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# WAR CABINET, 75.

*Minutes of a Meeting of the War Cabinet held at 10, Downing Street, on Tuesday,  
February 20, 1917, at 11:30 A.M.*

Present :

The PRIME MINISTER (*in the Chair*).

The Right Hon. the EARL CURZON OF KEDLESTON, K.G., G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E. | The Right Hon. A. BONAR LAW, M.P.

*In attendance :*

The Right Hon. A. J. BALFOUR, O.M., M.P.,  
Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.

The Right Hon. the LORD HARDINGE OF  
PENSHURST, K.G., G.C.B., G.C.S.I.,  
G.C.M.G., G.C.I.E., Permanent Under-  
Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs  
(for Minutes 1 to 9).

The Right Hon. LORD R. CECIL, K.C., M.P.,  
Minister of Blockade (for Minutes 12  
and 13).

HUGH MONTGOMERY, Esq., C.V.O., Foreign  
Office (for Minute 13).

The Right Hon. H. A. L. FISHER, M.P.,  
President of the Board of Education (for  
Minute 10).

The Right Hon. H. E. DUKE, K.C.,  
M.P., Chief Secretary for Ireland (for  
Minute 11).

Admiral SIR J. R. JELlicoe, G.C.B., O.M.,  
G.C.V.O., First Sea Lord of the  
Admiralty (for Minutes 1 to 5).

The Right Hon. the EARL DERBY, K.G.,  
G.C.V.O., C.B., Secretary of State for  
War (for Minutes 1 to 8).

General SIR W. R. ROBERTSON, G.C.B.,  
K.C.V.O., D.S.O., Chief of the Imperial  
General Staff (for Minutes 1 to 8).

Major-General SIR G. M. W. MACDONOGH,  
K.C.M.G., C.B., Director of Military  
Intelligence, War Office (for Minute 13).

Major the Hon. N. S. LYTTON (for  
Minute 8).

JOHN BUCHAN, Esq. (for Minute 13).

Lieutenant-Colonel SIR M. P. A. HANKEY, K.C.B., *Secretary*.

Major C. L. STORR, *Assistant Secretary*.

Mr. T. JONES, *Assistant Secretary*.

Destroyers in  
Collision.

1. THE First Sea Lord reported that two more destroyers had  
been in collision.

The Damaged  
Transport  
"Berrima."

2. The First Sea Lord stated that the P. and O. ship "Berrima,"  
reported torpedoed on the previous day, had since been towed into  
port.

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Publication of  
Shipping Losses.

3. The War Cabinet approved a new form for the daily publication of shipping losses (War Cabinet, 63, Minute 3) submitted to them by the First Sea Lord. It was decided not to publish neutral losses regularly, although, in the event of any special case where it might be desirable for propaganda purposes or other reasons to notify the loss of any particular ship or ships, there was no objection to such publication.

Raids in Sinai  
Peninsula.

4. The Chief of the Imperial General Staff reported to the War Cabinet two successful raids in the Sinai Peninsula.

The Russian  
Conference :  
The Return  
Journey.

5. The War Cabinet commended to the attention of the Admiralty a telegram received by the Chief of the Imperial General Staff from General Sir Henry Wilson in regard to the difficulty of keeping secret the date of the departure of the Mission and the consequent danger from submarine attack.

The First Sea Lord described the nature of the precautions taken by the Admiralty.

Munitions for  
Russia.

6. The War Cabinet requested the Permanent Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs to ascertain by telegraph what arrangement had been made in regard to the supply of ammunition to Russia.

The French  
Railways.

7. The Chief of the Imperial General Staff read out a communication from Field-Marshal Sir Douglas Haig regarding his recent discussion with General Nivelle on the subject of the congestion on the French Northern Railways, indicating that General Nivelle was hopeful of an improvement in the French railway position in the north (War Cabinet, 67, Minute 6).

The War Cabinet, nevertheless, adhered to their previous decision, that a Government Conference should take place, so that a definite understanding might be reached and an agreement drawn up and signed by the Heads of the two Governments respectively, not only so far as the railways are concerned, but also in regard to the operations of 1917.

The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs undertook to see the French Ambassador in London immediately, in order to make the necessary preliminary arrangements with him for the holding of the Conference.

Field-Marshal Sir  
Douglas Haig's  
Alleged Interview.

8. Major the Hon. N. S. Lytton, a specially deputed member of Field-Marshal Sir Douglas Haig's Staff, attended the War Cabinet and gave a full account of one of the interviews given by Sir Douglas Haig to certain French journalists. From Major Lytton's account it was clear that the French reports had considerably embroidered the actual conversation which took place, with the result that the reports, though based on Sir Douglas Haig's actual statements, were incorrect in detail, and gave a false general impression.

