

Mr. WYATT

H-au  
2 p.m.

NF 205

NATIONALISATION

STATEMENT BY THE LORD PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL

Extract from Hansard dated 19th November,  
Columns 34 to 39

THE LORD PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL (MR. HERBERT MORRISON): I desire with your permission, Mr. Speaker, to make the following statement. His Majesty's Government believe that it is in the public interest that they should give a general indication of the further Measures they propose to introduce during the life of the present Parliament to bring certain essential services under public ownership. This statement, which follows the clear indication of Government policy contained in the King's Speech at the beginning of the Session, will enable the Ministers concerned to enter into consultation with the industries affected.

As stated in the Gracious Speech, the Government will introduce a Bill during the present Session to nationalise the coal-mining industry. At a later stage in the lifetime of this Parliament the Government intend to introduce Measures to bring under national ownership the electricity supply industry and the gas industry. This will implement a concerted plan for the co-ordination of the fuel and power industries which were fore-shadowed in the King's Speech.

It is the intention of the Government to introduce, during the life of the present Parliament, Measures designed to bring transport services, essential to the economic wellbeing of the nation, under public ownership and control. Government policy in regard to civil aviation and telecommunications services has already been announced. In regard to inland transport, powers will be taken to bring under national ownership the railways, canals and long distance road haulage services.

As regards road passenger transport, it is regarded as essential that the undertakings of the municipalities and companies should be fully co-ordinated with the national scheme, and it must be considered whether this can best be achieved by transferring ownership to a national authority or by providing for the creating of regional or joint boards responsible for their own finances. The second alternative would make it necessary for some control to be exercised over these Boards by a national authority in order to ensure conformity with general policy and their proper correlation both with one another and with other forms of transport.

Dock and harbour undertakings will be brought within the scope of the national scheme. The most suitable form of public ownership is under examination, as is also the question of including certain appropriate ancillary activities.

It is not the intention of the Government to propose the nationalisation of the shipping industry, and we shall rely on the industries to have full regard to the public interest. The Government look with confidence to the shipping industry generally to play a full part in the effort towards national economic recovery, and are alive to the problems with which our shipping finds itself confronted as a result of the war.

The Coalition Government invited the iron and steel industry to submit a report on the improvements required to put the industry on an efficient operating basis. The Government propose to await this report, which is expected shortly, before

( Mr. Morrison )

taking final decisions on the future organisation of the iron and steel industry.

During the interval which will necessarily elapse before the plans outlined above can be presented to Parliament and carried into effect, all necessary development in the industries concerned must proceed. The Government, therefore, propose to see that progressive undertakings will not be prejudiced if they continue to develop in the interim period; and the appropriate Departments will enter into early consultations on the point with the industries concerned. (Interruption) - The Noble Lord is very touchy. I can take it and I hope the Noble Lord can.

The compensation payable will have regard to any extent to which an undertaking has not been maintained up to the time of transfer, and the Government will naturally take precautions in its legislation to protect the acquiring authority against any transactions entered into in the interim period, whether by way of contract or otherwise, which may prejudice the authority.

The proposals outlined in this statement involve important changes in the ownership and organisations of a series of industries vital to the national wellbeing - changes which were approved by the people at the General Election. The policy issues involved must be taken as having been decided and approved by the nation, and it will be for Parliament, Government and the active leaders and workers of the industries concerned to pull together in a high public spirit so that these great changes may be carried through smoothly and successfully, thereby promoting the wellbeing of the nation, including efficient service for the wide range of privately owned industries to which the successful operation of those industries coming under public ownership is vital.

MR. OLIVER LYTTLETON: The statement just made by the Leader of the House could hardly be more important, as it affects the industrial field. In many respects it is also - necessarily perhaps - ambiguous. It is just as important to build industries which are not coming within this embracing nationalisation, as it is to the others, because it covers all the essential services, and I hope very much that the Leader of the House, will, at an early stage, give us sufficient time to discuss these matters upon which the future of our industries so largely depends.

