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REPEAL OF  
THE INDUSTRIAL  
RELATIONS ACT

Previous  
Reference:  
CC(74) 4th  
Conclusions  
Minute 2

6. The Cabinet had before them a memorandum by the Secretary of State for Employment (C(74) 11) on the repeal of the Industrial Relations Act.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR EMPLOYMENT said that it was of paramount importance to put the proposals in his memorandum to the Trades Union Congress (TUC) and the Confederation of British Industry (CBI) on 22 March. They did not at any point go beyond what had been agreed between the Labour Party and the TUC. He had discussed the provision for picketing with the Home Secretary and he had discussed with the Lord Chancellor the transitional arrangements for disposing of the remaining cases before the National Industrial Relations Court. He had altered his proposals in the light of their comments and was prepared to consult further with Ministers who had raised points on his paper. He had already had to postpone the submission of his proposals to the TUC and the CBI and a further postponement would be difficult to explain. He hoped that he might have authority to send them his proposals immediately.

In discussion it was argued that both the transitional provisions and the provisions for picketing raised important problems that had not yet been resolved between Ministers. The provisions for picketing in particular ought not to be decided without discussion in Cabinet, for which there was no time at that meeting.

THE PRIME MINISTER, summing up the discussion, said that the Cabinet did not have time for a full discussion of these issues at their present meeting. On the other hand the Government had suffered in 1969 through entering into discussions with the TUC without adequate discussion in Cabinet. Furthermore there was always a risk that proposals put to the TUC would not remain secret. There was urgency in this case and he would therefore hold a meeting later that day with the Secretary of State for Employment, the Lord Chancellor, the Attorney General, the Lord Advocate, and the Secretaries of State for the Home Department, the Environment and Social Services. The group would give authority to the Secretary of State to send the proposals to the TUC and the CBI and would report their conclusions to the full Cabinet on 25 March.

The Cabinet -

Took note with approval of the summing up  
of their discussion by the Prime Minister.

Cabinet Office

21 March 1974