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PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

HOUSE OF COMMONS

OFFICIAL REPORT

Nº VIII

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HOUSE OF COMMONS.

Thursday, 26th March, 1942.

OFFICIAL REPORT.

[Mr. SPEAKER *in the Chair.*]

NEW WRIT.

For the Borough of Cardiff (East Division), in the room of Owen Temple Morris, Esquire, K.C. (Judge of a County Court).—[*Mr. James Stuart.*]

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS.

NATIONAL WAR EFFORT.

PRIVATE EMPLOYMENT AGENCIES.

1 and 2. **Mr. Craven-Ellis** asked the Minister of Labour (1) what representations have been officially made to him by bodies representative of black-coated workers and their employers such as chambers of commerce, regretting the monopoly of Employment Exchange envisaged under the Employment of Women (Control of Engagement) Order No. 100, and asking for its immediate cessation coincident with the cessation of hostilities; and

(2) whether, as the measures restrictive of the normal operation of private employment agents are due to war-time emergency, he will give an assurance of post-war restoration of the *status quo* as regards employment agents as has been done in the case of trade unions?

The Minister of Labour (Mr. Ernest Bevin): I received a letter last December from the London Chamber of Commerce, which did not contest the need for the Order, but expressed the hope that an assurance could be given that the *status quo* would be restored at the conclusion of hostilities, and that meanwhile some means might be devised for utilising the services of the private employment agencies. The reply made to the Chamber stated that the Order would cease to have effect at the end of the war unless Parliament otherwise determined and that the Minister could not, at this date, bind himself or his successors on questions of post-war policy. The reply further stated that the employment agencies to be approved under the Order would in general be those which specialise in placing women with recognised professional or technical qualifications and when assistance is necessary to ensure that such women are placed to the best advantage in the national interest.

Mr. Craven-Ellis: Is it not reasonable that these private organisations should have the same undertaking given to them as has been given to the trade unions, to restore their practices when the war is over?

Mr. Bevin: The question of what is to happen to all these things after the war depends on the end of the Defence of the Realm Regulations. Beyond that I cannot commit Parliament.

Mr. Craven-Ellis: But we have had special legislation, and I would ask my right hon. Friend again whether he will not give this matter fuller consideration.

Mr. Bevin: I cannot introduce special measures for special businesses under the Defence Regulations. You have to go into the whole range of businesses if you do that.

3. **Mr. Craven-Ellis** asked the Minister of Labour whether, before the Employment of Women (Control of Engagement) Order, No. 100 was brought before Parliament, he discussed its provisions with any bodies truly representative of domestic and black-coated workers and their employers?

Mr. Bevin: I would refer my hon. Friend to the Answer given to the hon. and gallant Member for King's Norton (Major Peto) on 10th March, of which I am sending him a copy.

MECHANICS AND ELECTRICIANS (DOG-RACING TRACKS).

4. **Mr. Glenvil Hall** asked the Minister of Labour the number of persons employed in and about the 20 or more dog-racing tracks in the London and Greater London areas; how many of them are mechanics and electricians respectively; and how many are of military age?

Mr. Bevin: I regret that these figures are not available.

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Mr. Hall: May I inform my right hon. Friend that if he applies to the Greyhound Racing Association and insists on seeing their books, he can get these figures and the names of the men; may I ask whether it is not a fact that these men are employed during part of the week in an aircraft components factory; and would it not be better that they should be made to do one job or the other and, if not making aircraft parts, should be put into the Army, at least those who are men of military age?

CRANE DRIVERS, NORTH KENT.

5. **Sir Irving Albery** asked the Minister of Labour, on what grounds he has permitted a crane-driver in the North Kent district to be stood off his work while younger men of military age were continued in employment?

Mr. Bevin: Owing to a falling-off in the need for crane drivers in his employer's establishment, this man, with another, was offered labouring work but refused to take it. The men retained on work as crane drivers are all senior to him, and the firm have not applied for deferment of the calling-up of any of their crane drivers. I am making arrangements for the transfer of the man concerned to other employment.

Sir I. Albery: Is my right hon. Friend aware that, with the connivance of his Department, this man has been unemployed for several weeks and drawing wages, and are instances of that kind in the national interest as a contribution to the war effort?

Mr. Bevin: I cannot accept that it is with the connivance of my Department. Difficulties do arise sometimes in these cases, as the hon. Gentleman knows.

Sir I. Albery: If the right hon. Gentleman's Department has been aware of this case for several weeks, may I ask what action he has taken or is taking?

Mr. Bevin: I have no further information than I have already given in the Answer.

Sir I. Albery: I beg to give notice that at an early opportunity I shall raise this matter on the Adjournment.

NON-ESSENTIAL PRODUCTION.

7. **Mr. A. Edwards** asked the Minister of Labour whether he will consider issuing an order prohibiting the use of labour in the production of commodities of any kind not essential for the war effort?

Mr. Bevin: This is a matter in which my Department works in close consultation with the Board of Trade, arrangements for the withdrawal of labour being made in conformity with restrictions placed on production.

Mr. Edwards: Does the right hon. Gentleman think it a very sensible matter to allow labour to be used for producing articles which are not necessary for the war, while another Department is wasting millions of man-hours persuading people not to buy those articles, and could not the said labour be better employed than in producing non-essential articles or wasting time on War Savings Campaigns?

Mr. Bevin: I am satisfied that the methods adopted in the carrying out of the concentration of industry are the correct ones. After all, even during a war, some communal life has to be carried on if morale is to be maintained.

Mr. Edwards: But is it a good policy to continue to use labour—

Mr. Speaker *rose.*

Mr. Edwards: On a point of Order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member was asking his original Question. He cannot repeat it.

Mr. Edwards: I am asking whether it is right to use man-power to produce unessential goods, and use more man-power in another Department to persuade people not to buy them?

Mr. Bevin: I have answered that.

TRANSFERRED WORKERS (TRAVEL WARRANTS).

8. **Mr. Beechman** asked the Minister of Labour whether he will arrange for free railway warrants to be issued to persons directed into work at a distance from their homes on the same lines as those now issued to members of the Fighting Services?

Mr. Bevin: I would refer my hon. Friend to the Reply I gave on 19th March to the hon. Member for Hanley (Mr. A. Hollins).

Mr. Beechman: Will my right hon. Friend bear in mind that many workers

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are compelled by the Government to work far away from their homes, and would they not do all the better at their work if they knew that they could occasionally be helped to go on leave to visit their parents?

Mr. Bevin: The Reply referred to indicated that I was reviewing the whole matter, but in considering it I have to bear in mind the tremendously vexed problem of transport, and to keep a balance between the capacity for carrying people and encouraging them to travel. I am trying to do my best to work it out.

Sir Herbert Williams: Would the right hon. Gentleman consider this matter in relation to the problem of absenteeism, and make it a reward for good attendance?

Mr. Bevin: That might be applied to this House.

UNEMPLOYED DOCK WORKERS.

9. **Mr. Purbrick** asked the Minister of Labour whether he will organise the workers under the National Dock Corporation, so that when they are unemployed they will do casual labour in other occupations and so relieve the lighterage, wharfage and stevedoring rates which have been increased under the Essential Work (Docks Labour) Order, 1941?

Mr. Bevin: Each dock labour scheme set up under the Essential Work (Dock Labour) Order, 1941, provides that a port transport worker when not employed in a port transport undertaking shall enter the Reserve Pool and be in the employment of the Corporation. When in the Pool he is required to accept any suitable employment including any work considered by the Manager to be necessary for clearing the port area or enabling work to be carried out therein. He is also required to travel to any other port or place as required by the Corporation to perform suitable work.

DOMESTIC SERVICE (ALIENS, WAGES).

10. Lieut.-Colonel Sir Thomas Moore asked the Minister of Labour whether he is aware that friendly aliens are now demanding, and receiving, abnormal wages for domestic service in replacement of British women called to the Forces; and what action he proposes to take?

Mr. Bevin: I have no evidence that aliens entering domestic service are demanding or receiving wages which are greater than those being offered and paid to British women entering similar employment.

Sir T. Moore: Is not my right hon. Friend aware that these aliens are actually receiving four or five times the amount of pay to take the place of our own girls called up for service, and even twice the amount of pay which they themselves received previously for the same service, and will he not do something to control the wages which are demanded by and paid to these people?

Earl Winterton: Is my right hon. Friend aware that the Council on Aliens, the official advisory committee on this matter, has received no such information as that given by my hon. and gallant Friend, and that if it had had such information, it would, of course, have conveyed it to the right hon. Gentleman?

Mr. Bevin: If there is any such information as that given to me by my hon. and gallant Friend, I will look into it, but there is a remedy—we had better do our own washing up.

TRANSFER OF LABOUR (DOG-RACING TRACK).

12. **Mr. Glenvil Hall** asked the Minister of Labour whether he is aware that early in February last a large number of men were sent from a certain firm to break up the frosted peat surface of a certain dog-racing track; whether he can state the extent of the loss thus sustained in the production of aircraft components; and whether this transfer of labour had the sanction of his Ministry?

Mr. Bevin: No, Sir, but I am having inquiries made and will communicate with my hon. Friend.

Mr. Hall: Without placing more emphasis on this matter than it deserves, may I ask my right hon. Friend whether he is aware that this track appears to get all the labour and material it needs, that some of the directors of this firm are also directors of the Greyhound Racing Association, and that in fairness to the public it is high time this racket was cleared up?

Mr. Bevin: I can assure my hon. Friend that every inquiry I ever make is very thorough.

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COTTON INDUSTRY (WOMEN).

14. **Mr. Sutcliffe** asked the Minister of Labour, whether the response to his appeal to women to return to the cotton industry has been satisfactory; and whether he will state the provisions which have been made for the care of their children?

Mr. Bevin: I assume my hon. Friend is referring to the appeal organised by the Cotton Board with the support of the Government and the two sides of the industry and particularly directed to those operatives, estimated to number some thousands, who having been formerly employed at mills now closed on concentration who did not seek other employment when the mills stopped. I understand that some 2,000 of such operatives have been interviewed and approximately 850 have been found available. My hon. Friend will understand, however, that these numbers are not adequate to achieve the increase of production required and I am in consultation with my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade as to the measures to be adopted. As regards the second part of the Question, the circumstances of former operatives who have children are fully considered. Every effort is made to provide satisfactory arrangements for the care of children, and where mothers are unable to work a full shift they are encouraged to undertake part-time employment. Supplementary to war-time nurseries the registered guardian scheme is now operating satisfactorily in many centres.

Mr. Rhys Davies: Does not the Minister think it grossly unfair to these cotton operatives to throw them out of employment under the concentration system of the Government and then ask them to come back again after they have found decent jobs elsewhere?

Mr. Bevin: No, Sir. War is not a settled thing; it is changing in its character every day, and adjustments have to be made according to the circumstances of the war.

Sir H. Williams: Is the Minister aware that the Government were warned against the probable result in this matter?

MILITARY SERVICE.

SKILLED AGRICULTURAL WORKERS.

6. **Major Sir Adrian Baillie** asked the Minister of Labour, in view of the paramount rôle of the agricultural industry in this country, who is the final authority in regard to the calling up of skilled farm-workers for military service or other war duties?

Mr. Bevin: The executive authority for this purpose under the National Service Acts is the Minister of Labour and National Service, who acts in accordance with the general policy approved by the Government. The selection of men to be called up is carried out in consultation with the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries, through the county war agricultural executive committees.

Sir A. Baillie: Does my right hon. Friend appreciate that there is still considerable anxiety in agricultural communities, and will he bear in mind that since the Home Guard is now on a compulsory basis, it would be better for the skilled farm worker to remain on the land, where, after all, he is making his best contribution to the war effort, and receive his military training in the Home Guard?

Mr. Bevin: Agricultural workers have been protected to a higher percentage than anybody else in the country, and I am afraid that agriculture, equally with other industries, must make some contribution to the Fighting Forces.

BOXER'S APPLICATION.

11. **Mr. R. C. Morrison** asked the Minister of Labour whether he is aware that Tommy Farr, the boxer, since being invalided out of the Royal Air Force, has tried four times to get back into the Services; that he can prove his physical fitness; and whether his request to join one of the Fighting Services will now be granted?

Mr. Bevin: The answer to the first and second parts of the Question is in the negative. If he applies to re-join the Services as a volunteer, the decision will rest with the Service Department concerned.

Mr. Morrison: Has the right hon. Gentleman seen a public interview which this gentleman gave, in which he said that he was now in better condition that he had ever been and could fight 50 Germans, and that he had applied four times to go into the Army, the Navy or the Air Force, without success?

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Mr. Bevin: It is a settled policy, to which I propose to adhere strictly, that once a person is discharged from the Services for medical reasons, I, as Minister of Labour and National Service, do not propose to conscript him again. If he volunteers, it is open to the Services to accept him or not.

Mr. Evelyn Walkden: Has my right hon. Friend any information as to whether this man has actually volunteered four times? Is it not all bluff?

Mr. Bevin: I have not.

WAGE RATES.

13. **Wing-Commander James** asked the Minister of Labour whether he can state, or give an approximate estimate of, the percentage increase of the average weekly earnings of those categories of wage-earners upon which he bases his estimate that their wage-rates had risen by 27 per cent. between the start of the war and the end of January, 1942?

Mr. Bevin: The latest statistics of average earnings at present available relate to July, 1941, when an inquiry was made by my Department into the earnings of workpeople in manufacturing industries generally and in some of the principal non-manufacturing industries. The results of that inquiry, which were published in the issues of the Ministry of Labour Gazette for November and December, 1941, showed that the earnings of the workpeople in the industries covered were about 42 per cent. higher, in the week ended 12th July, 1941, than in the last pay week of October, 1938, the latest date prior to the war for which corresponding statistics are available. It will be appreciated that in July, 1941, a great amount of overtime was worked.

OLD AGE PENSIONS.

15 and 17. **Mr. Ellis Smith** asked the Minister of Health (1) whether he can make a statement on the need of improved allowances for applicants for supplementary pensions;

(2) whether it is intended to increase the scales payable by the Assistance Board to those eligible for supplementary old age pensions?

The Minister of Health (Mr. Ernest Brown): Any question of altering the basis on which such pensions are payable would be a matter for examination by the Committee which has been appointed to make a comprehensive survey of all existing schemes of Social Insurance and Assistance. If my hon. Friend has in mind additions on account of the cost of living I cannot usefully add much to what I said in the reply to a similar question by my hon. Friend the Member for Central Southwark (Mr. Martin) on 7th August, 1941. The Assistance Board inform me that they note that while the cost of living figure as a whole has risen by one point since that date, the figure for food alone has gone down several points and that in the circumstances they would not feel justified in proposing any increase in the scales applicable to supplementary pensions at this stage. The Board assure me that they have the matter under constant review.

Mr. Smith: Does the Minister accept the Board's conclusions with regard to this matter?

Mr. Silverman: Does the Minister not consider that the case of the old age pensioners has an urgency which does not apply to the other cases to be considered by that Committee and that anything we do not do for the old people now we will not be able to do for them at all? In view of that urgency, would he not treat them as a separate problem distinct from the others which the Committee are considering?

Mr. Brown: This has been discussed several times in the House, and, as has been pointed out, the House itself settled the policy last year. That policy provides for supplementary pensions according to need.

Mr. Silverman: The old people will not live for ever.

16. **Mr. Ellis Smith** asked the Minister of Health, whether he has considered the request for honourable Members to be provided, where requested, with a copy of all documents sent out by the Assistance Board to their officials in order that they can be made aware of the rights of their constituents who apply for supplementary old age pensions.

Mr. E. Brown: This matter has been carefully considered, in accordance with

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[Mr. Brown.]
the promise made by the Government spokesman in a recent Debate. In order that old age pensioners who apply for supplementary pensions may be made aware of and receive their rights many arrangements have to be made, including directions to executive officers. These directions are given in many ways, and to select from a large number those which are given by means of documents would give them a false emphasis and lead to misunderstanding. Administration would be impossible without the rule that communications between officers of Government Departments must be confidential. All Governments have maintained this rule. The Act provides for independent tribunals, to which applicants for supplementary pensions can appeal, for the purpose of ensuring that they are receiving what they are entitled to under the regulations. Further, if any information is required about the working of the supplementary pensions scheme, in order that it may be made more effective from the point of view of the old people the Assistance Board or the Minister will always be glad to see the hon. Member and give necessary information.

Mr. Ellis Smith: Is it not a fact that it is professional Civil Service etiquette which prevents this from being done? If so, is it not time the Minister cut out this mid-Victorian attitude to this question?

Mr. Brown: It is a question which affects a great many Departments of State, and could have the most serious consequences on administration generally. I could sometimes wish that hon. Members had had a year or two of responsibility in this matter. They would understand more fully what is involved.

Mr. Buchanan: Is there any reason why a Member of Parliament should go to an outside body to get to know a Government instruction? Should not a Member get that as a right without begging from an outside body?

Mr. Brown: That is not the issue. It is a question of whether it will give the hon. Member what he wants with regard to the old people. There have been one or two occasions in which particular Members required details in regard to a particular instruction, and they have been laid in the Library. If the hon. Member believes that any rights of the old people—which are given to them under the regulations, not under the instructions—have been infringed, I will be glad to look into it. If there is any evidence, I have done that before, and it can be done again.

Mr. Buchanan: How can any Member know whether the old people's rights are being contravened unless he is supplied with the documents?

Mr. Stokes: Is it not a fact that a virtual promise was given in the Debate the other day with regard to the publication of these documents?

Mr. Buchanan: May I again ask how any Member of Parliament can know whether the old people's rights are being contravened unless he has access to the documents?

Mr. Brown: The instructions are given not only by documents, and a false emphasis would be given if only documents were considered, and in any case the rights are under the regulations.

Mr. Ellis Smith: Is it not a fact that the acting Leader of the House gave an undertaking, when this matter was last discussed, that we would have an answer to-day in the light of the questions raised?

Mr. Brown: An Answer has been given. The undertaking was that all the implications would be considered.

24. **Mr. Gallacher** asked the Minister of Health whether he has considered the resolution of the Holbrooks Branch (Coventry) of the National Old Age Pensions Association sent to him by the hon. Member for West Fife, demanding increased pensions, the abolition of the means test, and the payment of old age pensions through the General Post Office instead of the Assistance Board; and what steps he proposes to take?

Mr. E. Brown: I have considered the resolution referred to, and, as regards the rates of basic old age pensions, I would refer the hon. Member to the Reply given to my hon. Friend the Member for West Leyton (Mr. Sorensen) on 20th January. As regards the method of payment, the practice is to pay both basic old age pensions and supplementary pensions through the Post Office.

Mr. Gallacher: Is the Minister not prepared to face up to this question of the removal of the means test, which is still

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causing very great distress and unnecessary inquisitions, and which costs more than it is saving the country?

Mr. Brown: The House passed an Act about that last year.

Mr. Gallacher: The Minister is aware that the matter has been raised time and again by the—

Mr. Speaker *rose.*

PUBLIC HEALTH.

TUBERCULOSIS.

18. **Sir Robert Young** asked the Minister of Health to what the increase of tuberculosis during the war period is due; what steps have been taken to cope with the disease; and what further steps he proposes to take, especially for the safety of young persons?

Mr. E. Brown: The causes of the increase in tuberculosis are the subject of a special inquiry, which is at present being actively pursued by a committee of the Medical Research Council. Without anticipating their report, it may be said that the predisposing factors are undoubtedly related to the abnormal conditions of living and working in war-time. Both the causes and the action to be taken are highly complex, and cannot be dealt with adequately in reply to a Question. I hope to have an opportunity of making a fuller statement on this matter, particularly on the question of early diagnosis, which is undoubtedly of the highest importance, and to which special attention is being given.

Sir R. Young: When does the right hon. Gentleman expect to receive the report and to make a statement?

Mr. Brown: I cannot tell; but I expect that it will be possible to have a discussion on this subject at a fairly early date after the Recess.

Sir Joseph Lamb: What is the good of diagnosis when it is not possible to treat cases because of a shortage of nurses?

Mr. Brown: We are dealing with that.

Mr. Rhys Davies: Is it not time we had a full-dress Debate in this House on the work of the Ministry of Health?

Mr. Brown: I shall be only too happy if we have one.

IMMIGRANT IRISH LABOURERS.

19. **Sir Percy Hurd** asked the Minister of Health whether he will ascertain from Wiltshire and other local authorities affected, what extra charges they have incurred in the medical and sanitary treatment of Irish labourers imported into their areas for work on Government contracts, with a view to the deduction of these charges from the contractors' fees?

Mr. E. Brown: My information is that such medical and sanitary services as may be necessary are being provided on the Wiltshire site by the contractors themselves, and not by the local authority. I will, however, make further inquiries on this point.

DRUGS (SALE).

20. **Sir H. Williams** asked the Minister of Health whether his attention has been drawn to the great increase in the sale of pre-packed drugs by chain-stores; and whether, in the interest of safeguarding the health of the people, he will consider taking steps to restrict the sale of drugs except by qualified pharmacists?

21. **Major Lyons** asked the Minister of Health, whether his attention has been drawn to the competition to qualified pharmaceutical chemists resulting from the rapid increase in the sale of drugs by shopkeepers who do not employ a trained pharmacist; and whether he proposes to take any steps to stop this type of competition?

Mr. E. Brown: The Pharmacy and Medicines Act of last year restricts the retail sale of some kinds of medicine to certain classes of persons, including pharmacists. I should not feel justified at the present time in proposing further legislation to extend the privilege granted to pharmacists. My attention has, however, been drawn to the increase which is mentioned, and I shall continue to watch the situation.

Mr. A. Edwards: Would the right hon. Gentleman consider fixing a fair price for these things, based on cost, which would be about one tenth of the present price?

Mr. Brown: That is another issue.

POST-WAR HOSPITAL POLICY.

22. **Mr. Jewson** asked the Minister of Health whether he is able to make any

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[Mr. Jewson.]
further statement with regard to the Government's post-war hospital policy in relation to teaching hospitals?

Mr. E. Brown: Yes, Sir. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland and I have decided to set up a Committee, under the chairmanship of Mr. W. M. Goodenough, D.L., J.P., with the following terms of reference:—

"Having regard to the statement made by the Minister of Health in the House of Commons on 9th October, 1941, indicating the Government's post-war hospital policy, to inquire into the organisation of medical schools, particularly in regard to facilities for clinical teaching and research, and to make recommendations."

I will circulate the names of the ladies and gentlemen who have consented to serve on the Committee.

Following are the names:

Professor T. R. Elliott, C.B.E., D.S.O., M.D., F.R.C.P., F.R.S.,
A. M. H. Gray, Esq., C.B.E., M.D., F.R.C.P., F.R.C.S.,
Professor J. Hendry, M.B.E., M.B., F.R.C.O.G.,
Professor A. V. Hill, O.B.E., Sc.D., F.R.S., M.P.,
Sir Wilson Jameson, M.D., F.R.C.P.,
Professor J. R. Learmonth, M.B., F.R.C.S., Ed.,
Sir Ernest Pooley, M.A., LL.B.,
Sir John Stopford, M.B.E., M.D., F.R.S.,
Miss Janet Vaughan, D.M., F.R.C.P.

TYPHUS (PREVENTIVE MEASURES).

23. **Sir P. Hurd** asked the Minister of Health what special measures are being taken to safeguard this country against a plague of typhus, in view of conditions in Central Europe and of recent evidence of the widespread presence in our centres of population of the lice through which the disease is most readily propagated?

Mr. E. Brown: As stated in my Reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Central Bradford (Mr. Leach) on 19th February, the measures taken to safeguard this country against typhus include a close watch by medical officers at ports and airports; the organisation and training of special mobile diagnostic and sanitary teams; arrangements for confirmatory diagnosis by experts; plans by local authorities for prompt isolation, hospital treatment and supervision of contacts; and a general intensification of delousing and cleansing of verminous conditions, for which local authorities have been given additional powers.

Sir P. Hurd: Do these port examinations include examination of the Irish labourers who come here in a verminous and diseased condition?

Mr. Brown: My hon. Friend knows that that question has been answered several times.

Sir P. Hurd: What has been done?

INDIA (MOMINS).

26. **Mr. Sorensen** asked the Secretary of State for India whether he has now secured fuller information respecting the numerical support behind the All-India Momin Muslim Conference?

The Secretary of State for India (Mr. Amery): I am awaiting further information from the Government of India, which I have asked for by telegram. I shall be glad to let the hon. Member have it as soon as I receive it.

Mr. Sorensen: While expressing appreciation of that Answer, might I ask the right hon. Gentleman whether he is aware that this All-India Conference has passed very emphatic protests against his own diminution of the united support that they claim is behind them?

Mr. Amery: I have already answered that question fully.

SHOPS (YOUNG PERSONS' HOURS OF WORK).

29. **Mr. Rhys Davies** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he is satisfied that local authorities are implementing the provision of the Shops Act covering the hours of employment of young persons?

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Herbert Morrison): I have no information to the contrary, and such information as I have does not suggest that there is cause for anxiety on this matter.

Mr. Davies: In view of the fact that statements have appeared recently about

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the deterioration in the physical and mental condition of young persons, would the right hon. Gentleman consider whether it is possible to send a circular to local authorities calling attention to the effective administration of the Shops Act?

Mr. Morrison: I think it would not be quite fair to the local authorities to send such a circular without evidence that they are not implementing the provisions of the Act. If my hon. Friend will send me evidence on the point, I will consider it.

Mr. Kenneth Lindsay: Would my right hon. Friend consult with the Board of Education on the matter?

Mr. Morrison: So far as is relevant, certainly.

CIVIL DEFENCE.

Double Summer Time (Black-out Period).

31. **Mr. Pethick-Lawrence** asked the Home Secretary whether, on the introduction of Double Summer Time, he will make the same arrangements as last year for reducing the hours of black-out in England and Scotland, respectively?

Mr. H. Morrison: The Lighting (Restrictions) Order, 1940, as amended, already provides for a reduced black-out period in England, Scotland, and Wales from the first Saturday in May to the second Saturday in August. Black-out time is fixed in relation to the amount of twilight after sunset and before sunrise, and, for reasons of public safety, I could not see my way to amend the Lighting (Restrictions) Order so as to make the reduced black-out period coincide with Double Summer Time this year.

Mr. Pethick-Lawrence: Does that mean that we shall have half an hour at each end between the present introduction of Double Summer Time and 1st May, and, after that date, an additional half-hour in Scotland?

Mr. Morrison: I cannot quite remember the details of this matter, which were dealt with very carefully last year, but my right hon. Friend can take it that the advantageous position of Scotland last year, arising out of the different hours of light in Scotland, will obtain again this year between 2nd May and 8th August.

Respirators.

32. **Mr. Donald Scott** asked the Home Secretary whether he is aware of the small number of civilians who carry their respirators; and whether he will take steps to encourage the fulfilment of this duty, especially in the larger towns?

Mr. H. Morrison: I am keeping the situation under constant review, and I do not consider that any further injunction to carry respirators is desirable at the present time.

Exit Permit (Member's Visit to Dublin).

33. **Sir I. Albery** asked the Home Secretary, at the request of which Government Department was a visa issued to the hon. Member for West Leicester, Mr. Harold Nicolson, to visit Dublin on 16th March?

Mr. H. Morrison: An exit permit for Eire was granted to the hon. Member for West Leicester on 3rd March, to enable him to accept an invitation to go to Dublin to deliver two lectures, one to the Law Society of University College, and the other to the Irish Institute of International Affairs. The application for an exit permit was supported by the Ministry of Information.

Commander Locker-Lampson: Is not the hon. Member a first-class propagandist, to be used as often as possible?

Sir Malcolm Robertson: Was the report of the speech in the Irish newspapers a correct report?

Mr. Morrison: I understand that the Press reports were completely misleading, and that my hon. Friend did, in fact, deliver a most patriotic speech.

"Daily Mirror."

34. **Mr. Silverman** asked the Home Secretary whether he has taken any action under Regulation 2C against any person connected with the "Daily Mirror" or under Regulation 94A against the newspaper itself; and whether he will avail himself of his powers under these Regulations before applying those under Regulations 2D and 94B?

Mr. H. Morrison: The answer to the first part of the Question is in the negative. As regards the second part, I have already explained, in the statement made on 19th

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March, the reasons why the Government came to the conclusion that in this matter it is incumbent on themselves to form a judgment, subject, of course, always to their responsibility to Parliament, and those reasons cannot adequately be elaborated in reply to a Parliamentary Question.

Mr. Silverman: In view of the very serious allegations and the statement that the conduct complained of has been going on for a very long time, how are the persons attacked in that statement to have any opportunity of rebutting what my right hon. Friend says, or of defending themselves against statements which, if untrue, would be defamatory?

Mr. Morrison: I understand that there is to be a Debate later in the day, and it will then be open to hon. Members to defend this newspaper and to give any explanations there may be to be given. At any rate, if we are to discuss this matter to-day, I think it would be better to wait for that discussion.

Mr. Stokes: Is not this an insidious attack against the freedom of the Press, initiated by the Prime Minister himself?

Mr. Morrison: I think that the hon. Member and I both know that the answer is in the negative.

PERSONNEL (INDUSTRIAL EMPLOYMENT).

36. **Mr. Brooke** asked the Home Secretary whether he can make any further statement about enabling members of the Civil Defence services to do other work of national value during periods of lull?

Mr. H. Morrison: I would refer my hon. Friend to the reply which I gave on 19th March to the hon. and gallant Member for Hornsey (Captain Gammans) to which I have, at present, nothing to add.

"PEACE NEWS."

37. **Captain Gammans** asked the Home Secretary why "Peace News" is not banned, in view of statements made in its issue of 13th March, 1942, that the raid on the Renault Works, in Paris, was made to produce a momentary and false impression of activity and to keep up morale at home, that the war was precipitated by partisans of Poland and Czechoslovakia and as it is openly asking for subscriptions in order to carry on Pacifist propaganda?

Mr. H. Morrison: A careful watch has been and is being kept on this periodical, but I have not hitherto felt that any action against it was necessary, having regard not only to the very limited class of persons to whom it appeals, but also to the expressed view of the House at the time when the Defence Regulations were under consideration that the mere expression of Pacifist opinion ought not to be made an offence under the Defence Regulations. Statements such as those to which my hon. Friend refers, however, and other statements which have appeared from time to time in this periodical, go beyond anything which can be regarded as the legitimate expression of Pacifist views. The paper will continue to be watched, and I shall not hesitate to take appropriate action if I am satisfied that that course is necessary.

Captain Gammans: Is my right hon. Friend aware that in the current issue of that paper the view is expressed that conditions in Hong Kong under the Japanese are not much worse than they were under British rule; and what more seditious statement could be made than that?

Mr. Morrison: The article to which my hon. and gallant Friend refers is one of the articles of which notice has been taken.

Mr. Rhys Davies: Will the Home Secretary bear in mind his often declared opinion that we ought to have the freedom of the Press maintained here?

DISCIPLINE.

38. **Captain Gammans** asked the Home Secretary whether he has any statement to make concerning the suggestion of many local authorities and others that a discipline code should be instituted for Civil Defence workers?

Mr. H. Morrison: Provision is made under the Defence Regulations for the punishment of members of those services who disobey lawful orders or without reasonable excuse are absent from their posts of duty. As at present advised, I do not think that any elaboration of the present disciplinary machinery is required.

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Captain Gammans: Has not my right hon. Friend been asked by local authorities and also by the Civil Defence service itself to institute a disciplinary code which would be less cumbersome and more effective than the present procedure?

Mr. Morrison: Certain representations have been received. My impression is that Civil Defence workers generally are satisfied with the existing arrangements, and I do not think that anything more is required at the present time.

Mr. George Griffiths: Can the Home Secretary tell us the percentage of the representations made to him?

Mr. Morrison: I am afraid I do not know it.

Mr. Griffiths: It would be about one per cent., I expect.

Mr. Morrison: Possibly.

AUXILIARY FIRE SERVICE.

40. **Dr. Russell Thomas** asked the Home Secretary whether he is now satisfied with the system of promotion in the Auxiliary Fire Service?

Mr. H. Morrison: Under the provisions of the National Fire Service (General) Regulations, promotions in the Service are made by the Fire Force Commander, the Regional Commissioner or the Secretary of State, according to the rank to be filled. Selection Boards have been established at the various levels to ensure that the claims of candidates are fully and impartially considered and I have no reason to believe that the system is not generally working satisfactorily.

Dr. Thomas: Cannot the Home Secretary now institute some method of examination instead of the rather unsatisfactory method of local selection which has given rise to some dissatisfaction in the past?

Mr. Morrison: We will, of course, keep that point in mind, and it may be a point for the future. I am not sure that we have reached the stage when it would be practicable.

LIGHTING RESTRICTIONS (WAR OFFICE AND ADMIRALTY).

41. **Dr. Russell Thomas** asked the Home Secretary whether he is satisfied that the black-out and motor-car lighting regulations are properly carried out by officers and others employed at the War Office and Admiralty?

Mr. H. Morrison: Yes, Sir. I have made inquiry and find no reason to think that the staffs of these Departments observe the regulations any less than those of other Departments or the general public.

FIREARM CHARGE, WEYMOUTH.

43. **Mr. Thorne** asked the Home Secretary whether his attention has been called to the case of Roland Parry, of Noopeton Street, Weymouth, a 17-year old Home Guard, apprenticed fitter, who made himself a tommy gun, and was charged at Weymouth on 18th March and fined 10s. for having a firearm without a certificate; and whether he will remit the fine in view of the circumstances?

Mr. H. Morrison: I am making inquiries and will communicate with my hon. Friend.

WOMEN (HOURS OF WORK).

53. **Mr. Mander** asked the Home Secretary to what extent the lengthening of the weekly hours of work to a 60-hour week by women on Civil Defence has resulted in a reduction of staff; whether he is aware of the overlapping caused and the difficulty experienced by women in shopping; and whether he will consider the possibility of making the hours alternately long and short in successive weeks?

Mr. H. Morrison: Information is not yet available as to the reductions in staff that will be secured by the recent increase in the minimum stand-by duty hours for women. The paid establishments are now under review, and the longer minimum duty week for women will be taken into account. The system of shift working within the standard duty hours is fixed by the employing authority, who are, therefore, in a position to meet the reasonable personal needs of the members, so far as personal considerations can be allowed to interfere with the paramount operational needs of the services. Subject to this, there is no objection in principle to an alternation of long and short shifts, or any temporary leave of absence under proper safeguards to admit of necessary shopping. Whatever shift system is adopted, all personnel have at least one day of 24 hours free from duty in each week.

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INVASION COMMITTEES.

54. **Sir John Mellor** asked the Home Secretary whether invasion committees will be given facilities for studying scorched-earth policy and methods?

Mr. H. Morrison: The function of invasion committees is to co-ordinate the preparations of the various military and civilian services at the local level. The representatives of the services concerned with the denial of resources to the enemy will be in a position to inform an invasion committee of their instructions and plans, in so far as this may be necessary for the work of the committee.

Sir J. Mellor: Will special training be given to appropriate Civil Defence personnel in scorched-earth methods?

Mr. Morrison: I do not think we ought to go into too much detail in public. Democratic institutions inevitably provide the enemy with a lot of information.

Miss Eleanor Rathbone: In view of the fact that a large proportion of the able-bodied civil population will be women who will have to carry out these instructions, will the Minister see that the committees include a good number of women and that they are able to get detailed instructions as to how to mislead the enemy in all kinds of ways?

Mr. Morrison: The actual appointments will be made mainly by local people. To some extent, therefore, this is not in my hands, but I will keep my hon. Friend's point in mind and see whether I can do anything about it.

FREEDOM OF THE PRESS.

35. **Sir P. Hurd** asked the Home Secretary whether, before contemplating State interference with the freedom of the Press, he will invite representative organisations of the newspaper profession to discuss with him the best means of controlling irresponsible members in the general national interest, as is done by representative organisations in the legal, architectural and other professions?

Mr. H. Morrison: If some body representative of the newspaper profession, including newspaper proprietors and the two organisations of journalists, were established by the profession for the purpose of ensuring the maintenance of a proper sense of responsibility in the Press and control over irresponsible newspapers and journalists, I have no doubt that such a body could perform a valuable service, especially in time of war. The creation of such a body would be a matter for the profession itself, but if there is any way in which the Government could be helpful, any request would certainly be considered most sympathetically.

CHIMNEY SWEEPING.

39. **Mr. Sorensen** asked the Home Secretary whether, in view of the danger arising from unswept chimneys and the great shortage of chimney sweeps, he has been in contact with local authorities on this matter, with a view to their organisation or supervision of a service to meet local needs?

Mr. H. Morrison: The statutory provisions relating to chimneys which are on fire are enforced by the local authorities, none of whom has reported to me a danger in present circumstances or the need for a local service to sweep chimneys. I understand the Ministry of Labour has had no representations about a shortage of chimney sweeps. In these circumstance there appears to be no need for action on my part.

RAIDED CLUBS, LONDON.

42. **Mr. Thorne** asked the Home Secretary whether he can give any information in connection with the two club raids, in Whitechapel Road, under the Gaming Act: how many people were charged at the Thames police court on 23rd March; and what action he intends taking about closing the club?

Mr. H. Morrison: Both clubs were entered on 21st March, and card-gaming was in progress. In one a principal and 34 frequenters and in the other a principal and 32 frequenters were arrested and stand remanded until 7th April. As the cases are *sub judice* any further statement must be reserved for the present.

Mr. Thorne: Right; I will follow that up.

LIBYA OPERATIONS (INTER-SERVICE COMMUNICATIONS).

45. **Mr. Stokes** asked the Prime Minister whether he is aware that in recent Libya

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operations defective inter-Service tactical communications resulted in instances of attacks by our aircraft upon our land forces; and whether he can undertake to investigate the cause of these mistakes?

The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs (**Mr. Eden**): I have made inquiries, and I am informed that no instances of attacks by our aircraft on our own land forces during recent Libyan operations have been reported to the War Office. If the hon. Member has any information, I will be glad if he will give it to me. On the general question, I would refer the hon. Member to the Answer which my right hon. Friend the Dominions Secretary gave yesterday in reply to Questions on this subject.

Mr. Stokes: Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that our methods of communication are totally inadequate and that a proper system does not exist, and, if I give instances, will they be properly examined?

Mr. Eden: I will undertake to go into them myself, and that is why I asked the hon. Gentleman to give me any information.

Mr. Austin Hopkinson: Is there any means by which our Fighting Forces can be protected from the danger which must accrue to them by conveying this sort of information to the enemy?

Mr. A. Edwards: May we know whether there are any means whereby members of the Fighting Forces who make complaints can have the assurance that they will be given some attention?