The description of the interviews, however, were censored and passed at General Headquarters in France, but were not seen by Sir Douglas Haig himself. Major Lytton stated that the interview had had an excellent effect on French public opinion.



The War Cabinet decided that—

The reply in Parliament to questions on this subject should be in the following sense :—

“Sir Douglas Haig has from time to time seen various influential gentlemen, both journalists and others, of Allied and Neutral countries. On this occasion he met several important French journalists, with whom he had a frank conversation, in which he gave them his general views on the situation. In the present instance, proofs of the interview were sent to General Headquarters, but, owing to the action of a subordinate, they were not submitted to Sir Douglas Haig himself.”

The Dardanelles  
Commission.

9. The War Cabinet authorised the Secretary to communicate to the Dardanelles Commission the decisions of the Dardanelles Committee and of the late War Committee, so far as these relate to the present Enquiry (Appendix I) (War Cabinet, 47, Minute 22).

Educational  
Development and  
Reform.

10. The War Cabinet had under consideration the proposals of the President of the Board of Education, contained in a Memorandum of “Proposals for Immediate Action,” dated the 2nd February, 1917, and “General Proposals,” dated the 5th February, 1917.

Mr. Fisher stated that elementary teachers were miserably paid, and that a discontented teaching class was a social danger. Further, as in the case of all fixed incomes, the war had greatly diminished the purchasing power of the teachers' low salaries. Before the war, the wastage of teachers was 9,000 per annum, and this was being repaired only to the extent of 6,000. To meet such a serious shortage after the war, it was essential to increase the attractions of the profession now. If it were objected that local authorities would press Parliament for similar Treasury grants for housing, sanitation, &c., the reply would be that such measures involved the use of labour, whereas the educational proposals did not. Further, the present proposals did not increase the rates, but the taxes, and the burden was readjusted so as to offer a direct inducement to local Education Authorities to improve teachers' salaries where salary expenditure is low, and to recognise the liberality of the authorities where salary expenditure is high. Mr. Fisher pointed out that it was not intended, during the War, to abolish half-time or to raise the elementary school age. It was desirable, however, to obtain statutory recognition of the principle of Continued Education, although it would take perhaps fifteen years to give full effect to the principle.

The War Cabinet approved generally the proposals set forth in the Memoranda, including the financial proposals outlined in the Memorandum of the 2nd February, 1917, “Educational Development,” and authorised the President of the Board of Education to proceed with legislation :—

- (a.) To empower local Educational authorities to provide Nursery Schools ;
- (b.) To establish a system of pensions for teachers in Secondary and Technical Schools.

The War Cabinet also agreed that the President should take into consultation some of the leading business men of the country in regard to the initiation of a system of compulsory day continuation classes for young persons.



Irish Local  
Elections.

11. The Chief Secretary for Ireland stated that the ordinary triennial period for holding elections of members of the County and Rural District Councils and Boards of Guardians in Ireland would occur at the beginning of next June. The latest suspensory enactment ("Parliament and Local Elections Act, 1916") does not postpone them. The War Cabinet decided that—

The necessary steps should be taken to postpone the holding of the elections, on lines similar to those taken in England.

The British  
Blockade.

12. The Minister of Blockade laid before the War Cabinet alternative drafts (Appendix II) amending the draft Order in Council approved by the War Cabinet on the 8th February, 1917 (War Cabinet, 57, Minute 7 and Appendix I). He explained that the Lord Chancellor had taken exception to the original draft. The first alternative had been prepared by the Minister of Blockade, and the second by the Lord Chancellor.

The War Cabinet approved the first alternative draft, which carries out their original decision, and authorised the Minister of Blockade to take the necessary action to give effect to this decision.

Propaganda:  
Department of  
Information.

13. The War Cabinet approved generally the proposals in regard to the organisation and machinery of a Propaganda Department, outlined in a Memorandum, dated the 3rd February, 1917, prepared by Mr. John Buchan, and circulated to the War Cabinet in accordance with their decision of the 9th February (War Cabinet, 60, Minute 4), subject to the following variations:—

- (a.) The headquarters of the Department should be housed at the Foreign Office, on the analogy of the Ministry of Blockade.
- (b.) The new Department to be termed "Department of Information."

(Initialled) D. Ll. G.

2, Whitehall Gardens, S.W.,  
February 20, 1917.



## APPENDIX I.

## THE DARDANELLES COMMISSION.

*Note by the Secretary.*

I ENCLOSE a letter I have received from the Secretary of the Dardanelles Commission, covering a letter addressed to him by the Chairman of the Commission.

I saw Mr. Mears on Saturday afternoon and explained to him that the decision of the War Cabinet not to allow the Secretary's notes of the Meetings of the Dardanelles Committee to be furnished to the Commission must be accepted as final, and I suggested to him in conversation that the Commission could really get all the evidence they required by hearing the evidence of those members of the Government of that day, who were also members of the Dardanelles Committee. He begged me, however, to lay Sir William Pickford's letter before the War Cabinet.

