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CABINET**NAVAL RE-ORGANISATION****NOTE BY THE FIRST LORD OF THE ADMIRALTY**

On the subject of naval shore re-organisation, I circulate for the information of the Cabinet:—

- (a) the text of the announcement which I intend to make to Parliament on 18th February (Annex A);
- (b) the relevant section of my Explanatory Statement on the Navy Estimates which will be published on the same afternoon (Annex B).

2. I have consulted those Ministers directly concerned on the terms of these announcements.

S.

Admiralty, S.W. 1,

11th February, 1958.

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ANNEX A

PARLIAMENTARY ANNOUNCEMENT : 18th FEBRUARY, 1958

CLOSURE OF PORTLAND AND SHEERNESS DOCKYARDS;
ABOLITION OF THE NORE COMMAND;
RE-ORGANISATION OF HOME AIR COMMAND.

With permission I will make a statement about the future of the Royal Dockyards, naval air establishments, and the structure of the Home Commands.

Her Majesty's Government have decided, with great regret, that the Nore Command should be abolished; that Sheerness and Portland Dockyards, the Aircraft Repair Yard, Donibristle, and certain air establishments, should be closed; and that the Torpedo Experimental Establishment should be transferred from Greenock to Portland.

2. The decline in naval repair work resulting from the planned reductions in the Fleet will not require the closure of any other dockyard in the United Kingdom. Singapore and Gibraltar Dockyards will be retained. The future of Malta Dockyard is still under consideration.

3. The Nore Command will be abolished by April 1961, and its remaining functions transferred to other authorities. At Sheerness, the Dockyard will be run down gradually, closing April 1960. At Chatham, the Dockyard will be retained; but the barracks and other naval establishments will be closed, also by April 1961.

4. At Portland the dockyard will be reduced by July 1959. The naval base will be retained. I have considered with particular care the final stage of the concentration at Portland of underwater research and development and have decided that the Torpedo Experimental Establishment must be transferred there from Greenock in order to achieve the closest co-ordination in the development of underwater weapons. This move will take place towards the end of 1959.

5. The tasks of the Home Air Command will be concentrated in larger groups at fewer bases. The Aircraft Repair Yard at Donibristle will be closed by the end of 1959. The Royal Naval Air Stations at Ford, Bramcote and Eglinton will also be closed in about a year's time. The Air Station at Brawdy and the Air Electrical School at Worthy Down will close later.

6. I am well aware of what these decisions will mean for Chatham men, and for many Fleet Air Arm ratings, of the Royal Navy, and for the civilian employees of the establishments to be closed. My Right Honourable Friend the Minister of Labour will arrange as necessary to open special employment offices inside these establishments before discharges begin. With the assistance of My Right Honourable Friend the President of the Board of Trade, everything possible will be done to bring the facilities at Sheerness, Donibristle and Greenock to the notice of suitable industrial interests. We shall enter into consultation immediately with the staff associations and trade unions.

7. Details of these plans, and of their effects, are included in my Noble Friend's Explanatory Statement on the Navy Estimates, which will be available in the Vote Office later this afternoon.

8. The result of the re-organisation will be a total reduction of about 2,700 naval posts ashore and of over 7,000 civilian posts. Thus more men will be available to serve at sea, and an annual saving of about £7 millions will be achieved. The Government is confident that, although some hardship will be unavoidable, all those in the Naval Service will appreciate the necessity for these drastic measures for the purpose of maintaining the strength of the sea-going Fleet.

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ANNEX B

FIRST LORD'S EXPLANATORY STATEMENT ON NAVY ESTIMATES

Extract Relating to Parliamentary Announcement on 18th February, 1958

ROYAL DOCKYARDS AND NAVAL SHORE SUPPORT

During the last year there has been a thorough review of the future needs of the Navy ashore in order to ensure that the resources of men and money available will be used to the best advantage of the smaller Fleet.

2. In particular, a most careful examination has been made of the future of the Royal Dockyards and naval air establishments, and of the structure of the Home Commands. It has been decided that the Nore Command should be abolished; and that Her Majesty's Dockyards at Sheerness and Portland, and the Royal Naval Aircraft Yard, Donibristle, and five other air establishments, should be closed.

3. The decline in naval repair work resulting from the planned reductions in the Fleet will not require the closure of any other Dockyard in the United Kingdom. The closure of the Hong Kong Dockyard by the end of November, 1959 was announced earlier. Singapore and Gibraltar Dockyards will be retained. At Malta the level of naval activity is likely to decline and certain British firms are examining the feasibility of taking over the Dockyard for commercial use. In the light of the outcome of this examination, the future of the Dockyard will be decided after consultation with the Maltese Government.

