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PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

HOUSE OF COMMONS
OFFICIAL REPORT

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HOUSE OF COMMONS.

Wednesday, 28th January, 1942.

OFFICIAL REPORT.

[Mr. SPEAKER *in the Chair.*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS.

SELECTION.

Mr. John nominated a Member of the Committee of Selection.—[*Mr. Munro.*]

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS.

NATIONAL SERVICE (BRITISH AND UNITED STATES CITIZENS).

1. **Mr. Mander** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs whether steps have now been taken, as a result of discussions between the British and United States Governments, for the calling up for National Service of citizens resident in the territory of the other; and whether he has now decided to ask for access to the list of British subjects now available in the United States of America as a result of registration?

The Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs (Mr. Richard Law): Consultations are now in progress between His Majesty's Ambassador at Washington and the United States Government on this matter. The present positon is that British subjects between the ages of 18 and 65 and residing in the United States must register, and those between the ages of 20 and 45 are liable for service in the United States Forces. This rule applies to all foreign nationals resident in the United States. It would obviously now serve no useful purpose for His Majesty's Government to ask for access to the list to which my hon. Friend refers.

Mr. Mander: Is the hon. Gentleman aware that during the last war, when America came in, British subjects in America were brought over here to serve in the British Army? Is it proposed that in so far as they do not serve in the American Army similar action should be taken?

Mr. Law: We are discussing that matter with the United States.

OCCUPIED FRANCE (BRITISH INTERESTS).

3. **Mr. Cocks** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs what Government is now representing British interests in occupied France; whether the arrangements for providing financial assistance to British subjects in occupied France, formerly undertaken by the United States of America authorities, are being continued; and, if so, through what channel?

Mr. Law: The Swiss Government have replaced the United States Government as the Protecting Power in occupied France. Through their representatives financial assistance will be provided for British subjects in that area. The Swiss Government have already been supplied with funds for this purpose.

Mr. Cocks: Has there been any difficulty about these payments due to the German Government's insistence that they should be made in free dollars and, if so, has that difficulty been removed?

Mr. Law: No, Sir, there is no difficulty of that kind

JAPAN AND THAILAND.

4. **Mr. Cocks** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs whether, in the last two years, any reports were received from the British Minister at Bangkok indicating that the Government of Thailand might welcome Japanese military co-operation; and whether any steps were taken to meet that danger and to counteract Japanese influence in Thailand?

Mr. Law: Sir Josiah Crosby constantly drew attention to the danger constituted by Japanese pressure and the existence of pro-Japanese elements in Thailand. As regards the second part of the Question, His Majesty's Government naturally took such steps as lay in their power to counteract Japanese iufluence.

Mr. Noel-Baker: Have the Government received any evidence that the Japanese prepared dumps at Singora and other points in Thailand territory?

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COLONIAL ADMINISTRATION (EMERGENCY POWERS).

15. **Mr. Cary** asked the Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies whether he will state briefly the nature of the instructions issued by the Colonial Secretary to Colonial officials abroad as to their degree of legal responsibility and powers if hostilities suddenly overtook their particular territory?

Mr. George Hall: Instructions vary according to the circumstances, and it would not be in the public interest to go into details regarding them. Generally speaking, the Civil Government has many duties to perform under the wide powers conferred upon it by war-time legislation. Its primary role in the circumstances contemplated in the Question must necessarily be to render all possible assistance to the military authorities

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JAPAN (BRITISH CIVILIAN PRISONERS).

16. **Mr. Cary** asked the Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies whether he can give the approximate numbers to date of British civilians, men, women and children, who have been taken prisoner by the Japanese?

Mr. George Hall: I regret that it is impossible at present to furnish the information desired by my hon Friend. Every effort is being made through diplomatic and other channels to obtain information regarding casualties, prisoners-of-war and civilian internees in Japanese hands. It is feared, however, that some time may elapse before information becomes available.

Mr. Cary: Can the hon. Gentleman indicate when that information is likely to be available?

Mr. Hall: No, Sir, but we are pressing for it. The hon. Gentleman will appreciate the difficulties.

MALAYA.

PENANG (EVACUATION OF OFFICIALS).

17. **Mr. Cary** asked the Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies whether he has any further information to add to the statement issued by Sir Shenton Thomas, to the effect that evacuation of officials from Penang was carried out without his knowledge or that of the Colonial Secretary?

Mr. George Hall: I have no information beyond what has appeared in the Press regarding the statement attributed to the Governor. The House will realise, I am sure, that action had to be taken by the Civil and Military Authorities in circumstances of great urgency in Penang.

Mr. de Rothschild: How is it that the Colonial Office have no information about this very important statement?

Mr. Hall: The report appeared in Delhi, and there is a good deal of difficulty in getting into communication with the Governor upon matters of this kind.

COLONIAL SERVICES.

18. **Mr. Creech Jones** asked the Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies whether he is satisfied with the character and quality of the work done by the local and unified Colonial services in Malaya during the past year, and particularly just before, and since, the outbreak of hostilities in that part of the world?

Mr. George Hall: Yes, Sir; but the rapid Japanese advance through northern and central Malaya has, of course, led to quite abnormal conditions, and in such circumstances it would indeed be surprising if some mistakes had not been made. But my Noble Friend is satisfied that the Civil Service in Malaya has acquitted itself with ability and devotion, and he has no doubt that they will continue to play with credit their part in the battle of Malaya.

Mr. Creech Jones: In view of the continuous criticism by broadcasters and journalists of the ability of and the manner in which the Civil Service discharged its responsibilities, does my hon. Friend agree that it would be much better if, instead of directing their criticism to individuals, they would apply constructive criticism to the whole problem of Colonial policy?

Mr. Hall: My hon. Friend will know that certain action has been taken with regard to certain broadcasts to which he has referred.

TIN QUOTA.

20. **Mr. Stokes** asked the Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies on what

date the international tin quota was so adjusted as to permit of producers in Malaya producing to the maximum of their capacity?

Mr. George Hall: The international tin quota was increased to 120 per cent. for the third quarter of 1939, and since that date the permissible export of tin from Malaya has been consistently in excess of actual export.

COLONIAL DEVELOPMENT WELFARE SCHEMES.

19. **Mr. Creech Jones** asked the Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies to what extent schemes under the Colonial Development Welfare Act are being submitted by the Comptroller in the West Indies and Governors of British African territories and other parts of the Colonial Empire; to what extent these schemes have been encouraged by recent circulars of the Secretary of State; how these schemes are being handled in his Department; whether they will be considered by the Dufferin Committee; whether, in view of the full-time appointment of the Chairman in the Ministry of Information, he is satisfied that proper attention and adequate consideration will be given to the work he has been given in the Colonial Office; and whether this arrangement is to continue?

Mr. George Hall: As the reply is rather long and contains some figures, I will, with my hon. Friend's permission, circulate it in the OFFICIAL REPORT.

Mr. Creech Jones: In view of the very great importance of the social and economic development of our Colonial Empire, and of the problems that are now arising and the schemes that are being forwarded to the Colonial Office, is it satisfactory that an official who has full-time employment elsewhere, with inadequate experience, should be the Chairman of this particular Committee, considering its vital effects on the future of the Empire?

Mr. Hall: I must take exception to the reference to the experience of the Chairman of the Committee. For some time he occupied the position which I now have the honour to occupy. My Noble Friend is satisfied that the Chairman is able to give proper attention and adequate consideration to all the applications that come in.

Mr. Noel-Baker: Is it possible that the Chairman can do this job as well as a full-time job at the Ministry of Information? Is it not too much for any man?

Mr. Hall: No, Sir, the time required for this job is about one hour a week. There is no difficulty.

