

The Secretary,  
Joint Staff Mission.

Following the decision at the Joint Staff Mission meeting on the 4th November that I should proceed to explore the possibilities of recruitment of technical officers in accordance with the procedure recorded on page 2 of the minutes of the meeting the following developments are reported:-

1. Recruitment for the Defence Forces. The Clayton Knight Committee confirmed that the prospects of securing officers of the calibre required for the Services are remote even in the case of the Navy which is prepared to offer the rank of Lieutenant on entry, and almost hopeless for the other Services who are not prepared to offer equivalent rank. Nevertheless, we propose to ask them to use their best endeavours to assist us.

Discussions have also taken place with Dr. Conant and Mr. Bailey on -

- (a) the precise form of assistance the Conant Scheme offers,
- (b) the feasibility of numerical expansion of the existing scheme (covering the three classes of Communications Officers and known as the Electronics Battalion) and of extending the scope of the scheme to include other classes (Engineer, Armament and Civil Engineering Officers).

With regard to (a) Dr. Conant explained that the genesis of the scheme was that he had managed to secure the interest of the President in a proposal to commission into the U.S. Signal Corps a number of officers who would be available to proceed to the U.K. for radio and signals work. The President enthusiastically supported the proposal especially in view of the importance of developing and maintaining radio locator technique, and instructed the Chief of the Signal Corps to form a body of officers who would be available for service in the U.K. Owing to political difficulties these officers could only be made available to us in the capacity of Observers for a limited period of service which was ultimately fixed at eight months. Dr. Conant stated that it had been clearly understood that no objection would be raised to the employment of these officers in a useful constructive capacity and in substitution, if necessary, for Service officers. The only stipulation made was that they should not be employed on air borne duties. He advised, however, that we should not seek official endorsement of this view, but that we should simply proceed to act on that assumption. As regards the extension of the period of service Dr. Conant expressed the personal view that before the time arrived to consider the withdrawal of these officers, the position of the United States in relation to the war would have changed so materially as to have produced a situation in which a solution would present no difficulty. For that reason, he advocated that we should not at this stage make any approach to the U.S. authorities on the question of extension of the time limit.

I suggest that we should inform London accordingly, and that we should recommend them to regard Conant officers as likely to be available beyond the prescribed period.

On the question of numerical expansion and extension of the scope of the scheme he was frankly not sanguine of producing spectacular results. He was, however, prepared to place his services at our disposal with a view to securing such measure of assistance as could be obtained in face of the increasing demands on the U.S. War and Navy Departments for technical officers drawn from the same limited reservoir. He suggested, however, that the most effective basis of approach to the problem would be to obtain two cables from the Hankey Committee, one dealing with the question of expansion of the existing scheme associated with the Signal Corps, and the other seeking assistance in the new field covered by the other requirements.

With regard to the first cable he suggested that its terms should include the following points:-

- (a) a reference to the excellence of the officers already sent to the U.K.
- (b) an indication that they were proving of the utmost assistance to the British Government and, by reason of the experience they were gaining, would acquire greater value to the U.S. Government.

- (c) in view of the urgency of our need in the immediate future a request to explore the possibility of accelerating the provision of these officers so as to double the numbers available within the next few months.
- (d) a more precise statement of the actual nature of the duties on which the officers would be employed with the various Forces.

Dr. Conant suggested that the second cable should consist of a request for assistance in the remaining categories giving the particulars of numbers required for the Services and a short but adequate description of the specific duties for which their services were required. The request should conclude with a direction to pursue the possibility of establishing an organisation on lines parallel to that of the existing Electronics Battalion in order to meet the need for officers which could not be met through the medium of the U.S. Signal Corps.

Turning to the question of the requirements of the Supply Departments, Dr. Conant expressed the view that we should be unlikely to secure any material numbers of the highly trained types we sought. He agreed, however, that if the proposed American Civilian Technical Corps materialised we might well approach the U.S. authorities with the suggestion that an Officers Section should be formed to deal with the miscellany of technical officers required.

Mr. Bailey stated that he had already been engaged, at the request of the Embassy, on an exhaustive search for the research scientists required by the Supply Departments notified in Foreign Office letter of the 15th August, 1941, but up to the present had been unable to secure a single candidate.

I attach a draft of a cable which it is suggested should be sent from the Joint Staff Mission to Lord Hankey's Committee.

6th November, 1941.

W.C.G. CRIBBETT.

Copy to: Mr. W.G. Hayter, British Embassy. ✓