Mr. Eden: So far as it may lay within my power, if hon. Members will tell me anything about them. I shall be glad to be of service.

Mr. Lipson: In view of the serious nature of the allegations, will ot be possible, after investigations have been made, for a statement to be made in this House or elsewhere?

Mr. Eden: I have already stated the position of His Majesty's Government. It is for those who say that there is information to bring it forward.

Mr. Glenvil Hall: On a point of Order. Questions are frequently answered to the effect that the Minister has no information, and he puts the onus on the Member to supply it. Surely, if the Minister asks in his Department, he can get it. If it is known to us, it is known to the Department?

Mr. Speaker: It is a question of stating facts, which must be substantiated by the Member himself.

Mr. Hopkinson: Is there any reason why these questions should not be put privately to the Minister?

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT.

46. **Mr. Lindsay** asked the Prime Minister whether, to encourage the faith and determination of the people and assist in political warfare overseas, he will make a statement in the near future on the development of our social and economic order, in response to the declared desire from industrialists, churchmen, and men and women of all political parties?

Mr. Eden: While I have sympathy with my hon. Friend's suggestion, I am sure that he will understand that it would clearly not be possible to deal with such large and general matters at Question time.

GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS.

Ministry of Agriculture (Overtime Pay).

47. **Mr. Purbrick** asked the Minister of Agriculture the amount of overtime paid in his Department for the last month for which figures are available, and has any improvement been made in the peace-time system of checking overtime to ensure that the worker has fully worked 100 per cent. in his ordinary time before working overtime?

The Minister of Agriculture (**Mr. R. S. Hudson**): The amount of overtime paid in January, the latest month for which figures are now available, was £4,365. All possible steps are taken now, as in peace-time, to prevent overtime being worked unnecessarily.

Mr. Purbrick: In view of the large amount of overtime that is paid, should not the Minister introduce some special system of checking overtime?

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Mr. Hudson: I should have thought that there is a very small amount of overtime.

BOARD OF EDUCATION (OVERTIME PAY).

56. **Mr. Purbrick** asked the President of the Board of Education the amount of overtime paid in his Department for the last month for which figures are available; and has any improvement been made in the peace-time system of checking overtime to ensure that the worker has fully worked 100 per cent. in his ordinary time before working overtime?

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Board of Education (Mr. Ede): The sum of £853 was paid in respect of overtime in the month of February, 1942, to officers of the Board eligible for overtime pay. In reply to the second part of the Question, the use of overtime is and always has been carefully controlled by responsible officers, to ensure that it is limited to the amount required for the work to be done.

AGRICULTURE.

ANIMAL FEEDING-STUFFS.

49. **Mr. R. Morgan** asked the Minister of Agriculture, whether, as the compulsory use of wheatmeal flour which is shortly to be enforced will lead to a reduction in animal feeding-stuffs, he is taking steps to make good this deficiency; and whether he can make a statement on this subject?

Mr. Hudson: Yes, Sir. During the summer rationing period certain reserve stocks of maize will be drawn upon. As regards next winter I hope that increased production of oats and other fodder crops, including silage, will offset the loss of wheatfeed. I am impressing upon farmers, including milk producers, the urgent need to become as nearly self-supporting as possible and to plan their spring cropping accordingly.

FERTILISERS AND FEEDING-STUFFS (TESTING).

50. **Sir A. Baillie** asked the Minister of Agriculture what arrangements are made by his Department for the testing and analysing of samples of fertilisers and feeding-stuffs, including poultry mixtures, on sale to farmers and poultry keepers?

Mr. Hudson: As the Reply is rather long, I will, with my hon. and gallant Friend's permission, circulate it in the OFFICIAL REPORT.

Following is the Reply:

Under the Fertiliser and Feeding-Stuffs Act, 1926, any person who sells any of the fertilisers or feeding-stuffs scheduled in the Act must give the purchaser a statutory statement containing certain specified particulars as to the nature, substance and quality of the article. If the fertiliser or feeding-stuff is not scheduled in the Act, but is sold with a warranty, the buyer has a right to have a sample officially analysed.

There is no statutory provision for the analysing of materials sold without a warranty as manures or fertilisers which are not covered by the Act, but farmers should be sufficiently experienced not to buy an article, the fertilising value of which is out of proportion to its price. In the case of most feeding-stuffs it is also possible for action to protect the purchaser, to be taken under Ministry of Food Orders, and in addition my noble Friend, the Minister of Food has made an Order, which came into force on 23rd March, giving sampling officers the power to take samples of any feeding-stuffs.

EDUCATION.

TEACHERS (NATIONAL FIRE SERVICE).

55. **Mr. Hannah** asked the President of the Board of Education whether it is with his approval that men teachers of 36 years of age who are doing full-time service in schools in addition to helping to train boys of 14 to 16 years of age in technical schools, and who are holding responsible positions in Civil Defence for which they have been trained, are in addition being called for National Fire Service at a time when this service is asking that its members be allowed to use their spare time in making munitions?

Mr. Ede: As my right hon. Friend stated in reply to a Question by my hon. Friend on 12th February, it is the policy of the Government in present circumstances that teachers over 35 shall not be called up, and those under 35 who were deferred shall have their deferments continued. A man's age for this purpose is his age on the date when his age-class was required to register. If my hon. Friend will send me particulars of any cases in which this policy is not being carried out, I will have inquiries made.

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SECONDARY SCHOOLS (GRANTS).

57. **Mr. Lipson** asked the President of the Board of Education, how many secondary schools receive direct grants from the Board of Education; and what are the conditions under which a school can qualify for such grant?

Mr. Ede: The number of secondary schools in receipt of direct grant from the Board at the present time is 233. In order to qualify for such grant a school must be accepted after inspection as suitable for recognition by the Board and must comply with the conditions set out in the Regulations for secondary schools, of which I am sending my hon. Friend a copy.

Mr. Lipson: Are any public boarding schools included among those receiving direct grants?

Mr. Ede: I hope my hon. Friend will put that Question on the Paper.

NATIONAL FINANCE.

REGISTERED COMPANIES, MALAYA (TAXATION).

59. **Colonel Arthur Evans** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what is the position of British registered companies in Malaya with regard to Excess Profits Tax payments they have already made; and whether, as a result of the enemy occupation of this territory, such companies will be permitted to recover if they can show that they have incurred a deficiency in consequence, or whether they will be treated as having ceased business?

60. **Mr. R. Morgan** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what arrangements will be made to adjust the Income Tax assessment on British registered companies in Malaya whose property has now fallen into enemy hands?

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Captain Crookshank): If the companies in question continue in being with the intention of resuming operations in Malaya when circumstances permit, they will not be treated as having ceased business but will be treated for taxation purposes as still carrying on trade. As regards Excess Profits Tax, therefore, they will be able to avail themselves of the provisions under which deficiencies can be set-off against Excess Profits Tax already paid, while as regards Income Tax they will continue to be assessable on the basis of the preceding year's profits.

ESTATE DUTY.

65. **Sir J. Mellor** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he is now in a position to reply to letters, dated 5th and 10th February, from the hon. Member for the Tamworth Division, with regard to the claim of the Estate Duty Office that Section 43 of the Finance Act, 1940, applies where executors, in order to give effect to a bequest of an annual payment for life and facilitate distribution of the residue, purchase an annuity from an insurance company; and whether, as this claim gives rise to a possible liability to the executors incalculable until the death of the annuitant, he will take steps to remove this obstacle to the winding up of many estates?

Captain Crookshank: My right hon. Friend is advised by the Board of Inland Revenue that the letters to which my hon. Friend refers raised an important question of law on which the Board have thought it desirable to obtain the opinion of counsel, and they hope to be in a position at an early date to communicate with the executors.

E.P.T. (HOME-GROWN TIMBER INDUSTRY).

66. **Mrs. Rathbone** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will grant an increase in the Excess Profits Tax pre-war standard, under Section 13 of the Finance (No. 2) Act, 1940, to the home-grown timber industry similar to that already granted in the case of mines, quarries and oil-wells?

Captain Crookshank: My right hon. Friend regrets he cannot see his way to adopt my hon. Friend's suggestion.

Mrs. Rathbone: In view of the concession already made to mines, quarries and oil-wells does not my right hon. and gallant Friend think that the same should apply to timber, stocks of which are being slowly drained?

GOVERNMENT BORROWING (PUBLIC APPEALS).

68. **Sir T. Moore** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether, in order to give effect to the determination of our people to adopt a more offensive spirit towards the conduct of the war, he will have such slogans as " Lend to Defend "

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altered to " Lend to Attack "; and also follow the same policy in all other public pronouncements within the sphere of his office?

Captain Crookshank: My right hon. Friend will keep in mind my hon. Friend's suggestion, with which in principle he fully agrees.

FAMILY ALLOWANCES.

69. **Miss Eleanor Rathbone** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether the inquiry into the costs and possible methods of a scheme of family allowances, which he announced last summer, has been completed; and when the results will be made available to the House?

70. **Mr. Lindsay** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he has noted the recent decisions of the Trades Union Congress on the question of family allowances; and whether the inter-Departmental committee sitting under his guidance has now formulated any conclusions?

Captain Crookshank: My right hon. Friend has noted the decision of the Trades Union Congress General Council. The investigation which my right hon. Friend undertook in relation to family allowances is approaching completion, and my right hon. Friend hopes to complete it shortly after the Budget.

Miss Rathbone: Does not the right hon. and gallant Gentleman remember that it is about nine months ago since that committee was appointed, and in view of the urgency of the question and of the great volume of public support for it, is it not about time that the committee hurried up with its conclusions?

Mr. Lindsay: Does the right hon. and gallant Gentleman also remember that the most formidable point the Chancellor raised was the opposition to the change by the T.U.C., which is now largely removed?

Captain Crookshank: Yes, Sir. I remember all these things, but I also remember that a minute ago I said the investigation was approaching completion.

EXCISE WHOLESALE LICENCES.

71. **Major Sir Jocelyn Lucas** asked the Financial Secretary to the Treasury whether he can now make a statement as to taking powers to refuse Excise wholesale licences to persons convicted of black-market or other criminal cases, in view of the recent Portsmouth case?

Captain Crookshank: I am not yet in a position to make a statement.

Sir J. Lucas: Does not my right hon. and gallant Friend realise how very unsatisfactory is the position?

Captain Crookshank: That is why the matter is being investigated. In due course I shall make a statement.

Sir J. Lucas: Can my right hon. and gallant Friend give the approximate date?

FOOD SUPPLIES.

FRUIT (CANNING AND PULPING).

72. **Sir A. Baillie** asked the Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Food what steps are being taken for the canning or pulping of the large crop of fruit anticipated for this year?

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Food (Major Lloyd George): The subject of my hon. Friend's Question is at present under consideration. I will communicate with him as soon as I am in a position to give him the information he requires.

Sir A. Baillie: Does my right hon. and gallant Friend appreciate that the sooner any arrangements are made known to the farmers the better?

Major Lloyd George: Yes, Sir.

RATIONING ORDER, 1939.

73. **Mr. Leslie Boyce** asked the Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Food whether, in order to meet the wishes of the food committees and traders throughout the country, and to save time and difficulty at present experienced by them, he will consider redrafting and reprinting the principal Rationing Order, 1939, so as to incorporate the amendments which have so far been made?

Major Lloyd George: Yes, Sir, the matter is already in hand.

CARROTS AND ONIONS (MARKETING).

74. **Sir J. Lamb** asked the Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Food whether he has any statement to make about the future marketing of carrots and onions?

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Major Lloyd George: With my hon. Friend's permission, I will make a statement at the end of Questions.

Later—

Major Lloyd George: My Noble Friend has had under consideration the arrangements for marketing next season's crop of carrots and onions, and has decided upon certain modifications of the existing schemes designed, in the case of carrots, to give his Department a closer and more direct control over distribution. The scheme of control for the marketing of next season's crop of carrots is generally on the lines of the Potato Control Scheme which has operated successfully since February, 1940. There will be fixed growers' prices and a guaranteed market for carrots of standard grade. The proposed prices and other conditions will be discussed with representatives of the growers and distributors at an early date.

Responsibility for controlling the marketing of main crop onions will also be assumed by the Ministry of Food. Maximum growers' prices will be prescribed and the Ministry will, so far as practicable, arrange for the equitable distribution of the crop. In this case, also, the Government proposals will be the subject of an early discussion with the growers' representatives and with representatives of the trade interests concerned. In view of these proposed developments of policy, my Noble Friend has decided that it will be more convenient if Government control over the marketing of these crops is exercised by his Department direct, instead of through the agency of the National Vegetable Marketing Company, Limited.

If it had been decided to continue the existing forms of control, my Noble Friend would have been glad again to avail himself of the assistance of the company, which has discharged its difficult task during the past year with efficiency and success. Since the original establishment of the company, however, the Ministry of Food has extended its activities in the acquisition and marketing of potatoes, and the necessary machinery now exists within the Ministry for operating the proposed scheme of carrot control with comparatively small increase in the administrative costs incurred directly by my Department. Steps will be taken to wind up the company on completion of its operations in connection with last year's carrot crop. My Noble Friend wishes to place on record his warm appreciation of the public service rendered by the chairman of the company, the hon. and learned Member for Ashford (Mr. Spens), by the board of directors, and by the staff, whose hard work and good will have been evident from the outset.

Mr. Orr-Ewing: On a point of Order. Would it not help to save the time of the House if Answers to Questions, such as the answer which has been so brilliantly read by the Parliamentary Secretary, could be published in the OFFICIAL REPORT?

Mr. Evelyn Walkden: In view of the recent statement made by the Minister in another place that we are likely to become more vegetarian in the next few months, cannot we have greater control over the prices of many of the green vegetables which working-class families cannot now buy because of their high prices?

Major Lloyd George: That is a matter which is constantly engaging the attention of my Department. The hon. Member will appreciate that at this moment the supplies of green vegetables are extremely small.

Mr. Walkden: Does not the Parliamentary Secretary appreciate the hardship which this is causing in working-class homesteads, and cannot something be done in the matter right away?

Major Lloyd George: I appreciate that, but I also appreciate the difficulties of supplies. My hon. Friend must realise that the last few weeks have been exceptionally severe. At this time of the year large crops are not normally available, and the early summer crops have not yet come on the market.

Mr. Buchanan: Why should these green vegetables be available, because of their price, only to a very limited section of the population? If they are scarce, why should not the right hon. and gallant Gentleman take steps to see that they are available to those whose need is possibly greater?

Major Lloyd George: I am sure that my hon. Friend will appreciate the difficulties in view of the time of year, and the perishable nature of greenstuffs.

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Mr. Levy: Is there any reason why these prices cannot be controlled, and are not the exorbitant prices which are being charged due to the fact that there is no price control?

Major Lloyd George: It is not really a question of exorbitant prices. There are great difficulties for growers at this time of the year, and also at the end of the season. It is not an easy problem, but, as I have said, we are examining it closely.

EGG PACKING STATIONS.

75. **Mr. Lipson** asked the Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Food whether he will reconsider the decision to close down egg-packing station No. 469, Cheltenham, as this station is economically and efficiently run, and, of the proprietors, one is serving in the Navy and the other is giving valuable part-time service in Civil Defence?

Major Lloyd George: As it is essential to achieve all possible economy of transport, petrol and man-power, the position of all egg-packing stations is being reviewed, and certain redundant stations, including No. 469, are being suspended. I regret I am unable to reconsider this decision. Arrangements are, however, being considered by the packers whereby redundant packers will be compensated by the surviving packers.

Mr. Lipson: Does the Parliamentary Secretary think it is quite playing the game to a Service man whose brother is trying to keep the business going? Would he reconsider his decision in this matter? What national interest is served by closing down all these small businesses?

Major Lloyd George: The national interest is served by the saving of transport and man-power in closing those which you do not need. The saving of transport is a vital question at the present moment.

SCOTLAND.

DEER FORESTS (CATTLE).

76. **Mr. Leslie** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland, whether he is aware of the ranch scheme for the New Forest where, with Government aid, cattle are to be raised and sold under the Government Marketing Scheme; and will he consider formulating a similar scheme for the Highlands by utilising deer forests suitable for the purpose?

The Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. T. Johnston): On common lands comprising about 1,000 acres in the New Forest, Hampshire, an experimental scheme on about 400 acres is being carried out with a view to the improvement of grazings. In Scotland Club sheep stocks and cattle on common grazings are a normal feature of crofting practice, and I will be glad to extend the operation of any communal stocking to any deer forest where a recommendation is made by the local Agricultural Executive Committee. As the hon. Member may be aware, we have already taken over four deer forests.

OLD AGE PENSIONS.

The following Question stood upon the Order Paper in the name of Mr. MATHERS:

77. To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether consideration has been given to the representations made to him by the county council of Lanarkshire in respect of supplementary allowances to old age pensioners; and whether he is in a position to make any statement regarding the proposals submitted from the conference held on 7th March?

Mr. Mathers: May I point out that this Question was originally addressed to the Prime Minister, owing to more than Scotland being involved?

Mr. Johnston: I have been asked to reply. I assume that my hon. Friend is referring to the resolution, conveyed by letter dated 20th March, which was passed by the Conference of Public Assistance Authorities in Scotland at their meeting in Glasgow on 7th March. The resolution was received by me on 23rd March. It is receiving urgent attention, and a reply will be sent as soon as possible.

Mr. Buchanan: Will the Minister see that his reply is made public, or at least made available to some of us who are interested in this matter?

TRADE AND COMMERCE.

NON-ESSENTIAL GOODS.

78. **Mr. A. Edwards** asked the President of the Board of Trade whether he will consider the advisability of prohibit-

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ing the production of any commodity which is not essential for the war effort?

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Board of Trade (Captain Waterhouse): The policy of the Board of Trade has been to curtail the production of non-essential goods, and this process is being accelerated.

Mr. Edwards: Does the hon. and gallant Gentleman realise that if he prevented these goods from being manufactured, he would remove the only justification for the extravagant and wasteful organisation known as the War Savings organisation?

Captain Waterhouse: The difficulty is to reach agreement on essentials and non-essentials.

CLOTHING COUPONS (PROSECUTION).

79. **Mr. Thorne** asked the President of the Board of Trade whether he can give any information in connection with the 22 men charged with forging 97,000 clothing coupons; and whether all the coupons emanated from a printing press operated by Jack Hyman Cohen?

Captain Waterhouse: As this case is *sub judice,* I can make no comment on it.

FOOD OFFENCES (PENALTIES).

80. **Sir J. Lucas** asked the President of the Board of Trade whether, in view of the fact that in a recent prosecution by his Department the maximum fine for manufacturing and selling 100 per cent. sawdust as poultry food was only £20, he will now take powers to bring penalties for such offences into line with recent legislation for black-market offences and also arrange that all profits from such swindles shall be confiscated?

Captain Waterhouse: I agree that the penalties under the Merchandise Marks Acts are inadequate in present circumstances, and my right hon. Friend has taken up with the Law Officers of the Crown the question of the increase of these penalties.

POST OFFICE.

HOURS OF OPENING.

81. **Mr. Norman Bower** asked the Postmaster-General whether, in view of the great waste of time and the inconvenience caused to those people who can only visit post offices in their lunch-time, he will see that either a general post office or a sub-post office is open between the hours of one and two within a limited area?

The Assistant Postmaster-General (Mr. Grimston): General post offices do not close for the luncheon hour. Some of the smaller post offices, which in the main are establishments where both the post office and the owner's own business are carried on, are allowed to close for a period in the middle of the day if closing of shops in the vicinity is general. If my hon. Friend has any particular locality in mind and he will let me have details, I shall be glad to have inquiry made.

SCOTTISH BANK NOTES.

82. **Mr. Kennedy** asked the Postmaster-General whether he is aware that Scottish bank notes presented recently for deposit and in payment of stamps required at the New Road Post Office, Portsmouth, were not accepted; and whether he can explain this difficulty?

Mr. Grimston: The sub-postmaster and the staff at the post office in question are aware of the regulations which provide that, whilst a bank note other than a Bank of England note is not legal tender in Great Britain and Northern Ireland, a Scottish bank note must not be refused if there is no reason to doubt that it is genuine. I regret that some misunderstanding appears to have occurred on the occasion to which my right hon. Friend refers and the position has been explained to the complainant concerned.

PRESS MESSAGES TO COUNTRIES ABROAD (CENSORSHIP).

83. **Sir Stanley Reed** asked the Minister of Information whether he is aware that much concern has been caused abroad in recent weeks by irresponsible and exaggerated messages which have been sent from London by certain Press correspondents; and whether the Government will control, by censorship, the dissemination of such stories which are calculated to create ill-feeling overseas?

The Minister of Information (Mr. Brendan Bracken): Yes, Sir. The prevalence of such complaints from abroad has made it necessary for the Government recently to review the position and to inquire into the adequacy of the

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[Mr. Bracken.]
instructions at present given to censors in regard to outgoing messages of a harmful character.

Hitherto, the censorship of Press messages going abroad has been confined to the interception of any information that would be likely to be useful to the enemy in a military sense This is what we mean when we speak of a security censorship. Secondly, it has always been understood that except in the case of some serious infringement of security by a publication in this country, correspondents are free to despatch abroad extracts from anything that had once been published at home. These rules have, I regret to say, proved not altogether adequate for the protection of certain essential interests of this country abroad, where on several occasions the true position here has been gravely misrepresented and stories emanating from London have been published which could only foment ill-feeling between ourselves and our Allies or neutral countries.

In future censors will be empowered to exercise a stricter control with a view to stopping any Press message calculated to create ill-feeling between the United Nations, or between them and a neutral country—a measure which is surely essential in time of war. Moreover, diplomatic exchanges between these countries cannot be allowed to be prejudiced by unauthorised and premature disclosures. Similarly, extracts from home publications which are submitted for cabling abroad will in future be subject to the same rules of censorship as are now to be applied in the case of original material.

There is no intention or desire to apply these new instructions in any arbitrary or unreasonable manner; they are, in fact, designed solely to prevent the outside world from receiving a distorted picture of conditions and events in this country and to protect this country's essential interests. It will be seen that the alterations contemplated do not in any way affect the home Press.

Mr. Garro Jones: While I do not cavil at what has been done, will my right hon. Friend be good enough to assure the House that these more stringent new measures will apply to the publication of technical facts of military importance which throughout the war have conveyed information of the greatest importance to the enemy, facts which have been repeatedly raised and quoted on the Floor of the House?

Mr. Bracken: I am very much obliged to the hon. Member for his suggestion, and I quite agree with him. We have very good reason to know that a lot of important information goes to the enemy by the public Press and certain types of trade papers.

Mr. Hore-Belisha: May we be assured that there is nothing in my right. hon. Friend's statement which would preclude foreign correspondents in this country from sending out information as to the conditions here, providing it does not infringe upon any principle of military secrecy? Otherwise, invented accounts would take the place of accounts purporting to be accurate.

Mr. Bracken: I can give the right hon. Gentleman the assurance he desires.

Mr. McNeil: Will this extension of powers affect the Press representatives from the Dominions and Colonies, and if it does, have the right hon. Gentleman and the Government consulted with the Governments of the Dominions and Colonies before taking this step?

Mr. Bracken: I believe similar steps are being taken in the Dominions, but, of course, I can deal only with matters emanating from London.

Mr. McNeil: I am sorry if I did not make my point clear. Does this restriction affect the Press representatives of the Dominions and Colonies operating here, and if it does, have consultations taken place between this Government and the Governments of the representatives affected by the extension of the powers?

Mr. Bracken: Certainly, it affects the representatives of Dominion and Colonial newspapers here. I do not know that any special steps have been taken to consult with the Dominions, but they have been informed. I have been given extracts from various speeches made by leaders in the Dominions condemning some of the stuff that has been sent out from London, stuff that has done appalling harm to the war effort. If the House would like me some time to-day to read a few of the extracts which called for this decision on the part of the Government, I should be happy to do so.

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Sir S. Reed: Does my right hon. Friend's assurance cover the fact that the new regulations will apply to all correspondents without any exception, and will he also accept an assurance that, as far as the Press is concerned, there is in the new regulations nothing which would be prejudicial to their interests?

Mr. Bracken: Yes, Sir.

Mr. G. Strauss: Will the Minister bear in mind that it is important that people abroad and our Allies should appreciate that this is a democratic country, that there is an opposition in this country, and that people in this country are free to express criticisms of the Government or Allied activity elsewhere, and that it would be most unfortunate if an impression were given that freedom of expression is squashed in this country?

Mr. Bracken: I regard the hon. Member's suggestion as being preposterous.

Mr. Granville: Does the Minister's statement mean that this will in any way affect the censorship in London of foreign correspondents sending messages from abroad into this country?

Mr. Bracken: No, Sir.

Mr. G. Strauss: I put to the Minister a serious and important question. Is he not aware that it is vitally important in this war in which we are fighting that the world should realise that freedom of expression continues in this country, and that he should give no excuse for our friends or enemies abroad suggesting that we have such a tight censorship that no criticism may be made in this country and telegraphed abroad?

Mr. Bracken: I quite understand that the point which the hon. Member raised is an important one. There is no intention whatsoever of preventing criticism. What I have to do is to stop a distortion of our war effort here, which has caused consternation in some of our Dominions, upset our friends everywhere, and has been pre-eminently useful to Dr. Goebbels.

Mr. Pritt: When the Minister says that there is no intention of preventing criticism, is he speaking for the Home Office as well?

Mr. Bracken: The hon. and learned Gentleman knows sufficient about the Rules of the House to know that I do not deputise for my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary.

ANDAMAN ISLANDS (BRITISH WITHDRAWAL).

Sir H. Williams (*by Private Notice*) asked the Prime Minister whether he has any statement to make on the Japanese occupation of the Andaman Islands?

Mr. Eden: No, Sir. But I may say that the withdrawal of the small garrison from the Islands was completed on 12th March.

Sir H. Williams: Surely this is a very grave situation which has suddenly arisen —at least it seems so to many of us—and ought we not to have some assurance that this new and grave threat to India is being properly dealt with?

Mr. Eden: My hon. Friend will not expect me to make any comment in public on that. I have given the bare statement of the facts, and I cannot go beyond that.

Mr. Hore-Belisha: May I ask whether the Nicobar Islands are also involved, whether the policy of scorched earth was pursued, and whether all the landing facilities and harbour installation were destroyed?

Mr. Eden: My right hon. Friend will understand from my answer that these arrangements were carried out some little time ago. He may take it that the point he has in mind—security and other questions—was dealt with.

Sir S. Reed: Is it not the case, as must be apparent to anyone acquainted with the situation who studies the position, that, until such time as we are in a position completely to re-establish command of the seas in Eastern waters, any attempt to hold these Islands would simply mean throwing away lives, diverting great masses of material, and repeating the tragedies and errors which occurred further East?

HOME GUARD (COMPULSORY ENROLMENT).

Sir T. Moore (*by Private Notice*) asked the Under-Secretary of State for War, whether he has any announcement to make with regard to the extension of compulsory enrolment for the Home Guard?

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The Financial Secretary to the War Office (Mr. Sandys): The powers of compulsory enrolment for the Home Guard are at present in force in Civil Defence Regions Nos. 4, 6, 7 and 12, which approximately cover the area south of a line from the Wash to the Severn. While these Regions include the areas which lie within closest reach of the enemy's invasion bases, it is no less essential to bring Home Guard units in other parts of the country up to the strength necessary to meet the operational requirements of each locality. It has, therefore, been decided, upon the request of the Commander-in-Chief, Home Forces, to extend the application of the powers of compulsory enrolment for the Home Guard to all the remaining Regions of England, Scotland and Wales. I trust that this measure will not only meet the operational needs of the military situation, but will also have the effect of impressing upon the country at large the importance of the part in our defence plans which has been assigned to the Home Guard and the urgent necessity for bringing it up to the highest level of efficiency and preparedness.

Sir T. Moore: While not, of course, presuming to speak for the country as a whole, will my hon. Friend be assumed that this decision will give universal satisfaction in the Home Guard, and especially among the willing horses of the Home Guard? Can he say when these regulations will come into being, and can he give any indication as to the approximate numbers involved?

Mr. Sandys: For obvious reasons I am not prepared to give figures. As regards the date, this measure will be brought into operation as quickly as possible.

Sir A. Baillie: The Financial Secretary stresses the word "enrolment." May I ask him what disciplinary powers it is contemplated giving commanding officers who may desire to take action against conscripted Home Guards who have either failed to fulfil their obligations, or failed to do their duties?

Mr. Sandys: That is an entirely different question. The powers for ensuring proper attendances at parades and training have been explained to the House on a previous occasion, and I shall be glad to send my hon. and gallant Friend the information he asks for.

Mr. Lawson: Is my hon. Friend aware that certain part-time Civil Defence workers have wanted to join the Home Guard but have not been allowed to do so? Does this statement mean that they can now join the Home Guard?

Mr. Sandys: Those who will not be available in the event of invasion clearly cannot be accepted in the Home Guard. Provisions have, however, been made to enable men whose important civilian work may make it difficult for them to be immediately available on mustering to continue to serve in the Home Guard.

Sir I. Albery: Will the Government take into account that in country districts there are disproportionate numbers of men enlisted in the different Services, such as the Special Constabulary, Civil Defence and A.F.S.? In some villages the numbers are altogether out of proportion.

Mr. Sandys: The numbers to be compulsorily enrolled in the Home Guard will be fixed solely in relation to the military operational needs of the district. Those needs will be met by the measures which I have announced.

Earl Winterton: May we take it that the hon. Gentleman is answering in this matter for the Joint Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for War, and that the duties of looking after the Home Guard have not been transferred to his Department?

Mr. Sandys: I think my Noble Friend knows the procedure of this House very well. Any Minister in a Department can answer a question addressed to that Department. The responsibility rests of course with the Secretary of State.

Mr. Glenvil Hall: Will men still have the option of joining the Home Guard either at their place of business or at their place of residence, or is that option to be withdrawn?

Mr. Sandys: No change has been made.

Earl Winterton: May I press the hon. Gentleman for information on the point which I raised? I do not know why he should administer a rebuke to me. I merely asked whether the duties of looking after the Home Guard have or have not been transferred to the Financial Secretary to the War Office.

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Mr. Sandys: The responsibility for all matters relating to the Army is the responsibility of the Secretary of State for War, and whatever internal arrangements may be made in the War Office for dealing with particular questions, do not affect that responsibility.

Mr. Henderson Stewart: May I ask a question on a very important aspect of this matter? Is the hon. Gentleman satisfied that equipment and small arms ammunition will come forward in sufficient quantities to give these greatly increased number of entrants into the Home Guard the necessary material with which to train?

Mr. Sandys: The numbers which will be enrolled in the Home Guard in each district are fixed in relation to the arms and equipment which are or will shortly be available.

Colonel Arthur Evans: Arising out of the hon. Gentleman's answer to the previous Question, is it not true that some time ago the Secretary of State for War of that day made known to the House the respective duties of the two Joint Under-Secretaries of State; and at that time was it not clearly laid down that one of the Under-Secretaries of State would be responsible for the Home Guard; and is not the House entitled to know whether a change has been made?

Mr. Sandys: I regret that I did not know that these internal office arrangements had been publicly announced to the House. If that is so, I express my regret to my noble Friend. When the recent change in Ministers took place, the duty of dealing with the Home Guard was transferred to the Financial Secretary.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE.

Mr. Arthur Greenwood: May I ask the Leader of the House what will be the Business of the House at the first Sittings after the Easter Recess?

Mr. Eden: First Sitting Day—Committee and remaining stages of the Army and Air Force (Annual) Bill. The Chairman of Ways and Means will propose a Motion inviting the House to approve of a Report from the Select Committee on the Disposal and Custody of Documents. All this Business for the first Sitting Day is, of course, subject to any alteration that may be necessitated by the course of the war.

Second Sitting Day—The Chancellor of the Exchequer will open his Budget.

Third and fourth Sitting Days—A general Debate will take place on the Budget Resolutions.

Last year no Oral Questions were taken on Budget Day, but the rights of hon. Members to submit urgent Private Notice Questions to Mr. Speaker were not affected. This arrangement was found to be generally convenient to the House and to my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer, who has special considerations to bear in mind on Budget Day. We propose, therefore, to follow the same procedure this year, and to take only Private Notice Questions on that day. If the House agrees to this course, hon. Members will have their ordinary opportunities for asking Questions during that week.

Mr. Greenwood: May I ask whether provision is to be made for a Debate on the War Situation, if necessary?

Mr. Eden: We have put down the Business which I have just announced, but, of course, if it should become necessary to make a statement or something of that kind, we can always alter the arrangements.

Sir J. Lamb: Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that in the House generally it is felt to be inconvenient to meet at the proposed hour on the first Sitting Day?

Mr. Eden: Yes, I did know that there was some difficulty in that respect, but, as the result of such inquiries as it has been possible to make since yesterday, I am informed that, on the whole, the House would rather stick to the proposed arrangement.

Mr. Granville: Can the right hon. Gentleman tell the House when he expects to get the report from Major-General Gordon Bennett on Singapore; and does he ask the House and the country to allow four weeks to elapse without any information at all being given on this subject? Is he aware that a large number of people have relatives in Singapore; and would it not be possible to give the House some sort of information about Singapore in the same way as he gave us some information about Hong Kong?

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Mr. Eden: I do not understand what my hon. Friend means by a lapse of four weeks. It is not proposed to adjourn for four weeks. It is possible that between now and the reassembly of the House we shall have information from Major-General Gordon Bennett, and I hope we may also have some information from other sources. If we have the information we shall be quite ready to make it available to the House, and I realise that the more that can be said the better, from the point of view of feeling in the country, but we must have the material to deal with first.

Mr. R. J. Taylor: Will the Leader of the House said whether any statement which is to be made will include reference to the units that were at Singapore, as there is great concern among many people as to whether their boys were at Singapore or not?

Mr. Eden: I should certainly be glad to consider that point if it is possible to give such information.

Sir I. Albery: I wish to ask my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House a question with reference to to-day's Business. I understand that there is a matter of considerable importance to be discussed to-day and that it will probably be the third item to be debated. I refer to the question of the "Daily Mirror," which seems to me to raise the whole question of the administration of the Defence Regulations by the Home Office, in which case many Members will wish to take part. In the circumstances I want to know whether steps could be taken to suspend the Rule.

Mr. Eden: I do not think there are any precedents for suspending the Rule on the day of Adjournment, and I doubt whether it would be for the convenience of the House. As to the order in which subjects will be taken, that will be in the hands of the Chair.

Mr. Henderson Stewart: With regard to Singapore, since the Recess on which we are about to enter is largely for the purpose of enabling us to consult our constituents, and since there is a very widespread demand not only for a statement but for an inquiry into the Singapore disaster, and in view of the refusal of that inquiry, can the right hon. Gentleman give an assurance that the request for an inquiry will be reconsidered during the Recess?

Mr. Eden: I do not think I can go beyond what I have said, which is that we hope to receive more information during the Recess. That information will be examined, and we shall determine as the result of it what we shall say to the House when it meets.

Commander Bower: Will my right hon. Friend bear in mind as regards Singapore that the anxiety of the country is not so much concerning petty tactical details of what happened on the spot at the last moment, but the whole strategical direction of the Malayan campaign, the lack of appreciation of Japanase strength, the appalling lack of intelligence and the general bungling, for which those who are responsible are mainly in this country and available to give evidence, a great many of them sitting on the Front Bench?

Mr. Granville: Does the right hon. Gentleman's reply, that if the Government receive this report from General Gordon-Bennett they will consider it during the Recess, mean that they will give the House an opportunity on the first day we meet to discuss the whole question?

Mr. Eden: I cannot say what we are going to do till we have the report, but we will do our best during the Recess to get information from other sources and in the light of it determine how we shall handle the situation, whether by means of a statement to the House or by some other means.

Mr. Stokes: Do the Government propose to grant the Commission of Inquiry asked for by a large number of hon. Members regarding Malaya and Singapore?

Mr. Eden: That is covered by the answer that I have given.

Mr. Stokes: What was the answer?

Mr. Evelyn Walkden: Shall we have an early opportunity of discussing the Fifth Report of the Select Committee on National Expenditure, and its implications and recommendations and findings, which many of us have read with considerable interest?

Mr. Eden: I should like to consider that.

Mr. Walkden: I gave the right hon. Gentleman notice two days ago of my

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intention to ask such a question, and I was wondering whether he would be in a position to reply to-day.

Mr. Eden: If it is my fault, I apologise, but I have not had notice.

Mr. Buchanan: In view of the terrible anxiety of many people who do not know whether their relatives at Singapore are prisoners or dead, would the right hon. Gentleman consider setting up some kind of department or office where those with relatives who are missing could apply for information?

Mr. Eden: They can apply to the War Office. I should like to consider whether we cannot make a full announcement about the units that were there.

Mr. Buchanan: They can write to the War Office, but they just do not tell anyone. That is all that is wrong. I want to know whether there is some way of giving these people the feeling that something is being done in the matter?

Mr. Eden: We are trying to get all the information we can. I think we could allay anxiety to some extent by a statement of the units there.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION.

Mr. Harold Nicolson (Leicester, West): I ask leave to make a short personal statement in connection with a Motion on the Order Paper which in effect demands that I should be dismissed from my post as Governor of the B.B.C. on the ground that I made a defeatist speech in Dublin. I made three speeches in Dublin, two of which have been already mentioned by the Home Secretary. The third was not exactly a speech. I was taking part in a debate by the undergraduates of University College. That debate, in which I was only one of several speakers, was opened by an undergraduate who spoke with great ability and venom upon the Imperialistic ambitions of the British Empire. He took from our rough island story all its blackest spots and ranged, if I remember right, from the date of Drake, Frobisher and Hawkins to the date of the Hoare-Laval agreement. The implication of his speech was that our effort in this war was based entirely on our old Imperialistic ambitions. When it came to my turn to take part I was somewhat incensed by this extraordinary account of our history, and I did say that if the audience were to judge the present conflict in terms of the old nineteenth century Imperialism, they were getting it out of focus. I said that that Imperialism was dead and, I devoutly hoped, buried. I said that if they were to picture the British lion as a rampant beast, red in tooth and claw, seeking whom it might devour, then again they would get a completely false and distorted picture of our war effort. It would be much wiser to think of the British lion as an elderly, replete, self-satisfied, moth-eaten—I used that word—animal whose tail in the last 20 years has been so frequently twisted that very few hairs remained—I used that phrase—but an animal which at this moment was alert and angry. I told them that we had suffered severe defeats and should have further disasters to meet in the future, but I said that, whereas these defeats and disasters had certainly diminished our conceit and destroyed our self-complacency, they had increased our pride. How was it, I asked then, that our pride had been enhanced? It was at that stage that I pulled out the notes and began my speech.