Mr. Creech Jones: Surely, the direction of a Committee of this vital importance, with hundreds of schemes coming in from all parts of the Colonial Empire, involving the future social and economic development of these territories, calls for more than one hour a week? Is not that hopelessly indaequate for tackling this job?

Mr. Hall: I would ask my hon. Friend to await the reply which I am circulating.

Following is the reply:

As explained in my reply to my hon. Friend on 8th October, 1941, applications for assistance under the Colonial Development and Welfare Act are made to the Secretary of State either by the Comptroller for Development and Welfare in the West Indies or by the Colonial Governments concerned. The number of applications which have been received from the West Indies is 101; from East Africa 20; West Africa 16, and from the rest of the Empire 43—making a total of 180. Apart from the general encouragement given in the circular despatch of 5th June, 1941, which has been published in Command 6299, it has always been open to Colonial Governments to submit applications for assistance to enable them to carry out schemes of real urgency and importance, and the Governments of certain Colonies (in particular the West Indies) which were in a position to proceed with schemes of development without detriment to the war effort, have been encouraged to do so. It will, however, be appreciated that, under war conditions, it is not easy for Colonial Governments to prepare either general programmes of development or even detailed plans for specific schemes.

Applications received from the Colonies are examined in the Colonial Office as part of the normal business of the Department and are then submitted to the Colonial Development and Welfare Advisory Committee with any explanations or further information which may be needed to assist the Committee. This

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[Mrs. Tate.]
Paulton into Bath in order that these people may be granted necessary shopping facilities?

Colonel Llewellin: I have not received any representations on this subject. If there is real difficulty, I would suggest that the local authority should take the matter up wih the Regional Transport Commissioner.

Mrs. Tate: If the Regional Transport Commissioner communicates with the hon. and gallant Gentleman, will he endeavour to see that some arrangements are made, as there is very real suffering now?

Colonel Llewellin: Yes, Sir, certainly; but if it is taken up with the Regional Transport Commissioner—and I am informed that it has not yet been—I am certain he will do his best with the facilities available in that neighbourhood.

MINISTRY OF INFORMATION.

Allies' National Anthems.

30. **Mr. Mander** asked the Minister of Information whether it is proposed at any stage during the course of the war to play the National Anthems of the Allies on suitable occasions, or whether the ban is to remain permanent?

The Minister of Information (Mr. Brendan Bracken): Yes, Sir, the National Anthems of all our Allies will be played on suitable occasions.

Mr. Mander: Does that mean that it will now be possible for the B.B.C. to broadcast the American and Soviet National Anthems, and have they been so informed?

Mr. Bracken: Yes, Sir. The B.B.C. can broadcast the American and Soviet National Anthems and all National Anthems.

Mr. Thorne: Will the Chinese have a chance?

Mr. Bracken: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Gallacher: Will not the Minister have a practice of the " Internationale " in here?

Broadcasts (Ministerial Consultation).

31. **Mr. Mander** asked the Minister of Information whether it is the custom of the British Broadcasting Corporation and the Minister of Information to consult other Ministers on the advisability of giving broadcasts on subjects that do not involve questions of public security but only the expression of opinion; and, if so, whether he will discontinue this practice as being unfair to the Ministers concerned and contrary to the public interest?

Mr. Bracken: Yes, Sir. The B.B.C. and the Ministry of Information occasionally consult other Ministries on such subjects but do not necessarily accept their advice. Fairness will always be our objective; and, if ever we make mistakes in this respect, we count upon the healthy stimulus of criticism from this House and the Press to narrow the margin of our error.

Mr. Mander: Does not my right hon. Friend think, in cases where public security is not involved, that it is very embarrassing for Ministers to be asked whether matters affecting their own Departments should be broadcast or not? Is it not possible for the Ministry of Information to make up its own mind?

Mr. Bracken: I think that my answer covers the point.

Mr. Noel-Baker: Does the Minister mean that, as many think, it is undesirable that Ministers should be consulted upon controversial matters of policy affecting their own Departments, unless, of course, public security is involved?

Mr. Bracken: As a matter of fact the B.B.C. do seek consultation on certain matters, because, strange as it might seem, they like to get their facts right.

Mr. Noel-Baker: Is it right that the B.B.C. should consult a Minister, as they recently consulted the Home Secretary, on a matter of policy which did not affect public security, and upon which there was a great deal of public controversy?

Mr. Bracken: I tell the hon. Member, quite frankly, that if I had seen that particular question, I should not have transferred it to the Home Office.

Viscountess Astor: Would it not be possible for me to make a speech on the B.B.C., re the Ministry of Health?

Mr. Bracken: I hope that that suggestion will be forthcoming.

Broadcast in German.

34. **Mr. Craik Henderson** asked the Minister of Information whether his attention has been drawn to a broadcast in German, on 31st December, 1941, by Mr. Crossman who is employed to broadcast to Germany, in which he said that we respect the qualities of the German people, even in war, and esteem the soldiers of the German army; and whether such expressions of respect and esteem were made with his authority?

Mr. Bracken: Yes, Sir. I apologise for the length of this answer, but I feel I must read the relevant passages of this talk in full. I think they will correct the erroneous impression which has been created by the quotation of words out of their context. This is what Mr. Crossman actually said:

" Germany has heard the New Year Message of its Fuehrer: the German army has heard the Order of the Day of its new Commander-in-Chief. We heard it too. Perhaps Herr Hitler really believed that this strange confusion of phrases and slogans reminiscent of the street politics of 20 years ago, would bring comfort to the German mother and wife, confidence to the German soldier in his new Commander-in-Chief. We English find it difficult—yes, painful—to believe that the German people, whose qualities we respect even when we are at war, is the willing subject of the author of this New Year Message, that the German army, whom we respect *as soldiers*, recognises as its rightful Commander-in-Chief the author of this Order of the Day—with its mixture of whining and bravado, of half-truths and lies, of ill-digested theories. . . .

How long will you tolerate this madness which now reigns over you uncontrolled, unchecked by all restraining influences. In the year in which Herr Hitler promised final victory he has achieved, at a cost he dares not tell you, great victories, but he has lost the war. In 1942, in 1943, in 1944, however long the war lasts, Germany cannot win, and Herr Hitler knows it. And yet he calls on Germany to give the last sacrifice, to follow wherever he leads, to destroy itself in order to satiate his megalomania."

He then goes on to make another hot attack on the Fuehrer.

Mr. Henderson: Will the Minister bear in mind, following on the report of the Polish Government regarding the occupation of Poland and the Russian declaration of atrocities by the Germans, what the effect must be on the peoples in occupied territories and on our Allies when these expressions of respect and esteem are given?

Mr. Bracken: I recognise that point, but, when broadcasting to the Germans, the hon. Member must fully recognise that in order to destroy their faith in Hitler, you ought not to begin by saying, " You something swine." When talking to the Germans it is very wise to put a lot of what you call sugar on the pill.

Mr. Henderson: Is it the official policy that it should go out over the B.B.C. that we respect the German people and esteem the German army?

Mr. Bracken: Of course, it is not the policy. I have explained that when broadcasting to Germany you are not expressing the policy of the Government. As a matter of fact there is a Question on the Order Paper, standing in the name of the hon. Member for Abingdon (Sir R. Glyn), asking me why a certain film was published which appeared to ridicule the German army.

Mr. A. Bevan: Did not the Prime Minister pay a tribute to Rommel yesterday?

Broadcasts to Austria.

35. **Captain Alan Graham** asked the Minister of Information (1) whether he is aware that the British Broadcasting Corporation talks to Austria are run by a German team, naturally favouring pan-Germany, instead of by an Austrian team favouring an independent Austria; and whether he will see to it that genuine independent Austrian views are expressed in future;

(2) whether it is with his permission that the British Broadcasting Corporation propagate Pan-German tendencies in their talks to Germany and Austria in defiance of the Prime Minister's pledge of a free Austria, given on 9th November, 1940?