I would suggest, for the consideration of the War Cabinet, that I might be authorised to communicate, not the detailed Secretary's notes, but the formal decisions of the Dardanelles Committee and the War Committee to the Dardanelles Commission. There is a precedent for this in the case of the Mesopotamian Commission, which was quite satisfied to receive the decisions and to cross-examine Ministers about them, and, in private conversation with Mr. Mears, I gather that this would probably satisfy the Dardanelles Commission also.

M. P. A. HANKEY.

2, Whitehall Gardens, S.W.,  
February 17, 1917.

*The Dardanelles Commission.*

Dear Sir Maurice, 2, Hare Court, Temple, E.C., February 16, 1917.

Sir William Pickford has written me a letter, of which I enclose you a copy. I might perhaps supplement it by drawing your attention to an extract from a letter from Sir Maurice Bonham Carter to me, dated the 30th August, 1916, in which he says: "I am able to give you the answers to the three points raised by Lord Cromer when he called here some days ago. I understand from the Prime Minister that the Ministers will have no objection to giving their evidence on oath. Lord Stamfordham has written to me to say that the King will release them from their oath of secrecy for the purpose of giving evidence before them."

I have obtained the copy of the minutes of the War Council which were handed confidentially to the late Lord Cromer.

If you can spare me two minutes I will return them to you personally.

Yours sincerely,  
(Signed) E. GRIMWOOD MEARS.

Lieutenant-Colonel Sir Maurice Hankey, K.C.B.,  
2, Whitehall Gardens, S.W.

Dear Mears, Queen's House, Cheyne Walk, S.W., February 16, 1917.

I hope you will be able to get evidence as to the proceedings of the War Council and Dardanelles Committee before long. We cannot satisfactorily consider the conduct of the operations unless we know the decisions of these bodies which are part of such conduct. We have nearly finished the rest of the evidence, and I think it is important that we should have information as to these matters before Mr. Churchill gives evidence. He will no doubt give us evidence as to the proceedings and decisions, and extracts from the minutes, but they will be extracts taken quite fairly, but from our point of view, we can deal with more satisfactorily if we have the whole before us.

Of course the most convenient form in which we could have the information is that of a statement, supplemented by evidence, of Sir Maurice Hankey, as we had for the first part of the enquiry, but I quite see that, considering all the calls upon Sir Maurice's time, he may not be able to give us this.



But we could have the information either by his evidence, or that of some other person qualified to give an account of the proceedings, or by sending us a copy of the minutes.

I understand from you that there is no objection to sending the Chairman such a copy, as was done in the first part of the enquiry, but that is of no use in the present circumstances.

We had then an account given us by Sir Maurice Hankey, and the minutes were merely sent to the Commission to enable the Chairman to check this account. At present we have no account of such proceedings in the period between May 1915 and the evacuation, and to send the minutes to the Chairman would give no information to the Commission if he might not show them to the members.

I should think the Commission are just as much to be trusted with the minutes as the Chairman, even when he was as distinguished a man as the late Lord Cromer, but evidence in any form will be quite satisfactory.

Will you see Sir Maurice Hankey about it? If you like you can show him this letter.

Yours, &c.  
(Signed) W. PICKFORD.

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## APPENDIX II.

### DRAFT ORDER IN COUNCIL.

1. A VESSEL, which is encountered at sea on her way to or from a port in any neutral country affording means of access to the enemy territory, without calling at a port in British or Allied territory shall, until the contrary is established, be deemed to be carrying goods with an enemy destination, or of enemy origin, and shall be brought in for examination, and, if necessary, for adjudication before the Prize Court.

2. Any vessel carrying goods with an enemy destination, or of enemy origin, shall be liable to capture and condemnation in respect of the carriage of such goods: Provided that, in the case of any vessel which calls at an appointed British or Allied port for the examination of her cargo, no sentence of condemnation shall be pronounced in respect only of the carriage of goods of enemy origin or destination, and no such presumption as is laid down in article 1 shall arise.

#### *Alternative Article 2.*

2. In the case of enemy vessel carrying contraband goods with an enemy destination, the owner of the vessel shall be deemed, until the contrary is established, to have knowledge of the destination of the goods: Provided that in the case of any vessel which calls at an appointed British or Allied port for the examination of her cargo, no such presumption as is laid down in this article, or in article 1, shall arise.

3. Goods which are found, on the examination of any vessel, to be goods of enemy origin or of enemy destination, shall be liable to condemnation.

4. Nothing in this Order shall be deemed to affect the liability of any vessel or goods to capture or condemnation, independently of this Order.

5. This Order is supplemental to the Orders in Council of the 11th day of March, 1915, and the 10th day of January, 1917, for restricting the commerce of the enemy.