I will not waste the time of the House with further quotations, though on the whole I think it was the best speech I have ever made. It centred upon two themes, first that the war was not one for power and possession but a war of principles, and that those principles were shared by every Christian country. The implications are obvious. The second thing I said was that, whatever disasters happened, even if this country itself were occupied and if this capital itself was taken, we should go on fighting, if not on our beaches, then on other people's beaches, and that we should not rest until victory was ours. That is the speech that I made. I ask the House not to think I am boasting in any way if I quote a few words written by the only correspondent of an English newspaper who was actually present. He said I had scored an outstanding personal success. The speech was received not with the polite cheer usually given to visiting strangers but cheers that I never expected to hear from 1,000 Irish undergraduates listening to a British Member of Parliament. I must confess that I returned delighted with what I had been able to do, and when I opened the "Daily Telegraph" on the morning of my arrival in this country

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[Mr. Nicolson.]
and found that the hon. Member for Lincoln (Mr. Liddall) had put down a Motion which was based on evidence—I do not know where it came from—I must say it struck me by surprise.

I would not weary the House in wartime with a personal question, however indignant and injured I may feel, were it not that a question of principle is involved, a question of principle to which you, Mr. Speaker, alluded in another connection when you indicated that the privilege which Members of the House enjoyed in putting down Motions on the Order Paper or in putting down Parliamentary Questions implied a certain amount of responsibility, and that allegations against the honour and conduct of individuals should not be put down without careful investigation. I claim that the hon. Member must have known that a Motion in these terms would attract the greatest publicity. He must have known that if it had been said that I had gone to Dublin and made a patriotic speech, it would not have been news, but if he had said that I had gone to Dublin to make a defeatist speech, that would have been news and would be, as it has been, printed in every paper in the country. In my own constituency it has been printed, and in Germany too, and it has done me considerable public damage. The hon. Member put down his Motion on the evidence of quotations from Irish newspapers. He must have known that Irish newspapers are not evidence and that an Irish newspaper would not print a patriotic speech by an Englishman. He must have known, too, that he had only to approach me, and I would have told him the whole story—[HON. MEMBERS: "Don't overdo it."] I do not wish to go any further in criticising the hon. Member's action, but I beg him, after the explanation he has heard from the Home Secretary, to withdraw his Motion and to express at least some contrition for the public damage and the private distress to which I have been exposed.

Mr. Liddall (Lincoln): I feel that, at any rate, I can compliment the hon. Member on the speech that he has delivered in the House to-day. What I was concerned about was the speech he was alleged to have made on 16th March in Dublin. He tells us that he was misquoted. Newspaper men, like politicians, are not infallible, but after a fairly lengthy public life—I have been for 30 years in politics, and for 20 years I made my living as a reporter—I give it as my experience that for accuracy the working journalist can the better be relied upon. Indeed, accuracy is of paramount importance if a journal or a journalist is to prosper long. I have never known a journalist quote without being especially careful about the exact words used. As the hon. Gentleman has referred to the Irish Press, I will say that the practice of full and accurate shorthand reporting of political speeches has been more fully preserved in the Dublin Press than in any other Press in the British Isles.

Mr. Magnay (Gateshead): On a point of Order. Are we discussing the ethics of journalism or the imputations on the honour of a Member of this House?

Mr. Speaker: I did not stop the hon. Member for West Leicester (Mr. Nicolson), and I cannot stop the hon. Member for Lincoln (Mr. Liddall).

Mr. Liddall: I will not keep the House long, but it is fair to me as well as to the hon. Gentleman that I should be able to say why I put this Motion on the Paper. It was not based on third-person reporting, but on actual quotations that were given by the London evening Press as to what the hon. Member was alleged to have said. It was these quotations that shocked so many people in this country. Had the House been in the mood, I would have enjoyed reading the whole of the quotations and extracts from the many letters I have received from all parts of the country.

Commander Locker-Lampson (Birmingham, Handsworth) *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: I think that the hon. Member has said quite enough to satisfy the House.

Mr. Liddall: While I do not qualify my justification for putting down the Motion, I think it will be in accord with the usual procedure of this House when a Member has said he has been misquoted to beg to ask leave to withdraw the Motion.

NATIONAL EXPENDITURE.

Seventh and Eighth Reports from the Select Committee, brought up and read; to lie upon the Table, and to be printed [Nos. 75 and 76].

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WRITTEN ANSWERS.

POST-WAR PLANNING (UTHWATT COMMITTEE).

Mr. Mander asked the Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Works and Buildings, when it is proposed to introduce legislation to carry out the recommendations of the Uthwatt Committee?

Mr. Henry Strauss: My Noble Friend will be making a statement on this subject immediately after the Recess.

WORKS AND BUILDINGS.

RAILINGS: REMOVAL, WILLESDEN.

Mr. Viant asked the Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Works and Buildings whether he has considered a letter from the town clerk of the borough of Willesden recording the protest of the members of that council at the manner in which the iron gates, bollards and railings are being removed, the disregard of the damage caused to dwarf walls and tiled paths, and the makeshift character of the repairs effected where owners have asked for them; and will he take steps to ensure that this wilful damage ceases and all necessary repairs are carried out in a satisfactory manner?

Mr. Hicks: Yes, Sir. The damage referred to has been due in part of the difficulty experienced by the contractor in obtaining suitable labour, but to some extent damage is unavoidable owing to the nature of the structures. The damage will be repaired as soon as possible within the limitations imposed by the shortage of labour and materials.

SIR ALEXANDER GIBB AND PARTNERS.

Mr. Stokes asked the Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Works and Buildings, what proportion of the fees, amounting to £358,000, paid to Sir Alexander Gibb and Partners by his Ministry during the period December 1940 to March 1942 is retained by the firm; and whether he has any right of access to their books to ascertain the profit made by them?

Mr. Hicks: As I informed the hon. Member in reply to a Question addressed to me by him on the 11th February last, the sum of £358,000 is an estimate of the amount which will fall to be paid to the firm as outgoings on salaries and wages of staff, fees of quantity surveyors and specialist consultants and other disbursements, including a proportion of head office costs for rent, rates and other office expenses. The sum actually paid will be the amount of the firm's actual outgoings under these heads as shown in their accounts and checked by the Ministry. No portion of this sum will be retained by the firm except the proportion for head office costs referred to above. The answer to the last part of the Question is "Yes, Sir."

REQUISITIONED LAND (CLAIM).

Sir J. Lucas asked the Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Works and Buildings whether, in a case, of which he has been informed, where his Department requisitioned land, buildings, growing crops, farm implements and furniture five months ago and for which no payment has yet been made, he will authorise the immediate payment of a proportion of the compensation claimed, so that the claimant, a serving officer, may purchase a new house, in view of the fact that the option on this house is expiring and that the claimant agreed to accept the decision of the official arbitrator and, if necessary, to deposit the deeds of the new place?

Mr. Hicks: About 130 acres of land including a cottage, but not the mansion house, and certain furniture and other chattels were requisitioned from the claimant. The major part of the land is pasture and woodland, but there is also a kitchen garden containing growing crops. The major part of the furniture was placed in store and was not requisitioned. The claimant is still in possession of the cottage. No claim for payment of compensation under the Compensation (Defence) Act, 1939, has been received. The Department is always willing to consider making a payment on account of compensation. As the hon. and gallant Member is aware, it is proposed to purchase the claimant's interest on a basis agreed and the matter is being expedited as much as possible.

WAR WORKERS' HOSTELS.

Mr. Bossom asked the Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Works and Buildings the number of people for whom it has been decided to build hostels, for either the Ministry of Supply, the Ministry

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of Aircraft Production or any other Departments requiring such accommodation for war workers; and the number of hostels already completed?

Mr. Hicks: I assume that by war workers my hon. Friend means those engaged in munition factories, aircraft factories and dockyards, together with agricultural workers. My Department is building accommodation for 46,000 single workers and, in addition, hostels to house 6,400 married men with their families. Quarters for a total of some 24,000 of these have been completed. The two other Departments named are building similar accommodation on their own account, but I have no up-to-date information as to the amount completed or in hand.

TRADE AND COMMERCE.

Clothing (Exports).

Mr. De la Bère asked the President of the Board of Trade the total value of civilian manufactured and tailored clothing exported from this country for the 14 months from the 1st January, 1941, to the end of February, 1942?

Mr. Dalton: As has been stated in reply to previous Questions, publication of particulars of our oversea trade has been suspended since the outbreak of war.

Statistical Abstract.

Mr. Thorne asked the President of the Board of Trade whether he will give the date of the last publication of the Board of Trade Statistical Abstract of Accounts?

Mr. Dalton: The last issue of the Statistical Abstract for the United Kingdom, relating to the years 1924 to 1938, was published in July, 1940.

Clothes Rationing.

Lieut.-Colonel Macnamara asked the President of the Board of Trade whether he is aware of the difficulty nurses have in supplying themselves with black uniform and also civilian stockings with only one lot of coupons; and whether he will allow nurses a few extra coupons so as to help them with their uniform stockings?

Mr. Dalton: No, Sir, nurses, who receive a considerable coupon concession for the rest of their uniform clothes, have no greater wear and tear on their stockings than many other types of active workers. The wearing of different coloured stockings on and off duty does not entail extra wear and tear.

Mr. Sutcliffe asked the President of the Board of Trade whether he will make a reduction in the number of coupons required by women workers in the slipper industry for the purchase of overalls, owing to the exceptional wear and tear due to contact with machinery, and the fact that no less than seven coupons are required for each pair of sleeveless overalls?

Mr. Dalton: My hon. Friend is misinformed. In addition to the range of industrial overalls with sleeves at three and four coupons according to type, sleeveless overalls with open backs are also available at three coupons. I have no evidence that these types are unsuitable for women workers in the slipper industry.

AGRICULTURE.

Women's Land Army (Canteens).

Colonel Medlicott asked the Minister of Agriculture whether he has yet succeeded in making arrangements for members of the Women's Land Army to be allowed to use Services canteens?

Mr. Hudson: No, Sir.

Sugar-Beet (Garden Cultivation).

Colonel Carver asked the Minister of Agriculture whether, in view of the success of the scheme started by the Women's Voluntary Service at Fulford, Yorkshire, for the growing of sugar-beet in village and suburban gardens, he will recommend this scheme to other districts in areas within easy access of beet factories so that, in the aggregate, many tons of sugar will be produced and shipping space saved?

Mr. Hudson: I have no information about the scheme referred to, but if my hon. and gallant Friend will send me particulars I will consider his suggestion.

Unemployed Workers.

Colonel Carver asked the Minister of Labour the number of farm workers out of employment at the present time; and the reason for such unemployment?

Mr. Bevin: Statistics of the numbers unemployed in particular industries are

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not now available for publication and I regret therefore that I am unable to supply the information desired.

ROYAL NAVY.

Scientific Research.

Mr. Mander asked the First Lord of the Admiralty whether he will consider instituting a scientific advisory council to collaborate with the director of scientific research in connection with the work in naval establishments?

Captain Pilkington: As has been announced in this House there is, under the chairmanship of the Director of Scientific Research a scientific advisory panel, consisting of two eminent scientists and two specially selected naval officers. This panel has already carried out a number of inquiries and has visited the most important naval establishments in which research is conducted.

German Warships' Escape.

Mr. Martin asked the First Lord of the Admiralty when he received information that the German battleships lately in Brest were in a condition to leave harbour in the days immediately preceding their departure?

Captain Pilkington: I regret that I cannot add anything to the statements already made to the House.

GAS AND ELECTRICITY (RATIONING PROPOSALS).

Mr. Crowder asked the Attorney-General whether, in view of the fact that many flat dwellers have agreements with their landlords to supply them with adequate heat and light, he will ensure that under any rationing scheme steps will be taken to regularise the position between landlord and tenant in this respect on a fair and equitable basis?

The Attorney-General: Consideration of the point which my hon. Friend makes must depend very largely on the terms of the scheme for rationing heat and light which my hon. Friend proposes to introduce in due course. I will draw my hon. Friend's attention to the point raised in the Question.

JAPANESE EMBASSY AND CONSULATE STAFFS.

Wing-Commander Hulbert asked the Home Secretary how many members of the Metropolitan police are engaged in guard and escort duties over personnel of the Japanese embassy and consulate; and what is the cost of this service weekly?

Mr. H. Morrison: The total number of police officers at present employed in each period of 24 hours on these duties is 59. It is not possible to form any accurate estimate of the cost involved since the officers perform other duties in part of their time. The arrangement is of course a temporary one pending the repatriation of these persons who, while they remain here, are by international usage entitled to reasonable treatment.

Wing-Commander Hulbert asked the Home Secretary whether he will consider transferring personnel of the Japanese embassy and consulate to an internment camp or other place of detention in order to avoid members of the Metropolitan police being employed for their surveillance?

Mr. H. Morrison: The members of the Embassy are entitled to the treatment and protection prescribed by international law and custom until it becomes possible for them to leave this country. Meanwhile they and the consular personnel have been concentrated in the Embassy premises in order to simplify the task of the police in looking after them.

CIVIL DEFENCE.

Report and Control Centres (Lighting).

Mr. Lewis asked the Home Secretary whether he will call the attention of those in charge of Civil Defence report and control centres where young persons are continuously employed, where artificial lighting only is used and where the Factories Act and regulations do not apply, to the importance of arranging the lighting so that eye-strain may be avoided as far as possible and that the lights are turned away from the eyes and on to the work?

Mr. H. Morrison: The use of artificial lighting in these centres, in view of the standard of protection necessarily provided, is inevitable. It should have been

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installed with due regard to the avoidance of eye-strain, but if my hon. Friend will give me particulars of any centre where this is not so I will have the case brought to the notice of the responsible local authority.

UNIFORMS (GREATCOATS).

Lieut.-Colonel Macnamara asked the Home Secretary, in view of the decision to economise material by simplifying the design of officers' uniforms, why the design of air-raid precautions wardens' new greatcoats has not also been modified, so as to ensure economy in material?

Mr. H. Morrison: The Civil Defence greatcoat is based on an Army pattern for other ranks with one or two slight modifications made to economise material. I am satisfied that the conditions of duty and exposure under which Civil Defence Services work require a coat of this length and type, and am doubtful whether there is any room for further economies. I am, however, looking into the matter.

WOMEN DETAINEES, HOLLOWAY (CLOTHING PURCHASES).

Mr. Sloan asked the Home Secretary whether he is aware that a fashion show was held in Holloway gaol on 18th March; that a hall was provided as a show room; that mannequins were allowed to parade for the benefit of Lady Mosley and other women detained under Regulation 18B; and whether, in view of the fact that the wives and daughters of industrial workers have now no choice in relation to their purchases, he will explain his reason for allowing this proceeding?

Mr. H. Morrison: I am glad to have an opportunity of stating the facts about this arrangement. There was no fashion show and no parade of mannequins. Persons detained under Defence Regulation 18B are not kept under punitive conditions and, among other things, they are allowed to purchase clothing from their own funds. In view of the clerical and other work occasioned to the staff at Holloway Prison by the ordering of goods by post, arrangements were made with a firm near to the prison to send some goods to the prison so that the women might make their purchases on a cash basis. This arrangement has proved to be much less troublesome to the prison authorities than purchase through the post. No question arises of privileged treatment for the persons detained under the Regulation. They are, of course, subject to the same rationing restrictions as other people.

PAID AND UNPAID PERSONNEL (PROPORTIONS).

Mr. Erskine-Hill asked the Home Secretary the ratios between the numbers of unpaid and paid Civil Defence workers, excluding members of the National Fire Service, in England and Wales and in Scotland at the latest convenient date?

Mr. H. Morrison: On the basis of the latest available figures, paid personnel in the Civil Defence General Services comprise roughly 1-6th of the total in England and Wales and in Scotland approximately 1-11th. The employment of whole-time personnel was, generally speaking, authorised only in the larger built-up areas and comparisons country by country are, therefore, misleading. There are striking variations region by region. In Wales the proportion of paid to unpaid personnel in the general services is roughly 1 to 22.

FOOD SUPPLIES.

SERVICE OFFICERS' MESSES (PURCHASES).

Captain Molson asked the Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Food whether, in view of the fact that officers are entitled to full military rations less the supper element, he will arrange with the Service Departments that officers' messes should not be allowed to buy food in the open market except to bring their entitlement in food up to the standard allowed to other ranks?

Major Lloyd George: The arrangements made for the supply of rationed foods to officers' messes in the three Services vary, but in all cases the supply is subject to the limitations in force for other ranks. My Noble Friend would not feel justified in recommending the prohibition of purchases in the open market of unrationed foods for officers' messes.

EGG-PACKING STATIONS.

Mr. De la Bère asked the Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Food whether he will look into the case of Mr. V. H. Wise, of Overbury Poultry Farm, near Tewkesbury, whose egg-packer's licence, No. 552, together with many others

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similarly situated is in jeopardy owing to a proposed action by the Ministry of Food; what compensation is going to be given in such cases, and whether he will make every endeavour to refrain from discriminating against small men throughout the industry?

Major Lloyd George: The Ministry of Food has been considering, in conjunction with the national organisation representing packers, the steps which should be taken at the present time to achieve the utmost possible economy in the use of transport, petrol and man power. Schemes of economy have been prepared for each area, and most of these schemes involve the closing down of a number of redundant packing stations. Arrangements are being considered by the packers whereby the redundant packers will be compensated from a fund contributed to by the packers remaining in business. I can assure my hon. Friend that under these economy schemes no discrimination is being made against the small man, the sole test being whether the packing station in question is necessary, having regard to the needs of the area and the necessity for achieving the utmost possible economy.

FOOD EXECUTIVE OFFICERS.

Mr. Bartlett asked the Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Food whether it is still the practice of his Department to appoint local food executive officers on the nomination of the local food control committees; what instructions his Department has issued that such nominations shall be confined to persons already serving under the Department; when were these issued; and what notification of this change of policy was given to food control committees?

Major Lloyd George: When a vacancy for a food executive officer arises, the food control committee concerned is asked to recommend candidates. Food executive officers are members of the staff of the Ministry and it is the responsibility of my Department to make the appointment. There is no bar to consideration of persons outside the Ministry's service but, in view of the complexity of food control, prior experience is a factor of considerable importance.

FORTIFIED WHITE FLOUR.

Sir E. Graham-Little asked the Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Food whether he will give an estimate of the expenditure incurred up to date in promoting the fortified white loaf announced in July, 1940, including the cost of provision of factories in this country for the manufacture of synthetic Vitamin B1, and of the supply furnished in Canada and in the United States of America; the payment of royalties in respect of the patents for production of this artificial vitamin and for bleaching the flour respectively, and the sums payable by way of compensation to the firms in this country and in Canada whose contracts will cease with the cessation of the milling of white flour?

Major Lloyd George: I regret that I am not able to supply the estimate asked for by my hon. Friend.

MINISTRY OF SUPPLY.

ROYAL ORDNANCE FACTORIES (SALES TO STAFF).

Mr. Ivor Thomas asked the Minister of Supply whether he intends to continue the scheme whereby cosmestics are sold at Royal Ordnance Factories to the female staff?

Mr. Assheton: My right hon. Friend is reviewing the whole question of the sale at Royal Ordnance Factories of personal commodities, including cosmetics. I will communicate with the hon. Member as soon as a decision has been reached.

PAMPHLET.

Mr. Gledhill asked the Minister of Supply what is the purpose of the pamphlet entitled " British Tanks " and what was the cost of issue?

Mr. Assheton: The pamphlet was issued in order to satisfy the natural desire of factory workers, war savings contributors and taxpayers generally, for more information about the tanks which they are helping to produce. The cost has been more than covered by the sale proceeds.

EXCAVATOR (NON-DELIVERY).

Mr. Liddall asked the Minister of Production what reply he has forwarded to Lincoln Traffic's, Limited, in response to their telegram re non-delivery for a 10 R.B. excavator due the 25th instant; and whether he will undertake to hold an immediate inquiry on the spot?

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Mr. Assheton: I have been asked to reply. I am making urgent inquiries and will communicate with my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS.

CIVIL SERVANTS (PART-TIME WAR WORK).

Colonel Carver asked the Financial Secretary to the Treasury whether any encouragement has been given to civil servants to help with munition manufacture or farm work in their spare time; and with what results?

Captain Crookshank: No such encouragement has been given, and I find it hard to see how civil servants who are fully employed in their ordinary vocations could make any useful contribution to the munitions and farming industries.

INDIA OFFICE (OVERTIME PAY).

Mr. Purbrick asked the Secretary of State for India the amount of overtime paid in his Department for the last month for which figures are available; and has any improvement been made in the peace-time system of checking overtime to ensure that the worker has fully worked 100 per cent. in his ordinary time before working overtime?

Mr. Amery: The amount for the month of February, 1942, was £1,181. I am satisfied that the amount of paid overtime is at all times limited to the minimum necessary to the adequate discharge of the work.

HOME OFFICE AND MINISTRY OF HOME SECURITY (OVERTIME PAY).

Mr. Purbrick asked the Home Secretary the amount of overtime paid in his Department for the last month for which the figures are available; and has any improvement been made in the peace-time system of checking overtime to ensure that the worker has fully worked 100 per cent. in his ordinary time before working overtime?

Mr. H. Morrison: The amount paid in overtime to the staffs of all offices of the Home Office and Ministry of Home Security including regional offices during the month of January, 1942, was £9,200. Supervising officers are required to satisfy themselves that the staff are fully employed at all times and that the amount of overtime is no more than is necessary to cope with the work.

BRITISH ARMY.

OPERATIONS AGAINST JAPANESE.

Mr. Cocks asked the Under-Secretary of State for War whether instructions will be issued to the British forces fighting in the Far East that, in conflicts with the Japanese, no quarter is to be given or accepted?

Mr. Sandys: No, Sir.

PETROL (WASTE AVOIDANCE).

Sir L. Lyle asked the Under-Secretary of State for War whether he will lay upon the Table the most recent orders issued to the home Forces about avoiding waste of petrol?

Mr. Lipson asked the Under-Secretary of State for War what effective steps have been taken by the Army authorities, in view of the restrictions being imposed on the civil population, to put an end to the wasteful use of petrol?

Mr. Sandys: I would refer my hon. Friends to the statement I made on this subject in the Debate on the Army Estimates on 19th February last, of which I am sending them copies. The relevant orders are contained in a number of Army Council Instructions, which it is not customary to make public.

ENTERTAINERS (CIVILIAN ENGAGEMENTS).

Mr. E. Walkden asked the Under-Secretary of State for War whether he can now make any pronouncement as to the terms and permitted conditions by which servicemen in dance orchestras and concert parties may in future accept civilian engagements for entertaining the general public; and what action he has taken to deal with the evidence remitted to him during the past four weeks?

Mr. Sandys: I have been making thorough inquiries into the cases to which my hon. Friend drew my attention. As a result, I have reached the conclusion that a considerable tightening up of the existing regulations is necessary. A revised Army Council Instruction is now in the process of preparation. I will inform my hon. Friend when it is issued.

WHOLE-DAY EXERCISES (EASTER SUNDAY).

Mr. Loftus asked the Under-Secretary of State for War whether he will instruct divisional and corps commanders as to

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the undesirability of selecting Easter Sunday for arranging military exercises involving the full whole-day mobilisation of the Home Guard and other local defence services?

Mr. Sandys: I am not aware that any such whole-day exercises have been arranged to take place on Easter Sunday.

HOME GUARD.

Mr. Bossom asked the Under-Secretary of State for War whether it is intended to make available Regular officers to assist in the training of the Home Guard?

Mr. Sandys: On 24th March I announced the decision to appoint serving officers both as adjutants and as quartermasters in Home Guard battalions. As a further step, it has been decided to appoint serving officers from the Regular Army of the rank of major or lieut.-colonel on an approximate scale of one to every three battalions, with the express object of assisting in Home Guard training.

Mr. Groves asked the Under-Secretary of State for War why Home Guard medical units cannot obtain supplies of morphia until invasion commences; and by what means morphia is to be distributed under invasion conditions?

Mr. Sandys: Home Guard medical units do not exist. Supplies of morphia, however, are included in the medical equipment already issued to those Home Guard battalions for which a regimental aid post has been authorised. Arrangements have been made for the distribution of morphia to commanders of isolated posts when invasion is imminent.

Mr. Groves asked the Under-Secretary of State for War whether he is aware that certain local authorities, under invasion conditions, would probably not be able to evacuate Home Guard casualties; and whether Home Guard units are provided with sufficient equipment to enable them to treat their own casualties until evacuation becomes possible?

Mr. Sandys: Yes, Sir. Under certain conditions, it may be impossible to evacuate casualties, either military or civil. Home Guard units are, however, provided with sufficient equipment to enable them to give first aid treatment to casualties until they can be taken over by either the civil or the military medical services.

Mr. Groves asked the Under-Secretary of State for War what complaints he has received about the dilatory action of local medical war committees and their refusal to hear representatives of the Home Guard when discussing Home Guard affairs and whether he proposes to take any steps towards improving the existing situation?

Mr. Sandys: Very few complaints have been received and these have been looked into. An Army Council Instruction, whose terms have been agreed with the Central Medical War Committee, will be published shortly and should remove any misunderstandings.

BANDS.

Sir T. Moore asked the Under-Secretary of State for War whether, in view of the decisive contribution made to the success of warship weeks by the use of military bands, he will consider stationing such bands at large centres of the civilian population where they can play a useful part in sustaining the high spirit of the people?

Mr. Sandys: I would refer my hon. and gallant Friend to the reply given to him on the 17th March.

DECORATIONS (AUTHORISATION).

Colonel A. Evans asked the Under-Secretary of State for War the date on which authority was granted to eligible officers and other ranks to wear the ribbon of the Mons Star and the 1914-15 Star, respectively?

Mr. Sandys: The 1914 Star was authorised on 24th November, 1917, and the 1914-15 Star on 23rd December, 1918. Under the relevant Army Orders officers and other ranks become entitled to the star and riband of each on satisfying the War Office of their eligibility.

CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTORS (ROYAL ARMY MEDICAL CORPS).

Captain C. S. Taylor asked the Under-Secretary of State for War whether he will now give an assurance that conscientious objectors who renounce their objection to join the Royal Army Medical Corps will be retained in that Corps, and not transferred to any other branch of His Majesty's forces?

Mr. Sandys: A man who has been exempted as a conscientious objector from

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military service, but subsequently renounces his objection so far as to be willing to join the Royal Army Medical Corps, will in no circumstances be posted to a combatant arm and will normally remain in the Royal Army Medical Corps.

ANTI-AIRCRAFT GUNS (POLISHING).

Mr. Pritt asked the Under-Secretary of State for War whether he is aware that the lieutenant-general in command of a certain anti-aircraft corps, the identity of which has been communicated to his Department, has issued an order containing the words, "From now on, spit and polish is the order of the day," as a result of which paint and camouflage has been removed from anti-aircraft guns and they have been polished so as to shine in the sun; that the training of troops under his command has been practically suspended for a week in order that they may carry out this order; that it is likely to give direct and indirect assistance to the enemy; and whether he will immediately have inquiries made with a view to revoking this order and removing the person who made it?

Mr. Sandys: The necessity for the concealment of guns should of course, be well understood by all troops. It appears that an order of this kind was in fact issued, though not, as is suggested, by the corps commander. I have asked the Commander-in-Chief, Anti-Aircraft Command, to inquire into this matter and to take such action as may be necessary.

BRITISH PRISONERS OF WAR.

Mr. E. Walkden asked the Under-Secretary of State for War whether there has been any hitch in the delivery of Red Cross parcels to Stalag XXI D, Posen, or reports as to no food parcels having arrived and no extra food provided during February; and what action has been taken to augment the food supplies at this camp during the cold weather?

Mr. Sandys: Food parcels are sent regularly from Geneva to this camp, but for the reasons explained by my right hon. and gallant Friend on 17th February there was a temporary reduction in the number despatched about the end of last year. The position generally has now improved and I hope that this camp should by now be receiving regular and sufficient supplies of food.

INDIA (FOOD SUPPLIES).

Major Lyons asked the Secretary of State for India to what extent he is satisfied that India is self-contained in food supplies for its people; and whether all possible steps have been taken by the Government to increase food production and conserve supplies?

Mr. Amery: India is normally self-supporting in regard to food supplies, except for a varying quantity of rice imported from Burma which rarely exceeds 5 per cent. of the total rice consumed in India. The Government of India, who have to provide not only for the requirements of the civil population but also for certain military commitments and to meet local deficiencies which may result from transport difficulties, have discussed with representatives of the Provincial Governments and the Indian States at recent conferences the prospects of increasing the rice and other food crops in India, and have convened a further conference to take place on 6th April next to consider the steps to be taken to increase both food and fodder production generally as well as the question of regional self-sufficiency.

BLACKHALL COLLIERY, DURHAM (DISPUTE).

Colonel Burton asked the Secretary for Mines whether his attention has been called to the closing down of the Blackhall Colliery, Durham; what is the cause; and what action he is taking to secure its reopening?

Mr. Grenfell: I am aware that this mine has been idle owing to a dispute since 16th March. The chief conciliation officer of my Department is now in Durham, and I must await his report before making any further statement.

MILITARY SERVICE.

DOCTORS (REAPPOINTMENTS).

Mr. Groves asked the Minister of Health whether he is aware that some medical men who voluntarily joined the Forces during the war, and for that reason resigned hospital or other professional appointments, were not reappointed on their discharge or release from His Majesty's Forces; and whether he will consult the Emergency Medical Services

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Committee in order that such men may be reinstated?

Mr. E. Brown: If my hon. Friend will send me particulars of the cases which he has in mind I will consider whether I can properly take any action.

SCHEDULE OF RESERVED OCCUPATIONS.

Dr. Russell Thomas asked the Minister of Labour (1) how many occupations have been deferred under the Schedule of Reserved Occupations since 21st January, 1942; and how many men in each such occupation;

(2) how many occupations have been deferred under paragraph 28 of the Schedule of Reserved Occupations as before 31st December, 1941; and how many men in each such occupation?

Mr. Bevin: I am awaiting a letter from my hon. Friend, explaining more precisely what information he desires.

AGRICULTURAL WORKERS.

Dr. Russell Thomas asked the Minister of Labour whether farmers are applying for deferment of their employees, in view of the progressive raising of the ages of reserved occupation under paragraph 10; and to what extent they are refusing to employ women?

Mr. Bevin: The allocation of men in agricultural occupations to the Forces or Civil Defence Services is subject to a special scheme, and, with a few exceptions, occupations peculiar to agriculture are not subject to progressive age raising. Applications for deferment of calling up of men in those occupations are considered by war agricultural executive committees, who have regard to the possibility of substitution by women.

CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTORS (WOMEN).

Mr. Harvey asked the Minister of Labour whether his attention has been called to the position of a number of unmarried women between 22 and 30 years of age who were not afforded facilities to register as conscientious objectors in the same way as women of the 20 and 21 age groups; that some of the former group have been prosecuted for failing to comply with directions, which would not have occurred had their names been registered provisionally as conscientious objectors; and whether steps will be taken to remedy the position and remove misunderstandings in future on this point?

Mr. Bevin: Unmarried women between 22 and 30 years of age are entitled to apply to be provisionally registered as conscientious objectors in respect of service with the Forces. Such registration, however, has no bearing on their obligation to comply with directions to perform civilian work, though in practice I do not direct conscientious objectors to perform work closely connected with the military side of the war effort. In the two cases in which there have been prosecutions of conscientious objectors the women had refused to work in hospitals.

MALAYA (EVACUATED CIVILIANS).

Mr. Sorensen asked the Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies what steps have been, or are being, taken financially to assist the wives and families, both of soldiers and civilians, who have been evacuated from Malaya to this country or elsewhere; what steps are being taken to discover whether male relatives who remained in Malaya are still alive; and whether he is aware that some wives and families now here are without income or means of support other than the assistance of friends and relatives in this country?

Mr. Harold Macmillan: Wives and families of soldiers receive the regulated allowance payable when the soldier is missing. Vessels arriving with families of officers and soldiers from Malaya are met at the ports and there informed of the arrangements and are given financial assistance immediately if they need it. As regards civilians, similar rates are provided for dependants of members of the Malayan Volunteer Forces. The dependants of established members of the Malayan Government Services who have been evacuated receive an allowance from the officer's salary, and I understand that many business organisations are following this practice. As regards other civilians evacuated from Malaya to this country or the Dominions, the appropriate general rates of subsistence are applicable, but no specially increased rate of subsistence from public funds is possible in Malayan cases as compared with those who have suffered loss from enemy action in other

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theatres of war. Vessels arriving from Malaya are met and assistance, financial or other, is given immediately in any necessary case. Endeavours have been and are being made both through the Protecting Power and the International Red Cross Committee to obtain information about British subjects in Malaya and elsewhere. Unfortunately, the Japanese Government have hitherto maintained their absolute refusal to permit the representatives of the Protecting Power and the International Red Cross Committee to carry out their function in territories which have been involved. The Protecting Power is continuing its efforts.

BELGIAN CONGO (AIRCRAFT GIFT).

Sir D. Gunston asked the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs whether he has any statement to make regarding the sum of £250,000 collected in the Belgian Congo and presented to His Majesty's Government for the purchase of fighter aircraft for the Royal Air Force?

Mr. Law: I am glad to have the opportunity of expressing the gratitude of His Majesty's Government for this most generous gift from the people of the Belgian Congo. My right hon. Friend, the Minister of Aircraft Production, has already sent a message of appreciation to them. I understand that the money will be applied to the purchase of nearly fifty fighter aircraft, to be flown by the Belgian fighter squadron which is operating in this country with so much distinction and by the Belgian pilots who are serving so gallantly in other squadrons of the Royal Air Force. The aircraft will be named individually in accordance with the wishes of the people of the Belgian Congo.

NATIONAL FINANCE.

INCOME TAX (DEDUCTION FROM WAGES).

Mr. Mainwaring asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer (i) whether he is aware of the large number of cases in which deductions of Income Tax from wages are wrongly made and that, despite protests by the victims, the deductions continue to be made; and what steps he is taking to secure better assessments;

(2) whether he is aware of the unnecessary hardship and suffering imposed upon large numbers of workpeople who have to wait many weeks for the return of money deducted from wages on account of incorrect assessments; and will he take steps to expedite the machinery dealing with such cases?

Sir K. Wood: I propose to deal with the subject of the deduction of tax from wages when making my Budget Statement, but in the meantime I would like to point out that it is an essential feature of the tax deduction scheme that before any tax can be deducted by the employer the wage-earner is given an opportunity of making a return and is sent a notice of assessment against which he can appeal. In the ordinary case therefore the amount of tax to be deducted will have been agreed with the taxpayer before deduction commences. The commonest cause of over-deduction is the failure of the taxpayer to make his return or to appeal against his assessment at the proper time. If the hon. Member has any case in which he considers that there has been hardship or unnecessary delay in rectifying over-deduction, I would be grateful if he would let me have particulars.

Sir L. Lyle asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether, in view of the impossibility of simplifying Income Tax as a whole during the war period, he will concentrate upon its simplification for weekly or monthly wage-earners whose incomes do not exceed £500 per annum, and introduce a new tax devoid of complications to be deducted from current wages?

Sir K. Wood: I must ask my hon. Friend to await my Budget statement.

Major Kimball asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will simplify the procedure for the payment of Income Tax deducted by employers where only a small number of employees are involved by allowing the employer to make one payment and one return of Forms No. 1 D.S. (H.Y.) and No. 2 D.S. (H.Y.) at the end of the accounting period or upon the departure of the employee if before the end of the period, instead of the monthly payments and monthly renditions of the Form No. 2 D.S. (H.Y.)?

Sir K. Wood: Collectors of taxes have instructions to accept quarterly instead of monthly payment of tax deducted from

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remuneration in cases where the total amount to be deducted each month does not exceed £1.

BANK OF ENGLAND (GOLD STOCKS).

Mr. Parker asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether the Bank of England has made a profit by the sale of its gold stocks in the open market or to the Exchange Equalisation Fund; whether this profit has accrued directly or indirectly to the Treasury; and what is the amount involved?

Sir K. Wood: Since the establishment of the Exchange Equalisation Account all profits made by the Bank of England by the sale of its gold stocks have accrued directly to the Treasury. For reasons of public interest the accounts of the Exchange Equalisation Account, including the surplus, are left unpublished.

OLD AGE, WIDOWS' AND ORPHANS' PENSIONS (COST).

Major Peto asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what annual amount the State is now paying towards the cost of old age, widows' and orphans' pensions?

Sir K. Wood: Payments from the Exchequer in the forthcoming financial year towards the Contributory and Non-contributory schemes are estimated at £73,500,000. In addition, the Exchequer has to meet the cost of Supplementary pensions to old age pensioners and to widow pensioners over the age of 60 which are estimated to cost £30,500,000 in 1942-43, bringing the total charge for the year up to £104,000,000. These figures do not include the cost of war pensions, pensions under the Personal Injuries (Civilians) Scheme or pensions to blind persons.

YOUNG WORKERS (MEDICAL CARE).

Dr. Haden Guest asked the President of the Board of Education whether, in view of the long hours worked in war industries, and other occupations, by young persons between the ages of 14 and 18 years, he will extend the system of school medical inspection to them at the beginning of their employment and at convenient dates thereafter?

Mr. Ede: Provision for the care of young workers is made in connection with the Factory Acts and other enactments, through examining factory surgeons or other doctors, through welfare officers and in other ways. My right hon. Friend is in sympathy with the hon. Member's objection but he will readily understand that, under the conditions of strain in which the school medical service is at present working, my right hon. Friend cannot envisage its extension in the manner desired.

BLACK MARKET OFFENCES (PUNISHMENT).

Major Thorneycroft asked the Home Secretary whether arrangements can be made to form convict gangs for essential works, such as aerodrome construction, from men sentenced for offences connected with the black market?

Mr. H. Morrison: Persons imprisoned for " black market " offences will, like the rest of the prison population, be employed in prison, on work useful to the war effort. Special work of the kind proposed in respect of a particular class of offenders would not, I think, secure any advantages sufficient to outweigh the great difficulties involved.

INJURED WORKMEN (REHABILITATION).

Sir F. Fremantle asked the Home Secretary whether he will consider amendment of the Workmen's Compensation Act, as provided in most industrial countries, to make the provision of an artificial limb a compulsory part of benefit in any case that may so require it?