Mr. Bracken: The broadcasts to Austria are not run by a German team, but by a British team, assisted by Austrian collaborators. The B.B.C. does not broadcast pan-German propaganda to Austria or Germany. All statements with regard to the future of Austria have been based on the passage in the Prime Minister's speech to which my hon. and gallant Friend refers.

Captain Graham: Is my right hon. Friend aware it is evident that he has been grossly misinformed?

Mr. Bracken: I am not aware that it is evident that I have been grossly misinformed.

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Mr. Sandys: The main part of the training of the unit is of a technical character, and it is desirable that there should be a certain amount of parade drill. Although it is not fashionable to say so nowadays, smartness on parade has never done troops any harm.

EMPIRE WAR CABINET.

46. **Lieut.-Colonel Sir Thomas Moore** asked the Prime Minister whether, in view of the request of Mr. Curtin for the formation of an Empire War Cabinet or directorate with Australia's claim for a seat on it, he has now come to a definite decision on this question?

The Lord Privy Seal (Mr. Attlee): My right hon. Friend does not desire at present to add to the statement which he made yesterday in the course of the Debate.

Sir T. Moore: Is it the intention of the Government that a representative from India should be in this Cabinet?

Mr. Attlee: That is another Question.

GERMAN OIL SUPPLIES.

47. **Mr. Noel-Baker** asked the Prime Minister whether he can give the House the text of the order of the German High Command concerning shortage of oil supplies captured from General Rommel's forces in Libya?

Mr. Attlee: The actual document has not been received in this country. Its gist, however, is as follows:

"Because of the great expenditure of fuel in the East the fuel situation in the Reich is severely strained. Imports of fuel from Europe for the Panzer Group in Africa have accordingly been severely reduced. In particular we cannot in future count on replacements of fuel lost through enemy action. Still further restriction on petrol consumption is required."

Mr. Noel-Baker: In view of the immense importance of the German admission that there is a shortage of oil in Germany itself for the Russian and other campaigns, will my right hon. Friend urge on the Air Ministry that they should restart the policy of bombing oil targets, particularly those at Bari and Naples?

Mr. Attlee: The question of which targets should be selected is one that is under constant review by the Air Force. I will convey my hon. Friend's suggestion to the Air Ministry.

Sir Henry Morris-Jones: Is it not possible that that was a fictitious order, in view of Rommel's further advance and the use that he has made of the petrol at his disposal?

Mr. Attlee: That is the danger of relying on captured documents, but there is no reason to disbelieve this one.

ARMED FORCES.

DEPENDANTS' ALLOWANCES.

48. **Mr. Vernon Bartlett** asked the Prime Minister whether, in view of the fact that the increase in allowances to the dependants of those serving in any branch of His Majesty's Forces has not kept pace with the increase in the cost of living, he is yet in a position to announce an improvement?

Mr. Attlee: I would refer my hon. Friend to the answer which I gave yesterday in reply to a Question by my hon. Friend the Member for Wallsend (Miss Ward).

Mr. Thorne: As my right hon. Friend in replying for the Prime Minister, would it be out of place to thank the man who broadcast his speech last night?

POST-WAR RECONSTRUCTION.

50. **Mr. Kirby** asked the Minister without Portfolio whether he is aware that some local authorities of towns and cities suffering severely from enemy action are actively considering the problems of planning and reconstruction which will be necessary at the conclusion of hostilities, to ensure that really worthwhile efforts to rebuild their industrial, commercial and social life will be successful in a lasting sense; and can he indicate how far the Government is prepared to legislate so as to ensure that plans made will be supported by legislation empowering local authorities to acquire land and property, damaged or otherwise, to make new highways, close roads, divert roads, and in all other ways be able to carry out such post-war reconstruction schemes as may be planned in advance as necessary and desirable in the public interest?

The Minister without Portfolio (Mr. Arthur Greenwood): Yes, Sir, the wide range of topics referred to by my hon. Friend are under consideration both by the Local Authorities and by the Government. It is too soon to attempt to indicate the scope of the legislation which may be necessary, but he may be assured that any necessary action will be taken in due course.

FOOD SUPPLIES.

MILK (TUBERCULOSIS CONTACTS).

51. **Mr. Parker** asked the Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Food whether he is aware that contacts of tuberculosis provide a considerable source of new cases, and since the maintenance of adequate nutrition is as important for the prevention of this disease as for its treatment, will he extend the schedule of conditions qualifying for priority claims on liquid milk, which now applies to active tuberculosis only, to include adult and child home-contacts of active tuberculosis other than those covered by school or other milk schemes where the tuberculosis officer considers that this would be beneficial?

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Food (Major Lloyd George): The Milk Priority Scheme is strictly in accordance with the recommendations of the (Special Diets) Advisory Committee of the Medical Research Council. I regret that it is not possible to extend priority to all tuberculosis home-contacts who are not at present eligible under the scheme.

PROSECUTIONS.

52. **Mr. Emery** asked the Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Food whether he is aware of recent prosecutions in Stockport for selling an onion extract which consisted of 99.1 per cent. of water and in Leeds for selling egg substitute consisting of 96 per cent. water resulting in small fines; whether he will consider withdrawing all licences for the manufacture of food substitutes unless shopkeepers and customers can be given a guarantee that the articles for sale are as those which were granted a licence or introducing legislation to ensure that offending manufacturers will be committed to prison for a minimum period of five years, together with fines which will absorb more than their illegal profits?

Major Lloyd George: Yes, Sir. I am aware of the cases to which my hon. Friend refers, but I do not think it necessary to adopt either of the suggestions in the latter part of his Question.

54. **Mr. Thorne** asked the Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Food whether he can give information as to the case brought against a Navy, Army and Air Force Institute's inspector on 19th January, at Hatfield Police Court, for hoarding various kinds of food, and having 444 bars of chocolate, 200 meat cubes, besides dried fruits, tea, sugar, cheese and matches; and, in view of the statement made by the chairman of the court, what action he intends taking about the case?

Major Lloyd George: A person, stated to be an inspector of the Navy, Army and Air Force Institutes was prosecuted at the instance of the Ministry of Food and convicted at Hatfield on 19th January of acquiring an excessive quantity of various foodstuffs and was sentenced to one month's imprisonment and a fine of £50 and ordered to pay three guineas costs. The observations of the chairman of the bench have been brought to the notice of the institutes.

55. **Mr. Thorne** asked the Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Food whether he can give any information in connection with the Bathurst Estate Company, Limited, and its managing director who was charged at Cheltenham Police Court for obtaining 12 dozen eggs from a retailer with whom he was not registered; and did he take any action in the case?

Major Lloyd George: The Bathurst Estate Company supplied eggs to the Earl of Bathurst who was not a registered customer. The Earl of Bathurst and the secretary of the company were prosecuted at the instance of the Ministry of Food on 19th January at Cheltenham and were fined £75 with six guineas costs and £21 with three guineas costs, respectively.

MILK RATION (NIGHT WORKERS).

53. **Mr. Bower** asked the Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Food whether he is satisfied that, in the Milk Rationing Scheme, the needs of night workers have been fully taken into consideration; and what arrangements for an adequate supply are made in these cases?

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[Mr. Macmillan.]
existing safeguards and systems of inspection are in the opinion of this Ministry and of the other supply Ministries, adequate for the purpose.

PRODUCTION METHODS (EXCHANGE OF INFORMATION).

65. **Mr. Ellis Smith** asked the Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Supply whether he has any evidence to show that information on common problems is withheld at meetings of technical men who assemble together to consider how to improve war products and output; and is he satisfied that there is a pooling of production methods?

