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Conclusions

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CABINET

CONCLUSIONS of a Meeting of the Cabinet  
held at 10 Downing Street on  
MONDAY 9 MAY 1983  
at 11.15 am

P R E S E N T

The Rt Hon Margaret Thatcher MP  
Prime Minister

The Rt Hon William Whitelaw MP  
Secretary of State for the Home Department

The Rt Hon Lord Hailsham  
Lord Chancellor

The Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey Howe QC MP  
Chancellor of the Exchequer

The Rt Hon Sir Keith Joseph MP  
Secretary of State for Education and Science

The Rt Hon Michael Heseltine MP  
Secretary of State for Defence

The Rt Hon Nicholas Edwards MP  
Secretary of State for Wales

The Rt Hon Patrick Jenkin MP  
Secretary of State for Industry

The Rt Hon John Biffen MP  
Lord President of the Council

The Rt Hon David Howell MP  
Secretary of State for Transport

The Rt Hon Norman Fowler MP  
Secretary of State for Social Services

The Rt Hon Leon Brittan QC MP  
Chief Secretary, Treasury

The Rt Hon Baroness Young  
Lord Privy Seal

The Rt Hon Nigel Lawson MP  
Secretary of State for Energy

The Rt Hon Norman Tebbit MP  
Secretary of State for Employment

The Rt Hon Cecil Parkinson MP  
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and  
Paymaster General

The Rt Hon Lord Cockfield  
Secretary of State for Trade

The Rt Hon Tom King MP  
Secretary of State for the Environment

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THE FOLLOWING WERE ALSO PRESENT

The Rt Hon Michael Jopling MP  
Parliamentary Secretary, Treasury

The Rt Hon Lord Belstead  
Minister of State,  
Foreign and Commonwealth Office

Earl of Gowrie  
Minister of State,  
Northern Ireland Office

Mr John Mackay MP  
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State  
Scottish Office

SECRETARY

Sir Robert Armstrong

S U B J E C T

DISSOLUTION OF PARLIAMENT AND GENERAL ELECTION

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DISSOLUTION  
OF PARLIAMENT  
AND GENERAL  
ELECTION

THE PRIME MINISTER said that, following consultations with a number of colleagues the previous day, she had decided to ask The Queen for a very early dissolution of Parliament, so that a General Election could be held. Political and press speculation had reached a point where continued uncertainty could have serious consequences for the economy and in financial and exchange markets. There were some arguments in favour of 23 June as the date for the General Election; but that would imply an interval of six weeks before the Election, and in her view and that of the colleagues with whom she had discussed the matter that would be too long an interval. Accordingly, subject to the approval of Cabinet, she would seek an Audience with The Queen at 12.30 pm that day, and ask for the dissolution of Parliament on Friday 13 May. As soon as she returned from the Palace, advance notice would be given to the leaders of the Opposition parties and to the Speaker. The dissolution would be announced in a statement to the press soon after 2.00 pm. Parliament would be dissolved on 13 May without prior prorogation. The General Election would be held on Thursday 9 June. The House of Commons would re-assemble for the election of the Speaker and for swearing in new Members on Wednesday 15 June, and The Queen would open the new Parliament in state on Wednesday 22 June.

At 3.30 pm this afternoon the Lord President of the Council would tell the House of Commons that he hoped to make a business statement later in the day. There would then be conversations in the usual channels with a view to seeing what business could be completed before dissolution.

The Cabinet would meet at 11.00 am on Tuesday 10 May to clear outstanding business, including papers on local government finance and structure, and on proposals to deal with recent reports from the Armed Forces Pay Review Body, the Doctors' and Dentists' Pay Review Body and the Top Salaries Review Body. The Cabinet would also deal with any other outstanding business, including certain questions on the reform of trade union law.

In discussion, it was suggested that it might be desirable to postpone the publication of the report of the Top Salaries Review Body on the pay of Members of Parliament and Ministers until after the dissolution; but it was pointed out that it was known that the report had been received and the Lord President of the Council had undertaken that it would be published during the course of this week. The Cabinet agreed that, in the light of this commitment and of the speculation already building up, there was nothing to be gained by deferring publication until after dissolution. The Cabinet would consider at the following day's meeting the line to be taken by the Government in response to the report

THE PRIME MINISTER said that she had recently received a report from the Security Commission on the case of Geoffrey Prime, and she proposed to publish the report and probably to make a statement by way of Written Answer before the dissolution.

THE CHIEF WHIP said that it would be necessary to pass before dissolution an Appropriation Bill, which he hoped could be taken virtually on the nod, and a Finance Bill. The Finance Bill now before the House would be re-committed, and Committee Stage completed on the floor of the House.



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It was hoped that the Opposition would facilitate the passage of the Bill. It was also hoped to dispose before dissolution of the Importation of Milk Bill, the Education (Fees and Awards) Bill, the Mental Health (Amendment)(Scotland) Bill (Lords), the Dentists Bill (Lords), the Health and Social Services and Social Security Adjudications Bill (Lords), the Local Authorities (Expenditure Powers) Bill and the Marriage Bill (Lords); and of the following Bills currently under consideration in the House of Lords: the Agricultural Holdings (Amendment)(Scotland) Bill, the County Courts (Penalties for Contempt) Bill, the Miscellaneous Finance Provisions Bill, the Mobile Homes Bill, the National Heritage Bill and the Ports (Reduction of Debt) Bill. He would see if it was possible also to dispose of at least part of the Data Protection Bill and of the Social Security and Housing Benefits Bill, though it was uncertain whether the Opposition would agree to the latter. The Housing and Building Control Bill, the Telecommunications Bill and the Police and Criminal Procedure Bill would fall.

In discussion, it was agreed not to seek to proceed with any part of the Data Protection Bill before the dissolution.

THE PRIME MINISTER said that major public appointments which had not been announced before today would have to be held up until after the Election. That would include the proposed appointment of a new Chairman of the British Steel Corporation to take effect in September 1983. She would shortly be circulating guidance on this and other questions of procedure and conduct which might arise during the Election campaign.

THE PRIME MINISTER said that the United Kingdom would be represented at the Economic Summit Conference at Williamsburg on 28-30 May. She hoped that it would be possible for her to go herself; but, if the Opposition sought to accuse her of using the Economic Summit for domestic political advantage, the United Kingdom might have to be represented by the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary or the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

The Cabinet -

Approved the Prime Minister's proposal to ask The Queen for a dissolution of Parliament on Friday 13 May with a view to a General Election being held on Thursday 9 June 1983.

Cabinet Office

9 May 1983