Mr. H. Morrison: It is recognised that the present arrangements in regard to the provision of artificial limbs require to be put on a more satisfactory footing, but the precise form which such arrangements should take must depend on the measures for the rehabilitation of the injured workman generally. It is a matter which must be dealt with as part of the comprehensive measures for rehabilitation of disabled persons which the Government have decided shall be prepared for introduction as soon as possible after the end of the war. As the Minister of Labour announced on the 22nd January, these measures are now being actively investigated in consulta-

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tion with the Ministers concerned. Meanwhile it is hoped shortly to have in operation as part of the war-time emergency scheme for the rehabilitation of injured workpeople such additional facilities in respect of the provision of suitable artificial limbs as may be necessary to enable the injured workman to resume employment.

ORDERS OF THE DAY.

LANDLORD AND TENANT (REQUISITIONED LAND) BILL.

Order for consideration of Lords Amendments read.

Motion made, and Question, " That the Lords Amendments be now considered," put, and agreed to.—[*The Solicitor-General.*]

Lords Amendments considered accordingly.

TITLE.

Lords Amendment: In page 1, after " powers " insert:

" for the adjustment of the rights of the parties to such leases with respect to certain buildings and fixtures."

The Solicitor-General (**Sir David Maxwell Fyfe**): I beg to move, " That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said Amendment."

The necessity for the alteration of the Title of the Bill is caused by the new Clause which deals with fixtures on requisitioned property which has not been disclaimed, in addition to property where a disclaimer has been made.

Mr. Garro Jones (Aberdeen, North): Perhaps I may be permitted at the outset to congratulate my hon. and learned Friend upon his appointment to his new office and to wish him success. This is an Amendment to the Title of the Bill, and as there is a considerable number of other Amendments upon which I do not wish to detain the House at length, I may perhaps say a few words at this stage to deprecate Amendments being made in the Titles of Bills. The necessity for making such an Amendment at this stage arises from the fact that a number of Amendments are being proposed at a late stage in the passage of the Bill which can only be brought into Order if the Title of the Bill is amended. I would ask the House to observe that this places the procedure of the House in a rather anomolous position, because Amendments rejected by the Chair as being out of Order under the old Title on the Committee stage are now, when it is too late, made permissible by Amendments to the Title at this stage. Conversely, Amendments which were formerly admissible might now be made out of Order. If that is the case, and if the Title of the Bill is a rigid criterion of what is permissible and what is not, it is not a procedure that ought to be followed without good cause.

The rapidly changing scene in the relations of landlord and tenant in the light of changing post-war conditions, and the new decisions which are constantly being made in the courts, make it very difficult to keep the legislation governing the relations between landlord and tenant up to date, but I would suggest that if in future Amendments become necessary at a late stage of a Bill consideration ought to be given to the question whether the bringing in of short additional Bills might not be a more regular way of proceeding. I do not wish to press this as a highly critical matter, but I should like it to be considered by the hon. and learned Gentleman on any future occasion.

Question put, and agreed to.

CLAUSE 2.—(*Effect of notice of disclaimer.*)

Lords Amendment: In line 13, leave out Sub-section (3).

The Solicitor-General: I beg to move, " That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said Amendment."

This Sub-section deals with fixtures. It is the purpose of a new Clause which I shall move shortly to deal not only with the class of fixture referred to in this Clause but with certain others, and therefore it is proposed to omit this Sub-section.

Question put, and agreed to.

Lords Amendment: In page 3, line 39, after " ten," insert " and Sub-section (2) of Section sixteen."

The Solicitor-General: I beg to move, " That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said Amendment."

This Amendment does not raise any new point, but only applies Sub-section (4) to further provisions in the Agricultural Holdings Act.

Question put, and agreed to.

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Lords Amendment: In page 3, line 42, leave out paragraph (*b*).

The Solicitor-General: I beg to move, "That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said Amendment."

The matter referred to in this paragraph is also dealt with in the new Clause, and therefore we propose to leave out the paragraph.

Question put, and agreed to.

Further Lords Amendment to page 4, line 37, agreed to.

CLAUSE 3.—(*Multiple Leases.*)

Lords Amendment: In page 5, line 13, at the end, insert:

"Provided that, if the court gives such a direction in a case where possession of any tenement comprised in the lease has not been taken or is not retained as aforesaid, the court may, if it thinks just, direct that the rent payable under the lease and, if the tenement is sub-let, the rent payable under the under-lease shall, notwithstanding the disclaimer, be payable, to such extent as may be directed, in respect of the period beginning with the material date and ending with the date on which the notice of disclaimer becomes effective, and the provisions of this Act relating to the apportionment of rent shall have effect subject to any such direction."

The Solicitor-General: I beg to move, "That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said Amendment."

This proviso maintains the payment of rent where certain tenants under a multiple lease are left in possession.

Question put, and agreed to.

CLAUSE 5.—(*Provisions in case where tenant is abroad.*)

Lords Amendment: I page 6, line 26, after "application", insert "made on behalf of the tenant or".

The Solicitor-General: I beg to move, "That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said Amendment."

This Amendment gives an additional right to a tenant who is overseas on military service or otherwise in order that his case may be presented.

Mr. Garro Jones: In what part of the Bill is it stated who it is who may make application on behalf of the tenant? Is it a relative or his legal adviser?

The Solicitor-General: I think my hon. Friend will find that stated in the Clause. The object of this provision is to cover the case where the tenant abroad is too late in giving his notice of disclaimer, but is not unobtainable and can give instructions to the person mentioned.

Mr. Garro Jones: But where is it in Clause 5? I can find a definition of a member of the family in the Interpretation Clause, but I cannot find in Clause 5 who may make the application.

The Solicitor-General: Let me explain the present construction of Clause 5. Under Sub-section (1) an application may be made by the tenant himself within a reasonable time after his return. Under Sub-section (2) where the tenant cannot be found and it is not reasonably practicable to obtain instructions, and the applicant is a proper person to exercise the rights on behalf of the tenant, the court may, if it thinks fit, direct that those rights may be exercised. Who is the proper person, whether a relative or a solicitor, is, I think a matter for the court. As I understand it, it would be proper for the court to allow the tenant's agent, or the estate agent who is managing his property, or any person who is authorised by the tenant, to act. If this Amendment is inserted the words "made on behalf of the tenant" would obviously include the same class of person. It would not be limited to solicitors, but would include anyone who is deemed a proper person.

Question put, and agreed to.

Further Lords Amendments to line 31 agreed to.

Lords Amendment: In page 7, line 47, at the end, insert new Clause A (*Adjustment of rights as to certain buildings and fixtures*).

(1) Where possession of any land comprised in a lease has been taken on behalf of His Majesty in the exercise of emergency powers and—

(*a*) the tenant has a right, as between him and his landlord, to remove, either during the currency of the lease or after the termination thereof, any building or fixtures annexed to the land; and

(*b*) the lease comes to an end (whether as the result of disclaimer under this Act or otherwise) before possession of the land so taken has been given up, or within such a short period thereafter as not to give the tenant a reasonable opportunity for exercising his right;

the said right may be exercised within a reasonable time after such possession has been given up or, with the consent of the authority by whom possession was so taken, at any earlier time.

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(2) The foregoing Subsection shall not apply to any building or fixture which is annexed to a holding within the meaning of the Agricultural Holdings Act, 1923, and is a building or fixture to which Section twenty-two of that Act applies, but that Section shall have effect, in any such case as is mentioned in the last foregoing Sub-section, as if the reference in that Section to a reasonable time after the termination of the tenancy were construed as a reference to a reasonable time after possession of the land taken in the exercise of emergency powers has been given up.

(3) The tenant of any land of which possession has been taken as aforesaid may recover from the person entitled to the compensation payable in respect of the land under paragraph (*a*) or paragraph (*b*) of Sub-section (1) of Section two of the Compensation (Defence) Act, 1939, such part (if any) of the compensation payable under the said paragraph (*a*) as may be agreed by the tenant and the said person, or in default of agreement, as may be determined by the court, to be attributable to the use during any period after the termination of the lease of any building or fixtures removable by the tenant, and such part of the compensation payable under the said paragraph (*b*) as may be so agreed or determined to be attributable to damage to any such building or fixtures.

(4) Where the tenant of any land is entitled under the foregoing provisions of this Section to remove any building or fixtures within a reasonable time after possession of the land is given up as aforesaid, the person who, when possession is so given up, is entitled to occupy the land, shall, if the tenant has served on him a notice requesting to be informed when possession is so given up and specifying the address to which the information is to be sent, serve a notice accordingly giving that information, and the period within which the tenant may remove the building or fixtures shall extend to a reasonable time after the service of the notice by the said person.

(5) This Section shall extend to any case where the lease has come to an end before the date of the passing of this Act but possession of the land comprised therein is still retained as aforesaid at the said date, and shall, in relation to any such lease, be deemed to have been in force at the termination thereof.

The Solicitor-General: I beg to move, "That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said Amendment."

Under the procedure which we have varied by passing a number of Amendments to omit various provisions in the Bill, the tenant would have been allowed to remove fixtures within one month of the end of the requisitioning period and to get a share of the compensation which is enhanced by the value of fixtures. We did not think that that went far enough, and the new Clause covers the case where a lease has come to an end not by disclaimer on the part of the tenant but by the ordinary effluxion of time or the terms of the lease. In those circumstances a tenant may be barred from removing fixtures, and we have dealt with that position. We have also dealt with the position where it is not fixtures which are concerned but buildings which the tenant would have the right to demolish and remove were it not for the requisitioning being a fact. To answer the point made by the hon. Member for North Aberdeen (Mr. Garro Jones) that was one of the main reasons why this new Clause was introduced and why the alteration had to be made in the Title. A very hard case was brought to our attention in which a tenant was unable to remove a building on the land because it was requisitioned and the landlord was therefore getting compensation rent of a very considerable amount and not sharing it with the tenant. We felt that that sort of position ought to be dealt with even at the risk of taking the procedure which my hon. Friend has criticised.

Mr. Garro Jones: I should like to point out that this is a new Clause which would not have been admitted by the Chair if it had been proposed at the ordinary stage in the Committee proceedings.

Mr. Speaker: I must inform the hon. Member that that is not the case.

Mr. Garro Jones: It has been necessary to make an Amendment in the Title of the Bill in order to make admissible a Clause which would not otherwise have been admissible.

Mr. Speaker: That is not the case either.

Mr. Garro Jones: Then perhaps it may be possible for my hon. and learned Friend to say why it has been necessary to amend the Title. I think the House would be very glad to know what was the reason for this very unusual procedure of making an Amendment in the Title to the Bill. We might have spent a considerable time in debating it, and I should be glad to know the purpose of it.

The Solicitor-General: With regard to procedure, perhaps I might respectfully draw the attention of my hon. Friend to the possibility that he might receive enlightenment from a perusal of Standing Order No. 34? With regard to the other point which has occurred here, the proposed new Clause, as I have already explained, deals with fixtures. It embraces fixtures on requisitioned property which

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has not been disclaimed as well as on property which has been disclaimed. Therefore it seemed clear that there should be included in the Title the words:

" for the adjustment of the rights of the parties to such leases with respect to certain buildings and fixtures."

to make it clear that the Bill deals not only with disclaimed property but with property which has not been disclaimed. I appreciate my hon. Friend's very wide-awake, watch-dog activity on these occasions, but if he considers the Title now with the object of the Bill and the proposed new Clause in mind, he will see that, on the merits and apart from the technicalities, there is no difficulty placed in the way of hon. Members.

Question, " That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said Amendment," put, and agreed to.

Subsequent Lords Amendment agreed to.

KENYA (AFRICAN LABOUR).

Motion made, and Question proposed, " That this House do now adjourn."—[*Mr. James Stuart.*]

Mr. Creech Jones (Shipley): I would draw the attention of the House for a short while, to the new proposals which have been adopted in Kenya for the conscription of Africans to work on private European farms. In my judgment the policy is unwise and short-sighted; secondly, the safeguards are inadequate and more should be instituted. My Party has always opposed legislation to enforce Africans, directly or indirectly, to work for white settlers, on the grounds that it is uneconomical, is wrong in principle and is contrary to our British declarations in respect to discrimination. In any case, it seems to me to be the wrong way of seeking the co-operation of the Colonial peoples in the war effort.

Latterly, there has been a good deal of criticism in respect to the assumptions of our Colonial policy, following the conquest of the Malayan Peninsula by the Japanese. There have been criticisms and complaints of our failure to associate the Colonial peoples with the war effort and to secure their free co-operation, to make them feel that we, with them, have a common cause, and that for them, too, this is a war of liberation. In Kenya the co-operation of the people is sought, presumably, by conscribing them to work for private interests. It seems to me that this is the wrong way to convince the African people that Britain is identified with the cause of liberation.

No doubt I shall be told that we have labour conscription in England, and if in Britain, why not in Kenya? Obviously, Kenya is not Britain. We have responsible government, and the right of free criticism, and there is a check on the Government's activities. We are, more or less, an educated people. In the case of Kenya, the African people are governed by an alien race. The black people have no voice whatsoever in government; there is segregation in land, and many of us feel that our native policy in that country has been reprehensible. The racial and economic structure of the two countries is vastly different. There is no analogy between Britain and Kenya.

I put a question in this House as to the purpose of this policy, and I was informed that it was impossible by normal means to secure sufficient labour in Kenya to meet the requirements of a particular theatre of war. I would point out to hon. Members that, in the report which recommended this policy, there is no examination whatsoever of the possibilities of production in Kenya, as to whether labour can be better employed, more efficient development can go on in the reserves and in the European Highlands, what contribution the Africans and Europeans can make in the war effort, and what is the best means of mobilising the resources having regard to the existing racial and social problems in the Colony. Indeed, the underlying principle which is declared in the report is that Africans must be made to work. There is no suggestion that there should be a drive in the reserves for the improvement of African production or the development of the native economy.

This policy marks the culmination of an agitation which has been going on for some time among the white settlers in Kenya. There have been farmers' meetings in which demands have been made that African labour should be made more readily available for the European farms. With that in mind the Governor stopped the recruitment of Africans for military services. After a while the Government instituted a campaign to assist the normal recruitment methods of supply of Africans wanted for work in the Highlands. It

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[Mr. Jones.]

was while that assisted scheme was being worked out and applied that a committee was set up to consider labour conscription of the Africans. The committee admitted, with, as it seems, a guilty conscience, that the farm work for which the African was asked to give his labour was unattractive because of the pay and conditions operating on the farms. They admitted that there was no difficulty whatsoever in securing as many Africans as were required for military purposes, and that the African is dissatisfied with his basic rates, and this is reflected in his output. There is the further admission that there would be no difficulty in securing Africans if pay and conditions were right. These are the statements of the report, and the Committee did not examine at all why the assisted recruiting scheme was inadequate for the purpose.

Within a period of a few months the Government was able to secure no fewer than 12,000 to 15,000 Africans for work on the farms, but we find in the report no discussion of the nature of the shortage of labour, where it arose, what it was due to, or whether it was due to obsolete methods. These obvious questions are ignored, and one is left to assume that it became a matter of settled policy, both for the Committee and for the Government, that the conscription of African labour for private employment was to be put into operation. I suggest that if there had been a guarantee of reasonable wages and conditions, the necessity for conscription would not have arisen, and the present policy need not have been implemented at all. I was amazed at the most astonishing alacrity with which the Colonial Office, immediately representations were made to it for the enforcement of this policy, gave its consent. It would be unfair for me to suggest that the existing Ministers are in any way responsible for this policy. I rather deplore that two imaginative and enlightened Ministers are obliged to attempt the justification of an unfortunate and unhappy policy of the type which has marred our administration in this part of Africa.

Let me say a few words about the scheme itself. First of all, it is based in discrimination, discrimination against Africans as compared with Indians, Arabs and Europeans. It is quite true that the Governor has certain general powers, to operate at the age of 18, but the general powers against Africans for conscripted labour for private employment operate at the age of 16, and presumably his powers do not operate in respect of directing Europeans to private employment on farms. The second thing about the proposal is that essential work is completely identified with the European farm lands. There is no conception at all in the report that the essential work of the reserves should and must go on, or that the reserves themselves can make any contribution whatsoever to the war effort. In fact, a curious phrase occurs in the report:

> "An African may plead objection to being conscripted because he can show that he is engaged in producing on a reasonable scale in the reserves some commodity which is the equivalent of an essential undertaking."

That means that production in the reserves, or the organisation of production with a view to securing a surplus for the theatre of war, is not "essential work." Essential work for war purposes is entirely the work of the European farms. I suggest that this policy is bad for the Africans, particularly as it will coerce a larger number of Africans out of the reserves, and to that degree will prejudice the food production and general economy which we have been anxious to develop and organise in these reserves. Already, since 1936, 40,000 Africans have gone out into general labour, and every year some 90,000 Africans seek employment on the farm away from the reserves. That kind of exodus, whatever may be the present congestion in the reserves or pressure of taxation, cannot go on indefinitely without considerable prejudice to the progress of the African and also to the economy of the reserves. In point of fact, it is well known that these enforced absences over long periods dislocate family and tribal life, the life of the reserves; food crops suffer and a great deal of pain is caused. In this report the social and economic effects of the policy have not been in the least considered.

Surely, if this policy is adopted, there ought to be certain important safeguards. It was pointed out to the Committee by Government officials that this scheme depended completely for its success on the appointment of an adequate inspectorate. But the Government said at the time that men were not available to be appointed

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as inspectors. Although the warning was given that the scheme could not be carried out without a proper staff, the scheme was imposed, when for its efficient and fair working an inspectorate was vitally necessary. These considerations are also applicable in respect of the appointment of special magistrates, which is also necessary under the scheme. It is made very clear in the report by Archdeacon Owen that the scheme's disadvantages would be counter-balanced as it were by efficient inspectors, who would see that offending employers did not get away with it. The position is therefore that the scheme cannot operate efficiently because the officials are not available, and when Archdeacon Owen made a suggestion that Africans might be employed, no recommendation that that course should be adopted was made.

A second unfortunate feature is that there is no recommendation at all for an improvement of wage standards. It is quite true that there is a general phrase suggesting that in fixing wages attention must be given to the maintenance of a proper standard of living for the natives, and to the increased costs of living brought about by war conditions. But at the present time wages are 3½d. per day for a solid day's work, as is indicated in the report. If you allow for food, accommodation and other incidentals, wages are not more than 7d. per day. These wage rates are only possible because of the heavy subsidy which is contributed by the native reserves, and it seems to me to be a monstrous thing that conscription should be imposed in such a way as to impose further burdens on African reserves so that labour may be used on European private farm lands. These lands are to be subsidised and are not themselves put on a proper economic basis. I suggest that there should have been a clear-cut wage policy in connection with a scheme of this kind.

Though it is not in the report, I understand that there is to be a central wages board. There is some talk about district wages boards. What are the powers of this central wages board? What will constitute the decision of that board? Can it legislate for the whole of Kenya? But in any case, there is no suggestion in the report that there should be any wage increase. In point of fact, the report goes out of its way to say that there should be no material increase to conscripts. The old system of wage arrangements is to continue. The Committee, however, attaches importance to rations, but if you have not got the inspectorate, how can you guarantee that diet will be more varied and better, or that employers will treat their employees in this regard along the lines which the Committee would desire? Further, they place a great deal of faith in better accommodation. But already experience in the Colony shows that very little can be done in respect to farm housing, particularly so far as the poor and middling farms are concerned, because the financial ability of many farmers is not there. Without inspection, how can you guarantee the reasonable standard of housing of Africans? Again, nowhere in the report is the fact faced that it is unlikely that the conscripts will be gathered from any but the most industrious of the African people—the people who are most industrious already. It is not likely you will be able to get large numbers, say from the Masai, the Northern tribes or from the coastal tribes. The main burden will undoubtedly fall on the already industrious people who have fertile reserves in the central and Nyanza provinces. You will not get this burden of conscription equally spread over all Africans in the Colony. I suggest that it is grossly unfair that the most industrious tribes should have to bear this burden, and I ask that this policy should be reversed.

The white farmers have guaranteed prices and markets, and now they are to have cheap subsidised labour, subsidised at the expense of the African reserves. The sisal growers said they wanted yearly contracts. The Committee said they could have them irrespective of what was laid down in the Forced Labour Convention. This seems to mark the culmination of our native policy of rooting out natives from the white highlands and trying to force them back as labour serfs in the interests of private employment. I want safeguards in respect to inspection —if I cannot get this policy reversed—in respect to a standard wage and guaranteed conditions, and also in respect to a sound policy of development in the reserves. Then development should not be prejudiced through the policy of African conscription. I want further to be assured that the figure of 55 per cent. of Africans who may leave the reserves because of the adoption of this policy shall not be exceeded.

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[Mr. Jones.]

There are other unfortunate features. It seems to me to be monstrous to apply the whole system of penal sanctions to the employment of these people. This country has been a party to a Convention for the abolition of penal sanctions. Already in Kenya since the war the system of penal sanctions has been worsened. Now we bring them into conscript private employment and impose on this new class these sanctions. Again, I want to know why it is that the African boy at school at 16 should be taken. If the Kenya Europeans had a boy at school, would they agree to such a policy? Why this discrimination? Why is it, when it has become a general practice in most places with recruitment schemes that travelling from the place of employment to home is not provided for, that no provision is made here for repatriation, if I may use the word, or for the periods which must elapse between the respective contracts which these men may be obliged to serve? Again, I think the penalties which are suggested are perfectly monstrous. Why should it be that the fine that can be imposed on an African for an infringement is equivalent to a whole year's earnings? I think it is completely unjustified. I am told that penalties fall equally on the employer as on the employee, but the most cursory examination of this penal clause shows quite clearly that that is not the case. If an African feels that there is a case against an employer, if there are half a dozen Africans who have a like feeling, will it be suggested if the punishment is imprisonment that the two months' imprisonment will be multiplied by six? Penalties are not imposed in that way. There should be a punishment based in equity for the employer as for the employee. The penalties for the employee are much too heavy. I feel strongly that something needs to be done to modify the conditions which I have indicated.

My last remarks are concerned with the general effects of the Measure. I suggest that the effect will be to disturb the economy of the whole of the territory. It is likely to set back production in the reserves, and is likely to check African development. I suggest that the assumptions of such a policy are based on those old assumptions that the African people are different from us, and therefore we must discriminate against them, that according we can apply to them measures which could not be and should not be made applicable to the European. In point of fact the theory seems to be that the black exists, as was pointed out in the Kenya Press by a native, to work for private white employers. I do ask, when we are talking in these days about a war of freedom and liberation, when we are talking about Atlantic Charters, about winning freedom for the common people, about new deals and all the rest: Is the Secretary of State prepared to give guarantees to the Africans of a sound land and agricultural policy, including afforestation and soil conservation?

Is he prepared to modify the segregation policy of the White highlanders so that some of the derelict and uncultivated land may be used to relieve the normal congestion in the native reserves? Is he prepared to insist that there shall be a vigorous social policy concerned with the health and education of these people? Lastly, which is fundamental to the whole issue, is the existing Constitution to be changed so as to permit of representation of black people in the higher councils of the Colony? Is it to be tolerated any longer that no black man is nominated to sit on the Governor's Executive Council and in the Legislative Council? It seems to me to be wrong that there should be no direct black representation at all. And the answer is not that there are no Africans available. I can give the names of four or five extraordinarily well educated Africans, men of culture and learning, men of discretion and judgment, who are fitted to take their place in the higher councils of the State. If this present policy is imposed, then at least these concessions ought to be made.

For these reasons I ask that if this policy is persisted in, at least the elementary safeguards I have indicated should be granted. We talk of liberation. Let us secure the co-operation of the Colonial peoples by themselves identifying themselves freely with us because they are conscious that this war is not only a war of liberation for the great outer world, but also a war of liberation from the Imperialism we have in the past obliged them to experience.

Mr. Edmund Harvey (Combined English Universities): I would join with my hon. Friend the Member for Shipley (Mr. Creech Jones) in expressing regret

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that my right hon. Friend should have to make his first speech in his present capacity in defence of a policy which, at heart, he cannot feel easy about. I do not believe that, personally, he is in any way responsible for it. I regret that the decision should have been taken to carry out the recommendations of this committee on compulsory labour in Kenya without the House having had an opportunity to consider the principle and the grave consequences involved. Even in Kenya, anxiety has been expressed about the introduction of this principle; and the "Times," on 16th February, had a message from its Nairobi correspondent pointing out that the "East African Standard"

"hopes that compulsion will be avoided, and contends that the natives have not been given by the Government Information Service an adequate background of understanding of the real war situation and their own part therein."

Evidently it is the belief of a certain amount of well-informed people in Kenya that, if the right kind of appeal had been made to the natives, this urgently-needed labour would have been forthcoming. But my hon. Friend has put his finger on the real reason, which is that the rates of payment at present prevalent are not adequate to attract the labour which is there, and which could be forthcoming if adequate wage-rates and conditions prevailed. The report of the committee itself shows that that is the case. They point out, in analysing the position, that conscription had hardly been necessary for bringing Africans into the military forces, because of the attractive conditions offered. They point out that one of the present difficulties has been caused by the rise in the standard of living of the African native, and that dissatisfaction at the maintenance of a low basic wage has been reflected in his outlook. He did not feel that he could get enough, by his wage, to keep up the standard of living to which he felt himself to be entitled, with the result that output was not satisfactory. One of the justifications that the committee puts forward for its recommendation is that

"it would not be likely to involve any considerable increase in wages."

That is a very poor justification for a change of this kind. The recommendation of the committee stands condemned by that very idea. Any satisfactory solution of the difficulty in East Africa ought to involve an increase in wage-rates. It surely is not satisfactory that, as my hon. Friend has pointed out, the married worker with a family, from the reserves, should receive a wage amounting in practice, if we take into account the provision of food and housing accommodation, to only 7d. a day, and that his wife and children in the reserve should have to be not only supporting themselves, but producing food to maintain him when he returns. This hidden subsidy is quite the worst kind of subsidy. My right hon. Friend, in answer to a question of mine yesterday, spoke about the system of compulsory labour which had just been introduced as amounting in effect to a Government subsidy to the farmers. But why could we not, instead of having this system of forced labour, have carried out the suggestion, made clearly by Archdeacon Owen, in the memorandum which he contributes to the Committee's report, that there should be an increase in the wage-rate. It could be done by a war bonus. He points out that a number of the settlers would be glad to pay higher wages and provide better conditions, if they felt that the industry could economically bear it.

Last week the Under-Secretary, in reply to a question of mine, said that he considered that this new forced labour measure did not contravene the International Convention on Forced Labour of 1930, ratified by this country in 1931. It is quite true that technical excuses can be found for this measure under the provision of the Forced Labour Convention dealing with cases of emergency, such as war. The article mentions a number of cases of emergency—famine, war, earthquakes and fire—but surely the war then contemplated is war in the country itself, or, at least, immediate and threatening. The war does affect the life of the native of Kenya, and it is vital that he should realise his position; but the immediate emergency is far away, geographically, from the area in which he lives and works. If this country is to fulfil its obligations under the Forced Labour Convention, we should, at least, carry out the spirit of that Convention, and see that any arrangements for forced labour in an emergency—and only for an emergency—conform, as far as possible, to the safeguards laid down in that Convention. I want to mention one or two, in particular. The Convention provides that any

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work or services exacted in an emergency may be exempt, it is true; but it lays down clearly that forced labour, under the terms of the Convention, is not to exceed 60 days in 12 months. Under the present ordinance, a year's labour may be enforced. There is special provision in the Convention against forced labour for the cultivation of land, and it is laid down in all cases that the product is to go to the labourer. That is entirely ignored in the arrangements authorised by the Government. Article 4 makes it clear that forced labour is not to be used for the benefit of a private person or a private company.

It has already been mentioned that there is provision made for the protection of youth. In the International Convention the limit of age is to persons over 18 years of age, and not exceeding 45 years of age, and it is expressly stated in Article 11 that teachers and pupils are excepted from forced labour. I am aware that in the Government's Measure provision is made that pupils who are working for the higher standards should be excepted and those who are specially recommended by their headmasters. But surely, when we realise that the provision for Africans in the matter of education is utterly inadequate and that far too little has been done in the past to help them in that way, we ought to take no African pupil away from his work for forced labour. I would beg the Under-Secretary to see that this Measure is amended in that respect particularly. There ought to be no pupils taken away from school to fulfil forced labour conditions. It is very much to be regretted that, while the Committee reports on Archdeacon Owen's memorandum, no consideration is given to the alternative suggestion he has made for the raising of the standard of wages. That is the crux of the whole difficulty, and the Government must face it. I would beg the Government to make up their minds to face this question of wage rates. Years ago there was an Ordinance passed empowering the Government of Kenya to fix minimum rates, and it has never been carried into effect. There is no adequate machinery provided at present for the raising of the rates of pay, and I hope that we may have the assurance that this question will seriously be taken in hand and treated as a matter of urgency.

I am glad that one good thing at least may come out of the report of the Committee, and that is the revision of the ration that is at present provided. There is a valuable appendix to the report pointing out how utterly inadequate, from the point of view of vitamins, is the traditional allowance of 2 lbs. of maize-meal per day, per labourer, and that it must be supplemented by green vegetables, and perhaps, in some cases, by meat and fruit and in other ways. I am very glad that that is a positive reform that results from the Committee's labour, but the fact remains that we are imposing upon the people of Kenya an unwelcome burden when we might meet the difficulty in a straightforward way which would result in the raising of the standard of life of the whole people. Seeing that there is no possibility at present of native opinion expressing itself directly in the government of the Colony, we remain as the trustees and the guardians in this House for the natives, and I hope that the Under-Secretary will show that he too takes that position most firmly and that because of that he is prepared to re-examine the whole position in the light of the facts that have now been laid before him.

Mr. John Dugdale (West Bromwich): We are in a short time—a time all too short as far as I am concerned—to discuss our own liberties. At this moment we are discussing the liberties of Africans. We are going to ask that measures should be taken to preserve our own liberties. I hope that this Debate will impress upon the Government the importance of giving more freedom to Africans. I have always maintained that this is perhaps the most reactionary measure that has been brought in or advocated by any Government during the past 25 years. The Kenya settlers are among the worst employers in the world to-day. I think there is very little disagreement on that point among hon. Members. They are there to make the white man's burden as light as possible and to make their own profits as well as they can, and to these people is to be entrusted the welfare of the African population of Kenya. Why has it to be done? I understand that it has to be done because it is impossible to conscript the labour of Africans without such a measure. Why is that impossible? As other speakers, particularly my hon.

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Friend the Member for Shipley (Mr. Creech Jones), have stressed, it is impossible because the wages that are to be paid are too low. You cannot expect people to come forward with great enthusiasm to work for liberty at 7d. a day, but that is what they are being asked to do, and because they will not come forward and work for a wage which no Englishman would consider they are to be conscripted in the cause of liberty.

How are these people to live? They will live, as has already been said, simply because their wages will be subsidised by their own families working on the reserves and working to grow those very crops which are essential and necessary for the war effort, and in fact for the preservation of Kenya itself. Only by this false form of subsidy is it possible to pay workers 7d. a day and allow them still to live. These people are to be drawn in the main from their own reserves. They are to go, it would appear, to the Highlands. It says that they are to go to essential work, and the statement is made in the report that it can be assumed that the cultivation of certain crops in the Highlands will be scheduled as essential. It can now be assumed—because it has been the policy of the white settlers ever since they went to Africa to drive out the natives from the White Highlands in order to secure control of the White Highlands themselves, and having done that to get them back again to work for them—only too easily, that essential work will be work for the white settlers in the Highlands. Who is to declare what this essential work is? The Essential Undertakings Board. I asked the Under-Secretary himself a few days ago whether there would be any Africans on this Board, and I was informed that there would be none and that for some reason, which has not yet been explained, it is impossible for Africans to sit upon this Board, which is to decide which undertakings in East Africa are essential to the war effort—a most extraordinary state of affairs.

I come now to another question, which has not been mentioned by hon. Members up to the present. What control other than the very small inspectorate is to be exercised over these undertakings? It is said that it is being done for the war effort. Cannot it be assumed then that these undertakings will be controlled in such a way as to produce the maximum output, that they will, if necessary, be co-ordinated, that their profits will be reduced, and that they will be put on the most successful and efficient basis for developing the war effort? And yet, as far as I can understand from the Under-Secretary—and I hope he will have something to say on this—there is to be no control exercised over these firms and businesses into which the native population are being forced to go. We have lately witnessed an appalling series of disasters in our Colonies. We have seen Malaya and a large part of Burma go, and I think that perhaps one of the most distressing features of these disasters was summed up by a correspondent of "The Times" recently when he said, writing from Batavia:

> "The Government had no roots in the life of the country. With the exception of certain sections of the Chinese community, some inspired by the Free Chinese struggle for survival and others by Soviet precept and example, the bulk of the Asiatic population remained spectators from start to finish."

Will the same be true of the African population? Will they also remain spectators if Japan should reach the shores of Africa one day? If we pursue the sort of policy in Kenya which has been suggested to-day, we shall undoubtedly find that the inhabitants of Kenya will not only be spectators but will not help us and may, even, help the enemy. What is the excuse? It is that the Minister of Production has certain needs which it is assumed he cannot get except through the labour of Africans on European estates. I understand that the Minister created a good impression during the recent Debate on Production and gave the House to understand that he was setting forth on a great campaign to produce the necessary articles to win this war for liberty. Is this the first step in his new scheme for the production of the necessary war articles? Has he given orders to the Under-Secretary and told him that this must go through in order to provide the sinews of war? At this moment the right hon. and learned Member for East Bristol (Sir S. Cripps) is in India. He is trying to get a basis of agreement between the Indian and British peoples which will enable us both to work side by side in the defence of liberty. If I may be permitted to say so, what is needed to-day is a Cripps for Africa. We want somebody to go out to

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[Mr. Dugdale.]

Africa, somebody sympathetic to the African people, who will be able to do for Africa what it is hoped my right hon. and learned Friend is doing to-day for India. In conclusion, I would ask the Under-Secretary, when he replies, to tell the House whether he himself agrees with this Order. I cannot but feel that it has been imposed upon him, and I would say to him, "Take away this thing: it can at best do very little good; it can do at worst untold harm."

The Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies (Mr. Harold Macmillan): I thank the hon. Member for Shipley (Mr. Creech Jones) for his courtesy in two respects. First, he gave me notice that he proposed to raise this matter on the Adjournment, and, secondly, he was good enough, with his usual consideration, to provide me with some indication of the points he intended to raise. Nor have I any complaint regarding either the manner or matter of his speech. As to the matter, I had some previous warning, for which I thank him once again, and as to the manner, it was a combination of powerful eloquence and almost insinuating suavity which is characteristic of his contributions to this House.

Nevertheless, if I may use a phrase of De Quincey's, I have never heard a speech

"which could leave behind it the mixed impression of so much truth combined with so much absolute delusion."

There are several delusions upon which the argument of my hon. Friend is based. First of all, like so many critics of the Colonial Empire generally and the African Empire in particular, he is filled with a strange suspicion, amounting even to a dislike of the white settler. The hon. Member for West Bromwich (Mr. John Dugdale), who spoke last, was even more pointed in his feeling, and I have noticed that sort of feeling running through the books I have read and the speeches I have listened to in past years. This trend of hostility to the white settler is always prevalent. Whether it has some pathological or psychological background, I do not know, but I observe that it is most keenly felt by those critics whom one can never imagine subjecting themselves to the hardships of pioneer life. I must say that I do not share these prejudices. I have a high regard for my fellow countrymen who live in different parts of Africa and carry on their way of life under difficult conditions in a newly developed country. I look with pride to the story of this development.

Although I recognise that the hon. Gentleman's views are widely held, they have at least been partially shared by the Colonial Office during almost the whole of the 19th century. They are implicit in much of the history of Government relations to pioneer industry. Think of Rhodes, not of Lord Ripon or Lord Knutsford. Let the hon. Gentleman look at a map of Africa as Rhodes found it and as Rhodes left it. It was the pioneer spirit of individual Englishmen and Scotsmen, unsupported, unaided and, indeed, gravely hampered by their *laisser faire* Governments of the time, who built this Empire. It is perhaps a melancholy, perhaps an arresting thought that had it not been for Rhodes and Delamere and men of that stamp, we should not be having this Debate at all to-day. These problems would not lie for us to settle. This territory would have been in enemy or other hands, and, most strange thought of all, even the hon. Gentleman, like a modern Othello, would have found his occupation gone. There would have been no need—I shudder to think of it—of the Fabian Colonial Bureau. This contemptuous hostility for white settlers led to the loss of the first British Empire. The hon. Gentleman has on his side high authority—George III., Lord North, Mr. Grenville and the Duke of Newcastle. It should never be forgotten—certainly not in the Colonial Office—that in 1765 the British Government of that day issued a decree that no white settlement of any kind should pass West of the Alleghany mountains and that the territory West of the Valley of the Ohio was to be reserved as a native reserve. I say that the first delusion from which the hon. Gentleman and others are suffering is the suspicion, amounting to dislike, of the white settler, whether in Kenya, Rhodesia or elsewhere in Africa.

Mr. Creech Jones: May I make it perfectly clear that that is certainly not a delusion which I share? I pointed out that I am suspicious on historic grounds of the white settler policy in Kenya.

Mr. Macmillan: I say that that view is a delusion. I am reminded that apart

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from the pioneers who went there of their own will, unaided and unsupported, risking their all in these adventures, there is another class who have come to the country under different auspices. They are those thousands who came between the two wars, at the express wish of, indeed were cajoled and persuaded at every stage by, the British Government, to settle in the Highlands of Kenya. The ex-officers of the last war, relying upon their pensions, or their wound gratuities, or their little savings, were continuously persuaded to risk their substance in African farming. This class has suffered many vicissitudes. It has seen disease, famine, locusts, all the vagaries of agriculture in Equatorial Africa. It has seen prices leap up and crash down. It has seen itself rich one day, and ruined the next. This is a class of men for whom the Government have a great responsibility, and for whom I personally have a high regard and affection. They have faults, they have prejudices. There are among them, as in all classes, some bad hats. But to me, I say frankly, they make a stronger appeal, struggling as they are with problems of a nature that seems at once bounteous and malignant, they make a stronger appeal than all—dare I say it?—than all the inhabitants of Chelsea and Bloomsbury who appear to compose their most vicious and persistent critics. That is the first delusion.