Mr. Harold Macmillan: The evidence at the disposal of the Ministry of Supply shows that information on common problems of production is rarely withheld at meetings of technical experts. There is a noteworthy degree of exchange of information regarding production methods. It must not be forgotten that the Ministry has legal powers to compel disclosure when necessary.

KITCHEN WASTE COLLECTION.

66. **Sir Percy Hurd** asked the Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Supply whether the tonnage of kitchen waste collected by local authorities for feeding pigs and poultry has increased since the Waste Food Board was set up; and to what extent?

Mr. Harold Macmillan: The Waste Food Board was set up in May, 1941, and in that month local authorities' collections of kitchen waste totalled 12,838 tons, which compared with 11,279 tons in March, 1941, and 11,370 tons in April, 1941. Since May, the tonnage of collections has steadily increased and in December, 1941, reached a new peak figure of 22,000 tons.

Sir P. Hurd: Are the Armed Forces of the Crown taking part in this movement?

Mr. Macmillan: Yes, Sir; collections are made, of course, from military camps.

RUBBER SALVAGE.

68 and 69. **Mr. Parker** asked the Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Supply (1) whether he is aware that as a result of the publication of a rubber salvage campaign, without details of the exact method with which this scheme is to be carried into operation, scrap rubber which, before the announcement, was sold by manufacturers quite freely, is now being withheld by them, as a result of which plants engaged on the preparation of vital material are at a standstill for half of each week, due to the shortage of raw materials; and what action he proposes to take to deal with this situation;

(2) why proper price control has not been introduced in connection with the rubber salvage campaign?

Mr. Harold Macmillan: Particulars of the rubber salvage scheme and of the maximum prices were announced on 24th January. So far as I am aware, no plants are held up for lack of scrap rubber.

Mr. Parker: Will my hon. Friend investigate any cases which I bring to his notice?

Mr. Macmillan: Certainly, Sir; I shall be very glad to do so.

RUBBER CONTROL BOARD.

70. **Mr. Parker** asked the Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Supply why it has been arranged to have rubber growers, brokers and dealers on the Rubber Control Board when places are not found for independent tyre retreaders or rubber reclaimers?

Mr. Harold Macmillan: The Rubber Control Board already includes a reclaimer, and it would be undesirable to increase its size. The Tyre Retreaders Conference has, however, been invited to nominate members to the Tyre Control Committee, which reports to the Board.

PAPER AND PACKING MATERIALS (SALVAGE).

67. **Mr. Graham White** asked the Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Supply whether instructions have now been given to all workers and contractors employed by the Ministry of Supply with regard to the salvage of paper and packing materials?

Mr. Harold Macmillan: Instructions with regard to the salvage of paper and packing materials have from time to time been given to the staff in all departments of the Ministry of Supply, and to the Royal Ordnance Factories. Recommendations on the same subject were issued through the Federation of British Industries to all their members in April, 1940, and again this month; and contractors are aware of the appeals for the salvage of waste paper, which have for a considerable time been given extensive publicity.

WAR DAMAGE (PERSONAL CHATTELS).

72. **Mr. Bower** asked the President of the Board of Trade whether he is aware that, owing to the high prices of furniture, persons benefiting by free cover of personal chattels are now, when victims of enemy action, unable to purchase even necessities, since they are only compensated on the willing seller-buyer basis of March, 1939, since when values have risen over 300 per cent.; and whether, in his promised Bill amending the War Damage Act, he will introduce proposals to relieve these hardships of the less well-off members of the community?

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Board of Trade (Captain Waterhouse): Compensation in respect of private chattels is made under Treasury Regulations contained in S.R. & O. 1941, No. 787, and is based on values at the time of the damage, not on 1939 values. Immediate grants to enable persons to obtain necessities are made by the Assistance Board and take into account any rise in prices.

MINISTRY OF ECONOMIC WARFARE (STAFF).

73. **Mr. Hammersley** asked the Minister of Economic Warfare what steps are being taken to reduce the personnel of the Ministry now that the useful activities of this Ministry are so circumscribed?

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Economic Warfare (Mr. Dingle Foot): A small reduction has been made during the present month, but my hon. Friend is mistaken in supposing that the useful activities of the Ministry of Economic Warfare have been appreciably diminished. While the work of contraband and enemy export control has naturally declined since the summer of 1940, there have been a number of important additions to the work of the Ministry. Although the establishment of the Ministry is constantly under review, I cannot give any undertaking as to the future size of the staff.

Mr. Hammersley: Is it not a fact that the advent of America into the war must considerably curtail the work of the Department, and should not that mean a reduction of staff?

Mr. Foot: No, Sir. There has, in fact, been a considerable increase in work lately in establishing a complete liaison with the Board of Economic Warfare in Washington. There may be some reallocation of functions between the Board on that side and the Ministry on this, but it is too early to say which duties shall be discharged on either side of the Atlantic.

Mr. Hammersley: Will not the whole question of navicerts be reviewed in view of the possibility that it might be a great waste of time and energy, and a much simpler system be introduced?

Mr. Foot: Naturally we shall be glad to simplify it if we can, but at the present time the whole of our blockade is based on the navicert system and it would be very rash to modify it just now.

GREECE (FOOD SITUATION).

74. **Mr. Sorensen** asked the Minister of Economic Warfare whether he is aware of the critical food situation in Greece and other territories of Allied Powers; what representations have been made to His Majesty's Government by the Greek Government or its representatives respecting the existing famine in Greece; and whether any proposals are being considered, either in conjunction with the Turkish Government or otherwise, to meet the urgent need of the Greek people by securing for them fuller supplies of foodstuffs under appropriate guarantees that these shall be exclusively for the Greek people?

Mr. Foot: I would refer my hon. Friend to the answer given yesterday to my hon. Friend the Member for Stockport (Sir A. Gridley). The action taken by His Majesty's Government is in response to representations by the Greek Government.

Mr. Sorensen: Has the relaxation of the blockade to meet the needs of the Greek people been judged by the Greek Government to be satisfactory?

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Mr. Foot: We have not yet had time to consult the Greek Government about the answer given yesterday.

Mr. Sorensen: When is the Department likely to have consultations with the Greek Government on this subject?

Mr. Foot: We are in constant communication with the Greek Government on this and other matters?

NEAR AND MIDDLE EAST (SERVICE MEN'S REMITTANCES).

6. **Mr. Burke** asked the Postmaster-General whether he is aware of the high charges for sending money orders to service men stationed in the Near and Middle East; and whether he can arrange for a reduction in these charges?

The Postmaster-General (Mr. W. S. Morrison): There is no money order service available to His Majesty's Forces in the Near and Middle East. Remittances can, however, be made by postal orders, the charges for which are at the ordinary inland rates. Postal orders are encashable at any Army Post Office, at certain civil Post Offices, or if necessary by the commanding officer of the addressee's unit.

Mr. Burke: Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that it costs 7s. 9d. to send 10s. to the troops in Malta and 13s. 9d. to send £3?

Mr. Morrison: I do not think it can cost as much as that because the poundage rates for postal orders are the same as in this country and they can be transmitted by post in the ordinary way.

Mr. Burke: But suppose they have to be sent hurriedly by telegraph?

Mr. Morrison: My hon. Friend is referring to telegraph charges with which the Question did not deal. I will inquire into that and communicate with him.

CIVIL ESTIMATES (SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES, 1941).

Estimate presented,—of the further Sum required to be voted for the service of the year ending 31st March, 1942 [by Command]; referred to the Committee of Supply, and to be printed. [No. 21.]

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE.

Sir Henry Morris-Jones: May I ask you, Mr. Speaker, whether in relation to the Motion of Confidence standing upon the Order Paper in the name of His Majesty's Government it is your intention to accept any of the Amendments to that Motion which have been put upon the Order Paper?

Mr. Speaker: It is not my intention to accept any of those Amendments, the subject of which can be discussed in the course of the Debate.

