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- S E C R E T -

CABINET 37 (24).

CONCLUSIONS of a Meeting of the Cabinet, held in the Prime Minister's Room, House of Commons, S.W.1, on FRIDAY, JUNE 6th, 1924, at 1 p.m.

INDUSTRIAL DISPUTES.

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The Strike on the Underground and Great Western Railways.

(Previous Reference: Cabinet 32 (24), Conclusion 5.)

The Cabinet met, as a matter of urgency, to consider the situation arising out of a sudden strike on the Underground and Great Western Railways.

The Minister of Labour informed his colleagues of the following facts in regard to the situation.

The National Union of Railwaymen had recently entered into negotiations with certain of the Railway Companies, namely, the Great Western Railway and the Underground Railways, in regard to the wages of shopmen. On the 17th May a letter had been sent without warning to the Companies concerned by an unofficial Committee, who had demanded a reply at very short notice on the matters under discussion between the National Union of Railwaymen and the Companies. To this letter the Companies had replied that they were dealing direct with the National Union of Railwaymen and could not give an answer to the unofficial Committee. This Committee had then called a strike, and there had been a considerable stoppage. The difficulty of the Ministry of Labour arose from the fact that the National Union of Railwaymen did not recognise the strike, while the Companies also refused to negotiate with the representatives of the strikers,

on the ground that they were in negotiation with the Union. There were the usual complications arising out of the fact that members of Craft Unions were working alongside the railwaymen. No Union, however, either of the craftsmen or of the railwaymen, would have anything to do with the strike as such. There was some reason to believe, however, that the Secretary of the Electrical Trades Union was contemplating giving official recognition to the strike. At present about two-thirds of the power production of Lots Road station had ceased, and two-thirds of the trains on the Underground Railways had stopped running. The opinion of the National Union of Railwaymen was that the situation was not likely to improve before Monday or Tuesday, when an accelerated service might be possible.

The Cabinet consulted the Lord Advocate in person, and the Permanent Under-Secretary of State for Home Affairs, by telephone, as to whether naval ratings could be put into the power-stations to run them, in case of necessity, without the issue of an Emergency Proclamation. They were informed that the necessary legal powers existed, but that in the past the Admiralty had wished to avoid using naval ratings in this way before the issue of an Emergency Proclamation. In the circumstances of the moment, however, it was felt that, if absolutely necessary, the Government should not refrain from calling on the naval personnel.