I come now to the second delusion. My hon. Friend believes that the British Government and the Administration of East Africa are attached to the principle of compulsory labour. That is not so at all. Nobody likes compulsory labour. Nobody likes compulsion in any form if it can be avoided. I am old-fashioned enough to believe that the willing recruit is better than the conscript. I still think that the Army of the first 100,000 men, the Army of the Somme, which was a voluntary Army, was the finest body of men who ever took the field in the service of the Crown. I still prefer a man or a woman who voluntarily takes on a war job, either in the factories or in the Services. But we have found that it is necessary to have either the shadow or the reality of compulsion—starting with it in the background, and pushing it gradually to the foreground. We have found in this country that it was impossible to obtain all that we desired by voluntary recruitment. Nobody, if I may say so, has played a greater part in the skilful use of compulsion as a lever than my right hon. Friend the Minister of Labour, and no one is more committed to that principle than my hon. Friend the Member for Shipley (Mr. Creech Jones) who so ably assists him. When the hon. Member sits on the Government benches, he is all for compulsion. Then he is Dr. Jekyll. When he goes to the Opposition benches, he is all against it. Then he is Mr. Hyde.

Therefore, I say that nobody likes compulsion, least of all those who have long experience of the problem of African labour. I feel sure that the settlers do not want compulsion, especially those who have the longest experience and have built up a contented body of workmen, relying upon the squatters who are their permanent labour staff, together with the recruitment of additional labour for seasonal purposes by normal means. There are, of course, incompetent employers and new and unskilled employers who find it difficult to attract, manage or retain the services of Africans. They may be easily misled into the view that compulsory labour will solve their problems. But the more experienced of the settlers—and certainly the officials, the Government—do not share that view, that easy optimism. They know that in normal times compulsory labour of any sort is likely to be discontented, idle and inferior labour. It used to be asserted that the chief object of the poll tax or the hut tax was to force labour out of the Reserves. I do not think that was so. That may have been its effect. But those who have studied most this problem have always believed, in the words which I read in a book by the very wise Labour Adviser to the Colonial Office, Major Orde Brown, that " the shopkeeper is a better labour recruiter than the tax gatherer." It is by raising the standard of living, by exciting the demands and, if you like, titivating the palate of the African, that you will turn him into a labourer for wages because he wishes to obtain the commodities which wages can buy. All that is true in normal times, and everyone recognises it.

Of course, I know that there are two schools of thought in this matter. There are the more extreme partisans of the doctrine of indirect rule—those who would wish for ever to circumscribe the African communities in their own

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[Mr. Macmillan.]

Reserves—those who would wish to maintain absolutely unimpaired the whole tribal organisation. Those I would term the extreme anthropological school. Sometimes I wonder whether they wish to preserve them as interesting specimens for future Sir James Frazers to produce offshoots of Golden Boughs. Of course, there is a great deal to be said for this view. There are others, on the other hand, who believe it is impossible to isolate and insulate for ever Africans from the onward march of European civilisation. These believe that they must be influenced by, and take their place in, the general economic progress. They do not believe that any Reserve can be for ever maintained like some zoological gardens, or even Whipsnade, with satisfactory results. They believe that the African is a man like any other man, able to grow in due course, and it may be more rapidly than some think, into the full stature of an economic and political man.

There is good in both those views. I have purposely stated them in an exaggerated form. The truth lies somewhere in between. The differences are perhaps of emphasis rather than of fundamentals. At any rate, on whatever view, I think compulsion as a normal method of progress is not desirable in normal times. But times are abnormal. We are in the middle of a harsh, cruel, and all-embracing war. Africa is as much in the centre of the war as Ceylon or Burma. We must not shrink from measures in the centre of the Empire which are required and are now being put into effect at its periphery. I must here repeat that it is a complete delusion to believe that either the Colonial Office or the Kenya Administration or the mass of white settlers like compulsory labour, desire compulsory labour, or are in any way using the present emergency to insert surreptitiously into the economic structure the principle of compulsory labour which in normal times is abhorrent to all.

I come to the third series of delusions, of some of which my hon. Friend has been good enough to give me private notice, others of which have been mentioned by other speakers, and the most serious and most incorrect of which I have read in parts of the Press. First, it is stated that there is no conscription of Europeans for military service [*Interruption*]. I said that I had read them in parts of the Press, and I must take the opportunity, at the risk of delaying the rest of the Press, which is coming later, to deal with this matter, which is of some importance. I have seen it widely stated that there has been no conscription of Europeans for military service, whereas Africans have been so conscripted. That statement is untrue; and, so far from the truth is it, that it is laughably untrue. Whatever else one may say or think about the European community, they cannot be represented as a community of war-shies, conscientious objectors, or skrimshankers. Many of them are veterans of the last war, and indeed, our problem has been not to persuade them to join His Majesty's Forces, but to get them out again after they have joined or rejoined. In the production drive in which we are now engaged throughout the Colonial Empire, a great deal of my task even in the few weeks that I have been at the Colonial Office has been to get out of the Army farmers, mining engineers, technicians of all kinds, who are better, as we think, employed on the work of which they have skilled knowledge than they would be in the Forces. I may say, in parenthesis, that assisted by the appropriate pressure, the War Office has been most helpful in this connection. It is a fantasy and a travesty of the truth to represent that Europeans in Africa are afraid of war.

Secondly, it is said that while there is to be this conscription of African labour, there is no similar pressure upon Europeans. That again is, of course, not true. On the outbreak of war all the Europeans between 18 and 45 years of age were called up for military service, except those exempted by a special tribunal. The further step was taken later of making reserved occupation regulations which prevented those who had been exempted from leaving their jobs. At the end of 1940 the total number of Europeans in some form of military service was 2,332, while the total number of able-bodied male Europeans within the prescribed age limits was somewhere between 3,000 and 4,000. In effect there are no Europeans who are not either in the Armed Forces or in essential occupations. I come now to the third point. It is said: Why is this labour required? Can it not be obtained voluntarily?

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Mr. Creech Jones: The right hon. Gentleman will admit discrimination in so far as the age for conscription is 16 in the case of the natives.

Mr. Macmillan: I am coming to that point. I say that all Europeans are either in the Armed Forces or in reserved occupations and prevented from joining up. I should like to pay a tribute to the marvellous way in which the African people in East Africa have played and are playing their part in this war. I am sure that they know that their future depends upon the manner of its conclusion. I believe that we have won a great deal of their confidence and friendship. They are people naturally loyal and naturally affectionate, and that loyalty and that affection do, I think, go out to the Throne, the Empire and the British civilisation from which they have been such great beneficiaries. There are 47,000 Kenya Africans in the East African Military Forces, including the Auxiliary Pioneer and Labour Corps. There are 221,000 employed in civilian employment outside the Reserves. Therefore, out of a total able-bodied native population of Kenya of some 550,000, some 268,000, or 49 per cent., are now employed, as we think, to the best advantage.

But more still is necessary, if we are to fulfil our urgent need. We have had great losses of supply in the Far East. We believe—and the Minister of Production, when he was Minister of State, sent out a most urgent appeal from Cairo to the rest of Africa—that by the rapidly increased production of our agricultural products we can make an immense contribution to some of the most pressing problems which now threaten us. Every ton of foodstuff which we can ship from East Africa direct to our Armies in the Middle East saves a great haul from Liverpool round the Cape through dangerous and infested waters. We must, therefore, make every possible effort by every possible means in our power to increase production of the East African Colonies. Rapid decisions are necessary; the planting season is near. It is for the sole purpose of increasing production, both to maintain African well-being and to put still more into the common pool, that the Government of Kenya and my Noble Friend have reluctantly thought it their duty to put forward a scheme which is temporarily unsuited to normal times, with many difficulties and drawbacks, but still, for the moment necessary and essential, of compulsory recruitment of African labour. The figure of 49 per cent. to which I have referred will be raised under the new conscription scheme to not more than 55 per cent. This is a high percentage, but I can confidently say that it will not be exceeded, except in terrific circumstances.

On the other points which have been raised, I should like to make certain observations. First, voluntary recruitment has been pressed very hard in the shape of what is called assisted recruitment, that is, directly assisted by the Government. There are some drawbacks to this method. There is a danger sometimes of abuse. Those who have the interest of the African most at heart assure me that a system of compulsion properly administered, with proper safeguards, is more in the interests of the African than pressing too hard the policy of assisted recruitment. We have had some experience in our own country. I remember in 1916 all the various measures then being taken to secure voluntary recruits. A point was reached when they became derogatory, almost humiliating, and sometimes liable to grave abuse. It was better to take the jump from the Derby Scheme to compulsion. And so it may be here. Measures of official or unofficial pressure may be dangerous and harmful. An open acceptance of compulsory labour for agricultural purposes as well as for pioneer and military purposes may be, if properly administered, far more in the interests of the African himself.

But it is said, " Why do you put this emphasis upon the increase of labour for European management? Why do you not put the drive on to increased production of food from the reserves? " I should like any man who faces this question fairly and honestly, and who has experience of East Africa, to put his hand on his heart and ask this question seriously. Can anyone say that if my Noble Friend and I are seeking no purpose other than that of increased production of agricultural products at the earliest possible moment, we could hope to obtain that production out of the native reserves for export purposes? Surely it is an obvious fact, crystal clear, that this increased export surplus can only be obtained from additional effort on the European-owned farms. It is for that

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reason that my Noble Friend and I and the Government of Kenya have agreed to this policy.

Then it is said, What will be the effect on African production of taking still more labour from the reserves? But this is an argument against the recruitment of labour, not against compulsory recruitment. Exactly the same effect upon African production will result if 20,000 men are taken voluntarily or compulsorily. Indeed, under the compulsory system the ill effects will be much reduced, because it will be scientifically applied. Recruitment can be made from areas where the least ill will follow. It can be spread and controlled. Whereas, if it is merely recruitment following a voluntary drive, tempted perhaps by increased wages and other lures, the effect on African production may be much more harmful. Then it is said, and I saw it widely circulated in the Press, that there is discrimination because there is no minimum age-limit placed. This is, of course, not true. It is said, quite rightly, by my hon. Friend the Member for Shipley that there is a minimum age of 16, and that for other races it is 18. I must admit that the argument is superficially plausible and effective, but, in fact, as is well known, an African reaches manhood at an earlier age than a European, just as Europeans of 300 years ago reached manhood at an earlier age than we do to-day. He is initiated into full membership of his tribe at the age of 16. African schoolboys and students will, of course, be exempted.

Mr. Creech Jones: No.

Mr. Macmillan: I am coming to that. As we have drawn the Regulation, all African schoolboys of 16 will be exempted if so recommended by the headmaster of the school. If there is any weakness in that—I know my hon. Friend attaches great importance to it—I will look into the matter again and make certain that the provision is made effective. Then I am told that the African farms in effect subsidise the European farms. That was the argument so very well put by Archdeacon Owen, who incidentally gave his support to a unanimous plan. Of course, that is a quite different argument from the issue of compulsion. It is an argument for raising the price of African products and African wages, and one, no doubt, equally agreeable to the settlers and to the African labourers. There is an argument which says that, since the native reserves look after the African during periods of unemployment by providing for the nutrition of his wife and family, they are in effect subsidising the price of farm products. I think the House will agree that a violent and radical change in the whole price structure in the middle of a war to overthrow a situation which has been inherent in the price structure for a generation would be a very difficult thing for us alone to undertake. Many brilliant and active brains are now studying what is likely to be the machinery of the purchase and interchange of primary commodities in the post-war world. I should certainly agree with the argument put forward by my hon. Friend that in between the two wars the urban populations of the world have to a large extent profiteered at the expense of the primary producer, be he American, African, or even English. I think that is the underlying problem which has faced the world, and it is certainly not a doctrine abhorrent to me or to many Members of the House. I has, indeed, been a melancholy fact that ever since the repeal of the Corn Laws the urban population has to some extent been living at the expense of the rural population of thic country. But these are broad problems inherent in the whole economic structure of the world. They are not affected by whether recruitment to the farms is voluntary or compulsory. Nevertheless, I recognise their force, and we have done something, not all that I should like to have done, but something to meet that point. We should like to see African wages rise, but they can only rise if African prices rise. That is clear. As a contribution to the problem, we have now worked out a system of guaranteed prices and returns for certain crops. This will give the farmer that additional security which he has lacked in the past and this, combined with the operation of the minimum wage fixing machinery provided for in the Regulations, will ensure that the labourer will obtain his share in any general improvement in the economic position.

Then it is argued that the safeguards that we have in our scheme are inadequate. No safeguards are perfect and no machinery is absolutely sound, but we have done our best to design a system which can be as free from abuse as it is

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possible to devise. Perhaps I may describe that system. First of all, there is to be an Essential Undertakings Board, composed of the Chairman of the Supply Boards, the chairman of the Settlement and Production Board and the Director of Agriculture. Their first task is to decide what agricultural and other undertakings —it does not only apply to agriculture— are essential for war purposes. Every thing depends on that. If it is not essential, compulsion does not apply. The composition of the Board is satisfactory, but if there are other suggestions I will certainly have them looked into. Next to the Essential Undertakings Board there come the District Labour Committees. These will consider applications from persons who require Government assistance in recruiting labour. They will review the conditions of life at the place of employment and make their recommendations. These committees will not, as has been stated in the Press, consist only of a representative of the employers and the employed. The chairman will be the District Commissioner, and the representative of the employed will be either a Government officer, the Labour Officer or a missionary or some other suitable person. I do not think there is any fear that the Committee will not adequately represent the interests of the employees or that its members will not be able to stand up for them. Indeed, so far from there being no Government representative, as stated, I think, in the "Manchester Guardian," there will very often be two, one the chairman and one the labour officer representing the employees. After that we have the Provisional Selection Committees. These will be composed entirely of Africans. It will be their duty to select the men who are required. The men required will be male Africans between the ages of 16 and 45. [*Interruption.*] That is typical of the attitude of mind with which the hon. Member views everyone else who happens to disagree with him on any subject and the suspicions of the most futile kind that he introduces.

Mr. Creech Jones: I am speaking from very intimate experience of the practice that is followed.

Mr. Macmillan: They will be picked by someone. Does the hon. Member mean that he does not trust the honesty and sincerity of those who will select them?

Mr. Creech Jones: May I point out that already all political institutions in Kenya have been oppressed, and *bona fide* African leaders have been put into detention camps? I suggest that in the light of our experience in regard to the administration of native law and native policy one cannot be too careful.

Mr. Macmillan: I am sure one must be careful, but one need not be unduly suspicious. When we select officers and Government officials the hon. Member says they are prejudiced, and when we select Africans he suggests that they are hand-picked. That is not so. The men selected will be medically examined. Each man will attend after selection before the district officer, and he may then enter an objection. After that there is a still further sieve. The district officer will co-opt not less than 10 elders from the area from which the man has been selected, and he will hear the objections with the help of the elders. These are powerful safeguards. But that is not all. There is an appeal from the elders to a further tribunal, the District Exemption Committee, consisting of the District Commissioner, one or two European unofficials, two chiefs and two members of the local native council. Here a man may plead hardship on the ground that it would be hard for himself or his family, or that the economic position of his tribe or the locality would be injured by his being taken. I think that is a very complete system of safeguards as far as it is possible to devise it. I sometimes rather wonder whether any will be chosen at all, so careful is this arrangement.

After that I come to wages. There will be a Central Wages Board. That is a great advance, because in effect it will fix the wages, not of course only for compulsory but for voluntary labour, and we are thus, as in this country, making use of a period of crisis to set up a more satisfactory method of fixing wages which I hope will become a permanent feature of the structure after the crisis has passed. The Board will also fix rations. Every possible measure has been taken to bring before the Government of Kenya the importance of increasing rations, of getting better balanced rations and of obtaining wherever possible a meat ration. The Board will fix conditions of service, the tasks and so on, and these conditions will apply henceforth both to voluntary and

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to conscripted labour. These are important safeguards, and in some respects they make an important advance.

It is said that the penalties are unfair because £5 and/or two months' imprisonment means a great deal more for the African and not so much for the employer. It is true, however, that if an employer commits an offence in respect of more than one man, the penalty will be correspondingly multiplied. I understand the feeling that the proportions of the penalties are unfair, and I will gladly ask the Governor to look into the question again to see whether any more satisfactory arrangements can be made. It is said that there is no provision for repatriation. The normal arrangement for recruited labour will apply as in voluntary labour, under which the employer is required to provide transport back to the place of recruitment on the conclusion of the contract. My hon. Friend and others have said that the scheme depends upon an adequate inspectorate. My Noble Friend and I are determined that there shall be an adequate inspectorate and that the spirit of the safeguards shall be carried out. I have covered the field as far as I can. This is the scheme, these are the safeguards, and I put them forward to the House with some confidence. There was a statement recently in an important journal which curiously combines from time to time the greatest accuracy of detail of facts and figures with the wildest imputations of motive—the "Economist" of 14th March. It said:

> "the whole of this is in the interests of the white settler rather than of the war effort."

It is against statements of that kind that I vigorously protest. They are absolutely, completely and wholly untrue. The sole object of the Colonial Office and of my Noble Friend and me is to meet the cry that has come to us from the Middle East and from all parts of the Empire that Africa as everywhere else should play its full role in the immense struggle that lies before us. That problem fills and dominates the minds of the European settlers. I believe that it inspires the Africans themselves. It is certainly the compelling motive behind the Colonial Government and the Colonial Office.

We do not like compulsory labour. Nobody likes it. We do not like it in this country or in the Empire. But we are forced by the harsh compelling urgency of war to do many things which we do not like. We have to choose between evils. I for one prefer, and I believe the House as a whole will prefer, that we should take some steps, distasteful in principle as they may be, and unsuited to normal times which will help us to achieve our major over-riding object. In taking those steps we have tried to hedge them round with every conceivable safeguard, every machinery of protection that we can devise. If in the course of their practical application we find that further measures and safeguards are needed, we shall not hesitate to ask the local government to provide them. We shall always be ready to accept and study criticisms of detail and constructive suggestions on the working of the scheme, but we shall not be deterred by any accusations, whether couched in temperate or in violent language, from carrying out what we conceive to be our duty.

Mr. Pethick-Lawrence (Edinburgh, East): The right hon. Gentleman, who has made a reputation in this House as a man of ideas, has laid before us a case for the conscription of labour which, in words he used in regard to another matter, is superficially plausible. I cannot help thinking, all the same, that this scheme is gravely repugnant to people of good will, and I very much doubt whether all the safeguards which he alleges hedge it about will in fact materialise. He speaks of an inspectorate and assures us that he and his Noble Friend will see that it is adequate. Can he deny that the local government in Kenya have said that there will be the greatest possible difficulty in creating an adequate inspectorate? If that be so, and it turns out that the inspectorate cannot be adequate, what is the use of the promise he has given?

Mr. Macmillan: I am much obliged to my right hon. Friend. His intervention is very helpful to me. In the papers that have been published certain questions passed between the Governments. We have not accepted the scheme without a considerable amount of telegraphing of questions about it. This difficulty was raised in one stage of the discussion, but I am certain that it will be possible to provide an adequate inspectorate. I

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regard that as he does as a vital part of the safeguards. Recruitment has already been started for it, and I shall do everything possible to see that it is made a reality.

Mr. Pethick-Lawrence: The hon. Gentleman compared conscription for people in this country with conscription in Kenya. There is, of course, the fundamental difference that conscription in this country is safeguarded in the last resort by popular representation. It cannot go beyond what Members of the House of Commons, representing the people of this country, are willing to tolerate. In Kenya the position is entirely different. Conscription is there being imposed upon a native population who have in effect no representation and no power to make their voice appreciated, still less listened to and obeyed. Many of us regard this proposal with grave misgivings. The hon. Gentleman has told us that he will see that it is safeguarded as far as he can, and I hope he may prove able to be as good as his word, but, in any case, I am afraid that no safeguard imposed under such conditions as I have described can at best be very adequate.

LOCAL AUTHORITIES (RATE REVENUE).

Sir Adam Maitland (Faversham): I must apologise for intervening when hon. Members are anxious to discuss another subject. The question to which I wish to direct the attention of the House concerns local authorities whose areas have been blitzed. There is great anxiety on the part of the authorities, and I hope that the disappointment of the House in not immediately coming to the subject they wish to discuss will not prevent them, as we use local authorities for carrying out so many of the wishes of Parliament, considering their grievances. Among those authorities which have suffered losses from enemy action there has been and is to-day grave anxiety about the arrangements which have been made by the Government for paying compensation. The local authorities put up the case that it is wrong that, in addition to having had to undergo the onslaught of the enemy, they should be called upon to suffer the financial loss which ensued. The point of their objection to the attitude taken up by the Government can be put shortly in this way. First of all, they say that loss arising from enemy action ought not to be regarded as a burden to be borne locally but as a burden to be borne by the nation as a whole, and that contention has some substance. The second point is that under the system which has been put in operation by the Government they are in danger of losing something of their independence, something of their autonomy and something of their responsibility. Local authorities have put their case time and time again since as far back as May, 1939, and I know that my right hon. Friend the Minister of Health knows the case which they have put and which I shall put in moderation.

The objection taken can be paraphrased in this way: The Ministry of Health Report makes the statement that in April, 1940, the Government pledged themselves to assist local authorities if as a result of the war the machinery of local government in any area was in danger of breaking down, and between that date and March, 1941, financial assistance amounting to £4,600,000 was extended to 41 local authorities to enable them to maintain essential services. That is a frank expression of what the Goverment did by way of giving a solemn undertaking and an account of the extent to which they have implemented it in financial terms. My point is that they have interpreted their obligations to local authorities from a wrong standpoint, that it should not be a question of not giving assistance until there is a danger of local government breaking down but that the Government should frankly realise that the loss which local authorities suffer as a result of enemy action should at once be shouldered as a national burden.

If I anticipate the reply of my right hon. Friend by saying that the payment of compensation to local authorities for loss of revenue would introduce a principle which is not applied in the case of individuals, then I would say that I cannot accept the analogy. Local authorities are part and parcel of the government of the country. They are used by the national authority not only for local but for general purposes as well. From that point of view I believe that local authorities, in putting forward their claim that losses arising out of enemy action should be treated as a national burden, are standing on solid ground. There have been losses

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of revenue from rates amounting to considerable sums. It might be dangerous for me to give figures, and so I will not do so, but I will content myself by saying that in many areas there have been very large losses indeed of revenue from rates, as I am sure my right hon. Friend will agree. I will put my appeal to the Minister in tabloid form in this way: There is no question of difficulty in working out a practicable formula. There have been conversations between officers of the Ministry and the officers of local government with regard to a formula, and I am informed that there is no difficulty. Therefore, it is not a question of impracticability but a question of policy, and I appeal to my right hon. Friend to recognise the justice of the case which local authorities put forward and to endeavour to persuade his right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer to take a new view of how these losses are to be met. If he does so, I venture to say that he will be doing not only what is right but what is fair and what is just.

Mr. Culverwell (Bristol, West): I am very grateful, as is the whole House, I am sure, to the hon. Member for Faversham (Sir A. Maitland) for raising this very important matter which concerns so many people in this country. I shall not take more than a few minutes of the time of the House, because I know hon. Members are very anxious to hear a discussion on a subject which is to follow. I think the House will agree that the case which the hon. Member has put for spreading this burden over the whole country by casting it upon the National Exchequer is unanswerable. I am sorry that my right hon. Friend the Minister of Health should be acting as the spokesman of the Treasury to-day, because I am convinced that he, with his knowledge of the valuable services which local authorities render to the Government, would not personally wish to resist this perfectly just and reasonable demand. The losses suffered by these blitzed areas have been very considerable and have cast a very heavy burden upon the ratepayers. As I understand it, the Government's position is that since they do not compensate individuals for loss of income, and since municipalities are aggregations of individuals, they cannot admit the principle of compensating local authorities. That principle sounds all right, but surely there is a very great difference between the position of an individual and the position of a local authority. A local authority cannot go out of business, it cannot transfer its business elsewhere, it cannot move to another locality, as an individual may do if circumstances compel him. A local authority has to carry on with the functions and social services which are delegated to it by the central authority, and the Government would be the first to complain were there to be any cessation of the work of local authorities. Therefore, the argument of the Government that by admitting the principle of compensation for loss of income they would open the road to claims by individuals seems to be completely fallacious.

Further, the ratepayer often suffers a double loss, because not only has he in many cases lost his own property, but he has to pay extra rates in order to compensate for the general damage, so that he gets it both ways. And not only is the extra burden of rates very considerable. I represent a constituency in Bristol which has been severely knocked about by the enemy and has suffered a great loss of revenue, a burden which the remaining ratepayers have to shoulder and which has meant an increase in the rates. In addition there has been an increase in gas, electricity and water charges. If a considerable area of a city is destroyed the utility services suffer loss of revenue and they must recoup themselves by putting up their charges. It seems unfair that places which have suffered severe damage and from which people have been evacuated should be the sufferers—people are liable to leave their premises in such a way that no rates are leviable—while other areas which have been immune from bombing and have had a great influx of evacuees have become prosperous as a result and are benefiting from the war.

I would ask my right hon. Friend to reconsider the position which the Government have so far taken up and to try to persuade the Exchequer of the gross unfairness of putting upon areas which have been the target of the enemy the sole burden of this unavoidable damage. A small rise in rates may seem trivial to some people but it has a great effect upon a large proportion of people, not so much the workers because their wages have gone up with the cost of living but on

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people like widows and pensioners who are hardly able to keep themselves on their existing resources. I would echo the plea which has been made that the right hon. Gentleman should reconsider this situation.

The Minister of Health (Mr. Ernest Brown): My hon. Friend the Member for Faversham (Sir A. Maitland) made it plain that there is no need for me to take long in answering the speeches which have been delivered, not because the subject is not of great importance or because local authorities are not playing a magnificent part in the war effort, nor for any reason of belittlement of the effects of bombing. I must first disclaim the attempt of my hon. Friend the Member for West Bristol (Mr. Culverwell) to create a breach between the Ministry of Health and the Treasury. I would remind him that this is not Treasury policy but Government policy. A case may appear logical so long as it is separated, in isolation, but this case rests upon this logical basis, that all other kinds of loss shall be separated from this one kind of loss. Nevertheless, the House will see that other areas which have not been heavily bombed have suffered a loss of rate income which has been proportionately much heavier than in the cities which have been bombed. I would refer to some of the towns upon the fringes of our coasts, where the loss of rate income has been out of all proportion. No doubt hon. Members who desire to pursue further this aspect of the matter will be able to do so upon the estimates for the Ministry of Health.

Government policy in this matter was arrived at in 1939 in pursuance of a discussion arising out of the problems of the war effort. The Government are prepared to make good capital losses but not losses of income. The case has been put and fully stated to the House by my predecessors, and there has been only one change since I became Minister of Health. I find that the original Government decision to come to the aid of such authorities as needed that aid for their essential services was on the basis of 100 per cent. loan. When I discussed this matter with the representatives of local authorities when I went round the country and visited every one of these areas, it was clear to me that that basis was too heavy a potential liability to throw upon the shoulders of those who were responsible, and I was asked to give the matter reconsideration. The result of that reconsideration has been a new basis of 75 per cent. grant and 25 per cent. loan, subject to reconsideration when the war is over and all the circumstances are known.

Representatives of the Association of Municipal Corporations have put the case as powerfully as it can be put, both to myself and to the Secretary of State for Scotland, and jointly to the Health Ministers and the Chancellor of the Exchequer. They know the answer; I would only add that one or two authorities whose representatives were foremost in making that claim have been able to reduce their rate assessments for the forthcoming year. I make only one further comment. War has more than one effect upon varying areas. The only areas which have experienced an entirely adverse effect are those which would not gain if the formula put forward by my hon. Friend were adopted. While they have suffered a certain amount of bombing and consequential loss, their general loss is due mainly to evacuation and because of their position on the seaboard. I am afraid I cannot give any hope for reconsideration in these cases. The matter has been thoroughly examined by the Government, and this is Government policy.

I want to make one other thing clear before I sit down. My hon. Friend the Member for Faversham gave certain figures from the report recently published, particularly that the number of applications from authorities was 41 and the amount of money disbursed was £4,600,000. The present position is that we have received applications from 70 authorities, and the total amount now is £13,000,000. I am sure he is aware that all the authorities who have been to see the Ministry of Health to put their case have been received not merely with understanding but with sympathetic understanding. The House may be sure that if there is need to maintain essential services and to prevent an undue burden being thrown upon other ratepayers because of these calamitous happenings, there will be no lack of sympathetic understanding or of financial support such as the Government have promised in the policy laid down.

Sir A. Maitland: The right hon. Gentleman said that the representatives of local authorities and their associations knew

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the answer which had been given by him. Of course, they know the answer, but does not my right hon. Friend appreciate in turn that they are still very dissatisfied? Will he still keep an open mind upon the difficulties of the situation and be prepared to consider this matter again with the representatives of the local authorities?

Mr. Brown: I shall always be ready to do that. There may be a change of circumstances. The House will have seen in this short Debate upon our fundamental policy that we cannot take out one section of war damage and separate it from all other forms of war damage.

FREEDOM OF THE PRESS.

Mr. Wilfrid Roberts (Cumberland, North) *rose*——

Mr. Barnes (East Ham, South): On a point of Order. Before the hon. Member for North Cumberland (Mr. W. Roberts) opens this Debate, may I ask, as it was originally intended that this subject would commence about an hour and a half before now, and in view of the general interest which is taken by a number of hon. Members who desire to speak on this subject, whether you would accept a Motion to extend the Sitting?

Mr. Deputy-Speaker (Colonel Clifton Brown): That is a matter for the Government.

Mr. Stokes (Ipswich): In view of the lateness of the hour and the vital importance of this subject, may I ask whether the Leader of the House will make arrangements at a suitable moment to move to extend the time available for the Debate?

The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs (Mr. Eden): Naturally, it is the Government's desire to meet the wishes of the House. As we have actually two and a half hours if we sit until the usual time—I have heard very good Debates and a great many speeches in two and a half hours—may I suggest that we should see how matters go? I will not close my mind to the possibility of an extension, but the difficulty is that we should have to fix a definite time.

Mr. Wilfrid Roberts: I am most grateful to the Leader of the House for giving us the hope that the Debate may be extended, because the subject which we wish to raise from this bench is a large one, and involves an important point in which the country and the world are interested. There have been increasing encroachments by the Government on the liberty of the Press. I do not wish to refer to the announcement which the Minister of Information made to-day, because the other subject, the announcement which the Home Secretary made last week, is perhaps sufficient for the limited time at our disposal to-day. But there has been a number of encroachments, and I hope that to-day's Debate will deal with the wider issues and that we shall not merely argue the merits or demerits of the case of the particular paper which the Home Secretary has warned, because larger questions are involved.

The Home Secretary's statement was a warning to the Press as a whole, as well as to one particular paper. Most of the London dailies, and the provincial papers, commented on that statement in leading articles, and with one or two exceptions the Press has reacted with disapproval of the Home Secretary's action, or if not with disapproval, with alarm. As I see it, a free Press is a vital part of a free Parliament. The Press moreover is a vital part of this House, and a threat to the freedom of the Press is a threat also to the freedom of Members of Parliament. Neither the Press nor this House has ever liked Regulation 2D, the one which the Government threaten to use again on this occasion. Regulation 2D was an unfortunate afterthought of the previous Home Secretary. It was justified to this House as an extreme weapon, to be used only at moments of crisis, such as invasion. Even so, as the last weapon in the armoury of the Government, it was only approved in this House in July, 1940, at that critical and dangerous time, by a very small majority of 38.

Under Regulation 2D there was in fact no need for the Home Secretary to give any warning. If it were necessary for him to give a warning, it would defeat its own object. The object of 2D is to give him the power to act very swiftly in moments of crisis, and it really appears to me that the Home Secretary was not proceeding under any particular Regulation. Under 2C and other Regulations

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he must give a warning, but he seems to prefer to use part of one Regulation and part of another one. If that is so, it raises some doubts in my mind. I would like to press the Government not to continue to make use of 2D. There has already been one instance where it was used, against the " Daily Worker." I would like to press the Home Secretary to give us an assurance that, in deference to the opinion of this House, he will in future use the other Regulations by which, if necessary, he can accomplish exactly the same thing. If the House will forgive me for a moment, although I am not a lawyer, may I point out that under other Regulations he can imprison, he can fine, and he can suppress a paper if he considers that it is necessary to do so, but the process is different. Instead of being judge and executioner in his own case, he has to submit it to the courts, and has to prosecute the offending paper in the courts.

I am afraid that the Press and the public are somewhat concerned about this. I do not know whether, in mentioning the case of that sad criminal the " Daily Worker " languishing in gaol, I am not perhaps assisting the Home Secretary. Perhaps I am helping him to jangle the chains of the first victim, and assisting him to remind Fleet Street that these powers exist. In a way I feel that 2D is a sort of modern version of that old instrument of British justice, the stocks, in which the victim was exposed for all to see, and that last week we were assisting at a ceremony at which the Home Secretary erected his modern stocks, with the " Daily Mirror " invited to the front seat and the rest of the Press very welcome to take note. That is the way in which the use of 2D has been understood.

There is no opposition in this House, or in the Press or in the country that I can see, to vigorous and energetic action by the Government when it is necessary. The crime that the " Daily Mirror " is accused of is that it criticised the Government irresponsibly, sensationally—to quote words that have been used—and " with a reckless indifference to the national interest." The crime of the " Daily Mirror " is to criticise the Government, and all I ask on this point is that, if the crime is against the Government, the Government should not judge that crime, but that the normal processes of law should be invoked. Having said that, it will be clear that I do not think a Member of Parliament in this House is the right person to advance the case of the " Daily Mirror," but yet, as we are living under the threat of the possible immediate suppression of a very large newspaper, possibly even during the Easter Recess when the House is not sitting, it seems to me absolutely necessary to say something about the " Daily Mirror."

I am confident that the Home Secretary can produce a most formidable list of quotations from the " Daily Mirror," of pungent, biting and acid criticisms. May I suggest that on the first count, that of this cartoon, the case of the Government is really not very strong? The verdict of the public was not that the cartoon was a criticism of the oil companies, but that it was directed against the wasters of oil. That cartoon was one of a series devoted to supporting the Government policy of pursuing food racketeers, hoarders, wasters and so on, and it is a little amusing, I think, to know that at the offices of the " Daily Mirror " they have received a considerable number of requests by officers and by persons organising Warship Weeks to use this very cartoon to raise money for the conduct of the war.

Petty-Officer Alan Herbert (Oxford University): Does the hon. Member mean that they propose to use that cartoon with the same caption?

Mr. Roberts: Yes, that is what I understand. I do not wish to delay the House. I have been given a sample letter which I would quote, but the time is short, and I wish to reduce my quotations as far as I possibly can. I saw that cartoon. I did not understand it to be an attack on the oil companies. I understood it as a very remarkable cartoon from one of the ablest cartoonists who is working on the Press at the present time. I remember distinctly, over my breakfast, having a slight twinge of conscience as to whether I had been using petrol unjustifiably or not. The worst of this political procedure instead of a legal procedure with regard to this paper is that it gives the maximum effect to the sort of smoke screen of innuendo and rumour which I am afraid does exist in politics. Suspicions and rumours get around. I am sorry to tell the Minister of Information, who I see is here, that one of these rumours—he will tell me if I am wrong—is, I am informed, being given some currency by the Ministry

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[Mr. Roberts.]
of Information itself. When the Home Secretary made his statement, an hon. Member in this House referred to the name of Mr. Hearst and asked whether he had anything to do with the " Daily Mirror." I am told that in a telegram issued by the Ministry to Buenos Aires last night that rumour was given further currency, and it was referred to in terms such as this, that if the question asked by the hon. Member was correct, then that, of course, strengthened the reasons for the action taken by the Government. Either that is correct or it is not.

The Minister of Information (Mr. Brendan Bracken): I do not understand this. What is the source of this information?—[HON. MEMBERS: " Is it true or not true? "]—It is quite impossible for me to say whether it is true or not. The hon. Member appears to know more about the goings on in my Department than I do. I think he must tell us where he got this information—[HON. MEMBERS: " No."]—The hon. Gentleman has said that the Ministry of Information sent out a telegram last night.

Mr. MacLaren (Burslem): Do you deny this was sent from your Ministry?

Mr. Bracken: I think it is rather important that we should know where this comes from. It is the first time I have heard of it.

Mr. Roberts: I do not lay stress on this matter. I ask the question whether that is true. I am not going to give the Minister my source of information. I am sure that the Minister will have time in the hour or two that this Debate will last to find the answer. The telegram was one to Buenos Aires. I think that will be sufficient guidance to him to check it. If I am wrong, I shall most humbly apologise.

Mr. Bracken: And give a lot of information to Dr. Goebbels—[*Interruption.*]

Mr. Speaker: There must be freedom of Debate.

Mr. Shinwell (Seaham): On a point of Order. Is it likely we shall have freedom of Debate when the Minister of Information remarks across the Floor that information furnished by my hon. Friend who is now speaking would be useful to Dr. Goebbels?

Mr. Speaker: At any rate, it is freedom of expression.

Mr. Roberts: I do not wish to pursue that further. I have asked my question. I am sure that I shall get an answer. The story has been widely spread in this House and elsewhere that Hearst has some influence on this paper. I believe that it has no basis in fact whatever, and I believe that that is a similar rumour to one that went round before. If the House will bear with me for one moment, I will remind them that so far as I can see, this paper, the " Daily Mirror," has followed quite a consistent policy for many years now. On its political side it has followed quite a consistent policy. I think that the Foreign Secretary will perhaps remember that at one time before the war it supported him. I would like to make one quotation from the issue of 27th September, 1938. I do not think there is much difference in this from what the " Daily Mirror " is saying at the present time:

> " Make Britain strong. Britain stands for peace. But she must be strong for war. It is your duty to give her strength. By joining the Defence units. By growing all the food you can. By avoiding waste. By making ammunition, aircraft, ships. By keeping calm, cheerful, determined. To make the nation so strong that none may dare challenge the peace of the world."

There was a time before the war when the Prime Minister himself was a contributor, a very notable contributor, to the " Daily Mirror." I believe that the writer of the editorial now under consideration prizes letters he has, both from the Prime Minister and Lord Beaverbrook, congratulating him on his work. But at that time, before the war, there was a similar rumour to the present one. Then it was stated that a prominent Jew influenced the " Daily Mirror," because the " Daily Mirror " was anti-Nazi perhaps a little before some of our papers and some other gentlemen. Then it was supposed that it was the Jews who were influencing the policy of this paper; now it is the hidden hand of the Isolationists of America.

I shall risk making a statement about the ownership of the " Daily Mirror " which the Home Secretary, with his superior sources of knowledge, ought to be able, with his powers, to get. If he has not the powers, he ought to get them. The " Daily Mirror " belonged originally

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to Lord Rothermere. About 10 years ago, Lord Rothermere sold his shares, gradually, on the Stock Exchange. They were bought up in small blocks. There is no big, or controlling, group of shares now, held by any one person. The shares held by nominees represent only between 5 and 10 per cent. of the whole shareholding of the paper. In other words, this paper, unlike many others, is run by a board of directors and a chairman. I am not sure that that is not a very much better way than for great organs of opinion to be at the mercy of the whim of one owner, who may change his policy overnight. I say that the policy of the " Daily Mirror has not changed in the last five or six years. Its staff has not changed, and its ownership has not changed, since the time when the Prime Minister wrote for it and when I remember the Leader of the Labour Opposition quoting it with such effect from that Box after the occupation of Austria.