Sir H. Morris-Jones: Further to that, I would like to put a question to the Prime Minister. I am sorry that he is not in his place. I gave notice that I should raise the question, but I fully accept the fact that the Prime Minister could not be present. May I ask you, Mr. Speaker, whether the Prime Minister did not, quite unwittingly, I admit, mislead the House on this question of a Vote of Confidence? I will recall to the House the statement made by the Prime Minister last week:

"Should, however, the Debate disclose any situation which seems to involve a challenge to His Majesty's Government, I shall on the second or third Sitting Day put down a Vote of Confidence. As relevant Amendments in any form can be moved to such a Motion, Members would be able to state any differences they may have with the Government in the most effective form, and the House would be enabled to express its opinion not only in speeches in the Debate, but, if it were so desired, in a Division."—[OFFICIAL REPORT, 20th January, 1942; col. 207, Vol. 377.]

I do contend that there an implied promise was given to the House by the Prime Minister that amendments could be moved.

Mr. Speaker: Perhaps I had better answer that question. The Prime Minister forgot that the selection of amendments rests entirely with me.

Sir H. Morris-Jones: May I with great respect put a further point of Order in regard to the Amendment standing in the name of myself and my hon. Friend the Member for the Eye Division of Suffolk (Mr. Granville)? It is to leave out from "in," to the end, and to add:

"the Prime Minister and will aid him to the utmost in the vigorous prosecution of the war, and in order to attain this object urges upon him the desirability of appointing to high office the most capable and active men irrespective of Party."

I submit that the Motion of Confidence as framed cannot do what a Motion of this importance should do if voted upon, and that is collect the voice of the House on the entire issue. Can you give any guidance to hon. Members of this House, who are practically unanimous in supporting the Prime Minister but who do not feel that the present Government and our machinery for conducting the war meet the situation? How can the voice of the House be registered except upon an Amendment which tries to meet that difficulty?

Mr. Speaker: I must tell the hon. Member that it does not serve any useful purpose to argue with the Chair whether an Amendment should be accepted or not. That is a question which rests with the Chair.

Sir H. Morris-Jones: Will you allow me, Mr. Speaker, with great respect and consideration for the Chair, to put another aspect of the matter before you?

Mr. Speaker: Captain Crookshank.

BILL PRESENTED.

SECURITIES (VALIDATON) BILL,

"to provide for the validation of certain acts which affect securities and are in breach of the Defence (Finance) Regulations, 1939, or the Defence (Finance) Regulations (Isle of Man), 1939," presented by Captain Crookshank, supported by the Attorney-General; to be read a Second time upon the next Sitting Day, and to be printed. [Bill 13.]

WRITTEN ANSWERS.

EIRE (PORTS AND AIR BASES).

Dr. Little asked the Prime Minister whether, as the ports and air bases of Eire are urgently required by Britain and the United States of America for the successful prosecution of the war against our enemies, he will approach the President of the United States with a view to making representations to Mr. de Valera to give the use of, or lease, these ports and bases to Britain and America for the duration of the war?

Mr. Attlee: My right hon. Friend does not wish to make any further statement on this subject at the present time.

BROADCASTING (MONITORING SERVICE).

Sir W. Smithers asked the Minister of Information why the monitory service of the British Broadcasting Corporation is not staffed by British subjects?

Mr. Bracken: Work in this service calls for fluent and colloquial knowledge of the language monitoral. British subjects with adequate qualifications are not obtainable in the numbers required. Preference is, however, given to them when they are available, and all the directing staff is British.

Sir W. Smithers asked the Minister of Information whether he will state, by nationalities, the number of aliens or ex-aliens employed in any capacity in the monitory service of the British Broadcasting Corporation; what is the total amount paid in salary; and the amount paid to each?

Mr. Bracken: It is not in the public interest to give detailed information with regard to the monitoring service, but I am sending my hon. Friend privately a statement covering the points raised in his Question.

COLONIAL EMPIRE.

HOUSING (NATIVES).

Major Lyons asked the Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies whether, with a view to the abolition of native slum location throughout the Colonial Empire, he has drawn the attention of all Colonial Governments in Africa to the details of the progressive steps taken by the Port Elizabeth municipality in re-housing their African population; and, if not, whether he will consider arranging with the High Commissioner for South Africa for the sending of an observer there, to make a full report for subsequent circulation to the African Colonial Governments?

Mr. George Hall: I am glad to be able to say that active measures for the improvement of housing conditions are being taken in a number of the African dependencies and are under consideration in others. In this connection my Noble Friend will certainly consider the desirability of informing Colonial Governments in Africa of the importance of the housing experiments now in progress at Port Elizabeth and elsewhere in the Union of South Africa.

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Major Lyons asked the Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies whether all Colonial Governments in Africa have received instructions to apply to the Colonial Government Fund for loans to assist in the proper housing, with reasonable amenities, of their native employees, and thereby setting an example to private firms and authorities?

Mr. Hall: Colonial Governments in Africa have received no specific instructions to apply for assistance from the Colonial Development and Welfare Vote for improving the housing of their native employees, but the general instructions given to Colonial Governments clearly cover the submission of such schemes. I need hardly say that any such applications in respect of schemes that could be carried out in present circumstances would be sympathetically considered.

GRANTS AND LOANS.

Major Lyons asked the Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies what is the total sum of loans and grants made under the Colonial Development and Welfare Act, 1940, up to the 31st December 1941; when he proposes to publish details of the loans and grants so made, and the purposes for which they have been intended?

Mr. George Hall: Grants and loans amounting to a total of £827,357, were approved under the Colonial Development and Welfare Act, 1940, up to 31st December, 1941. In addition a further scheme was approved for which provision will be made annually as required, but in respect of which it is not yet possible to estimate the total amount involved. Particulars of the grants and loans made and the purposes for which they have been approved will be given in a statement which will be laid before Parliament after the close of the financial year in accordance with Section 1 (4) of the Act.

RHODESIAS AND NYASALAND (NATIVES).

Mr. Creech Jones asked the Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies when the Hailey Report on Native Policy in the Rhodesias will be published?

Mr. George Hall: The question of the publication of Lord Hailey's Report is still under consideration, and my Noble Friend is not yet in a position to make a statement on the subject.

WEST INDIES.

TRINIDAD (CIVIL SERVICE WAR BONUS).

Mr. David Adams asked the Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies whether he is aware that no adequate provision is made to meet the increased cost of living to members of the Civil Services in Trinidad; and whether he will recommend that war bonuses should now be granted to these applicants?

Mr. George Hall: A war bonus has been given to the lower paid members of the Trinidad Civil Service since January, 1941. The rates of this bonus have recently been increased.

ST. LUCIA (DEVELOPMENT AND WELFARE PLANS).

Mr. Creech Jones asked the Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies whether any scheme of public works is in contemplation or preparation for St. Lucia, in order to provide employment locally when the work at present in progress on the American bases comes to an end; and, if not, whether such a public work plan will be prepared without delay?

Mr. George Hall: No such scheme is in contemplation; but plans for development and welfare, including re-housing and land settlement, are occupying the attention of the Comptroller and will no doubt form the subject of applications in due course for assistance under the Colonial Development and Welfare Act.

PALESTINE (JEWISH RECRUITING CAMPAIGN).

Mr. Creech Jones asked the Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies why, in the recruiting campaign organised by the Jewish Agency in Palestine some weeks ago, Jewish newspapers were not allowed to print any account of the various recruiting meetings and demonstrations; why in leaflets appealing for recruits any appeal to Jewish national feeling had to be omitted; why newly enlisted Jewish recruits not yet in uniform but assisting in the campaign were forbidden to wear the blue-white armlets; and whether he will institute a different policy as such acts are not calculated to inspire respect for British administration by people gravely menaced by the war?

