would constitute some threat to private medical practice—any proposals for the establishment of a comprehensive medical service must have that effect.

On the other hand, it was pointed out that the proposals for grouped practice—whether in health centres or otherwise—were likely to lead to increased efficiency among the rank and file of the medical profession.

(c) The suggestion was made that the scheme would involve the establishment of a large bureaucratic machine which, through the proposed Central Medical Board, would determine where each doctor should practise.

It was pointed out that, if there was a shortage of doctors and the State had undertaken to provide a universal service, the State must have some power to control the general distribution of doctors in the public service. The degree of this control was not, however, so drastic as had been suggested. In the case of separate practice,



for example, all that was proposed was that the consent of the Board should be required before a vacant public practice was filled or a new public practice established; and it was intended that this consent should be withheld only if there were enough or too many doctors in the area.

(d) It was suggested that the scheme was likely to meet with keen opposition from the doctors, and would be represented as undermining the whole basis of the medical profession.

The War Cabinet were informed that, while opinion among doctors might be divided, it was likely that the scheme would be supported by a substantial proportion of the profession. It was also pointed out that a scheme on somewhat similar lines had been in operation for over thirty years in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland—where it had proved highly beneficial to the population, had increased the efficiency of the service, and had not had the effect of killing private practice.

(e) It was suggested that the reference to Sir William Beveridge in the introductory paragraphs in each of the two Papers might, with advantage, be omitted.

This was agreed to.

*The Prime Minister* asked that, in presenting this scheme to the public, Ministers should stress the fact that it did not represent the final views of the Government; that it was put forward for public discussion and that constructive criticism would be welcomed; that, when there had been an opportunity for the formation of public opinion, the details would be further discussed with the medical profession and other interests affected; and that only then would the Government proceed in the light of all these discussions to formulate their final conclusions and to bring forward proposals for legislation.

The War Cabinet—

- (1) Approved on this basis the scheme outlined in the documents attached to W.P. (44) 74.
- (2) Authorised the presentation of the White Paper to Parliament and the simultaneous publication of the shorter memorandum.
- (3) Took note that these documents would be published on the 17th February, and that arrangements would be made for them to be debated in Parliament after an interval of two or three weeks.

**Australia-  
New Zealand  
Agreement of  
21st January,  
1944.**

3. The War Cabinet had before them a Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs (W.P. (44) 70) about the Australia-New Zealand Agreement of the 21st January, 1944. Attached to the Memorandum was the text of the agreement, together with a telegram on the subject, dated the 25th January, from the Prime Ministers of New Zealand and Australia.

*The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs* explained that we had had virtually no prior knowledge of this conference, which we had thought was intended to be a mutual consultation between the two Governments of a preliminary character before consultation with ourselves and other foreign countries. It was, therefore, perhaps somewhat unfortunate that the two Governments should have published their conclusions without any prior consultation with us. Nevertheless, on a broad view, he thought that the results of the conference might well prove to be useful. In particular, he pointed out that the two Governments had stated publicly that they had a primary interest in the defence of the Pacific.

The Secretary of State also drew attention to paragraphs 7, 10 and 14 of the agreement, in which the two Governments asked for representation on certain bodies, including representation at the highest level on all armistice planning and executive bodies. He

thought that it might be difficult to give effect to such claims without giving rise to awkward claims on the part of the United Nations generally.

The main point dealt with in the course of a preliminary discussion was what reply should be returned to the telegram from the two Prime Ministers of the 25th January.

**The War Cabinet—**

Invited the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to arrange for a reply to be drafted, in consultation with the other Departments concerned, and submitted to the War Cabinet on the broad lines indicated in his Memorandum. This reply would include a statement to the effect that we took the view that the matters dealt with by the conference would be suitable for discussion at the forthcoming meeting in London of Dominion Prime Ministers.

*Offices of the War Cabinet, S.W. 1,  
9th February, 1944.*

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