The crime of the " Daily Mirror " is to have been too critical. But a newspaper reflects the opinion of the public who read it; and if the public at the present time are critical, newspapers generally may also tend to be critical. I have heard that the real suspicion about this paper would be expresed somewhat as follows, that this mood of criticism is only a blind, a sort of camouflage, or shield, to hide its real intention, which is to pull down the Cabinet and the present state of society, so that people, when perhaps they have been made sufficiently depressed, after a major disaster, will be ready to assent to a peace by agreement with the Germans. I do not know whether that is to be the basis of the Home Secretary's speech to-day. I begin to think that it might be. If it is, I do not believe there is any evidence that there is a sinister plot behind the actions of this newspaper. I think, quite frankly, that it is a most overdrawn case. I do not want to be facetious but let us remember some of the causes the " Daily Mirror " has stood for, or some of the men it has stood for.

Do you think, after the board of directors had invited the Prime Minister and the Home Secretary himself to write for it, when they were not in the Government, that when the first National Government was formed, and, later, the Prime Minister became the great Leader of this country in its moment of gravest danger, the board of directors said, " We have backed the wrong man again; we thought we were going to disrupt this country "? Of course not. Did they, when they supported the present Leader of the House, who is away in India now, want to disrupt and overturn society; or did they believe, as the House and the country now believe, that the Government would be strengthened by his inclusion? Or does Cassandra—whoever he is—sit at his desk, with biting poison dripping from his pen, and say, " I have demanded that the old men should be cleared out of the Army: I have been foiled again; the new Minister of War has gone and done it "? Or when he demands that there must be less waste of petrol and of food, and Lord Woolton introduces his new Regulations, do you think he says, " Again a lost cause: the Government have adopted my policy; my case falls to the ground "? Or do you think that the journalists connected with this paper really, honestly—perhaps sometimes very much too bitterly; perhaps too cleverly, and too ably—do represent what people see with their own eyes of the mistakes that are being made?

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Herbert Morrison): The voice of the people.

Mr. Roberts: I do not say that it is always the voice of the people, but I believe that it is a voice; and I believe that it is most important that all the voices, provided that they are determined to win this war, should be heard at the present time. I want to end with this. I was in the Army, and I read the " Daily Mirror," like so many other officers. [An HON. MEMBER: " Jane."] Yes, " Jane " is popular in the Army. The strips are popular. It may be that the Home Secretary is going to make an overwhelming case that this paper's biting criticism has undermined confidence in the leadership of the Government. I do not believe that. But I believe that if a paper with such a circulation, which has been critical, is suppressed, it will cause a very widespread feeling of disquiet. I believe it would do far more damage to morale than any of the biting, sarcastic, pungent articles which appear in that paper. I do not know whether the Minister of Information is going to speak in this Debate, but he has expressed in an article which has just been published in the United States —where they, too, value freedom of

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[Mr. Roberts.]

speech immensely—some remarks which I would like to quote. I believe that the heart of this country is absolutely sound. We are determined to win this war. There must be a censorship—we recognise that; a censorship of anything that would give useful information to the enemy, but not a censorship of views or opinions. That is not necessary, and not desirable. It is dangerous. Let me quote what the Minister of Information wrote in an article, copies of which have just come to this country:

"There will never be a 'yes' Press in England. To us, freedom of the Press is as important as an independent judiciary or as Parliamentary Government."

Speaking of censorship and its difficulties, he says:

"The savage censorship imposed on the French Press played no small part in the fall of France. It encouraged defeatism, and bred complacency. A blindfolded democracy is more likely to fall than to fight."

Sir Irving Albery (Gravesend): I am extremely glad that my hon. Friend has opened the Debate with that most excellent speech. In spite of the fact that he is not a lawyer, he put up an extremely good defence, if not for the "Daily Mirror," at any rate for the case he was making. I am especially glad that this Debate has taken place, because I think it raises the whole question of democratic liberty in this country. The liberty of the subject, the liberty of the Press, and the liberty of Parliament are all bound up together. They exist together, and any damage which is done to any one of them is, and must be, damage done to the other two. The chief responsibility for what has happened so far—and in my view that liberty has already been seriously curtailed, and more curtailed than was ever necessary on account of the war—rests with this House of Commons, though not all of it. The Home Secretary frequently endeavours to put the responsibility upon this House of Commons for present conditions, which are in fact the responsibility of the Government, but this House is not without its responsibility. The first backward step was when this House permitted the Defence Regulation to be put upon the Table which enabled a Member of this House to be arrested and put under detention or into prison by an executive Minister without the consent or assent of this House of Commons. When that action was taken the House went back upon the wise precautions which Members in this House had taken at earlier times. When a similar situation or emergency arose in the earlier history of this House it took the precaution of amending a Regulation passed at that time in such a way as to make sure that the assent of the House must be obtained for the detention of a Member of this House.

Subsequently the matter was further debated in the House. The Press is not without its share of responsibility. When Members of this House were debating the question of the liberty of the subject, it is true that there were newspapers in this country and writers in the Press who took a strong attitude, but, taking the Press generally, they failed fully to recognise, as they should have recognised, the manner in which the liberty of the individual, of the Press and of Parliament must always be bound together. They should have adopted a much stronger attitude and given those of us who speak out at the present time a far greater amount of support than they in fact did. The liberty of the Press appears to be in danger.

Mr. MacLaren: It has always been in the hands of advertisers. What is the good of wasting time?

Sir I. Albery: The Press to-day is looking to this House to uphold the liberty of the Press, and I believe that the whole attitude of the House of Commons towards these matters has undergone a considerable change during the last three months. During the various critical times through which we have passed, and owing to the manner in which a whole cloud of Regulations are laid upon the Table of this House, most of which are never read and cannot in the ordinary way be read by Parliament, it has only been gradually that Members of this House have been fully seized of what is happening and the manner in which the liberty of the subject and the constitutional liberties of this country are being undermined by the present War Cabinet.

The right hon. Gentleman the Prime Minister hardly ever intervenes in a Debate of this kind without showing and expressing his reverence for, and his desire

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in every way to uphold, democratic traditions in the House of Commons and in the country. I believe in the main that he sincerely expresses these sentiments, but at the same time the House of Commons would be glad to see him take some action to assist towards that end. The present Home Secretary hardly ever makes a speech upon the subject without using—I believe that the last time he spoke he used it four or five times—the word "humility." I do not know whether he is a humble man or whether he has a great deal of humility, but he always has had the reputation for liking to be a dictator. Whether it was playfully said, I do not know, but it was constantly and frequently said that he was always known as the dictator at the County Hall.

Mr. Cocks (Broxtowe): And at the London Labour Party too.

Sir I. Albery: In this House his actions have been such as to convey that he believes, at any rate, in a benevolent autocracy, and—I want to be fair to him—I would emphasis the word "benevolent." I believe that in the main his administration of this Regulation is not harsh. He is painstaking. If you correspond with him, he is always courteous; you will get a reply. He takes a lot of trouble, and he goes into the matter and makes a reasonable and a courteous reply. I have no complaint whatever to make on these grounds, but he seems to think that he alone is always right and that it is not necessary that there should be any appeal on action beyond his decision. That is the more curious, because recently in a Debate in this House with reference to Regulation 18B he himself admitted that either alone or in conjunction with the Advisory Committee he had released seven persons who ought not to have been released, and it is reasonable to suppose that, if he has released seven persons who ought never to have been released, there are probably at least seven persons detained at present who ought never to have been detained.

I know that a good many Members want to speak, and I shall be brief, and therefore I will end merely with this: These Defence Regulations were given to the Government by the House of Commons as war-time measures for use at times of acute emergency, and in an emergency time is the essence of the matter. The Government said, "We require powers and regulations which, without any delay at all, at any moment of emergency, we can immediately put into operation and function." And the House of Commons recognised the need for them and gave them these Regulations. But I do not believe that the House of Commons ever intended the Government—and I feel sure that the Government were never entitled—to use these Regulations which were given them for the specific purpose at any time when any other Regulation or legal process could be used. If they sought to achieve a certain purpose in conditions of war, and if the ordinary processes of law could achieve the purpose, then they ought to use the ordinary processes. If there be any less harsh Regulation or any Regulation of a less dictatorial kind, then that Regulation ought always to be used before any more drastic Regulation of the kind that the Home Secretary quoted when he dealt with the case of the "Daily Mirror."

The Home Secretary challenged this House to a Division on his administration of the Defence Regulations. I heard a rumour that some Members contemplated passing to a Division to-day. Personally, I do not wish to go into the Division Lobby purely on the question of whether the "Daily Mirror" merited or merits suspension. We have not yet heard the Home Secretary, and I do not think the Debate was staged to-day to decide whether the "Daily Mirror" has been properly conducted. I believe that the main reason and interest in this Debate is not to decide whether the "Daily Mirror" is being properly conducted, but whether the Government are properly conducting themselves in the handling of Defence Regulations under present circumstances? If that be the issue which is challenged to-day, I can assure the Home Secretary that I am willing to take up the challenge which he issued recently during the Debate on the Address. William Pitt, a great many years ago, said, "Where law ends, tyranny begins," and that is perfectly true.

Mr. Lawson (Chester-le-Street): The Debate to-day is a testimony to the strong feeling there is on this matter, but I want to remind the House that there are two kinds of strong feeling. Some of us are

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[Mr. Lawson.]

very much astonished that there should be such an upheaval of opinion and such indignation concerning the warning to the " Daily Mirror " while there is such little concern about the limitation of the liberties of the great masses of our citizens. This question must be related to the lives of our people. Any man who knows anything about this country and its historic development should not treat interference with the liberty of the Press lightly, and anyone who has watched developments in various countries in Europe in recent years much less so. My hon. Friend who raised the Debate pointed out that there had been increasing interference with the liberty of the Press. If that was the only subject for discussion, we might talk about this question in a more temperate manner. Indignation has been evoked because of the warning to the " Daily Mirror." [An HON. MEMBER: " And the ' Daily Worker '."] There was no indignation about the " Daily Worker," but there was about the " Daily Mirror." Has this House forgotten that for the first time in history it has not merely interfered with the liberty of millions of our young men and women but has voted for the taking away of the lives of some of these people?

Mr. Vernon Bartlett (Bridgwater): That was Hitler, not the Government.

Mr. Lawson: No, this House did it. It has interfered with the liberty of persons to an undreamt of degree. Constituents of mine come from various parts of this country where they are earning £6 a week in factories for comparatively easy work —work which, in comparison with mining, is not work at all. They have been compelled to go to pits. [*Interruption.*] Somebody else has the right to speak on this matter. The indignation about the " Daily Mirror " startled me so much that I began to wonder whether I was living in the same world as some other hon. Members. Miners are being brought back from factories, where they have been earning £6 a week, to go into pits for £3 10s. or £4 a week. They are being compelled to do so by this House. I have not heard the " Daily Mirror " get excited about that. [*Interruption.*] My hon. Friend is one of those who have asked for compulsion.

Mr. Shinwell: If my hon. Friend is suggesting that at any time in this House I asked that men should be transferred from munitions factories, where they have been earning £6 or £7 a week, to mines, where they could earn only half that amount, I shall be glad if he will furnish the evidence.

Mr. Lawson: I do not want to mislead either the House or the country as to the attitude of my hon. Friend. He would not do any such thing, but, nevertheless, he asked for compulsion on the workers. What would happen if you had no compulsion? If you had not the power to order workers and limit their liberty, you could not carry on the war. Everybody knows that.

Mr. Cocks: What about liberty of speech?

Mr. Lawson: I am coming to that. Millions of men and women in this country have submitted to a discipline and a test of character to which soldiers have never been subjected. It is easier to fight and move than to sit and wait for the enemy coming. Hitler knows that quite well. Ribbentrop told him we had gone soft. Well, some sections of the community, owing to the stupidity of Governments, may have gone soft in the body, but they have not gone soft in the head, like Ribbentrop. Hitler has calculated that if he waits long enough, that test will be too great for our people. Any soldier knows that that is the greatest test that can come to a man. Yet what is this newspaper doing? Consider this one statement alone—and those among my friends who read the " Daily Mirror " are of no two opinions that this has been going on for a long time—consider this one statement:

> " . . . the accepted tip for Army leadership would, in plain truth be this:—All who aspire to mislead others in war should be brass-buttoned boneheads, socially prejudiced, arrogant and fussy. A tendency to heart disease, apoplexy, diabetes and high blood pressure as desirable in the highest posts . . ."

Suppose that the men get tired of waiting. They are in remote places in the country, in small groups. They do not get any of the recreations that other people get. These men are submitted to a great test. Suppose they take that sort of statement, and more of it, literally, and suppose they act upon it; if the House supports this kind of thing, could they oppose these men and women acting upon it? In that case you would have mutiny. In rising to speak, I wanted not merely to express

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the indignation I feel at seeing great men in council here getting indignant about this matter, but to warn the House that though they may treat this thing as a lawyer's problem, outside the people are treating it as a human problem, and expressing themselves accordingly.

Mr. A. Bevan (Ebbw Vale): I am extremely sorry that my hon. Friend the Member for Chester-le-Street (Mr. Lawson) should have introduced into the discussion of this matter what I consider to be irrelevancies which have distracted the Debate from its main current and tended to raise emotions not present before. When the hon. Gentleman spoke about restrictions being placed upon the miners, he was perfectly correct. He supported those restrictions, and having given way on one thing, he uses that surrender as a reason for surrendering everything else. What he has said is: Having imposed restrictions upon certain people and certain institutions, why should we not impose restrictions upon everybody? He has asked us to follow that logic.

The Joint Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Home Security (**Miss Wilkinson**): Why not?

Mr. Bevan: The hon. Lady on the Front Bench opposite would probably like the House to follow that logic, too. I want to say to her that really she should restrain herself, because some of her remarks are quite shameful. When I compare her present attitude with her past attitude——

Miss Wilkinson: What I said was, having put restrictions on the workers, why should you then refuse to put them on the upper classes?

Mr. Bevan: What the hon. Lady suggests is that, having restricted the workers because of the requirements of the war, you should now prevent them from having any opportunity of expressing themselves.

Sir Stanley Reed (Aylesbury): On a point of Order, Mr. Speaker. I listened very carefully to the speech of the hon. Member for Chester-le-Street (Mr. Lawson), and I did not hear a single word or statement to justify the statement which the Member for Ebbw Vale (Mr. Bevan) has made.

Mr. Bevan: The House will recollect the argument used by the hon. Member for Chester-le-Street. He expressed his surprise, that the House, having restricted the liberty of the citizens of this country, should then be astonished by restrictions which it is proposed to impose upon the Press. Never have I seen so many hon. Members present in the House on a Debate for the Adjournment for a Recess. Of course, the Government's supporters are here I think it is due to the Home Secretary to say that the decision to issue a warning to the " Daily Mirror " was a decision of the Government as a whole, and not merely of the Home Secretary. He has behind him all the Members of the Government in this matter, including the Labour Members. In this matter we have a solid Government, a united Government.

I should be the last person to suggest that there ought not to be such restrictions upon personal liberty as are necessary to win the war. I am not one who argues that there ought never to be restrictions upon liberty in any circumstances. I am not in favour of allowing people to say exactly what they like and to do exactly what they want to do, in any circumstances. The amount of liberty afforded to the people must be governed by the necessities of the war. That is an overwhelming and over-riding consideration, and every restriction upon liberty must be judged by that criterion. Therefore, there is no argument here for liberty in the abstract. What we are discussing is whether the definite proposals to restrict liberty here and now, are necessary for the effective conduct of the war, and whether they promote the war morale of the country or undermine it. It would be a very foolish idea to discuss the matter in an abstract way. I do not like the " Daily Mirror," and I have never liked it. I do not see it very often. I do not like that form of journalism. I do not like the strip-tease artists If the " Daily Mirror " depended upon my purchasing it, it would never be sold. But the " Daily Mirror " has not been warned because people do not like that kind of journalism. It is not because the Home Secretary is, aesthetically, repelled by it that he warns it. I have heard a number of hon. Members say that it is a hateful paper, a tabloid paper, a hysterical paper, a sensational paper, and that they do not like it. I am sure the Home Secretary does not take that view. He likes the paper. He is taking its money.

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Mr. H. Morrison: If the hon. Gentleman wants to be personal, I would say, so is somebody closely connected with him.

Mr. Bevan: Be as personal as you like. As far as I am concerned I do not mind how direct the right hon. Gentleman is, because in this matter, the harder the hitting the better I like it. But the right hon. Gentleman will not be able to hit back as hard as I can hit him. He does not dislike the " Daily Mirror " because of its bad journalism, because of its sensationalism, or because of its strip tease artists. He took the " Daily Mirror's " money, so he does not dislike it. I have here a copy of the " Daily Mirror " in which there is an article headed:

" My report on what the people want, by Herbert Morrison."

This is on 1st February, 1940, when the country was at war. He says that:

" They want the war to be fought with energy. They want to see every factory and every man at work. They want less muddled advice from on top."

As a matter of fact the heading at the start of this series of articles is:

" Morrison's important page. Regularly you can read these articles in the ' Daily Mirror.' The Right Hon. Herbert Morrison, P.C., M.P., writes a hard-hitting page which is winning an extraordinary reputation among the people."

Of course the right hon. Gentleman was not in the Government then. [HON. MEMBERS: " The country was at war."] Yes, but what sort of war? The same sort of war as that which is happening now—no air raids and no attacks on the enemy. What was the right hon. Gentleman doing there—undermining the morale of the country and the confidence of the country in the leaders of the nation and the Army? He made an attack when the right hon. Gentleman the Member for Devonport (Mr. Hore-Belisha) resigned from the office of Secretary of State for War. [HON. MEMBERS: " Read it."] He suggested that the right hon. Gentleman was removed by the " brass hats " because he was in favour of democratising the Army. Could there be anything more calculated to undermine the morale of the Army than to suggest that the generals shifted a Secretary of State for War, because he wanted to democratise the Army?

Mr. Morrison: I have no notice of this. [*Interruption.*] It would have been helpful. I am only asking my hon. Friend, in order to help everybody, including myself, to quote what I wrote.

Mr. Bevan: Certainly. I have not given the right hon. Gentleman notice, but he gave me no notice of his warning of the " Daily Mirror." I am pointing out that at the time when he wrote these articles, the British Army was in France facing the enemy—not in Britain and not in camps, but right opposite the enemy—and suggesting that he was writing articles in the " Daily Mirror " was as much calculated to undermine the confidence in the " higher-ups " as anything which the " Daily Mirror " has written since. I will quote something else from the " Daily Mirror."

Mr. Morrison: Will the hon. Gentleman quote what I wrote about the " brass hats? " That is what I want.

Mr. Bevan: I assure my right hon. Friend that he must not play with me the old Parliamentary game of asking me to read—[*Interruption.*] I do not want to read these articles because they are rather dull—[HON. MEMBERS: " Read it."] This is another article headed " Sensational attack on Belisha." He writes:

" The more the House of Commons can be told about the episode, the better it will be for the public interest. . . . All sorts of explanations of this business have been canvassed. The most prominent one is that the ex-War Secretary is a victim of the ' brass hats ' of the Higher Command of the Army."

Mr. Morrison: I want to know what I said about it.

Mr. Bevan: I am reading what you said.

" And if that should stand revealed as the real issue in this episode, it would be the duty of the Labour party to fight it out with all the vigour at its command."

This is Britain, not Japan.

Mr. Morrison: I only wanted my hon. Friend to quote that, because, having started with the statement that I said the brass hats removed my right hon. Friend, it is now perfectly clear that somebody else said it.

Mr. Bevan: I leave it at that. But it makes it worse. The right hon. Gentleman was the purveyor to 1,800,000 people of a story he could not verify. I am anxious not to delay the House. I ask the House to consider this: Why does the House always look upon the soldiers in the Army as children? Why do you not treat them as adults? Which will do

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more harm to the Army—for the Army to be told, as it has been told, that this paper is being warned and may be in danger of suppression, or for the Army to be allowed to read what the paper says morning by morning? Which will do the more harm? This paper is, in a special sense, the paper of the Armed Forces.

Mr. Granville (Eye): They like it, that is why.

Mr. Bevan: Certainly they like it. I am asking the House this serious question, because if what the "Daily Mirror" says about the administration of the Army is not confirmed in the daily experience of the soldiers, they will not take any notice of it. The British Army consists of adult men as good as we are. So if these men, when they read these criticisms, know from their own experience that the criticisms are exaggerated, that they are not correct, then those generalisations to which the right hon. Gentleman referred will fall upon barren ground. But if, in their experience, the criticisms are confirmed by what they know, you will not stop the demoralisation by preventing them from being told, because they know it, and, unfortunately, most of the criticisms made by the "Daily Mirror" about the leadership of the British Army have been confirmed by many military events. The Prime Minister said that. What is the use of pretending that you can restore the morale of the British Army but preventing the Army reading what a paper like this says?

There is a further consideration to which the House ought to give some attention. I am concerned about this particularly. One never knows now what it is possible to write because of the effect it might have on the morale of the country. I have to edit a paper every week. I do not know what to do under this kind of censorship.

ROYAL ASSENT.

Message to attend the Lords Commissioners.

The House went; and, having returned—

Mr. SPEAKER *reported the Royal Assent to*:

Landlord and Tenant (Requisitioned Land) Act, 1942.

FREEDOM OF THE PRESS.

Question again proposed, "That this House do now adjourn.

Mr. Stokes: On a point of Order. Before the Debate is resumed, may I ask the Leader of the House whether he has any proposal to make about the Sitting to-day?

Mr. Eden: Perhaps my hon. Friend will allow me to have some consultations before I make an announcement.

Mr. Bevan: It is unfortunate that the Debate was interrupted, but I will do my best to pick up the current of my thoughts. I was suggesting that the right hon. Gentleman in his writings in the "Daily Mirror" did many things which he is now accusing the "Daily Mirror" of doing. The right hon. Gentleman at that time was outside the Government. Now he is in it. I am asking him to consider very seriously the consequences of what he is doing upon the morale of the country. Whenever a British statesman makes a speech and says that Great Britain is fighting for freedom of expression, for democracy and for the rights of ordinary people, what is the response in the minds of millions of people? The "Daily Mirror" and the "Daily Worker." Instead of the language of the Prime Minister and the right hon. Gentleman evoking a response, it evokes cynicism. We cannot fight a war in that way. We must fight it either democratically or dictatorially. We cannot mix both, because the one destroys the spirit of the other.

The right hon. Gentleman has been connected with the Labour party for many years. He is the wrong man to be Home Secretary. He has been for many years the witch-finder of the Labour party. He has been the smeller-out of evil spirits in the Labour party for years. He built up his reputation by selecting people in the Labour party for expulsion and suppression. Indeed, the House of Commons ought to be warned by the career of the right hon. Gentleman. He is not the man to be entrusted with these powers because, however suave his utterance, his spirit is really intolerant. The House of Commons ought to consider what has happened. The right hon. Gentleman exorcised with bell, book and candle from the Labour party a gentleman who has

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[Mr. Bevan.]

now been taken into the War Cabinet and appointed Leader of the House. In fact, the right hon. Gentleman is the worst possible counsellor on issues of this kind. His own political record denies what he is doing now. I say with all seriousness and earnestness that I am deeply ashamed that a member of the Labour party should be the instrument of this sort of thing. It has been in my experience in the House, which now goes over a number of years, a sad thing that the two Home Secretaries whom this party has provided have been among the most reactionary Home Secretaries in half a century. It is a shameful record.

The right hon. Gentleman is doing great damage to the Labour party and great damage to the country as a whole. I ask the House seriously to take into account what would be the consequence of the policy suggested by the right hon. Gentleman. We shall go through very difficult times in the next few months. We shall have to call upon our people to make supreme spiritual exertions. We shall have to address meetings in an unprecedented way in the next few months if we are to face the crisis which lies ahead. Why do the Government take our arguments away from us even before we begin to speak? Why do they make nonsense of our pleas before we make them? How can we call on the people of this country and speak about liberty if the Government are doing all they can to undermine it? The right hon. Gentleman wrote an article in the " Daily Mirror " on 23rd November, 1939, which puts my thoughts succinctly. He said:

> " Democracy is not without its faults. I know. I have to lead a democracy and it is my business to know. But a Government of parliamentary democracy fighting a war knows whether or not its people are with it. A free press and a free Parliament can successfully fight for the elimination of the incompetent. Ability generally becomes known in due course, as does corruption and inefficiency. Praise and blame are freely handed out by a public opinion that can express itself, even though it is not always just. But in some way or another the accused can usually defend themselves and demand justice. Public criticism is one of the essentials of good government. Under dictatorship public criticism—even private criticism—is a crime. . . . Beware of the foes of democracy using the excuse of war for its suppression."

I ask the right hon. Gentleman, could the argument be put better than that? Is he not to-day using the war emergency as an excuse for invading the rights of the Press and of free public criticism in Great Britain. I can understand now why the right hon. Gentleman does not take the " Daily Mirror " to the courts. His case is too bad. He has to appeal to a packed House of Commons—packed by over 200 members immediately attached to the Government. He dare not put his case to the courts because the " Daily Mirror " would then have the right to defend itself by putting the Home Secretary in the box as one of its principal witnesses. That is the reason he does not go to the courts.

These powers were given to the Government in 1940 in order to protect the nation against what might happen in case of an invasion. They were never given to the Government to enable them to behave in this way. The Government are not acting in this matter in the interests of the nation. They are acting in the interests of the Government. The Government are seeking to suppress their critics. The only way for a Government to meet their critics is to redress the wrongs from which people are suffering, and to put their policy right. To-day at Question Time, last year over the " Daily Worker," and now in a variety of ways it has percolated through to us that the Government are going to become tough-minded. With whom? With Hitler? There is not a sign of that. Tough-minded with the enemy? No. Tough-minded with its own people, tough-minded with the British people.

It is one of the most shameful incidents in the whole history of the British Labour movement that the instrument in this case should be a Labour Home Secretary, who formerly endeared himself to the hearts of our people. We cannot have a Division to-day, but I suggest to the House that it should make its opinion known to the Government in this matter, and say that the Government are overstepping their authority and exceeding their mandate. The House is not behind the Government I am sure, and I am very certain that the country is not. The by-Election result announced to-day is a straw in the wind. The spirit of the country does not endorse the policy of the Government. It is our duty to see that the policy of the Government is brought into accordance with the spirit of the country. I beg and implore the House of Commons to assert itself in this matter.

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Mr. Eden: I beg to move,

" That the proceedings on the Motion for the Adjournment of the House be exempted at this day's Sitting from the Standing Order (Sittings of the House)."

I think it is the wish of the House that, having lost some time, we should sit a little longer, and I suggest that we should sit for another hour.

Commander Sir Archibald Southby (Epsom): Would it not be possible for the House to adjourn, as it obviously wishes to, and for the Debate to be continued on the Vote for the right hon. Gentleman's salary on a future occasion?

Mr. Eden: That could always be done, but I should like the Debate to come to a conclusion now.

Mr. Gallacher (Fife, West): On a point of Order. Can you tell me, Mr. Speaker, why it was that while I was first for the Adjournment to-day, the speakers on the other two subjects were called and I was advised that I would not be called, although I had the Adjournment on the subject of the " Daily Worker "? I would like to know why I was ruled out without any consideration.

Mr. Speaker: This is the first I have heard of the hon. Member having been ruled out. It is news to me.

Question put, and agreed to.

Question again proposed, " That this House do now adjourn."

Petty-Officer Alan Herbert (Oxford University): Like the hon. Member for Ebbw Vale (Mr. A. Bevan), on whose characteristically entertaining, eloquent and earnest speech I am sure the House would like me to congratulate him, and like the right hon. Gentleman the Home Secretary, I have from time to time written for the papers; I am a great lover of liberty and have written many words about it; and if I thought for a moment that the proceedings of the Home Secretary, now so heartily condemned, were really the beginning of an attack upon the liberty of the Press, there is no doubt whatever upon what side I should be, and I agree with much that has been said on the other side. In the first place, I would congratulate the hon. Members who have initiated this Debate, because, whoever is right, it is well that we should show the utmost vigilance in these matters. I agree also, if it is not impertinent for me to say so, that the Government procedure in this matter may not have been ideal in every respect. I myself would not have chosen the precise *casus belli* which has been selected. I am not much impressed by the argument, but I quite agree with the suggestion that the cartoon without the caption might well have been used as a Warship Week poster; but of the particular passage about the Army which was printed in the " Daily Mirror " I say that it is a damned, disgusting, blackguardly thing; which is a disgrace to the honourable craft to which I belong; and I notice that there is not one man in this House who has had the courage to get up and defend it. It is no good an hon. Member saying to me that the Army is composed of adults, and therefore what does it matter what you say! If adults cannot be misled by poisonous nonsense, why have we a law of libel and why have we laws of blasphemy and sedition? I am not in the Army; but I am on the fringe of the Navy, and I do not know that the Navy is less adult than the Army, but I tell the hon. Member that I have seen the progressively poisonous effect on adult sailors caused by this particular paper.

I am not at all happy when hon. Members point out that the promise was made that 2D would be used only in certain circumstances and that these do not exist at the moment. I do not like that sort of thing. I always remember the Entertainment Duty which came in as a war measure but which has remained ever since. I would recommend to my right hon. Friend that he should say this, " You challenge me to use 2C and take this paper to the courts. All right, if you insist upon my putting the editor or the proprietor, or whoever it may be, into the dock and exposing him to imprisonment for seven years and a fine of £500, I will do so. There is nothing whatever to prevent me." But if the Home Secretary had taken that course, would it not have been said that it was a monstrous proceeding, on this petty political point to take the worthy and excellent editor and proprietors and put them in the dock like common felons. I do not think my hon. Friends would really be any more pleased with that idea than with the other situation. I think that exhausts my points of agreement with hon. Members opposite, except

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[Petty-Officer Herbert.]

that on the question of machinery I think the Government may have done what the Americans would call taking a sledge-hammer to deal with a butterfly. My remedy for the " Daily Mirror "—and believe me that paper does need a remedy—would be to send the management a large box of liver-pills every morning and stand over them while they swallowed them. But I am not required to discuss the merits of the " Daily Mirror," because nobody else does. It really is extraordinary that, so far, nobody except one hon. Member on the other side has said a word in defence of the accused the " Daily Mirror." I am a little bit disappointed about the courage of some of my colleagues in Fleet Street——

Mr. Bartlett: Is my hon. Friend aware that some of us who are colleagues in Fleet Street have not yet had a chance to speak? It is not lack of courage.

Petty-Officer Herbert: Certainly I should not question the courage of the hon. Member. I am thinking about people outside. They say to me " The ' Daily Mirror ' is muck." Then they go off and write these terrific leading articles, saying that the " Daily Mirror " must not be touched. There is no question that anyone who wants to defend the " Daily Mirror " in this Debate must face that particular passage dealing with the Army, because that is the heart of the thing. But the argument seems to be that no matter how bad anything it says, we must not deal with any newspaper, on its merits, because we shall be endangering a principle. To-morrow it will be the " News Chronicle " and next day " The New Statesman " and so on, till there is nothing left but the " Daily Telegraph," in other words, the old doctrine of the thin end of the wedge. I never pay much attention to the thin end of the wedge argument. For one thing the retort is always open that if the trunk into which you drive the wedge is sufficiently robust and solid, it does not matter which end of the wedge it is, it will in the end be the wedge that will split, and not the trunk. The hon. Member for Chester-le-Street (Mr. Lawson) used a really good argument, which was dismissed rather too lightly by the hon. Member for Ebbw Vale, when he pointed out how many wedges have been thrust into how many fundamental principles without real danger, in the present war. The first and most important in principle of freedom is freedom of the person. It is the only freedom that is mentioned in Magna Charta. It has only been going about 60 years. There is nothing about free speech in Magna Charta. It is good stuff, but modern. It is not one of our immemorial principles at all. The foundation of all liberty is personal liberty.

Well, we have surrendered Habeas Corpus; and not merely baronets with odd ideas but Members of this House can be arrested, imprisoned, and detained for goodness knows how long—perhaps for 10 years—without trial. Secondly, there is free speech: Any old woman in a pub or anybody in Hyde Park who said one millionth part of what the " Daily Mirror " says every day would be cast into gaol or fined for spreading rumours, alarm and despondency. Thirdly, the other day we thrust the most drastic wedge into the principle of fair play in the courts, when we said that certain black marketeers were going to be assumed to be guilty until they proved themselves innocent. That, as principle, was a most terrible thing, but hon. Members liked it. Fourthly, there is freedom of contract: Is there anybody in this House who would say that the institution of freedom of contract has to be preserved in a permanent and inviolable condition for the rest of the war? There is not one who would say it. Lastly, there is the free Parliament. In the old days we private Members used to have a lot of fun and games—and much more than that—introducing private Parliamentary Bills on Fridays. We have surrendered all that. There is not a private Member who can put a Motion on the Paper with any hope of getting it discussed, because the Government take all our time.

What is the relevance of all this? All these are fundamental liberties into which we have permitted wedges to be thrust, in this catastrophe and crisis of our lives, because there is no man so wise and so good, no institution so profound and so perfect, that some derogation of its totality may not be asked in the present conditions. Why is it that members of the Press alone—I will not say that—why is it that such a paper as the " Daily Mirror " alone should be sacrosanct in this general orgy of sacrifice? I do not want to press the argument too far, but that seems to me to be the general idea.

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All this is very unfortunate, I think; and I myself should never have rushed out to any newspaper, but I ask hon. Members not to become too excited about the general principle. The Government know rather more about the operation of these things upon people's minds than we do.

I suppose one reason why the Government used this machinery and not the other is that if you take any one particular passage and go into court it is extremely easy for a really clever counsel to pick it to pieces, and to ask, " Are you really suggesting that the whole Army is going to collapse because of that? We remember the Chinese torture of little drops of water day after day. There is no one drop that can be described as barbarous. [*Interruption.*] Well, perhaps I had better alter my metaphor. Arsenic is a poison of somewhat lethal quality; but it can be taken in small quantities without much danger. It is very difficult to draw the line. On the whole, if the Home Secretary is going on with this, I think he will be wise to call their bluff and go to the courts, and see what they say then. I do not think that this is a great attack upon our liberty. I wrote at the beginning of the war a very eloquent address on Liberty, which was published by the Ministry of Information and delighted the citizens of Bath, to whom I delivered it. I said many good things, I think, in favour of liberty, but I remember one phrase which I used, and I wish to repeat it now: I said that where there is a deliberate and persistent abuse of liberty I would curtail or suspend it without hesitation in order that men may learn to value it better.

Mr. A. G. Walkden (Bristol, South): I feel bound to acquaint the House briefly with conversations I have had this week with many friends of mine, who are responsible men in the trade union movement. They are seriously perturbed that Members of the party with which I am associated should attack fellow Members who have been selected to bear the onerous duty of sharing the huge responsibility of Government in this war period. [*Interruption.*] I am warning the noisy minority on my left——

Mr. Bevan: On a point of Order——

Mr. Walkden: —that they are not speaking in harmony with the great heart and soul of the Labour movement of this country. I warn them that the General Council of the Trades Union Congress is very seriously considering its position in relation to——

Mr. Bevan: On a point of Privilege. I claim Privilege. The hon. Gentleman is suggesting that a body of persons outside this House are considering bringing pressure to bear upon a Member of this House to restrain him from doing his public duty. I claim Privilege. It is the immemorial constitution of this House that hon. Members must not be under threat or restraint in the discharge of their duties to their constituents and their duties to His Majesty the King. I ask you, Sir, to give me a Ruling on the threat uttered by the hon. Member.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member has not said anything yet to which exception can be taken.

Mr. Walkden: The trade union side of our movement might well consider whether it is worth while spending the money of its members to enable people to behave in the way they are doing in this House. [*Interruption.*]

Mr. Speaker: I must ask hon. Members to restrain themselves from making these interruptions.

Mr. Bellenger (Bassetlaw): The hon. Member has alleged against his colleagues that some of them are paid by trade unions to represent some sort of interest in this House. I repudiate that entirely.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for South Bristol (Mr. Walkden) has not said anything to which I can take exception.

Mr. Walkden: I was rather surprised that this Debate should have been initiated by what remains of the Liberal party, because unfortunately I remember what happened in the previous war, when the Liberal party existed in all its glory and had two Prime Ministers during the course of the war. That Liberal party, when in the Government, decided, on account of unworthy personal attacks by a certain London evening newspaper, that that paper should be suppressed. It was suppressed for a whole week, and it never smiled again. It faded out and had to be merged with another journal.

Sir Percy Harris (Bethnal Green, South-West): Perhaps the hon. Member will allow me to ask him to make quite sure

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[Sir P. Harris.]

of his facts. What did happen was that it printed false information—a statement that Lord Kitchener had resigned. That is quite a different thing from expressing opinion.

Mr. Walkden: I remember the facts very well, but this is a far worse case than that of the "Globe," and I am amazed at the Liberals coming forward in this way. They themselves, the Liberal proprietors of newspapers, are as hard as iron with the men who serve them and who dare to differ from them in opinion. In that very same period, I remember a very great journalist being sacked from the "Daily Chronicle" because he differed from his proprietors about the Boer War. We know the agonies which H. W. Massingham was put under by his Liberal dictators and dominators. It is surprising to me, an old-fashioned Englishman, that they should be taking such a different line to-day. They are evidently enjoying greater freedom and less responsibility than they did then.

Their spokesman spoke as though this Government had imposed a terrible censorship on the Press. That is not true. There is no censorship. There is a sort of advisory arrangement—[*Interruption.*] Yes, an advisory arrangement under the Ministry of Information, where news and news only is examined, and the censorship, as it is called—it is not truly a censorship, it is nothing like the French or American, indeed the Americans have none—suggests to newspapers that they should not print news likely to help the enemy and that they should not prematurely announce news which it is not advisable to announce. That is all they do. There is no censorship of opinion, none whatever. I have a very near relative on this work, and he tells me, "We must not touch opinion; that is absolutely free. The Press can say what they like." So the case is not as my hon. Friend put it at all. The whole thing has been monstrously exaggerated. I have never heard such gross and awful exaggeration as we have had to-day.

Mr. W. Roberts: If the hon. Member will allow me, I have never said that there was a censorship of opinion. I said that this paper was being threatened with suppression because of the opinions expressed, which is different from a censorship.