Mr. George Hall: It is not the case that a censorship ban was imposed on the publication by Jewish papers of descriptions of parades, meetings and rallies held last autumn to stimulate Jewish recruitment, and in fact all these papers devoted much space to such accounts. The leaflets prepared by the Jewish Agency for the campaign were approved by the military authorities and issued without material alteration. As regards the third part of the Question, the armlets proposed by the Jewish Agency for attested recruits were white with blue lettering. The Agency agreed to a request that a narrow red strip should be added to make it clear through the combination of colours that the recruits were joining the British Army, and such armlets were in fact worn. In view of these facts, the fourth part of the Question does not arise.

FOOD SUPPLIES.

DIVISIONAL OFFICERS (WOMEN).

Miss Cazalet asked the Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Food how many divisional food officers and assistant divisional food officers there are; and how many of these are women?

Major Lloyd George: There are 19 divisional food officers who are all men and 249 assistant divisional food officers of whom 18 are women.

BRITISH RESTAURANTS.

Miss Cazalet asked the Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Food how many British Restaurants are in existence at the present time?

Major Lloyd George: There are in existence 1,252 British Restaurants.

ROYAL NAVY.

VOLUNTEER RESERVE, AIR BRANCH (OFFICERS).

Sir R. Gower asked the First Lord of the Admiralty whether promotion to the rank of lieutenant-commander, Royal Navy Volunteer Reserve, in the Fleet Air Arm, is by seniority, as in the case of Royal Navy officers?

Sir V. Warrender: Temporary and permanent officers of the Air Branch of the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve and Executive Branch officers who specialise in Air Branch duties may, regardless of seniority, be granted the acting rank of lieutenant-commander if they are chosen for appointments which require the higher rank. While holding the acting higher rank they receive the pay of that rank. In addition, those officers who are on the permanent list of the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve may obtain promotion to lieutenant-commander by seniority.

FLEET AIR ARM.

Mr. Horabin asked the First Lord of the Admiralty whether lieutenants, Royal Navy, who have sufficient flying experience are eligible for command of squadrons of the Fleet Air Arm?

Sir V. Warrender: Lieutenants R.N. with sufficient flying experience and possessing other qualities essential for command are eligible for command of Squadrons of the Fleet Air Arm. Several squadrons have been, and are still being, commanded by lieutenants.

AGRICULTURE.

WAGES AND RENTS.

Colonel Carver asked the Minister of Agriculture whether he is aware that when the farm labourers' wages were 36s. a week in parts of Yorkshire, 3s. a week which was a non-economic rent was deducted for the house in which they lived, on the ground that they could not afford more; and whether, now that 60s. a week is being paid, farmers are entitled to demand an increase of such rent to at least 6s. a week, especially in the case where there are three bedrooms with a bathroom?

Mr. Hudson: The determination of the values at which cottages held by farm workers from their employers may be reckoned in part-payment of minimum rates of wages is a matter for the agricultural wages committees. The majority of these committees have now made provision under which an employer may apply for the value of a particular cottage to be increased on the ground that it affords superior accommodation and amenities. Of the committees which have made such provision, eight have specified 6s. as the

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maximum value, two have fixed the maximum at 7s. and 7s. 6d. respectively, and the remainder have not specified any maximum.

DRAINAGE GRANT.

Colonel Carver asked the Minister of Agriculture how much money has been paid over to farmers who have carried out tile drainage scheme under the Government arrangement, whereby they were to be paid 50 per cent. of the cost of doing so; and whether he is aware of the complaints of farmers that, although the work done has been approved, no money has been forthcoming?

Mr. Hudson: Payments of tile drainage grant totalling about £50,000 have been authorised by my Department. I am not aware of any widespread complaints about delay in payment.

SCRAP METAL (NATIONAL SURVEY).

Mr. Mainwaring asked the Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Works and Buildings whether he is aware that, as the widespread knowledge of the existence of many thousands of tons of metal scrap on the surface of collieries and other establishments throughout the country, with no apparent step being taken to collect it, militates against his efforts to collect household scrap, he will take the necessary steps?

Mr. Hicks: Yes, Sir. As has been recently announced, a national survey of all scrap metal is being put in hand immediately. This survey will be carried out systematically throughout the country. Whilst early steps will be taken to remove the surplus material revealed by this survey, it cannot all be collected at once. My hon. Friend may rest assured that urgent steps are being taken to complete the survey and collection as soon as possible.

GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS.

PREMISES, 43, PARLIAMENT STREET, LONDON.

Sir R. Glyn asked the Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Works and Buildings what use has been made of 43, Parliament Street; for how long this office was used by the Ministry of Agriculture; and why it is not being used in relief of some requisitioned private property?

Mr. Hicks: 43, Parliament Street was occupied for many years by the Fisheries Department of the Ministry of Agriculture and certain records of the Ministry are still stored there. The building is not good from a structural point of view and, as it was not considered practicable to provide a proper air-raid shelter, the staff were removed shortly after the outbreak of war.

OFFICES (HEATING).

Sir R. Gower asked the Financial Secretary to the Treasury whether medical advice was sought before all Government Departments were instructed to ensure that in the interests of fuel economy the temperature in all offices during the winter months was not to exceed 60 degrees Fahrenheit; whether he is aware of the hardship caused by this order, particularly in offices where thermostatic control enables it to be rigidly enforced; and whether he is satisfied that the loss of efficiency of sedentary clerical workers does not offset the economy in fuel?

Mr. Hicks: I have been asked to reply. No, Sir. The circular to which the hon. Member refers was issued last autumn as part of a national campaign to ensure economy in the use of fuel, which was, and still is, urgently necessary. I am not aware that any particular loss of efficiency has resulted. A temperature of 60 degrees Fahrenheit has been a commonly recognised standard of heating for many years in this country, and, although I am aware that standards tend to rise, I see no reason why the instruction should be varied during the present emergency.

WAR TRANSPORT.

ROAD ACCIDENTS (COMMITTEE).

Sir W. Smithers asked the Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of War Transport whether his Department will set up a committee to make a comprehensive survey on the lines of a memorandum, a copy of which has been sent to him, of all road traffic problems and the resulting road accidents?

Colonel Llewellin: There is already a Committee on Road Accidents sitting under my chairmanship, and I am making

arrangements for consideration by that committee of the memorandum referred to by my hon. Friend.

MINING DISTRICTS (TRANSPORT SERVICES).

Mr. Mainwaring asked the Secretary for Mines (1) whether he is aware that groups of miners for some months past have been losing shifts on account of inefficient and inadequate transport; that these conditions continue to obtain; that the men who suffer loss of wages in this manner fail to obtain compensation either from their employers or the Ministry; and what steps does he propose taking to remedy this state of affairs;

(2) what representations have been made to him in respect to inadequate and inefficient transport facilities for the conveyance of miners to and from their work at certain collieries, and what steps are being taken to provide a remedy?

Mr. Grenfell: I am aware that in certain mining districts difficulty has been experienced in maintaining full transport services from mines. The difficulties other than those which arise from payment of fares which are insufficient to meet the cost of the services have been largely overcome by the Regional Transport Commissioners. The financial question is under active consideration in consultation with the industry and with Government Departments interested including the Ministries of National Service and War Transport.

TEACHERS (SUPERANNUATION).

Sir E. Graham-Little asked the President of the Board of Education whether in view of the unprecedented staffing difficulties now being faced by schools everywhere, he will initiate action leading to the repeal of Section 6 (1) of the Teachers' Superannuation Act, under which any teacher resuming, from patriotic motives, school duties after retirement must forego the amount of his superannuation allowance during his resumption of work?

