

Ministers discussed the name to be given to the proposed central conservancy organisation, and agreed that it should be called "The Fisheries Conservancy Board for Northern Ireland".

After further discussion it was agreed that legislation should be prepared on the lines proposed in the Memorandum.

### 3. THE LOCKWOOD REPORT

The Cabinet resumed its consideration of the Minister of Education's Memorandum dated 11th December, 1964. At the outset the Prime Minister expressed the view that, in the unavoidable absence from the Cabinet of two Ministers, no final decision should be reached at that meeting. On this point the Minister of Education said that there was no immediate urgency about finalising the Government Statement, but that he hoped they could agree to publication of the Report on the 19th January, so that arrangements for publicity, involving Sir John Lockwood's presence in Belfast, could be finalised. The Prime Minister, the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Commerce all urged, however, that there should be no commitment as to the date of publication before the Cabinet had reached decisions on the Report, and the Minister of Education accepted this. The Minister of Finance expressed the view that the public mind might be confused if two such major documents as the Lockwood and Wilson Reports were to be published virtually simultaneously.

Opening the general discussion, the Prime Minister said that he was now convinced that there were grave physical difficulties in the way of expanding Queen's University to the point where it could cater for the student numbers anticipated by Lockwood, and that they must therefore contemplate the establishment of a second university. At the previous discussion the Minister of Commerce had expressed the view, which had commanded fairly general support, that it would be most difficult simply to accept the "phasing-out" of Magee, and that consideration should therefore be given to some method of associating Magee with a new university. He understood, however, that both the Lockwood Committee and the Ministry of Education had considered the possibility of such an association with great care, and that they had concluded that it was not desirable on educational grounds. This dilemma therefore remained unresolved.

The Minister of Education explained that Queen's University, in the course of its own written evidence to the Committee, had stated that an expansion to 7,000 by 1978 would be the maximum possible without a serious deterioration in standards. The Committee, however, had pointed to the need for 13,000 places by 1980. An accelerated expansion of Queen's would mean a slow and costly acquisition of urban areas used at present for housing or recreation, whereas a new university could expect a large free site. One also had to take into account the traffic congestion and the lack of residential accommodation in Belfast.

The Minister of Health and Social Services asked whether a university at Coleraine would have a detrimental effect upon the tourist trade in Portrush

and Portstewart, but the Ministers of Education and Commerce both expressed the view that use of boarding accommodation outside the tourist season would assist rather than hamper tourist development.

The Minister in the Senate said he favoured the idea of a second university complementary to rather than competitive with Queen's. There would, however, be very grave implications in any decision to "throttle" Magee. The Minister of Education replied that; for his part, he could not contest the logic of paragraph 226 of the Lockwood Report, nor could he ignore the fact that the University Grants Committee openly refused to recognise Magee as an institution of university standard. The Minister in the Senate observed that the staff of Magee had been given substantial salary increases not long ago, but the Minister of Finance said that the salaries <sup>of professors</sup> were still not at the university level. The Minister in the Senate replied that, whatever the status of Magee, people would find it difficult to understand why an institution of modest size and cost must be killed at the outset of a programme to spend a capital sum of £50 million on higher education, and to increase annual expenditure from £3 million to £15 million. The Minister of Education commented that these figures seemed enormous in isolation, but were in fact comparatively modest in relation to a capital programme of £3,500 million accepted for Great Britain.

The Minister of Commerce said that, although the expenditure proposed might be justifiable in proportion to the effort in Great Britain, it would be difficult to justify decisions which would kill Magee and offend people in Londonderry, against a background of expansion in higher education throughout Northern Ireland. It would, in his view, be helpful if the Cabinet could have a Memorandum directed to the specific problem of Magee and possible alternative solutions. The Minister of Education replied that the position at Magee and the possibility of a "federal" solution had been carefully considered by the Lockwood Committee and that he felt their conclusions were inescapably logical. The Minister of Finance said that, while he accepted the Minister's position, he also felt that a detailed appreciation would be helpful. He agreed with his colleagues that the Magee question was one of exceptional difficulty. He hoped, however, that they would be able to avoid a situation where the preservation of Magee would prejudice the entire future of university education. The Treasury would be unlikely to view with favour an approach for financial support for a second university, coupled with a decision to maintain Magee in the face of the clear advice of an eminent expert Committee. There was also the position of the U.G.C. to be considered. They were already somewhat dissatisfied with the state of university education in Northern Ireland. Since two members of the U.G.C. had served on the Lockwood Committee, there was a real risk that if the Lockwood Report was flaunted the U.G.C. might decline to take any further interest in Northern Ireland.

The Minister of Education referred to paragraph 215 of the Report, and commented that it was easy to understand why, using these criteria, the Committee had not favoured Londonderry as a location. The Minister of Agriculture, on the other hand, commended the advantages of a residential university as opposed to one served by lodgings, and wondered whether a location on the outskirts of Londonderry would not be an acceptable compromise. The Minister of Education stressed, however, the need to devote available funds to academic facilities. If residential accommodation had to be provided, this would add enormously to the cost.

The Chief Whip said that he was afraid that the Lockwood Report would produce a dangerous and powerful "lobby", consisting of disgruntled people in areas which had hoped to obtain a university, such as Londonderry, Armagh and Lurgan/Portadown; elements in Queen's University who wished to see a great expansion there; and the supporters of Magee both in Londonderry and throughout Northern Ireland. To prevent this wide-ranging alliance of disappointed interests, he believed that in some way or other Magee must be continued as a university-level institution. In reply, the Minister of Education said that wherever a second university was to be located, other areas would be disappointed. The best hope of riding out the storm was to stick closely to the Lockwood Report. As for Magee, it should be understood that the future of the Theological College, which in any case only had five students at present, was not in question. On the University College side, the great bulk of undergraduates eventually took Arts or Science degrees at Trinity College, Dublin. Very few ever returned to Londonderry. From the point of view of the local economy, expansion of higher technical education would confer much greater benefits.

The Minister of Finance recalled that the Minister of Education had explained at the previous meeting that it would probably be difficult if not impossible to recruit a suitable Academic Planning Board for the new university with the pre-condition that Magee must be associated with it. He wondered, however, if it would be possible to recruit a Board while asking them specifically to consider whether Magee could be associated. If they could find a solution, such as conversion into a university-level college for teacher-training, so much the better; but if they rejected the idea, the Government would face the difficult decision to "phase-out" with the support not of one but of two expert bodies. Such a procedure might mean some delay, but a delay of another year would not be disastrous. The Minister of Education replied that he would consider this suggestion before the next meeting, but that he was anxious at the prospect of further delay in view of the need for urgency stressed throughout the Lockwood Report. The Prime Minister commented that in some ways university-level teacher-training might be a particularly suitable alternative use for Magee.

The Minister of Finance suggested that, once decisions had been taken, there should be confidential exchanges with Sir John Lockwood to explain some of the problems and difficulties, before his "publicity" visit to appear on T.V. etc. The Minister of Education agreed that this would be desirable.

Discussion of the Memorandum was adjourned.

4. VISITS ABROAD

There being no comments by Ministers, the visits notified in the Secretary to the Cabinet's Memorandum of 30th December, 1964, were approved.

*Terence Hill*