MR. MORRISON: If I may say so, I see no need for that at all. In the first place, legislation will be introduced, and that will be debateable. In the second place, the Opposition had ample opportunity to raise this on the Address in reply to the King's Speech, but they did not debate it, they did not move an Amendment, and the Address in reply went through without a Division. If the Opposition did not discharge their functions in the Debate on the Address, it is no part of my business to help them to do so now.

MR. LYTTLETON: I must press this point. It is easy for the Leader of the House to make these parliamentary points, but there are several parts of this scheme - phrases such as "other ancillary services" and matters of policy - which were not covered by the Gracious Speech. Surely it is hardly treating a matter of such importance with the respect which it deserves, if we are to be fobbed off with this sort of general statement.

MR. MORRISON. As to the importance of the statement and the suggestion that it is not being treated with the respect and consideration it deserved, perhaps the right hon. Gentleman might have had a word with his hon. Friends during the later part of my statement when they did not seem to be very serious. If there are any details required, questions can be put down to the Ministers concerned, but I say again that this is a statement made in the interests of industry - (HON. MEMBERS: "Oh.") - certainly it is - to enable the Ministers to open discussions, and if there is any disputation about it, either it ought to have been raised on the Address or -

MR. GODFREY NICHOLSON: Do not lecture.

MR. MORRISON: I am only telling the hon Members the facts. If the Opposition do not know their job, they must be lectured. Secondly there will be ample opportunity for debate, as and when the legislation is introduced.

MR. CLEMENT DAVIES: In view of the very important statement which the right hon. Gentleman has made will he state now or in the very near future what is the Government policy arising out of that statement with regard to land and the increased value which is bound to result from any improvement in regard to services for transport, or electricity or matters of that kind?

MR. MORRISON: I would remind the hon. and learned Gentleman that in the Gracious Speech it was announced that legislation would be brought in with regard to the planning of land, compensation and betterment, and we would anticipate that that aspect of the matter would be amply taken care of under that legislation.

LIEUT-COLONEL DOWER: The right hon Gentleman referred to the industries concerned making improvements in the meantime. I would like to ask him whether, if his car was going to be smashed tomorrow, he would sit up tonight decarbonising it?

MR. MORRISON: The hon. and gallant Gentleman may think it consistent with his Parliamentary duties to incite industry to sabotage the public interest. If I may say so, incitement to sabotage of the public interest is not consistent with the duty of legislature.

LIEUT-COLONEL DOWER: On a point of Order. As the right hon. Gentleman has said that I am inciting industry to sabotage the public interest - (HON. MEMBERS: "You were.") - may I ask for your protection Mr. Speaker? What I was saying was that the right hon. Gentleman's statement would discourage enterprise and improvement in these services.

CAPTAIN SIR PETER MACDONALD: While the Government are carrying our this programme of legislation for which they have no mandate, may we ask when are they going to find time to tackle the really vital problems of demobilising our Forces, building houses for nation, and rebuilding our export trade.

MR. SPEAKER: We seem to be having rather a lot of speeches. We cannot have speeches.

MR. GARRY ALLIGAN: Will the Lord President tell the House whether the decision not to nationalise shipping applies only to ocean-going shipping, or will it include coastwise shipping?

**MR. MORRISON:** No, Sir. It applies to coastwise as well as ocean-going shipping, but it is recognised that there are relationships between coastwise shipping and inland transport, to which my right hon. Friend the Minister of War Transport will, I can assure my hon. Friend, give due attention.

**SIR WAVELL WAKEFIELD :** When is the right hon. Gentleman going to bring before the House evidence that all these proposals he intends carrying out are really in the public interest?

**MR. OLIVER LYTTLETON:** In view of the great importance of the matters which have been raised Mr. Speaker, I beg to ask whether you will accept a Motion for the adjournment of the House so that we can consider them?

**MR. SPEAKER:** Such a Motion is usually submitted in a written form. One reads it out and then considers if it is in Order or not. Quite frankly, I could not accept such a Motion in this case because it would be completely out of Order. The statement which has been made involves legislation, and that cannot be discussed on the adjournment.

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21.11.45.