

T. 15. 1637 APPOINTED H. C. 2. 10

Mr. DENMAN (Leeds, Central, Nat. Lab.) asked the Prime Minister (1) what authority had been appointed for the economic planning of the nation's war efforts, including such aspects as finance, supply of commodities, economic warfare, and stimulus of exports, and (2) if it was proposed to set up a body to plan the economic war efforts of the Allies.

Mr. CHAMBERLAIN.—The responsibility for coordination of all branches of the nation's war effort in whatever sphere rests of course with the War Cabinet as a whole. In practice the method adopted is to effect the solution of particular problems by means of consultation between the Ministers concerned, and in order that the results may be brought before the War Cabinet, some member of the Cabinet is entrusted with the general direction of these consultations.

In the case of economic and financial policy a Committee has been set up, under the chairmanship of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, composed of the Ministers concerned with the various aspects of the subject. The duty of this Committee is to keep under review and to coordinate the working of Departments in relation to the economic effort of the country as a whole. This Committee is also responsible for supervising the arrangements which have been made for Anglo-French economic cooperation.

Lord Stamp has been asked to assist this Committee by becoming Adviser on Economic Coordination. Assisted by Mr. Henry Clay and Mr. H. D. Henderson, Lord Stamp had for some time prior to the outbreak of war been advising upon the economic war plans of the Government, giving guidance and assistance to the Departments concerned. In association with the Ministerial Committee to which I have just referred, he will continue to review our current economic plans and activities in order to propose to the Minister or Ministers concerned ways of filling any gaps that may be found to exist or remedies for any inconsistencies that may be discovered.

There has also been set up under the Ministerial Committee an inter-Departmental Committee of officials composed of the permanent heads of the Departments concerned. Lord Stamp will be president of this official Committee.

As regards Anglo-French economic cooperation, arrangements already exist for discussion between representatives of the two Governments on many common problems. Further arrangements are under consideration with a view to establishing the requisite degree of consultation, as well as the means for joint action.

LORD STAMP'S WORK

Mr. DENMAN.—In view of the fact that our economic effort obviously needs concerted direction and drive, will Lord Stamp be a whole-time worker, or is there anyone who will be a whole-time director of these activities?

Mr. CHAMBERLAIN.—I do not think that Lord Stamp will be a whole-time worker, but I think he will be able to give a very large part of his time to this work.

Mr. SHINWELL (Seaham, Lab.).—Does the right hon. gentleman appreciate that our economic activities may prove to be the most fundamental of all our lines of defence, and that there is essential need for effective co-operation of all our economic activities, including finance, supply, mobilization of labour, exports and imports, and the like; and will he not reconsider the whole matter, and instead of appointing a very large number of committees with voluntary assistance will he appoint some member of the War Cabinet who will actively function in all these matters?

Mr. CHAMBERLAIN.—No, Sir. I do not think that it would be possible for any single individual to function in consultation with the Ministers who are responsible for all the Departments concerned. It is because we realize the importance of the whole subject that we are setting up this Committee, which we believe will be the most effective way of dealing with it.

Mr. SHINWELL.—While I appreciate the need for consultation and active liaison between the Board of Trade, the Ministry of Supply, and the like, will the right hon. gentleman not agree that someone should be directly responsible, not only to the War Cabinet, but to this House and to the country, for the coordination of all these activities, which would be better than the establishment of a large number of committees?

Mr. CHAMBERLAIN.—I do not know why the hon. member should say, "a large number of committees." I only mentioned the Ministerial Committee and the Inter-Departmental Committee. I do not think that we could do without either of these. As to the general responsibility to the House and to the country, it must rest with the War Cabinet as a whole, and my right hon. friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer is going to act as chairman of this Committee, and he will be the individual member of the War Cabinet who will be specially responsible.

MR. ATTLEE'S QUESTION

Mr. ATTLEE (Limehouse, Lab.).—Would it not be better if a Minister gave whole-time and not part-time attention to these economic questions?

Mr. CHAMBERLAIN.—It is very difficult to meet all these different points of view. One point of view which has been urged upon me—and I am not sure that the right hon. gentleman himself has not taken part in these suggestions—is that the War Cabinet ought to be smaller than it is at the present time. I do not see how you can make it smaller if you are going to add to its numbers.

Mr. LEES-SMITH (Keighley, Lab.).—Will Lord Stamp have any staff, or will the work be done in his leisure time?

Mr. CHAMBERLAIN.—He will have the secretarial staff of the Cabinet available to him.

COMMANDER LOCKER-LAMPSON (Birmingham, Handsworth, U.) asked if any member of Parliament would be on the Committee.

Mr. CHAMBERLAIN.—Yes: they are all members of Parliament, in one House or the other.

SIR P. HARRIS asked if the right hon. gentleman would consider making use of the

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