Mr. Butler: Pensions under the Teachers' Superannuation Acts are for the maintenance of teachers whose salaries have ceased owing to the cessation of their pensionable service. I regret that it would be inconsistent with the principles of the Acts to repeal or amend the provision in question so as to permit the payment of pension during a period, in which the teacher was in receipt of salary for such service.

CHINA (FINANCES).

Mr. David Adams asked the Prime Minister whether he has discussed, or will discuss, with the Government of the United States of America, the possibility of making a loan to the Chinese Government to avoid the growing danger of internal inflation which is weighing hard upon the common people?

Sir K. Wood: I have been asked to reply. I would refer my hon. Friend to the answer which I gave yesterday.

BRITISH ARMY.

AERODROMES (DEFENCE).

Major Lyons asked the Secretary of State for War which of the services is charged with the definite responsibility of the guarding and general security of airfields under construction or nearing completion?

Mr. Sandys: The Army is responsible for all land defence at home and abroad, including the security of aerodromes. From the defence point of view there is no essential difference between an aerodrome under construction and one which has been completed and taken into operational use by the Royal Air Force.

COLONIAL UNITS.

Mr. Creech Jones asked the Secretary of State for War what non-European Colonial troops have been raised and employed outside their own territories; whether he has received reports as to the pay, allowances, pension, welfare and other provision for African troops; whether he is satisfied with the health arrangements and rate of sickness of the African troops; how the mortality rates compare with European; and what provision is being made for men discharged from the services as disabled, unfit, etc.?

Captain Margesson: Colonial units from Cyprus, Palestine, Mauritius, Seychelles and Ceylon have been employed outside their own territories, as well as East and West African troops, many of whom took part in the Abyssinian campaign. Reports concerning the conditions of service

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[Sir J. Wardlaw-Milne.]

therefore, that no blame must be attached to the people abroad. Does that mean that those who were in charge of our military, naval and other dispositions in the neighbourhood of Singapore were well aware of the inadequacy of our preparations and were making continued representations to the Government regarding the position in which we were likely to be placed if Japan attacked? If it was so, surely there was no necessity for the flights of fancy in which these gentlemen in the Far East engaged. If they were making representations against the position at Singapore—and I am entitled to take that to be the position—they are in no way to blame. We must assume that they were making urgent representations regarding the state of affairs. Why then indulge in those flights of fancy? Let me give one illustration. There are many. An order of the day, quoted in the "Times" of 9th December, was issued by the Commander-in-Chief, Far East. It stated:

"We are ready. We have had plenty of warning; our preparations have been made and tested. We are confident. Our defences are strong. Our weapons are efficient."

Captain Anstruther-Gray (Lanark, Northern): Surely my hon. Friend could not expect a commander-in-chief at that time to say that we were unready.

Sir J. Wardlaw-Milne: I do not suggest that. I suggest that if the commander-in-chief knew that we were not ready, he should have kept his mouth shut. He is not a Minister of the Crown and is not bound to answer questions. It is not for members of the Fighting Services to make statements of that kind. There is no possible excuse, to my mind, for the statements that were made in the Far East. They have misled this country for months past. I am willing to say that the blame rests upon the Government, and I have said so. I say that if these brave and distinguished officers abroad felt clearly that they had made their representations and that they knew what was wrong, they could at least have avoided making statements of that kind. I accept that it was a result of the Government's decision to support Russia and to give all possible equipment to Libya at the expense of the Far East. Personally—and I can speak only personally—I find it difficult to understand how, even based on that policy, our preparations in the Far East could have been as meagre as they were. It is impossible for anybody who knows anything at all and who followed the Prime Minister's figures yesterday, to understand the position. It was made very clear in the Debate yesterday. Apparently we had 60,000 troops in Singapore, eventually. That is after more than two years of war. Allowing for what had been sent to Russia and for what we had in Libya, Persia and Iraq, was it possible to equip only 60,000 men, after two-and-quarter years of active war and after nearly five years of rearmament? Was that all we could do? If so, what is wrong?

Let us go further. How many troops have we in India? Where in the whole British Empire will you get troops of the character that we have in India, men trained in war, hereditary warriors? We have far more men than any figure like 60,000. I do not want to give figures, even if I could be sure they were accurate. Could none of those troops be sent to Malaya? It seems incredible in the circumstance that we should have been left with such a meagre force to stand against the attack of an active, powerful enemy like Japan.

Perhaps the House will allow me to turn for a moment to a side-issue. I do not know what other Members feel about this but nothing has disgusted me more in the last few weeks than the character of some of the communiques which we read, in connection both with the Far East and with Libya. I realise that in Libya the weather has been bad. It is right that we should be told that it has been bad. But you would think to listen to these statements that we get from the B.B.C., that the dust-storms fell only on the British troops and that the Germans never had a dust-storm and, again, that it is, in some way, "not cricket," that it is hitting below the belt, for the Japanese to land in sampans and proceed up creeks. Really these things are very childish and it is time that the British people were told the truth.

I appreciate the force of what the Prime Minister said yesterday that the Far Eastern situation is primarily a question of sea-power. There is no doubt about it that we were and are entitled to look to the United States for naval control in the

Pacific and I have no doubt that, in the end, we shall not be disappointed. It is not of any value to say anything about the unfortunate events at Pearl Harbour, except this, that, after all, the Americans at least had the excuse that they were not at war. We were at war and we equally were caught napping and this House has never had an explanation of what happened to the "Prince of Wales" and the "Repulse," or why they should have been sent out without air protection. I do not want to probe into that. These are things about which I cannot give any opinion because I have not the knowledge but I do say that we have had no satisfactory explanation so far.

In the last two years many Members of this House who would not claim to have known what was going to happen but have known—as the Prime Minister knows and admits frankly—of the danger from Japan, have spoken on the position in the Far East. Many of us have been pressing for two years that we should, at least, do one thing—that we should do everything in our power to give aid to China in her defence against Japan firstly for the sake of China herself in her heroic struggle and also because the stronger the Chinese Forces the more Japanese would have to be employed against her and the less likely they were to attack anybody else. I want to ask the Government certain definite questions about this Far East problem. Was there, previous to the Japanese attack, a really complete and clear comprehension of what was likely to happen if the Japanese occupied Indo-China. There was infiltration into Thailand—that we know. Was any attempt made to prepare a defence when that was happening against an attack from that direction. The Japanese were building aerodromes I am told in Indo-China and Thailand, and on the borders of Malaya. Were any defences prepared or were any forces sent to prepare against an attack from there. The real defence of Singapore is not only against the sea but also against the land. Singapore bears the same relationship to the mainland of Malaya, to Johore, as the Isle of Wight does to the coast of Hampshire. You cannot defend Singapore in these days entirely from the sea. Again, is it true, I ask the Government, that the invasion of Khota Baru was foretold to the military authorities in Singapore months ago and that they were warned then that this was exactly what would happen? Did they take any precautions? I have here a long letter from which I am permitted to quote from a distinguished officer who was Defence Security Officer in Malaya. I prefer not to give his name as he is, as I say, a distinguished officer and he is now serving in another capacity. I trust I may read some passages from the letter. [HON. MEMBERS: "What date?" This particular letter is dated 14th December and the writer says:

"It can be no great secret that the defences of Singapore consisted entirely of preparations against attack from the sea. A single battalion used to garrison the naval base which is the sole importance of Singapore. The base lies between Singapore and the mainland of Malaya; the not even federated State of Johore. Northward from the open roadstead of the base there were no defences, no troops, scarcely police either. A long coast-line, unprotected, unpatrolled except by occasional aircraft . . . great stretches of beach as much as two miles in breadth and hard as cement offered landing grounds for surprise from the air and seizure of a bridgehead. With three weeks' command of the sea, the Japanese could land at Khota Baru, at Kwantan and at Mersing. No troops, no preparations anywhere. Of course things have changed since."