Mr. Walkden: I take note of my hon. Friend's words. My right hon. Friend, and comrade and brother, the Home Secretary—[*Interruption*]—Oh, yes, he is; I am going to be loyal to him, and to any other man who serves us working folk in the Government to-day; I think they are right in what they are doing and ought to be supported in that work. He has been described as a dictator, an awful dictator. It is not true. He built up the London Labour party, all by peaceful persuasion; it was all done by kindness and a lot of hard work. He did splendid work inside our movement, with no dictatorship about it. I think that he should be commended in his restraint in dealing with this unhappy little newspaper instead of stopping it as I am afraid I should have done. He just sends for the editor and gives him a nice, kind warning which has had a very good effect. The paper is much more decent now than it was before and will probably improve in circulation. Other gentlemen—I do not blame them for a moment—would much rather see anything taken into the courts and dealt with summarily than by a Minister of the Crown. They say that the Home Secretary should operate under Regulation 2C; let us have the full set-out of court procedure.

They seem to ignore the terrible state of danger we are in. There is an absence of all consciousness that we are living on the very edge of what is probably the most terrible thing in the history of our country. The Germans are 20 miles from the coast of Kent. They hold the whole of the French coast. The March moon is on; the April moon is coming. Within far less time than this legal procedure would take the Germans might be on our own coast or the coast of Southern Ireland; we ought to remember that we might have the enemy at our own throats. We ought not to play about with the nation like this. It is unworthy of the House of Commons, with the urgency of everything now. Why, yesterday and the day before, what was the burden of the song—"Urgency, urgency, you must prepare, you must arm, anything may happen at any hour, you will not have time if you do not hurry up." Yet they want any amount of time to go to the courts, to

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take up the time of the Law Officers of the Crown in court so that they can carry on their song and dance about this unedifying business. What it is all about really is not the case put up by the spokesman who initiated the Debate. It is about certain words in an article, no matter what people have written in this newspaper. Why has this newspaper been warned? Because it issued a cartoon with certain words which had a cruel implication, very cruel indeed, for sailors, wives and other people, women who have their husbands on the sea bringing our oil to carry on our life. Then, in the editorial article, the journal said—because this is the real case—all the stuff that has been talked here has nothing to do with the case—the essential core of the matter is that they printed these words:

> " . . . the accepted tip for Army leadership would, in plain truth, be this:—All who aspire to mislead others in war should be brass-buttoned boneheads, socially prejudiced, arrogant and fussy. A tendency to heart disease, apoplexy, diabetes and high blood pressure is desirable in the highest posts. . . ."

These are really monstrous words, most abominable accusations against the High Command of the Army, which includes men like Wavell and Auchinleck and other men of high rank in our military service. You cannot support the present War Minister who himself was a council school boy, and who graduated, through a secondary school, to a university, and has now won his way, by energy, ability and reliability, right to the Government Front Bench—a splendid capable man; a true example of the best in present-day life—and then take action which seems to condone this kind of statement. For that is what it amounts to. Anyone who is against the Home Secretary to-day is, in fact, supporting these abominable words. Some people say that you ought not to take any notice of this sort of thing. Of course, these people are too big, and too busy, to take notice of what the " Daily Mirror " says; but I am concerned about the young people who have to go into the Forces. This paper is juvenile in its nature. It is, to use Lord Salisbury's phrase, " written by office boys for office boys." Actually, this is a paper written for girls—its name shows that. Its original proprietor intended it as a paper for girls. These girls, and their sweethearts, have to take part in this terrific struggle, on which the future of this country depends. We are not fighting this war for the " Daily Mirror," but for survival, for the future of democracy. Hundreds of thousands of young people read this paper every day. Girls give it to their boy friends in the Army, and in the offices, and so on. They get one whenever they can, and take it home for mother to read. Think of the effect on the mothers, when their boys are being taken away for this terrible struggle, and they read that they will be directed by incompetents, who are not even sound in wind and limb. I am amazed at anyone who champions a paper which does this sort of thing.

Men of the responsible Press, too, great writers whom I admire, who have done very good work in this war, have made a terrible fuss about this particular case. But I put it to them that the " Daily Mirror " has done British journalism untold harm; it has disgraced British journalism. They should look at the thing in that way, as the Home Secretary did, and realise that they ought not to descend to this sort of thing. Rather an interesting book has been written recently by a journalist who did that sort of thing and then made a confession. He went religious, and wrote a book called " Innocent Men." In that book he showed how his proprietor—I will not use any adjectives on him, although I could—instructed him to follow the policy of " Attack, Attack, Attack." [An HON. MEMBER: " The proprietor was Lord Beaverbrook."] Yes, I know who it was. This journalist was to attack anybody, unscrupulously and ruthlessly, and he was to get a four-figure income by ruthless attack on other people. At last, this good fellow, turning religious, thinking of the life he was leading, realised that it was a disgusting way to live. All honour to him. He repented, and became an innocent man. He became a reformed character. I read many of the things that he printed; but really this quotation out-Howards anything that Peter ever wrote. I would ask the " Daily Mirror " proprietor, editor, and the whole set of them, to reform themselves, like Peter did; and not do it any more. That would be good enough.

On the whole question of the freedom of the Press, France has been mentioned. France is not England. I always hate our country to be compared with any other, and most of all with France. There is no need to worry about our

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[Mr. Walkden.]

position in comparison with what occurred in France. They mentioned America. There you may have too much of a good thing. A great news commentator the other day said that the confusion among the public there through the discordance of the Press was so great that really he sometimes wondered whether Great Britain was at war with America and President Roosevelt or with Germany and Japan, there was so much discord. Therefore, I think we had better not refer too much to other countries when we want guidance for ourselves. Let us solve our own problems. I commend the Government for giving the powers that they did. All honour to the previous Home Secretary, and to the present Home Secretary for using them. I hope that he will not be deterred from using them whenever they are necessary. Let us be careful and remember that there is no right to do wrong. Let us be careful to see that the freedom of the Press does not become a tyranny.

Mr. Barnes (East Ham, South): I am connected with the Press in the same way as I am a Member of this House of Commons, namely, in a representative capacity. I assure my hon. Friend the Member for South Bristol (Mr. A. G. Walkden) that all of us who are interested in this subject are not concerned with the defence of the " Daily Mirror " as such nor with the material that may appear from time to time in any journal. I have not found myself in sympathy with extremes of opinion on either side of this problem. The speech of my hon. Friend appeared to me entirely to miss the point. What is involved is the responsibility of Parliament itself and whether the Home Secretary in using Regulation 2D is exceeding the intentions of Parliament. The issue before the House raises the responsibility of the House of Commons to the executive Government. I raise this point immediately because my hon. Friend the Member for South Bristol congratulated the Lord President of the Council, when Minister of Home Security, for adopting these powers, and congratulated the present Minister of Home Security for using them. What my hon. Friend has entirely missed, in using an argument of that kind, is that it was the House of Commons that gave that power to the Minister on the specific statement and assurance which the Minister made to us at the time.

I agree that the Home Secretary has not used that power with regard to the " Daily Mirror " and has not suppressed that paper under Regulation 2D, and we ought at least to give him credit for providing sufficient time for an opportunity for a Parliamentary Debate. The provision of that opportunity is a very important privilege, and in utilising that privilege properly we should ask ourselves under what conditions the House of Commons vested these powers in the Minister of Home Security. I want to recall to the House a speech which the Lord President of the Council made on that occasion—a speech which clearly brings out the circumstances of the time in which the provisions made for the executive Government would be used. They did not supersede previous powers which the Government had had accorded to them by the House of Commons. If this House imposes a responsibility upon the newspapers and citizens of this country, Members of Parliament cannot divest themselves of any responsibility when the powers which they have given to the Executive convey the impression that they are not being used correctly. We have no right to approach this question under the passions and prejudices which seem to have been stirred up today over what may or may not have appeared in a particular paper, according to whether it satisfies or injures the views of any particular Member of this House. Before the war we gave the Government certain powers, but following the experience of Dunkirk the Lord President of the Council, as the then Minister for Home Security, came to the House of Commons, when we were mobilising the Home Guard and expected invasion at any moment, to point out that the powers the Government had were insufficient to deal with the situation that might arise in the circumstances then contemplated.

I propose to remind the Lord President of the Council and the present Minister of Home Security of the words that were used then, because in my view the present action of the Home Secretary is a direct breach of the undertaking which the Lord President of the Council gave. If the Executive is going beyond the understanding of the House, then it is the duty of the House to maintain its authority over the Executive Government of the day.

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This Parliament has extended its life beyond its normal period. New Members are being elected on the nominations of party organisations. We have an all-party Government representing the Executive Government of the day. The people of this country have not the normal means of remedying their grievances, or imposing or reflecting their will, except through existing Members of Parliament. I think it is vital that Members should not lose the confidence of the public by giving powers to the Executive and then allowing the Executive to use those powers under entirely different conditions. If that situation were allowed to develop, I cannot conceive that there is anything that would more undermine the confidence of the people in Members of Parliament and Parliament itself. The second point I want to make is that Members of Parliament claim the right to complete freedom of speech and freedom to criticise the Government of the day. If they claim that, they cannot arrogate to themselves alone the right of expressing criticism of the Government. It is only three or four weeks since Members of Parliament, reflecting opinion in the Press and indignant opinion in the country, influenced the Prime Minister to reconstruct the Government. This sprung from a series of serious military disasters which had had a great effect on public opinion, and that opinion had been reflected in the Press. If the Press of the country is to be subjected to this kind of threat of the exercise of Regulation 2D against it, there might arise a situation in which the country faced conditions which, leading to a series of military disasters, might lose us the war.

When hon. Members talk about the " Daily Mirror " and other newspapers being able to print matter which might demoralise people or have a bad effect on the prosecution of the war, I can only say that there is nothing that could more easily lose the war than blunders and lack of policy on the part of the Government. The right of criticism of the Executive Government is vital to freedom of speech, freedom of the Press and freedom of Parliament. The Lord President of the Council recognised this when, on 31st July, 1940, in the Debate in which he asked the House to approve of these Regulations, he said:

" The reason why it seemed, not merely to the Home Secretary, but to the Government, that a Regulation of this kind, admittedly very drastic, was necessary, is this: the invasion, the overrunning in a very short space of time, of Holland, Belgium and part of France brought home to us in a way it had never been brought home to us before that we in this country were exposed to perils of a kind that most of us had never before imagined. What we have to ask ourselves, and what the Government had to ask themselves, before deciding to make this very drastic Regulation, was whether if the direst peril we can imagine were to come upon us, if we were to find ourselves undergoing trials never before experienced, it would be tolerable that there should at that moment, when the resolution of some of the weakest among us be shaken . . . "—[OFFICIAL REPORT, 31st July, 1940; col. 1320, Vol. 363.]

I ask the House to note that phrase. Obviously and clearly it indicates a condition of abnormal stress and strain in the community, when probably the people would be anxious to leave their villages and towns because of the invasion, and when the Armed Forces and police and others in authority would have to prevent people from flooding the highways of the country. It is under those conditions that the resolution of the weakest members of the community will be shaken. He went on to say:

" By allowing, even for a short time, the systematic publication of matter calculated to foment opposition to the prosecution of the war to a successful issue, how can we be content with the procedure of Regulation 2C? "

I submit that the real issue involved here is not the " Daily Mirror " or any other paper, but the responsibility of the House of Commons, the Government and executive Ministers——

Mr. Austin Hopkinson (Mossley): Are we to understand from what the hon. Member says that in his opinion the present circumstances are less dangerous to this country than those which existed immediately after Dunkirk?

Mr. Barnes: Certainly, from the point of view of the pressure of events on the weakest members of the community. I think that the hon. Member discloses the danger of the situation. The complaint of the Government in the case of this particular paper is that it has printed matters which offend the taste and views of a number of persons, and has printed matter which is irritating to the Government of the day. These articles have been written at a time when this country was facing military disasters. Those disasters have caused widespread disquiet in the community with regard to the conduct

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[Mr. Barnes.]

of the war. That disquiet has been reflected in the House of Commons, and Members, exercising their right of free criticism, brought about a change in the Government of the day. But Regulation 2D does not apply here. The House of Commons is getting to the position where it says that Members are entitled to reflect disquiet, but a public newspaper is not.

Mr. Orr-Ewing (Weston-super-Mare): Cannot we get things straight? As regards the question of stresses, may I put this question? The hon. Member states that stresses can only arise in case of invasion or threat of invasion. Let us assume that, after a series of very unfortunate events, even though they are thousands of miles away, troops are given embarkation leave before proceeding to these zones of operations. They go home on leave to their families, and they are subjected to the sort of propaganda which is contained in the "Daily Mirror." Does he mean to say that the people in this country have not been exposed to great stresses, and that these stresses have not been aggravated by the articles in this paper?

Mr. Barnes: I say that members of the Forces can go home on leave and read the speeches of Members of Parliament which show just as much disquiet as the articles in the "Daily Mirror." I can recall one particular statement made by a Noble Lord in another place which cast reflections on the quality and capacity of a leading general of this country. My point is that the Lord President of the Council, when he was Home Secretary, did not advance this argument in connection with Regulation 2C. If he had advanced the arguments that he has now submitted, he would not have got that Regulation through the Chamber. I submit that he is wrong in using this Regulation for the purpose of suppressing a newspaper in the circumstances now prevailing. His argument may be that 2C does not provide the right type of facility or power to deal with certain circumstances. But my contention is that the executive Government are going beyond the original intention of Parliament when the Regulation was given to them. If they find their powers are not sufficient to deal with any problem in the circumstances that prevail at present, they ought to bring forward proposals which can be discussed on their merits. If we once permit these arbitrary powers to be vested in executive Ministers of the Crown, we can clearly see the danger of the precedent that we are beginning to establish. By whatever standard we judge the cartoon, it was the caption which enabled people to put their interpretation on it. Here we are getting into the position that putting a caption to a particular cartoon is brought within powers which Parliament solemnly gave to Ministers to use in a time of extreme peril.

Mr. A. G. Walkden: Plus the editorial statement.

Mr. Barnes: My hon. Friend takes us to the position that newspapers are subjected to a very severe censorship for practically all their news dealing with war matters. I know, because I am connected with a newspaper, and I know that all matter pertaining to the war has to be subjected to the censor. But the editorial remains practically the one part of a newspaper where a responsible journalist —and an editor ought to be a responsible journalist—can express any criticism that he feels disposed to do. A Government which uses a power like 2D in the case of editorial comment or the caption to a cartoon is going a long way to undermine the structure of liberty. It is not a question of the rights and merits of the matter in the "Daily Mirror." In the long run that progressive development will undermine the whole virility of our war effort. I urge upon my right hon. Friend and the Government to recognise that if they commence to use this power in this direction, they will increase public disquiet and they will commence to break up the essential connection of the Press with Parliament. I urge the Home Secretary to reconsider his decision and, if his powers under 2C are not sufficient, have the courage to come to the House with new proposals dealing with the specific problems which it is for us to cope with.

Sir Ralph Glyn (Abingdon): I think that perhaps at this stage of the Debate it might be well to get back to reality and realise what the issue is. The House owes a debt of gratitude to the hon. Member who raised this matter, because very properly the House is jealous of the freedom of the Press. I do not think, however, that we are considering in this

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episode the question of freedom but a question of licence. The great bulk of the Press of this country is just as honourable in its intentions and as anxious to see the war brought to a successful conclusion as any hon. Member in the House. I am also certain that everybody who has spoken to-day has shown, apart from what may be personal recriminations, the same wish and desire to do nothing which will hamper the war effort. I rise because I am convinced that the articles which have been appearing in this newspaper are most distasteful to all honourable journalists, and I believe that they are responsible for a lowering of the spirit of the Services of this country. If that is the position, surely we must not confuse the issue and must not be more royal than the King. Hon. Members have made speeches to-day defending the freedom of the Press, but there is nobody anxious to attack it. The Press is perfectly free, but surely in time of war, when we are faced with the greatest peril that this realm has ever faced, it would be the greatest cowardice on the part of the Government, after they have been given powers by this House, not to act. If the Home Secretary had not acted, hon. Members would have demanded to know why he did not act. I feel strongly that he should have acted far sooner.

For months the drift of criticism of officers in all the Services which has been the business apparently of the " Daily Mirror " has undermined what is essential, for let the House remember that we stand on the brink of the whole future of our country. What right has the Home Secretary to lock up anybody under Regulation 18B if he allows one man with a pen to do infinitely more harm to far more people through a newspaper? We have, I am afraid, reached a stage when this country is getting rather impatient with the House of Commons. We talk as if we were in a vacuum. We do not realise what our duty and responsibilities are. I do not think the Government have been wise in everything they have done, but when they have taken action at long last, why should anybody here abuse them? I have heard from friends of mine in the Services that the soldier, sailor and airman do not understand how this one newspaper can continually produce this daily drift which is calculated to undermine discipline. The men may be adults, as one hon. Member said, but if day by day a newspaper puts out things wrapped up in one form or another which are calculated to undermine the discipline of the one defence of this country, surely the House will not defend it or condemn a Government if at long last they take action about it.

I am certain that every hon. Member who is acquainted with any officer in command knows that they are most open to constructive criticism. [*Laughter.*] Those hon. Members who laugh betray their lack of knowledge of the type of officer who is now leading our Services. This is not a time to detract from the strength of our Forces. It is a time when the House of Commons should stand behind those in authority, and nothing which the hon. Gentleman who opened the Debate said should be used still further to increase the harm which has been done by this newspaper. In the end, as General Knox, who was Adjutant-General of the Army not very long ago, said in a letter to " The Times " yesterday, it is the spirit of the troops and the maintenance of their spirit which will bring victory, nothing else.

> " You may talk of all your modern inventions to bring victory, but what ultimately matters is the spirit of your men, and how can you keep the spirit of your men if you are having this daily drip of wicked, ignorant criticism."

Sometimes I believe that this daily criticism must have had some evil source associated with our enemies. If the Press of this country, which has a more honourable record on the whole than the Press of any other country, can tolerate this sort of thing in war-time, it seems to me that the real answer is not a Debate like this in the House but is criticism from other newspapers. Unfortunately, this paper is so clever. It appeals to every sense, the sense which we all have, and which has been seen in this Debate, of a desire to nag those in authority, which is easy criticism; but it also appeals to the " strip-tease " mind, which means an appeal to those feelings which are very prevalent in war and which are absolutely natural. That gives the paper a market, so to say, and makes it attractive to a certain number of people. But there was one newspaper in this country which had the courage to criticise what was said in the " Daily Mirror " in that passage which has been quoted so often. The " London Illustrated News " said:

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[Sir R. Glyn.]

" Some at least of the mud must stick. And there is one thing sure; if these reckless people succeed in making the young soldier, the young cadet at an O.C.T.U., the young officer just commissioned from the ranks, believe that their superiors are as a body narrow-minded, conceited, idle and pompous fools, then they will have introduced into the veins of the Army a poison which will eventually corrupt its blood and weaken its muscles. . . . If the fighting forces are attacked by the canker of disillusionment they are ripe for defeat without a battle."

Those are strong words, and they are used by a newspaper which, I believe, recognises that by its policy the " Daily Mirror " has done nothing to help the war effort but has done everything to undermine it. Finally, it is not only in connection with the war and the Government prosecution of the war that the " Daily Mirror ", has played such an evil part. The other day reference was made by the chairman of a large undertaking in a speech to pilfering and stealing on the railways. Every trade union working with the railways is working day and night to wipe out this evil. What does the " Daily Mirror " say? It condones it. It is not only undermining the spirit of the Services, but it is undermining the moral fibre of the country in war.

Mr. Bellenger: Read it.

Sir R. Glyn: The " Daily Mirror " of 7th March said, after discussing this question of theft and pilfering:

" We are consoled however to some small extent by thought of the railways' revised financial agreement with the Government, by the assistance provided from the Exchequer or taxpayer, and by the passenger in mounting fares."

They justified this action.

Mr. Pritt (Hammersmith, North): What action?

Sir R. Glyn: Stealing and pilfering.

Mr. Pritt: Read the whole statement.

Sir R. Glyn: This is what it said:

" The Chairman of the L.M.S. has made a depressing discovery. He has detected ' a lowering of moral values, an unhappy feature of all war.' The lowered moral values, so far as the L.M.S. is concerned, have revealed themselves in wholesale robbery and petty pilfering on the line: robberies that have reached ' appalling dimensions.' Some of the Company's oldest servants have succumbed to the infection of this moral disease. They have been ' detected and found guilty of thefts of goods in their charge.' Are we shocked? Indeed, we are! So shocked that we hardly dare to point to the average wage of the average railwayman in war time; to the growing cost of living; and so on."

Then follows the paragraph I have just read. The article concludes:

" We remember how a Minister, not long ago, condemned or criticised this agreement, which many people (not stockholders) called a ramp. And we rejoice that wholesale robbery can be thus financially corrected by good strokes of business, done with the sanction of law, which never condone pilfering."

I apologise to hon. Members for taking up their time by reading all this article, but I say that the whole attitude of that leading article is to lower the moral standard of the country.

In conclusion, may I say a few words, with all respect? I have been a Member of this House for a great many years. I am very conscious that we stand in a position now where we shall be judged by our successors. I do not think that we deserve victory in this country unless we cleanse ourselves. I believe that any organ which appeals to baser motives or does anything to undermine our stability and strength should be rooted out and should not be condoned by any hon. Member of this House.

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Herbert Morrison): We have just listened to a speech of great sincerity and thoughtfulness from my hon. Friend. Whether Members agree with that speech or not, they will agree that it contributed to the elevation and usefulness of the Debate. I join with other hon. Members in expressing my appreciation of the action of the hon. Member for North Cumberland (Mr. W. Roberts) who opened this Debate, and the hon. Friends with whom he acts, for making the arrangements with other Members of the House.

When this action, or rather intimation of possible action, was taken by the Government I anticipated there would probably be Parliamentary criticism. Indeed, as one who is a great believer in Parliamentary accountability and the principle of Parliamentary accountability, I took the earliest opportunity, on the very morning when I had seen the representatives of the " Daily Mirror " to inform the House of what we had done, in order, if the House were so disposed, that it could challenge the action of the Government and take its own steps to restrain any further action on that line.

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I think everybody will agree that the Government, and I myself acting in this matter for the Government, have been most scrupulous to observe the rights of the House and to submit ourselves to the judgment of the House at the earliest possible moment. If there be critics, it is right that they should express their minds, as they have done to-day. The only small regret I have is that we did say that if the House wanted debating facilities we would provide them and, of course, opportunity for a Motion and a Division. I am bound to say that if there is a state of indignation in the country about this matter to the extent to which the Press—but by no means all the Press—have criticised my action—[*Interruption*]. The hon. Member for Nelson and Colne (Mr. Silverman) ought not to confine his attention to the London Press. There is a division of opinion among the Press. I freely admit that a considerable element is strongly critical of the Government's action. I hope I am not such a fool as to expect otherwise.

I have read certain speeches by hon. Members of this House and others, and have heard of deputations which wished to wait upon me, all suggesting that this is a terrible thing, that the bulk of the people of the country are awfully worried about it, and that this threat to the freedom of the Press must be challenged and stopped. After all this hullaballoo, what has been happening this week? There have been manoeuvrings behind the scenes, not to accept the Government's offer, which I made with the assent of the Prime Minister and of the Leader of the House, to provide opportunities—as we could have done if the demand had been made early enough—for a full day's Debate, a Motion and a Division. I assure the House that there have been considerable manoeuvres among a number of hon. Members to see that this Debate to-day should take place in conditions in which a Division could not be taken. [*Interruption.*] I know what I am talking about, and in any case——

Mr. W. Roberts: As I am the Member who raised this question, I should be obliged if the Home Secretary would tell me what he is referring to. I am quite unaware of anything except that we asked to have the discussion to-day. It was always understood that the Debate would be to-day, and the only question was whether it should be a whole day Debate or not.

Sir I. Albery: Before the right hon. Gentleman replies, will he allow me to say for myself and certain other hon. Members that our only anxieties and efforts have been to confer with the hon. Member who was raising this Debate and to say how much we regretted that we should only have a portion of a day? A whole day's Debate and a Division would have been welcome.

Mr. H. Morrison: In that case why, after Thursday of last week when I said that the Government would provide facilities for a Motion, a Debate and a Division if desired, was such a Motion not put down?

Mr. Stokes: When?

Mr. Morrison: Last Thursday.

Mr. Stokes: May I ask my right hon. Friend——

Mr. Morrison: One moment. Do not let my hon. Friend be so mentally and physically aggressive in his interruptions. It could have been done. Surely hon. Members know what can be done in this House? There could have been a rearrangement of Business this week if there had been a real demand.

Mr. Bevan: If the right hon. Gentleman will permit me to intervene, I have been considering putting a Motion on the Order Paper, and indeed I should be delighted to have the opportunity of voting against the right hon. Gentleman on this matter. But does the right hon. Gentleman suggest that the Government would have been prepared to postpone the Debate on Production, which had been announced over a fortnight before?

Mr. Morrison: No, Sir; do not let us get mixed. The House knows perfectly well that there could have been such a readjustment of the Business of the House, and that a day could have been arranged without prejudice to the other Debate.

Mr. Bevan: When?

Mr. Morrison: My hon. Friend the Member for Ebbw Vale (Mr. A. Bevan) poses as a great Parliamentary strategist——

Mr. Bevan: I never do.

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Mr. Morrison: I am afraid the hon. Member does. What would have been easier than to request the Government that the House should sit on another day, that we should have taken the Adjournment Debate on another day and have a Motion and Division to-day? [*Interruption.*] That request was never made. [An HON. MEMBER: " It was made this morning."] I beg to recall to hon. Members that this is a Debate about freedom of expression. I beg to remind the hon. Member who raised the matter that I was present at a consultation with a representative of his own party, during which he said, quite sincerely, that it was not intended to take this matter to a Division.

Mr. Stokes: Was that the manoeuvre?

Mr. Morrison: I am speaking generally in response to the challenge. That is the evidence.

Mr. J. J. Davidson (Glasgow, Maryhill) *rose*——

Mr. Morrison: I am sorry, I am not giving way. These manifestations of Parliamentary indignation are really no good. If there is a sufficient body of opinion in the House which wishes to challenge the Government on an issue, on which, hon. Members say, the great bulk of opinion in the country is against the Government, it is childish to urge that the Members of the House do not know the way to set about it.

Mr. Davidson: On a point of Order. I have been a Member of this House since 1935, and I have always acted through the recognised channels of the House of Commons. The Home Secretary has just said that there has been, during the past week, certain manoeuvres to avoid a decision on this issue. I am not concerned with the issue, and I am not indicating myself as a supporter of one side or the other, but I wish to ask you, Sir, whether it is in Order for the Home Secretary to intimate that certain manoeuvres have been made behind the backs of hon. Members of this House by other Members of the House, without mentioning the Members concerned.

Mr. Speaker: That is not a point of Order.

Mr. H. Morrison: It seems to me, being an instrument of the House, that if there is feeling about a subject there is a straightforward thing to do, and not the sort of thing which has repeatedly happened about the Defence Regulations. There the policy seems to have been one of willingness to strike without any particular anxiety to take the matter to its proper conclusion, and let the House decide whether the Minister concerned is right or wrong. There is a charming idea that the Government should be so weak about its own position as to put down a Motion on the matter. Surely it is for the critics to put the Motion down. [*Interruption.*] I again call attention to this demonstration by the advocates of freedom of expression. The hon. Member who opened the Debate made a statement which I shall do my best to recall in its general sense. It was to the effect that some persons, broadcasting from this country to Buenos Aires, had said that Mr. Hearst was a part-proprietor of the " Daily Mirror," and that they had received encouragement or inspiration, as I understand it—my hon. Friend will correct me if I am wrong—from the Ministry of Information or the B.B.C.

Mr. W. Roberts: The Home Secretary has got quite a wrong impression of what I said, which was that a telegram, sent either yesterday or the day before, to Buenos Aires from the Ministry of Information repeated this unconfirmed allegation that Hearst was a part-owner of the " Daily Mirror "; I also said that such telegrams should not go abroad, reporting rumours which have no foundation.

Mr. Morrison: I can only say that my right hon. Friend the Minister of Information has made the most careful inquiries, and assures me that neither the Ministry of Information nor the B.B.C. has taken or inspired such action. That is a specific denial in the presence of, and with the authority of, my right hon. Friend, and I think in those circumstances——

Mr. Shinwell: Will my right hon. Friend allow me to intervene only on a point of correction? We do not want any misunderstanding. I understood my hon. Friend to say that this telegram had been despatched and that his point was, not that the Government or the B.B.C. were responsible for sending the telegram, but that they did not censor the telegram.

Mr. W. Roberts: No; my information is that this was a telegram sent by an official in the Ministry of Information.

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Mr. H. Morrison: My right hon. Friend tells me that that is quite untrue. I only want to say that that is a very serious allegation, which implicates officers in the Ministry of Information. It is made in the light of day here; it can be cabled all over the world—it probably has been—and made use of by other people. It may cause mischief in the United States. I suggest two things to the hon. Member. One is that that sort of thing ought not to be said without real evidence; and the other is that my hon. Friend ought now, having received my right hon. Friend's denial, to supply my right hon. Friend with the source of his information, so that the necessary checking-up can take place.

Mr. Roberts: I hasten to make my apologies, and to accept the assurance that the Home Secretary has given that my information was not correct.

Mr. Morrison: I am sure that my right hon. Friend will greatly appreciate the very frank and open apology that the hon. Member has made. But I still say that it is a pity that he should make these grave statements without proof; and I must say that, having made such a statement, it is his duty to convey to my right hon. Friend the evidence upon which that allegation was based.

Mr. de Rothschild (Isle of Ely): The hon. Member, speaking from these benches, has made his apology, and will give his information to the Minister of Information. Will the Minister of Information also make an inquiry, as to whether that telegram was sent?

Mr. Bracken: I have done so.

Mr. H. Morrison: I have said categorically—not for myself, for it is not my Department that is concerned, but on the authority of my right hon. Friend—that the statement was untrue and without foundation. Broadly speaking, the Debate has gone to and fro, and there have been what I think we may regard as a certain number of fundamental arguments. I will make only two points of personal observation. One is, that the hon. Member for Gravesend (Sir I. Albery), in association with the hon. Member for Ebbw Vale (Mr. Bevan), has accused me of being some sort of dictator. My hon. Friend the Member for Gravesend was good enough to say that I was a benevolent dictator; and, considering his state of mind, that was not ungenerous. My hon. Friend the Member for Ebbw Vale was up to his usual hearty and thoroughly irresponsible, enjoyable, and hectic standard. My hon. Friend is never happier than when he is having a shot at his own political friends, and he has never been happier than he was to-day.

Mr. A. Bevan: And the right hon. Gentleman is never happier than when he is attacking his own political principles.

Mr. Morrison: That last observation is up to the best standard of my hon. Friend, as from one comrade to another. Usually such communications are signed, "Yours fraternally." It is difficult to please the critics. Some are complaining to-day, as they have done before, that I am a dictator. I do not think so myself; but who am I to say? But, on other occasions, Members of this House are equally free in their accusations that Ministers have not minds of their own, and in their demands that Ministers should have minds of their own. Now, it is complained that I have a mind of my own. We all do our best, but it is exceedingly difficult, in view of these conflicting criticisms. The hon. Member for Ebbw Vale made some observations about my past journalistic efforts. It must not be assumed that, because one writes for a newspaper, one agrees with that newspaper. My hon. Friend has written, I believe, for the "Daily Express," the "Evening Standard," and other organs of enlightened opinion.

Mr. Bevan: The right hon. Gentleman really uses the word "irresponsible." Will he tell the House of Commons when I last wrote for the "Daily Express" and the "Evening Standard"?

Mr. Morrison: I have not the least idea.

Mr. Bevan: It is more than five years ago, and it was only one article then.

Mr. Morrison: I hope that the deduction to be drawn from that is not that my hon. Friend's writings were not sufficiently attractive. Why should not my hon. Friend write for the "Evening Standard" or any other paper? It does not follow that he agreed with all the opinions of my Noble Friend Lord Beaverbrook or with those of his newspapers. It does not follow at all. I am sure that when he wrote those articles he wrote what he believed, as I tried to do when

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[Mr. Morrison.]

I wrote in that paper and in other papers in which I have written. After all, he had family connections of the same sort himself. I only intervened to raise a point about his story because I thought he was leading the House to think that I alleged that the right hon. and gallant Gentleman the late Secretary of State for War was removed by a conspiracy of Army officers. The argument I conveyed was that it was so alleged and that it raised an important constitutional issue if it were so, and that the House of Commons ought to be certain whether or not it was the case. I think that my hon. Friend when he reads the OFFICIAL REPORT will find that he quite misrepresented what I did say. What harm are we doing by raising the constitutional principle anyway? I cannot see anything pernicious in the view I expressed on that occasion. The basic argument in this Debate has been in the main concerned with whether we should use Regulation 2C or Regulation 2D. This point was raised with great energy on the occasion of the " Daily Worker " Debate.

Mr. Gallacher: When are you going to lift the ban on the " Daily Worker "?

Mr. Morrison: I am not dealing with my hon. Friend at the moment, and he had better await his turn. That argument was very fully dealt with at the time. I pointed out then, and the House evidently took the same view judging by the result of the Division, that Regulation 2C was a rather clumsy and inconvenient instrument for this purpose. I do not complain that the " Daily Mirror " itself might prefer this Regulation and that those who did not want to deal with this problem of the Press at all would also prefer it, because it really would be an ineffective instrument. This is what would have to be done if Regulation 2C were used. We should have to watch the paper for systematic objectionable matter. We should issue a warning and have to watch again to see whether fresh offences occurred. Then, if we were of opinion that the offence continued, the Attorney-General would have to be consulted for consent to and the institution of proceedings, and before proceedings could be taken time would be taken up in the preparation of evidence and the getting together of witnesses on both sides and so on. We should then prosecute an individual or individuals. Presumably the person responsible for the publication would be the editor and, I suppose, the printer, but so far as I can see the rich proprietors would not come within the proceedings and would get away altogether. So far as I can see, it would be the salaried officers of the undertaking who would be imprisoned or fined, and that in itself leads to the possibility of many evasions. There would have to be legal arguments, and there would be the possibility of appeal, going perhaps to the highest Court, so that the course of the proceedings from the beginning to the end might take a very long time. The newspaper, meanwhile, could go on with its mischievous propaganda, and this could be continued in the course of argument in the court of law itself. At the end of it all somebody might be fined the maximum of £500 or receive a maximum of seven years' imprisonment. Even then the paper would not be suppressed. We could apply to the High Court for the power to seize the printing plant, but when that was done there would be nothing to stop the paper obtaining more plant and going merrily on.

This procedure may be suitable for a certain type of offence, but I suggest to the House that leisurely procedure is not adequate for a country which is in the situation in which we are to-day, when we are entitled to expect speed of action and from the Press as a whole a proper degree of loyalty and responsibility to the State. I am surprised that hon. Members who have often pressed the Government to be speedy and decisive in action should ask that we should be indecisive in this matter. If in this case we had fallen back upon Regulation 2C I know what the argument would have been, that when we dealt with the " Daily Worker " we used the brutal Regulation 2D and that when we dealt with the capitalist Press we used Regulation 2C. [*Interruption.*] More freedom of expression is being manifested from this little quarter. I think we were right to use Regulation 2D against the " Daily Worker." Remember that the House supported us on a Division in our action against this newspaper.

We have been patient with the " Daily Mirror." I ought not to say so, but I have some sympathy with the hon. Member for Abingdon (Sir R. Glyn) when he said that perhaps we have been too patient. There is a strong case that could

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be made for that point of view which has in itself proved the reluctance of the Government to interfere with the Press at all. I can assure the House that that is true of the Government as a whole and of myself as the Minister concerned. We do not wish, if possible, to interfere with the Press.

Mr. Cocks: The " Daily Worker."

Mr. Morrison: That is not a very pointed reference. We dealt with the " Daily Worker " because we believed that in the interests of the State it was necessary to do so. It is a curious argument which assumes that there is no choice whatever between allowing all newspapers to say and do exactly what they like and challenging the whole principle of the freedom of the Press. It ought not to be argued that newspapers have a right to do anything they like. The newspapers are not superior to our Parliamentary institutions. They are not superior to the interests of the British people in times of great crisis and of war. And let it be understood by all the newspapers that it is this Parliament that is supreme. It is to this Parliament that I am immediately accountable. And if the argument is to be advanced, as it almost was advanced, that all newspapers have the right to do exactly what they like, however they imperil the State, let me reply that that is an impossible argument which no Member of Parliament in his right senses ought to touch with a long arm in time of war. But it has been flirted with in this Debate.

What is the case? There has been one suppression, and now one threat of suppression. In one case it was a newspaper which was actively and openly impeding the prosecution of the war, and in this case it is a newspaper which has done things which no decent Member of this House will defend. I have given some quotations, and I will give some more later. It is true that when one talks to hon. Members, and when one talks to journalists outside, even to some of the most critical and miserable and unhappy journalists outside, they all say, " No, of course we would not defend the ' Daily Mirror.' It is irresponsible. It is off the rails, and we would not defend it for a moment. For goodness' sake do not mix us up with it, but do not interfere with it, because if you do, you interfere with the freedom of the Press." That is an inept argument. It is an argument which makes government impossible. It is an argument which condemns the Government to take no action against any newspaper, whatever it does. I want to say that this Home Secretary will take, subject to his responsibility to the House, any action within his power against any newspaper which actually conducts itself in such a way as to promote opposition to the successful prosecution of the war. It is my duty to do that, and I will discharge that duty and be accountable to the House. If the House has a Division and I go down, I will go down, but up till that happens, I will have done my duty as I see it.

On the other hand, it ought not to be deduced from this that the Government are bursting to quarrel with the newspapers. I have yet to see politicians bursting to quarrel with the newspapers. I have seen so many politicians do the very reverse. Let us be human and frank about it. None of us likes to quarrel with the Press if we can help it. We do not enjoy it when the Press goes for us. Except in certain circumstances, we like to be friendly with the Press. We are very friendly with the Lobby men here, and they are very helpful to us, to the State and the Government. They are a fine body of men. Why should it be assumed that a peculiar circle of Ministers in the Government want to provoke, to precipitate needlessly, a wholesale and first-class quarrel with the Press? Why should we? We do not want to do anything of the kind. We wish generally to preserve the liberty of the organs of opinion in this country. As a matter of fact, in the great difficulties with which we are faced, the remarkable thing is not that the Press has been touched at all, but that up to date only one daily newspaper has been suppressed, and that was only partly a newspaper, and it was openly anti-war. I think that is a remarkable achievement which is a credit to the British nation.

