

Memorandum re Meeting of

Cabinet War Committee.

July 17th, 1940.

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CABINET WAR COMMITTEE

A meeting of the War Committee of the Cabinet was held in the Prime Minister's Office in the East Block on July 17th at 8.30 p.m.

There were present the following members of the Committee:

The Prime Minister
The Leader of the Government in the Senate (Senator Dandurand)
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 Munitions and Supply (Mr. Howe)

The Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs. X

I.

Discussion of International Situation

The Prime Minister read a communication from the High Commissioner for the United Kingdom regarding action that might be taken in the event of Spain and Portugal entering the war, a telegram from the High Commissioner in London regarding the situation in Ireland, a letter from the High Commissioner for the United Kingdom on the same subject, and a communication from the High Commissioner for the United Kingdom containing an appreciation of the situation in the Near East.

II.

Designation of Halifax as a Controlled and Protected Area.

The Minister of National Defence stated that a report had been made by the Chiefs of the General Staff recommending that Halifax be made a controlled and protected area under the Defence of Canada Regulations

With Premier McNair, the Minister of National Defence recommended that a moderate sum, approximately \$100,000, might be spent on the road section between Bathurst and Newcastle. A question was raised by other members, particularly the Minister of Munitions and Supply as to the dangerous precedent involved in undertaking to build or repair provincial roads, but it was considered there were special grounds in this case in view of the fact that the roads and particularly the bridges were not sufficient to carry military vehicles required for defence in a vital area. It was therefore agreed that the Minister of National Defence might proceed on the lines he had suggested, in his discussions with Mr. McNair the following day.

VI.

Control of Firearms.

The Minister of National Defence raised the question whether firearms in the possession of private citizens should be taken over by the Government, or at least registered; or in any case whether stocks of such arms and stores should be taken over, both as a means of security and to ensure a reserve for training purposes.

The Prime Minister said that Mr. McGeer had spoken to him of his great concern about the Japanese situation in British Columbia, and was drafting a bill, apparently at the request of the Attorney General of British Columbia, which would authorize the Attorney General in any province to take over arms. The Minister of National Defence for Air said that Defence officials had been of the opinion that farmers in outlying districts should be allowed to retain their arms for protection and hunting purposes. There was some discussion as to whether it would be possible to apply the law in some provinces only or in some areas only of each province. A good deal of apprehension was indicated as to the danger of firearms and explosives being in the hands of Japanese residents. It was pointed out that the Criminal Code at present required aliens to have permits for firearms, and the view was expressed that such action might

increase rather than lessen unrest, and that the Police authorities had taken the view that only the good citizen would register. The general opinion appeared to be that it might be advisable to extend the permit system to cover all residents and not merely aliens, and that the Minister of National Defence should pursue this possibility with the appropriate Committee and the Mounted Police, and bring it before Council or the War Committee later.

VII.

Formation of Seventh Corps.

The Minister of National Defence referred to Telegram No. 1118 from the High Commissioner in London, with regard to the formation of the Seventh Corps. A draft reply was discussed. The main question was the date at which Canada should assume responsibility for the ancillary forces. It was agreed the date of September 1st should be adopted.

VIII.

Contracts with Canadians of German and Italian Ancestry.

The Minister of Munitions and Supply said that as the result of a Trenton contract being let to the lowest tenderer, a Canadian of Italian ancestry who had brought in a large group of his compatriots to work on the contract, a tendency had developed to refuse to grant contracts to Canadians of German or Italian ancestry. The view was expressed that this was wholly unwarranted, and that, in view of the loyalty of the overwhelming proportion of such groups and particularly in the old established sections, the lowest tenderer should not be refused in such cases unless Police enquiry indicated sympathy with the enemy.

IX.

Munitions Enquiry in Washington.

The Minister of Munitions and Supply stated that his visit of last week to Washington, which had been