The Nore Command and Sheerness Dockyard

4. The post of Commander-in-Chief, The Nore, and the Nore Command will be abolished. It is planned that the Commander-in-Chief's present functions, in both his national and NATO capacities, will be transferred to other authorities by April 1961. Responsibility for naval establishments remaining in the Command area will be allocated to another Home Command.

5. Sheerness Dockyard will be run down by April 1960. It is hoped to dispose of the yard before closure to industrial or commercial interests. It employs some 2,500 industrial and non-industrial staff. About 1,100 are established, of whom as many as possible will be absorbed into Chatham Dockyard. The balance of unestablished employees will be reduced by normal wastage and discharge.

6. At Chatham the Dockyard will be retained; but by April 1961 Her Majesty's Ships will normally be refitted there with only key personnel on board. It is planned to close or transfer the barracks and other naval establishments, as shown below. Deep regret is felt that it is necessary to break the long association in history, going back four centuries, of the Royal Navy with the Medway towns.

Royal Naval Barracks, Chatham :

To be closed by April 1961.

H.M.S. Ceres (Royal Naval Supply and Secretariat School) :

To be housed in the Royal Naval Barracks, Chatham, for at least two years; then to be moved, probably to Portsmouth. (It is not possible to move *Ceres* straight to its final location.)

Mechanical Training Establishment, Chatham :

To be transferred; probably to Portsmouth by September 1960.

Royal Naval Hospital, Chatham :

To cease to be a naval hospital by April 1961.

H.M.S. Wildfire (Royal Naval Base, Sheerness) :

To be closed by April 1960, or as soon as the run-down of Sheerness Dockyard permits.

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Chart and Boom Defence Depots:

The Chart Depot at Sheerness and Boom Defence Depots at Sheerness and Queenborough to be closed by 1960.

Royal Naval Armament Depots:

Royal Naval Torpedo Depot, Chatham, and Chatham Gunwharf Workshops—to be closed by end of 1958.

The Depots at Upnor, Lodge Hill and Grain; and Chatham Gunwharf Storehouses—to be closed by 1963

Other minor Fleet establishments and services at Chatham and Sheerness will also be closed, reduced or transferred as the run-down of the Command progresses.

7. In the Chatham and Sheerness area as a whole, the total number of industrial and non-industrial employees will be reduced by normal wastage and discharge by about 2,700 over the next three years or so.

Portland Dockyard and Underwater Research and Development Concentration

8. Portland Dockyard will be run-down by July, 1959. A naval base will be retained there in support of the local establishments and H.M. Ships using the harbour.

9. In addition, as has already been announced, research and development establishments dealing with underwater weapons are to be concentrated there. This is essential in order to provide for the day-to-day working association of scientists in this important field, and to promote the closest possible integration of the techniques of detection and control in underwater weapons. The final stage of the concentration has been considered with particular care; but it has been decided that there is no alternative to the transfer to Portland of the Torpedo Experimental Establishment, Greenock, if the most efficient scientific and technical co-ordination is to be achieved. The plans for the concentration are summarised below. The major part of it will be carried out during the first quarter of 1959; the Torpedo Experimental Establishment will not leave Greenock until towards the end of 1959.

Underwater Detection Establishment, Portland

To remain.

Admiralty Gunnery Establishment, Portland

To be transferred to Portsmouth, near Portsmouth, beginning early in 1959.

Torpedo Experimental Establishment, Greenock

To be transferred to Portland towards the end of 1959.

Royal Naval Torpedo Depot, Weymouth

To be closed towards the end of 1959 as a torpedo depot; to coincide with the transfer of the Torpedo Experimental Establishment, for which its staff and facilities will be available.

Underwater Countermeasures and Weapons Establishment, Havant

To be transferred to Portland, beginning early in 1959.

Underwater Launching Establishment, West Howe, Bournemouth

To be transferred to Portland by mid-1959.

10. The final effects of this reorganisation on civilian employment at Portland cannot be precisely assessed. The Dockyard employs some 1,600 industrial and non-industrial staff. Most established men will continue in employment in the area; but some 200-300 men, including apprentices, will be offered transfer to Admiralty work elsewhere, and about 700 unestablished employees will be gradually reduced by normal wastage and discharge. Some of the latter may be re-employed in the research and development concentration. At the Torpedo Experimental Establishment, Greenock, where about 750 staff are employed, about 300

unestablished employees will have to be discharged. All established staff will be invited to transfer to other establishments where suitable vacancies exist, including the Royal Naval Torpedo Factory, Alexandria.