I resent these light-hearted and irresponsible allusions made at a time of critical fortune for our country. I resent allusions that either the Government or I have the slightest desire to interfere with the legitimate and proper liberty of the Press. Let it be remembered that, under the procedure of Regulation 2C, if I had prosecuted, the House would not have

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[Mr. Morrison.]
been able to say anything about the matter. I could have prosecuted, I could have gone for the heaviest penalties I could get, and the House could not have debated the propriety of my action. I could not have been accountable to the House, because the case would have been *sub judice,* which would have stopped Questions or debate. I think that in this class of case, which is really a broad judgment of public policy—that is what it really comes to—there is no better, and no more immediate and swifter tribunal to deal with it than the House of Commons.

Mr. Cocks: Does not my right hon. Friend realise that the action of a Home Secretary on an issue like that might bring down the whole Government?

Mr. Morrison: I am glad to have that encouraging observation from my hon. Friend. I am afraid that on this point he is not in agreement with my hon. Friend the Member for Ebbw Vale who sits next to him. After all, Parliamentary Government is Parliamentary Government, and, if there is a sufficient body of opinion which dissents from the action of the Government, it is the duty of that sufficient body of opinion to convince the Government that they have done a very wicked and bad thing, and not to worry about me, and whether it brings me down or not. It is their duty to express themselves and take action: and any other attitude is not acting in accordance with our Parliamentary standards.

Let us come now to the merits of this newspaper. I have given the House two quotations, and, if Members will bear with me, I will give one or two more. It has been stated that the cartoon could equally well bear some other interpretation than the interpretation I gave it. These are matters of individual judgment; surely these things must be judged on their face value. It was a very simple cartoon. It was not involved or difficult. It was a well-drawn cartoon of a seaman struggling on a raft at sea. He was alone, almost exhausted, on a lonely sea. What that cartoon meant depended on what was printed in the caption beneath. With great respect, that is what a caption is for. On the caption beneath the cartoon it was stated: "The price of petrol has been increased by 1d. per gallon—Official." I may be dull, narrow-minded and unimaginative, but I really cannot see that that meant anything else but this, that that man is risking his life in order that somebody may get additional profits.

Mr. Stokes: Is it not possible—because this is the effect it had on me—that that cartoon could be taken to mean that seamen are risking their lives, while all we have to suffer is one penny more per gallon on petrol, and, therefore, we jolly well ought not to waste it?

Mr. Morrison: All I was trying to do was to give the most probable explanation of that cartoon from the point of view of the ordinary person of average intelligence. I should have thought that was the ordinary interpretation. My hon. Friend does not argue from that point of view. With his mental ingenuity and energy, for which we all know him and like him, he says it is possible intelligently to imagine and believe that it meant something else. With great respect, I think it is far more important in coming to a judgment to know the possible meaning of the cartoon, than to set about trying to find what else it can mean. It is a good way of mixing oneself up.

Mr. Stokes: I said that that was the effect it had upon me.

Mr. Beverley Baxter (Wood Green): Is it not a little terrifying, both to the Press and to this House, that appreciation of a cartoon by the Home Secretary, which has many variations of meaning, may result in, at least, a process of starting to ban that newspaper?

Mr. Morrison: You see where one gets to when one tries to answer criticisms that have been made. It was alleged that this cartoon either did not mean this or that it could mean something else. I then get into trouble with my hon. Friend who says, "What a difficult Regulation this is when it depends on the individual interpretation of an individual cartoon." But that is not the Regulation. There is in the Regulation the word "systematic." The offence has to be not merely repeated but systematic. It has to reflect some kind of repetitive tendency. I believe that the interpretation which jumped to my eyes when I saw it—I know that other people have found other interpretations

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since—is the common-sense and obvious meaning. [*Interruption.*] It is impossible to go on with my speech if there is going to be persistent interruption. It is a speech of some importance and care.

Mr. Speaker: The right hon. Gentleman the Home Secretary has appealed to Members to stop interrupting. I do hope that they will do so.

Mr. Morrison: Let us assume that what I think is the obvious meaning of it is the obvious meaning, or even that it is capable widely of that interpretation, which is lower than I would put it. Consider the problem of the Minister of Labour. He has feelings on this matter. He is responsible for seeing that sufficient men go to sea in the Merchant Marine. He knows that merchant seamen have a rough time. He knows, and admires, as we all know and admire, their heroism. They are sometimes torpedoed. Many have died or have been injured in the course of their calling. In a small number of cases the Minister of Labour has to prosecute, where men are unwilling to go to sea and they are even imprisoned. Is it not obvious that a cartoon which clearly intimates, in my judgment, that when they go to sea and risk their lives they are risking them in order that someone may get extra profits is calculated to stimulate opposition to the war? I do not think there can possibly be any answer to that.

Mr. Shinwell: Has there been any complaint from them? If not, why raise it?

Mr. Morrison: No doubt the seamen will see what my hon. Friend has said. I think it was a wicked cartoon, and so does the Minister of Labour. I only ask that when these people write these captions they will pause and think, Will this help the country or injure it? That is all I am asking, and I say that the man who wrote that caption did not think or else that he was deliberately doing something of which he ought to be heartily ashamed. That increase in the price of petrol did not go through without the most careful examination by the Petroleum Department and, in addition, a careful examination by a committee of the Government presided over by the Lord President of the Council. Therefore, there was no question of our having allowed a needless profit.

I come now to other extracts. One has already been quoted in my statement to the House on Thursday last week, others by my hon. Friend the Member for Chester-le-Street (Mr. Lawson) and by my hon. Friend the Member for South Bristol (Mr. A. G. Walkden) in the very human and forceful speech which greatly charmed the House. They speak for themselves, even though there may be some difference of opinion about the leading article. I will give one or two more examples—they are not exhaustive, and they ought not to be, because it would keep us too long—of the general tendency of this newspaper. It may be that certain Members may think there is an element of truth in some of them or all of them. The question is their persistency and the extremity, the wholesale character of the kind of comment which appears in the columns of this newspaper. Here is one by a gentleman known as " Cassandra " on 12th January, 1942. He said:

> " Bungling and mismanagement of the Army are on a scale that cannot be concealed and is obvious to all. . . . Hundreds of thousands of loyal and intelligent civilians are now being drafted into the Army. Most of them find themselves in circumstances where they are forced to put their initiative and commonsense into cold storage for the duration. At the top you have the military aristocracy of the Guards Regiments with a mentality not very foreign to that of Potsdam. In the centre you have a second class snobocracy, and behind it all the cloying inertia of the Civil Service bogged down by regulations from which they cannot extricate themselves."

Mr. Bevan: What is wrong with that?

Mr. Morrison: If the hon. Gentleman wishes by his interjection to associate himself with that passage, he is at liberty to do so, but I would not advise him to do so. [*Interruption.*] If he wishes to be associated with it, I must give it to him. The same is apparently true of the hon. Member for Broxtowe (Mr. Cocks).

Mr. Cocks: You can mention my name if you like. [*Laughter.*]

Mr. Morrison: I am bound to say that I think this hilarity in a situation like the present is to be deprecated. Here is a war in which we are fighting Nazi tyranny, in which we are fighting for our freedom, in which we are fighting against the Nazi version of the Prussian outlook. That is what Members of Parliament have told soldiers, airmen and sailors they are fighting the war for. Then here is a

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journalist who says in effect, " That is all nonsense. Your own officers are drawn from the military aristocracy of the Guards regiments." That really is not true nowadays. He says, too, " Your own officers have a mentality not very foreign to that of Potsdam." Is that likely to inspire the Army with ardour and enthusiasm? Is not this stuff which is calculated to undermine the morale of the Army? The allegation in the article is not true and it ought not to be supported as true by Members of this House or others. Here is another extract which is a contemptuous attack upon the House of Commons:

> " America goes so far as to prepare her public opinion for that (defeat). It is as well to warn. And yet it is useless to warn the impotent masses, the public the people. Useless. Because all that the House of Commons does is to pass fatuous votes of confidence after hours of bitter criticism."

Mr. Bellenger: That is quite true.

Mr. Morrison: This must be considered in the light of the general tendency of the paper's criticism, and I say that is a frontal attack upon Parliamentary institutions, deliberately done if it was wished to be done, for the purpose of undermining faith in Parliamentary institutions. I could go on with quotations of this type, in which the general implication all the way through is that everything is wrong, that everybody is incompetent. The logical deduction which would be drawn by any ordinary man is that nothing is right, that everybody is incompetent if, indeed, not worse than incompetent. Surely the logical result of that in any elementary reasoning by an individual is, " What is the good of going on? Why continue the war? We had better do some sort of deal with the enemy to patch things up." Day after day, month after month, this newspaper is conducting that sort of propaganda. Instances of it could be multiplied.

Mr. McEntee (Walthamstow, West): It used to be Fascist.

Mr. Morrison: Supposing a secret Fascist organisation wished to conduct propaganda for the purpose of undermining morale. If it had sense it would not go about it by openly opposing the war. Not at all. It would set about vigorously supporting the war and then it would paint the picture that the House of Commons is rotten or corrupt or incompetent or something like that, that the Government is the same, that the chiefs of the armed forces are the same, in that way effecting a steady undermining of public confidence and a spread of the belief that defeat is inevitable and why should the needless spilling of blood and suffering continue. That would be a perfectly understandable Fascist technique. I do not say that this newspaper had Fascist intentions in this connection. I am not too much concerned with whether it had or not. I cannot know what the journalist thought and meant and what his motives were when he wrote what he wrote, but I say that the general line of this newspaper is consistent with the Fascist propaganda policy, and whether it meant it or not is at bottom really irrelevant to the issue. It is the consequences of the facts which must be considered, and that being so the Government were not only entitled to act but it was their duty to act.

Dr. Haden Guest (Islington, North): Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that this paper—I have a copy of it in my hand—advocated precisely the same line of general policy as long ago as May, 1939, and does he consider that in May, 1939, this Fascist conspiracy which he is hinting at, this Fascist intent, had then taken shape in the mind of the newspaper's proprietors?

Mr. Lawson: I would put another question to the right hon. Gentleman. Can he tell us how it is, if they pursued this course previous to the war, that they are now deliberately doing their best to lose the war?—[An HON. MEMBER: " Nonsense."]

Mr. Morrison: I noticed what both hon. Members said, and there is point in both their observations. The basis upon which judgment must be delivered is: Is this calculated to have the very effect that the Fascist enemies in the war would wish? I have said that we wish to preserve the freedom of the Press, but we do say that we have a right to expect the Press to conduct itself in a responsible manner. That really is the dividing line. If a newspaper, writing criticisms of the Government, which all newspapers do from time to time, sits down and does so with the purpose of being helpful, not to the Government but to the country and

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the active prosecution of the war; if such newspapers are discriminating in what they write, if they are responsible, if they are deliberate, if they put their case in a way which bears responsibility on its face, with that kind of freedom of the Press we have no quarrel, and we shall have no quarrel with it. But when a journalist sits down, as these people have, and says: " I am going to think of the most extreme, mischievous, irresponsible and even untruthful thing that I can, irrespective of its effect upon the country and the war effort," I say that is a journalism that has destroyed its own freedom, has imperilled its own freedom, and is a menace to the freedom of the rest of the Press as well. The dividing line is the sense of responsibility. The dividing line is between the journalist who criticises with the intention of aiding the prosecution of the war and the journalist who criticises merely with the intention of being destructive and mischievous and with complete indifference as to the consequences on the war.

The usual argument has been brought out about France. Poor France. Everybody has used it as an example of political censorship, but we have not followed the policy of France with the Press. What France did was to have a political censorship of every item of news and opinion that went into a newspaper. That is a totally different thing from what we do. They did not permit criticism of the Government at all. That was eliminated, and so was criticism of the army leaders. Why is this stale old story of France brought out when it has nothing to do with the case? I will tell the House of another country which is worth study, and that is the German Weimar Republic. When it was suggested there that Hitler should not be given every liberty in order to destroy liberty, that his newspapers should be checked and that his Storm Troopers should be checked, people said: " You cannot interfere. That is interference with the classic principles of the Liberalism of this new Republic." The consequences we know. If we are to learn from those lessons, whether of France or the Weimar Republic, the action of the Government is responsible and proper.

Finally, let me say that we have no wish or intention improperly to interfere with the proper freedom of the Press, which we are upholding and we will uphold. I myself would be no party to any such policy. If there was any danger I certainly should not be a party to it. There is no danger of it with this Government. There is no such intention; but we say boldly and clearly to the House that this is the kind of thing we will not tolerate, that this newspaper has been told that the evidence against it exists, that the systematic publication of which we have evidence entitles me, in our opinion, legally to suppress that newspaper tomorrow—or last week—and that is our view. I told the newspaper that in future there will be no question of building up another systematic case. We are not waiting six months to build up another systematic case. If that newspaper goes that if that hapupens, that newspaper will on with the pernicious line it has conducted, I tell the House—because I will not be a party to deceiving the House — that if that happens, that newspaper will be suppressed, and having done it, we will submit ourselves to the judgment of the House. I can only hope that that will not be necessary. The newspaper has, I think, been much less objectionable since the statement I made in the House on Thursday of last week. I hope that it will learn from the warning and the experience that it has had, and will conduct itself in a proper and responsible spirit. If it does, it has nothing to fear from His Majesty's Government, but if not, then I tell the House openly and frankly that we shall not be afraid to act.

Mr. Hore-Belisha (Devonport): My right hon. Friend began his speech in a mood of defiance, and rebuked those who are interested in the preservation of the liberty of the Press for failing to take advantage of an opportunity to divide against the Government. I cannot help feeling that such a charge is unworthy. No hon. Member of this House is afraid of expressing his opinion, either by word or by vote, and I rise for the purpose of assuring my right hon. Friend that some of us, at any rate, have been left unsatisfied, and would take any occasion which offered to register that view in the Lobby. Let us see on what course my right hon. Friend is leading us. This important and far-reaching matter arises out of a cartoon.

Mr. Morrison *indicated dissent.*

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Mr. Hore-Belisha: Certainly it does, and my right hon. Friend has dealt with the cartoon to-day. The question was asked, whether it was proper that such a cartoon should be published when seamen were risking their lives; a cartoon, it was stated, which suggested that they were risking their lives in order to make bigger profits for their proprietors. I do not know from which date my right hon. Friend became so squeamish about profits, but the fact has emerged that there are two opinions about the meaning of this cartoon. This in itself shows how uncertain is the course of those who wish to embark upon the censorship of opinion.

A further doubt arises about the guiding principle. What happens? By analogy, my right hon. Friend is pressed to censor other newspapers, or to intimidate them in the way that the "Daily Mirror" has been intimidated. Yesterday, a Question was put in this House asking whether the printing of a picture showing British officers surrendering at Singapore was not calculated to harm the national effort. My right hon. Friend the Minister of Information made what I think was the right and safe answer. He said:

> "The editor of this paper presumably knows his public better than do my hon. Friend and myself."—[OFFICIAL REPORT, 25th March, 1942; col. 1981, Vol. 378.]

Why, within the space of a week, are these two entirely contrasted attitudes taken up from the Front Bench opposite? One can see how, gradually, liberty is lost. You begin by saying that no information should be published which could be of assistance to the enemy. That applies to the publication of news. The next step is to say you must not advocate the making of peace, for that would be to injure the war effort. You must not be defeatist. That was the term used when this Regulation was authorised. And you finish up by censoring opinion, which, when you started on this process, you avowed it to be your purpose to preserve. So, we start with a cartoon. The argument is that it is not only the cartoon but that derogatory observations have been made about the Army. Now here, I think, my right hon. Friend opposite, for I wish to be fair to him, is on better ground. But I ask myself this: How has he assisted morale in the Army by threatening to suppress this newspaper? I should have thought it would have had precisely the contrary effect. What disturbs morale in the Army is not what is said in a newspaper, but the facts. It is a series of reverses that has disturbed the morale of the Army, if it has been disturbed at all. Personally, I do not take the view that it has been disturbed by what has been written. I do not believe that the Army, which comprises a cross section of the whole nation, has to be safeguarded from the expression of opinion of this kind. I believe we should lose the war if that were the case. I believe that the British Army, like the British people, are determined to carry our flag to victory. You will not make them march with any greater enthusiasm by telling them that you do not trust them to read the papers to which they have become accustomed. I therefore say it is facts, not words, which affect morale.

I deplore the right hon. Gentleman's action for the reason that I think it will have the opposite effect to that which he intended. Suppression emanates not from confidence but from fear. Great men do not suppress. It is contrary to the whole tradition of our public life. Some generals, it is said, are genuinely alarmed about the "Daily Mirror." I respect their opinion, but it is for us as politicians to safeguard the political tradition of this country. Who is the greatest general who has emerged in this war? General MacArthur has some claim to that title. At any rate, he has been an extremely successful general. [An HON. MEMBER: "What about Wavell?"] I said "has some claim." I do not dispute General Wavell's title at all, but I am introducing a quotation by General MacArthur. I have no reason to believe that General Wavell would not have said exactly the same. It is because I intend to quote what was said the other day by General MacArthur on arriving in Australia to take over his new Command:

> "One cannot wage war under present conditions without the support of public opinion, which is tremendously moulded by the Press and other propaganda forces. Men will not fight and die without knowing what they are fighting and dying for. In the democracies it is essential that public should know the truth. You will get no 'canned' news from me."

I do suggest to the House and to the Government——

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Mr. McEntee: Might I ask whether the right hon. Gentleman is arguing that the article quoted from is the truth?

Mr. Hore-Belisha: My hon. Friend knows that I was arguing no such thing. I was arguing for the free expression of opinion, and when you have free expression of opinion you have conflicting views expressed, conflicting views which cannot in all cases be true. Some contradict others. You have different methods of expression. I am arguing the general case that a democracy should be stalwart enough to be told the truth and to hear opinion about it. If it cannot bear to hear the truth, or to hear opinion, it is not a democracy which is likely to be preserved.

It is always easy to create prejudice by giving extracts from a paper which you dislike. I could give extracts from many newspapers. The right hon. Gentleman has pursued the course of making quotations from previous editions of the "Daily Mirror." On 15th October, in this House, there was a Debate about another newspaper.

Mr. Gallacher: The "Daily Worker."

Mr. Hore-Belisha: No, not the "Daily Worker," but another newspaper. Lord Wedgwood called attention to the fact that, whereas the "Daily Worker" had been suppressed, another newspaper, which actually argued in favour of making peace, was allowed to appear week by week. I do not identify myself with the views of Lord Wedgwood. His case was precisely the contrary of what I am arguing. His case was that, here was a newspaper, which said, on 14th February, 1940:

> "If peace were concluded with Germany, and there is good reason to believe that it could now be concluded on terms which would satisfy any reasonable person. . . ."

There was a paper expressing views derogatory to America and hostile to Russia. He drew the attention of the Home Office to extracts which, I should have thought, would affect public morale, if public morale were capable of being affected, more seriously than the extracts my right hon. Friend read to-day.

Mr. H. Morrison: What paper was this?

Mr. Hore-Belisha: It was "Truth." I am referring to the Debate on 15th October for the purpose of quoting. What was said on behalf of the Home Office on that occasion? The Under-Secretary said:

> "It would be quite easy, in respect of a number of newspapers, by culling excerpts carefully over a long period, as the right hon. Gentleman did, to make out a case for saying that a newspaper is affecting the national war effort and ought to be suppressed. The right hon. Gentleman no doubt chose, from his point of view, the best extracts which he could."—[OFFICIAL REPORT, 15th October, 1941; col. 1464, Vol. 374.]

He then went on to appeal to Lord Wedgwood to remember our great traditions of liberty, particularly as those traditions affect the Press. My right hon. Friend to-day has adopted a course identical with that of Lord Wedgwood.

As to the procedure which he has followed, I think the House is entitled to take exception to it. My right hon. Friend said that this House was the fairest tribunal anyone could desire; but it is not a tribunal at all, in the judicial sense. This House is a debating assembly, which settles general principles and makes laws. The courts are the proper judicial tribunal. It is quite true that if my right hon. Friend had taken the "Daily Mirror" before the courts, so long as the matter was *sub judice*, no comment whatever could have been made on the case. Why did he not take that course? When Norway was being invaded, Regulation 2C was promulgated. It provided for, first, a warning and, then, a prosecution. A little later, when France was being overrun by the enemy, it was said in this House that this Regulation was not adequate for the perilous circumstances in which we then found ourselves, and that we had not time to take a newspaper to trial. It was only in these circumstances that the Regulation under which my right hon. Friend now says that he will proceed in future, was passed by this House. I say that, on any reading of the speech made by my right hon. Friend the Lord President of the Council, this procedure is a violation of the undertakings then given. It says in precise terms:

> "The whole thing can be put in a nutshell. The reason why it seems that a regulation of this kind, admittedly very drastic, is necessary is this—invasion."

Why does not the right hon. Gentleman use this method of depriving a newspaper of an opportunity to be heard? Why does he put it in handcuffs? How can a newspaper do its duty to the public when the editor is not sure how he stands?

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[Mr. Hore-Belisha.]

The right hon. Gentleman made a most provoking statement about that. He used very strong language about this newspaper. How can other newspapers be expected to exert the proper freedom when they labour under this disadvantage? How can other newspapers do their duty with the chains clanging about them?

The hon. and gallant Gentleman the Member for Oxford University (Petty Officer Herbert), in his most humorous speech, said that this question is modern. He said that it is good stuff but modern. It is not modern. It is very ancient stuff. This battle has been fought for hundreds of years both in war and in peace. Socrates, one might have reminded him, died for this principle, and men are dying in Europe for this same principle to-day. In the newspaper this morning we find that a Pole has been put to death for listening to the B.B.C. programmes and reproducing them in Poland as a newspaper. He has died for the principle for which we profess ourselves to be fighting. Again, in the newspaper to-day there is an account by a Norwegian editor on the suppression of newspapers in his country. He said that he was sent for and shown into Quisling's room and told that his article had incensed Quisling, and he was then clamped into a concentration camp. He said that editors of Norwegian papers, despite the fact that they were languishing in concentration camps, will continue to uphold by every means in their power this principle.

I do not wish to exaggerate the case against the right hon. Gentleman, because, after all, he has not yet suppressed the newspaper, but it is the duty of Parliament to be excessively vigilant in these matters. The descent is easy. You start on a firm principle. The ground gradually gives way and your foothold becomes less secure and in the end you cannot even hold on to the cause for which you started this war.

Wing-Commander James (Wellingborough): The right hon. Gentleman the Member for Devonport (Mr. Hore-Belisha) referred to this House being excessively vigilant. After listening to the whole of this Debate my impression is that, on this occasion, a comparatively small number of very sincere Members are being excessively vigilant. I believe that the majority of the House take this view. Personally, I support the action of the Government in warning this very undesirable picture paper, which cannot possibly be called a serious political organ at any time. This Debate has ranged so widely round this alleged infringement of liberty that I also propose to range a little round it. I would refer to one aspect of this paper which should not be lost sight of. Nobody can contend that the " Daily Mirror " is a serious political paper, but it has one aspect which I believe is pernicious, and that is, that its circulation has been very largely built up on the publication of deliberately salacious muck to tickle the palates of its public.

I regret that the law about the publication of indecent, or pseudo indecent matter, in this country has been too weak for this little rag to be tackled long ago on that ground. I would like to take this opportunity, if I may be allowed to do so, of saying one or two words about dirty publications, which is highly apposite to any discussion about the " Daily Mirror." Since this war began I have on three occasions brought to the notice of the proper authorities publications which were thoroughly salacious, and intentionally so. The first occasion was an advertisement sent through the post to a brother officer in the Air Force from a firm of manufacturing chemists in Manchester. It was so disgusting that I gave it to the Law Officers of the Crown who, after examining it and agreeing that it was disgusting, said that it was too cleverly worded to justify a probably successful prosecution.

Again, in 1940, another illustrated paper, not the " Daily Mirror," in its correspondence column, published some letters which were sent on to me. They were quite obviously bogus and written in its office merely to tickle the lowest instincts of readers of a certain class. They, also, were perfectly disgusting and again I sent them to the Law Officers of the Crown, with the same result. It was disgusting stuff and all of it too clever for a prosecution to be successful. The third example came to my notice quite recently. I was in the City walking away from an office I had visited when I looked into a bookshop window and saw a display of cheap, paper-covered books. I did not look inside them, but the titles and pictures showed that they were pure muck.

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[An HON. MEMBER: " Impure muck."] Yes, I mean impure muck. I took the trouble to enter the shop and purchase one or two of these miserable things, which I did not read but passed on to the competent police authorities. Again, investigation showed that a prosecution would not be successful. I wonder how many Members of the House have recently read the book " Report on France " by an American journalist, Thomas Kiernan? In that book he says that one of the factors that rotted France was her indecent literature. I have no hesitation in saying that no daily paper, a so-called national paper, has been nearer to deliberate salacious publication than the " Daily Mirror."

Mr. Eden: May I make an appeal to the House? We extended the time of the Debate to meet the wishes of the House and it is now a considerable time after that hour. We have had a very good and full Debate and perhaps we may now bring it to a close.

Mr. Bellenger (Bassetlaw): When the right hon. Gentleman suggested his extension he probably was not aware that four Front Bench Members would take up so much of the time of the House. I am sure that he, having been an ordinary back bencher himself, would not deny the same right of speech to those who feel that they want to speak.

Mr. Eden: That is exactly why I made the appeal now instead of half-an-hour ago.

Mr. Bellenger: I will endeavour to be very brief but I feel so strongly on this matter that I cannot let the opportunity pass without saying something. I appreciate what the right hon. Gentleman said and I will expedite my remarks as much as I possibly can. A challenge has been thrown out by the hon. Member for Abingdon (Sir R. Glyn) and I accept it. I have a great deal of sympathy with him because I, like himself, served the country as an officer in the last war, as I have done in this. I would not countenance any attempt to subvert the loyalty or undermine the morale of our Army. Any newspaper or Member of Parliament who attempts to do that should be dealt with at once. I will not say whether the examples which the Home Secretary gave are examples of subversion, but I have no hesitation in saying to him that if he and his Law Officers believe they are, he should proceed against the newspaper at once. It is because some of us do not believe that my right hon. Friend is approaching this matter in a judicial frame of mind that we are arguing the case to-day. I say outright that my right hon. Friend is acting as a stooge for more powerful people who are behind him. I will say quite frankly to whom I refer. I refer to the Prime Minister in particular, and to the Minister of Labour as well, but particularly to the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister has shown on more than one occasion—on occasions which have not always come before the House—that he resents criticism of himself and his Government. He has said so, and he has shown his resentment in this manner, that he has warned at least one newspaper proprietor that he would deal with that newspaper, and not by the methods of Regulation 2D.

Mr. Brendan Bracken: Which proprietor?

Mr. Bellenger: I am not prepared to give that information now.

Mr. Bracken: I fully understand the hon. Member's reason.

Mr. Bellenger: I do not mind giving it to the right hon. Gentleman afterwards. I think he knows who it is.

Mr. Bracken: I do not.

Mr. Bellenger: I will tell the right hon. Gentleman afterwards. On the question of subversion, or undermining the morale of the Army, the hon. Member for Abingdon has referred to an attack on the officer class as a class. If I wanted to attack the officer class very successfully, I would employ the methods adopted by David Low in his cartoons of Colonel Blimp. That national feature has undermined the officer's status far more effectively in the minds of soldiers, and others as well, than ever the leading article in the " Daily Mirror." I am not attempting to uphold that article. I would never have written it. To say the least, I think it unwise for that article to have been written. I do not go so far as to say it was subversive, but if it was, I say that my right hon. Friend has neglected his duty by not proceeding against the writer of the article. If an example of subversion is wanted, I wonder what the House will think of this, which was written in the last war. I

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[Mr. Bellenger.]

will tell my right hon. Friend why I intend to read it to the House. I was then a young soldier myself, a volunteer and not a conscript, and I presume my morale was something to be considered. Perhaps my right hon. Friend will be able to say whether he thinks this was subversive:

" Your King and Country need you!

Ah! Men of the Country, you are remembered.

Neither the King, nor the Country, nor the picture papers had really forgotten you.

When your master tried to cut your wages down—did you think he knew of your beautiful brave heart? When you were unemployed—did you think your Country had forgotten you? When the military were used against you in the strike—did you wonder if your King was quite in love with you? Did you? . . . Ah! foolish one.

Your King and Country need you.

Need hundreds of thousands of you to go to hell and to do the work of hell. The Commandment says: ' Thou shalt not kill.' Pooh!

What does it matter? Commandments, like treaties, were made to be broken. Ask your parson: He will explain.

Your King and Country need you!

Go forth, little soldier "—

I was one of those little soldiers—

" Go forth, little soldier. Though you know not what you fight for—go forth. Though you have no grievance against your German brother—go forth and kill him! Though you may know he has a wife and family dependent upon him—go forth and slay him; he is only a German dog. Will he now kill you if he gets the chance? Of course, he will.

He is being told the same story!

His King and Country need him."

I wonder what the House thinks of that quotation. I wonder what my right hon. Friend thinks of it now in this war. He is not unacquainted with the author. I say that a man who could write that stuff in the last war, when many of us were defending our country and he was not, is not the man to be the judge of subversion on this occasion.

Mr. Stokes: Who wrote it?

Mr. Bellenger: I think the House knows who wrote it. I have not given notice to the right hon. Gentleman, who is the author, that I was going to quote it. I hope when he reads it he will recognise his effusion in the last war. I feel strongly on this matter. I feel that hon. Members in this House should know—I would not attempt to undermine the morale of the Army—that the Army have grievances. They have grievances in some cases against their officers, because they believe those officers are not the right type. I do not say that we should not do everything we possibly can to convince the Army that the officers being selected to-day are of the right type. We ought to do it, because it is fatal to let a man think when he is being led into battle that he is being led by officers who are inefficient and incapable. If the " Daily Mirror " has been guilty of that, I condemn them as much as any hon. Member in this House, and I say that my right hon. Friend has neglected his duty by giving them only a warning. If he thinks they were subversive, he should have proceeded against them. But I do not think for one moment that the motive behind the notice the other day was genuine. There has been something fomenting in the minds of certain members of the Government for a long time, and this was an opportunity not only to convey a warning to the " Daily Mirror " but to the Press in general. I cannot support that action.

When we talk about irresponsibility, let hon. Members who speak in this House also remember that, though free speech is a privilege, they must make responsible remarks. When the hon. and gallant Member for Handsworth (Commander Locker-Lampson) said the other day that Hearst was part-proprietor of the " Daily Mirror," whether that remark got wide circulation or not, the fact remains that a Member of Parliament said it. What are the facts? Mr. Hearst is not part-proprietor of the " Daily Mirror "—in fact, I have reason to believe he is a considerable debtor to the " Daily Mirror." As to the insinuations made by my right hon. Friend about the financial structure of this paper, I should like to make one or two remarks. The register of shareholders of this paper is open to anyone who cares to go and inspect it. I believe that one of the biggest shareholders is Sir John Ellerman—at any rate, he has a holding. If my right hon. Friend does not know the facts, it is his duty to find them out, or keep his mouth shut, before making insinuations against businesses in this country. I have reason to believe that the holdings by anonymous nominee shareholders are very small indeed. This is a feature of the structure of our businesses, and the big banks themselves hide

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the identity of many people who may be of enemy origin who are shareholders in some of the biggest concerns in this country.

If we are out to attack that, do not let us go to the " Daily Mirror " for an example. We can find a far better example in much bigger undertakings, some doing work of national importance at present. I suggest to the Government that those of us who are as much concerned as they are to win the war, who indeed have taken some active effort towards that end, are seriously concerned at the way we are going. I believe that from time to time it is necessary to criticise the Government strongly, and, as long as I am given that privilege, I shall do it, and no one can ever accuse me of being afraid to vote against them if necessary. I believe the time is coming when we shall have to do it. I hope it will not be on the issue of the " Daily Mirror." If it is on the wider issue of the freedom of the Press and of this Parliament, I shall gladly vote not only against the Home Secretary but the whole lot of them, including the right hon. Gentleman, the Minister of Information, for whom I have a great regard. I believe he himself is a democrat, and I suggest to him, when he is looking around among some of his right hon. Friends, not of the same political colour, to remember that dictators do not always come from the Right. I appeal to the Government to go carefully in this matter and, if they are going to proceed against any national newspaper, to proceed quickly but always judicially.

Mr. Silverman (Nelson and Colne): We are grateful to the Leader of the House for the accommodation that he gave us upon this matter. I do not think anyone would desire to take advantage of it after the Debate has proceeded so long, but I would crave indulgence to make two short points which I have been anxious to make throughout the Debate. I really feel that, after all, in the discussion that has taken place, and particularly the most extraordinary speech of the Home Secretary, there has been a very great deal of care taken to cloak and disguise the real issue. It really is not very much use to say, " I came down to the House to defend my action, and I want the judgment of the House upon it." That is merely to place Members in a most unfair position, because they are not to judge the rightness or wrongness of the particular act complained of. Inevitably in such circumstances the Government are bound to make it a Vote of Confidence or turn it into a Vote of Censure, and the issue that is really before the House is merged in a wider issue, and the procedure is unfair to Members of the House, to the Government and to the individual attacked. Surely if the right hon. Gentleman wanted to protect himself there is one way of doing it, and that is to give the people attacked an opportunity of defending themselves. The only reason advanced against it on this occasion has been that they might defend themselves. I think there is one way in which the House might be used as a tribunal. I should not object in the least to procedure under Regulation 2D if the Whips were taken off and Members were allowed to use their own private judgment on individual cases.

The only other thing I want to say is this: Whom did the Home Secretary want to protect, and from what? What sort of people does he think the people of this country are? Here we have a people that stood up alone for 12 months against an armed Europe. Their morale did not shake, their courage did not flag, their determination did not weaken. Is it the morale of the people of Plymouth that is to be protected, the morale of the people of Coventry, or of Hull, or of Bootle? Is it really suggested that there is some great danger to the morale of the people who stood up to that in an ambiguous cartoon or an offensive sentence in a leading article in the " Daily Mirror "? No one believes that. The Home Secretary does not believe it, and the Government do not believe it. The thing from which we have to protect ourselves is not the attack upon the " Daily Mirror " or upon a cartoon or a leading article; it is the beginning of an attack upon the freedom of opinion in this country. The Home Secretary said that if anyone cleverly wished to start an insidious Fascist campaign, he could think of no better way of doing it than the " Daily Mirror " had chosen. May I suggest that if there were a Home Secretary and a Government which intended to suppress freedom of opinion and freedom of the Press, it would undoubtedly begin in the way that the Government have begun on this occasion? You would

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[Mr. Silverman.]
not in these circumstances begin with "The Times." You would not even begin with "Truth." You would go to the "Daily Mirror," about which you could raise a good deal of prejudice, and begin in that way. If the right hon. Gentleman pretends that he really wants to defend the freedom of the Press, let me ask him—he cannot tell me to-night, but the country is waiting for his answer—when does he propose to lift the ban on the "Daily Worker"? He may have had a case in the past to impose the ban, but he has no case to-day.

Mr. Gallacher (Fife, West): I want to warn the Minister that on a very early opportunity I will make up the time that was lost to-day for a discussion on the "Daily Worker" to bring that matter forcibly before him. At the moment I want to raise one or two short points. The Minister was very annoyed that anybody should raise the question of France and the French Press. Who really raised that question? It was his colleague, the Minister of Information, in an article in "Time and Life." So that if the Home Secretary feels that there is something wrong, he should suppress the Minister of Information.

Mr. Bracken: In the first place, the paper is called "Life," and in the second place, I made only a casual reference to France. I did not say that there was any difference between the Home Secretary and myself, because we both think that the censorship in France was an abomination.

Mr. Gallacher: I know that there was only a slight reference to France, but there was only a slight reference to it in the Debate to-day, but the Home Secretary was very angry about it and made a great fuss in order to distract attention. He has a lot of experience in this business. He knows that when he is in a bad spot it is desirable to shift the attention to something else. The Minister discussed the question of irresponsibility in the Press. Is it not a fact that there was only one instance of irresponsibility in connection with the Press given here to-day and that it was the Minister himself who was responsible for it?

Statements have been made in the Press and those responsible for making them are prepared to argue them before the Minister or in a court. The man who wrote the leading article is prepared to go into court and face the responsibility of having written it. "Cassandra" is prepared to stand up and defend what he has written. But when the Home Secretary has his attention drawn to something which he himself has written, does he take responsibility for it? No. He replies, "Somebody else said it, I only wrote it down." What are you going to do with anyone who talks in that way, who says, "Somebody else started the rumour, and I only wrote it down"? But the men and women who read it in the "Daily Mirror," they are taking it that it comes from the Home Secretary and that he is telling them the truth, or is he telling them the truth? They take it that he is prepared to take the responsibility for what he himself has said. He comes before us here a very strong and resolute man. He wants to warn the "Daily Mirror," he wants to warn all and sundry. He was even somewhat threatening with the Member for Ebbw Vale (Mr. A. Bevan). He would advise the hon. Member for Ebbw Vale to be careful—this in a very quiet and sinister voice. But he was a very strong man, ruthless if need be——

Mr. Pritt: Tough as well.

Mr. Gallacher: — in dealing with the "Daily Mirror" or anybody else. That cartoon represents something that is very terrible and tragic. A very dear friend and neighbour of mine sits night after night hoping, hoping, hoping against hope that her boy is not adrift somewhere in the Atlantic, parched with hunger and thirst. Do you see them laughing over there? Such a laughing matter for the Minister of Home Security. What an attitude. The lads are out in the Atlantic, the lads are adrift on rafts, are starving, their mothers are at home night after night weeping. And this strong man, and this strong Government—what is their attitude? Do they stop the profit in petrol? Do they take over control of petrol and the rationing of petrol? No. A penny on the gallon. That is their concern for the lads who are giving their lives at sea, for the lads who are starving, for the mothers who are weeping their eyes out.

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A penny on the gallon. If ever there was a cartoon that was justified, that cartoon was justified. I say here to the Minister of Home Security what I said at a public meeting in Birmingham town hall on Sunday night, a packed meeting, with more outside the hall than inside. I said that in view of the tragic sufferings of the lads at sea it was a crime that a penny of profit should be made on petrol, a crime against the seamen, a crime against the mothers who are weeping their eyes out at home; and I said that the Minister of Home Security, if he had any concern for Socialism or for principle, if he had any thought for the men who are giving their lives, would, instead of threatening to suppress the "Daily Mirror," suppress the profits on petrol.

Question, "That this House do now adjourn" put, and agreed to.

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