

Minutes of the
War Committee of the Cabinet
February 26th, 1942.

Ottawa, February 26th, 1942.

CABINET WAR COMMITTEE

A meeting of the War Committee of the Cabinet was held in Room 401, House of Commons, on Thursday, February the 26th, at 4 p.m.

There were present the following members:

The Prime Minister (Mr. King), in the Chair,
The Minister of Mines and Resources
(Mr. Crerar),
The Minister of National Defence (Mr. Ralston),
The Minister of National Defence for Air
(Mr. Power),
The Minister of Finance (Mr. Ilsley),
The Minister of Fisheries (Mr. Michaud),
The Minister of Munitions and Supply (Mr. Howe),
The Minister of National Defence for Naval
Services (Mr. Macdonald).

The Under-Secretary of State for External
Affairs (Mr. Robertson),
The Secretary (Mr. Heeney).

Delivery of icebreaker to Russia

1. The Secretary reported that word had been received from the U.K. government that they were deeply concerned by delays which had occurred in the delivery to the U.S.S.R. of the icebreaker "Montcalm", regarding which approval had been given by the War Committee on October the 29th, 1941. The U.K. High Commissioner had asked whether the government would institute an enquiry into the matter, and had asked the earliest possible date on which the vessel could put to sea.

A full report of the facts had been obtained from the Deputy Minister of Transport. Difficulties regarding crew and with regard to bunkers had been the principal causes of delay and the vessel had had to put back to port on two occasions, after leaving the expectation now was that

present, the Committee on Vulnerable Points followed the policy of leaving responsibility for protection upon the proprietors. It would be extremely difficult to change this policy for one involving differentiation between the many locations in respect of which protection might be desirable. Consideration might be given to using the National Resources Mobilization Act to call out men for police duty.

15. The War Committee noted the submission of the Journal of the Board for their twenty-fifth meeting; as to the protection of vulnerable points, it was agreed that no change be made in the present policy followed by the Vulnerable Points Committee.

Movement of Japanese from British Columbia

16. The Prime Minister referred to the magnitude of the task of implementing the government's recent decision to evacuate all persons of Japanese race from the protected area on the Pacific Coast and make provision for them elsewhere. A special organization should be set up for this purpose. It would be useless to proceed by piecemeal methods. Justice (through the R.C.M. Police), the Army, or possibly Munitions and Supply might be agencies in which responsibility should be centred.

17. The Minister of Munitions and Supply suggested that temporary accommodation for the large numbers involved might be provided at Banff and Jasper. A local British Columbia Committee, or the Army might provide the organization.

18. The Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs observed that in the United States the problem was dealt with by the Army, which had the right to call upon other agencies of government for assistance as required.

19. The Secretary drew attention to the fact that the authority of the Labour Department to provide work camps for evacuated persons was restricted to male Japanese nationals. There had, as yet, been no amendment to the Order in Council providing for these camps, so as to correspond to the wider powers

now given to the Minister of Justice in respect of any or all persons within protected areas.

20. The Minister of National Defence expressed the view that the Army could not undertake responsibility for the evacuation. They were already overburdened, and Army personnel in British Columbia were preoccupied with problems of Pacific defence. Possibly they could provide for administration, housing and commissariat as was done with internment operations.

Transportation units for service in the United Kingdom

21. The Secretary reported that the U.K. government had again raised the question of special transportation personnel. A request for certain special units had been made in June, 1941, and postponed, pending clarification of the manpower situation. Some 3,500 men of various categories were involved.

(Secretary's note, February 17, 1942 - C.W.C. document 91).

22. Mr. Heeney said that the Chief of the General Staff was not in favour of the government accepting this commitment. Personnel in these categories were not available. The railways themselves were shorthanded. Transportation troops might have to be provided for the Canadian Army overseas, at a later date. If such formations were to be raised later on, they should be in Canadian units for service with the Canadian Army.

23. The War Committee agreed that this commitment could not be accepted, and that the U.K. government be informed accordingly.

Proposed impregnation of battle dress

24. The Secretary submitted a recommendation of the Minister of National Defence, to provide for the impregnation of battle dress as protection against vesicant gas attacks. The considerations upon which this recommendation was based were similar to those advanced in favour of proposals, submitted to the War Committee on February 16th last, for in-