Home Air Command

11. The tasks of the Home Air Command will be concentrated in larger groups at fewer bases. Six air establishments will be closed over the next three years, in addition to the air stations at Anthorn and Stretton, which are already closing. They are the Royal Naval Aircraft Yard, Donibristle; the Royal Naval Air Stations Ford, Bramcote and Eglinton; the Royal Naval Air Station Brawdy (which will be kept in reserve); and the Air Electrical Training Establishment at Worthy Down.

12. The Aircraft Repair Yard at Donibristle, which is unsuitable for the latest types of aircraft, will be closed by the end of 1959. It is hoped to dispose of it to industrial or commercial interests. It employs about 1,400 industrial and non-industrial staff. As many established men as possible will be absorbed into Rosyth Dockyard. The 700 or so unestablished employees will have to be reduced by normal wastage or discharge. Some 900 unestablished employees will be similarly affected at the other five air establishments, from which established men will be offered transfer elsewhere. Planned dates or closure are as follows:—

Royal Naval Air Station Ford, Sussex;

Royal Naval Air Station Bramcote, Warwickshire:

To be closed in late 1958 or early 1959.

Royal Naval Air Station Eglinton, Co. Derry:

To be closed in first half of 1959.

Royal Naval Air Station Brawdy, Pembrokeshire:

To be closed in 1960 (but to be kept in reserve).

Royal Naval Air Electrical Training Establishment, Worthy Down, near Winchester:

To be closed in 1961—its task to be transferred to Royal Naval Air Station, Lee-on-Solent.

13. The air establishments to be retained are:—

Royal Naval Air Station Yeovilton.

Royal Naval Air Station Lossiemouth.

Royal Naval Air Station Culdrose.

Royal Naval Air Station Abbotsinch.

Royal Naval Air Station Arbroath.

Royal Naval Air Station Lee-on-Solent.

Royal Naval Aircraft Yard Belfast.

Royal Naval Aircraft Yard Fleetlands.

A small part of the Home Air Command task will be accommodated at Royal Naval Air Station Halpar (Malta).

Other Measures of Reorganisation and Reduction

14. Decisions have also been taken to effect many smaller reductions and other measures of economical reorganisation, of which some have already been announced. In Germany the Elbe Squadron has been withdrawn and the Rhine Squadron will shortly follow. The small craft which support the Fleet and shore establishments at all the major ports are being amalgamated into a single Port Auxiliary Service. Further reductions have been made in storage depots; in particular, a number of smaller armament depots are to close. These closures have been made public except for that of the Royal Naval Armament Depot, Charlesfield, which will be run-down by the end of 1959. Training establishments

are being reduced to conform with the training requirements of a smaller Vote A. The savings in civilian posts resulting from these decisions are, so far as possible, being achieved through the process of normal wastage.

15. In addition, savings are being made in Ceylon. Following an agreement with the Ceylon Government in April 1957, the Naval Base at Trincomalee has been transferred to the Royal Ceylon Navy, and other naval facilities (except the Royal Naval wireless station) are being evacuated by the end of September 1958.

Summary

16. It is recognised that these measures will create disturbance and difficulties for both civilian and naval personnel. Everything possible will be done to mitigate hardship for all who are affected, and in particular to help civilian employees discharged to find other work. The Ministry of Labour and National Service will be arranging, as necessary, to open special employment offices inside the establishments affected before discharges begin.

17. The ultimate annual savings which will result cannot be accurately forecast. It is expected to achieve the following results, although the full effect of some of them will not be realised for about 4 years:—

Major Reorganisation and Reductions (paragraphs 4-13):

A saving of about 7,200 civilian posts; of about 2,700 naval posts ashore; and of about £7,000,000 a year.

Nore Command;
Home Air Command;
Sheerness Dockyard;
Portland Dockyard; and
R. and D. Concentration.

Other Measures of Reorganisation and Reductions (paragraph 14):

A saving of about 5,800 civilian posts; of about 3,500 naval posts ashore; and of about £5,000,000 a year.

Overseas Dockyards and Bases (paragraphs 3 and 15):

A saving of about 10,000 civilian posts; of about 450 naval posts ashore; and about £3,500,000 a year.

Hong Kong;
Trincomalee.

18. These eventual savings total about 23,000 civilian posts at home and abroad, between 6,000 and 7,000 naval posts ashore, and about £15,500,000 a year. They will make available more men to serve at sea; and more of our resources will be released for the paramount purpose of maintaining the strength of the sea-going Fleet.