I believe it is true that the Japanese landed very large forces in Khota Baru. What had we to resist them. According to the newspapers 12 sepoys and a very gallant young officer. I cannot find that anything else has been said publicly but I would like to know what other force there was. If it was true that the Japanese had half a million men in Indo-China and many of these on the Gulf of Siam, there was this place, Singorra, 300 to 400 miles away, an ideal spot for the Japanese to land. According to the broadcasts which one hears from distinguished generals landings of this kind in the North-East monsoon would be impossible. They seem never to have heard of Singorra. My information is that there is almost an inland sea 100 miles long with a half mile wide opening to the ocean, perfectly calm inside and an ideal situation for invading troops to land, a good aerodrome and a wireless station. What preparations were made to resist at Singorra. When the people on the spot whose business it was to advise the Government were making representations what precautions were taken. Again, I think we are entitled to ask what was the attitude of the Governor of Singapore? What attitude did Sir Shenston Thomas

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[Mr. Richards.]

means that we must not take the risk, to which the Prime Minister referred yesterday, of having another and a worse Dunkirk. Consequently we were right to keep our men here as far as we could and to equip them to the utmost limits of our capacity.

Fortunately, however, there was another front opened up for us in Libya, and I think we are agreed that we were right in supporting an adventure in this part of North Africa, but I think it is here that criticism of the Government must come in and does come in. I think the Prime Minister suggested that this attack, long prepared for, and for which we were quite ready, would certainly achieve remarkable results. The country was naturally led to expect that something really drastic would happen in North Africa. The B.B.C., which has been criticised already, and the newspapers, immediately rushed in, and I think they vied even with our Army in cutting up Rommel's troops and disposing of them altogether. The tragic fact is that Rommel reappeared. He has reappeared recently, and I think it was the B.B.C. which said that, of course, it was expected he would come out again. But surely we did not expect it. We thought he was on the way to being beaten and annihilated, but he is out and at large again. I do not know whether I understood the Prime Minister aright yesterday, but somebody must be blamed for it, and that is exactly the kind of feeling one finds in the country. Why is it that, when the country really undertakes a job, somehow or other we never seem to carry it out? There is always some explanation; there is always some disaster that is dogging the heels of this country, and, of course, we must ask why it is we have so many of these apparent failures.

If we turn to the Far East, we feel like the previous speaker, who is so well qualified to speak on that question, about inadequate preparations. It may have been inevitable and that, as the Prime Minister said yesterday, we had not the supplies to do all these things. His case is that we have used our resources to the best of our ability, that it was best for us to support Russia and attack in Libya, and not to scatter, as we all agree, our resources all over the world. We are not complaining of that. What we are complaining of is, as the previous speaker emphasised, how it is that we were told we were adequately prepared in the Far East. If we were not prepared, we ought to have left it at that and not boasted that we were quite ready to meet any attempt there. Behind this it seems to me that there floats another fundamental question. Is this generation to witness the disintegration of the British Empire? I suppose we are all agreed that some day or other the British Empire, like other great Empires, must disappear. [HON. MEMBERS: "No" and "Why". Other Empires have disappeared. We have to face the question as to whether our Empire is in the balance. I think it was emphasised by the previous speaker that the position is essentially critical. It is essentially critical from the point of view of the Empire.

Let us look at one or two facts in the position. The Channel Islands, the oldest part of the Empire, we allowed to disappear without our firing a single shot against the enemy. It may have been inevitable, but those islands have been associated with this country for hundreds of years. Hong Kong, which we have held for just over 100 years, has disappeared too, and I find rather interestingly that the Chinese, who are marching in the direction of Kowloon, the mainland town attached to Hong Kong, are rather surprised that we gave up the fight so readily there. Unpreparedness, it may be said. That may be the case, but if we are to keep the Empire, we must be prepared, we must shoulder the responsibility of being able to keep it, because the Empire, after all, is the economic basis of the high standard of life which we enjoy in this country. Every working man here, as well as every capitalist, as we often say, is really involved in the upkeep of this Empire, from the merely personal point of view. I am not saying that an Empire is a good or a bad thing, but at any rate our present life is based upon the conception of a widespread Empire covering a large part of the world, and it is the exploitation of that Empire which has enabled this small Island to stand up to the enemy as well as it has been done hitherto.

There are other parts of the Empire, and I know there are other speakers anxious to say something in this most vital Debate. We have to recognise that our commitments are such that we must shoulder the responsibilities of Empire,

and must not allow it to dissolve before our very eyes. We know that the position in India, for example, is by no means satisfactory, and I think that a movement in the direction of a closer association of the Indian people with their own Government would do a great deal to consolidate that very rich and important part of the Empire. There is Australia, and there is South Africa. I am really rather alarmed at the position in South Africa. There was a vote there on the question of ending the association with this country and setting up a republic. Although the Government got a good majority, there was a minority of nearly 50 per cent. in that vote. Consequently, one feels not very happy, particularly in view of our unpreparedness. As the previous speaker said, I think we are entitled to know more in detail as to the exact degree of preparations we made, not only to preserve these Islands, which are so dear to us, but also the Empire, which is so important to us.

Mr. Graham White (Birkenhead, East): I do not disagree with my hon. Friend the Member for Kidderminster (Sir J. Wardlaw-Milne), who stressed the importance of the House giving the Government the complete Vote of Confidence for which the Prime Minister has asked. We are accustomed to criticise each other: we know the meaning of our procedure in this democratic Assembly; but there are others who might consider that failure to give the Government this Vote of Confidence indicated a serious weakening of the determination of this country to carry the war to a successful conclusion. The Prime Minister spoke yesterday of hunting for scapegoats. I hope that we shall never in this country make a practice of looking for scapegoats. That is a Vichy policy, and it does no good. But I hope that the Prime Minister will not feel that he is under any inhibition whatever, political or otherwise, from making the freest possible choice of men to lead the country at this time. If he feels that there are inhibitions of a political kind, let me assure him that there are none in the country. If he chooses to make any appointment that he thinks fit, he will receive support for it in the country. Governments in war-time work a great deal harder, and wear out faster, than they do in peace-time. Changes are held by most of us to be necessary, and we hope that they will be made. There was no series of observations which fell from the Prime Minister yesterday which will have found a warmer sympathy in the heart of everyone who heard it than the words in which he spoke of the increasing burden of his task. It is in order that he may have men to support him under that great burden that some of us hope that he may be successful in finding worthy colleagues. It is no spirit of vengeance, no desire for heads on chargers, that is moving the House of Commons.

My hon. Friend the Member for Kidderminster drew attention, very properly, to the great achievements which is set out in the White Paper on munitions that we have the advantage of having in our hands to-day. When these matters are seen in historical retrospect, I believe that the willing consent of the United States, when she is attacked by a well-prepared and determined foe, to pool all her resources, to be sent wherever they may be most needed by the United Nations, will stand high in the great transactions of these days. I will not follow my hon. Friend in what he said about the state of our preparations and his very searching criticism on the course of events in the Far East, but these matters require an answer. If I do not join with him in asking for an answer immediately, it is because I feel that all our criticism should be tempered by the desire of getting things done now rather than of holding inquests as to why things have not been done in the past. I see that spirit prevailing in the House at present. Perhaps the House will bear with me if I pass to other matters which, while perhaps not so spectacular, are of the greatest consequence. My hon. Friend referred to the influence of production in this country upon the state of preparedness for action in the Far East. There is only one defence which can be urged for what has happened in the Far East. That is, that nothing more was humanly possible. That defence has not yet been put forward. The question, however, calls for an answer at the proper time.

I would like to follow my hon. Friend in what he said about production. I want to speak of certain things which I think are best described as imponderable, because they are not susceptible of accurate measurement but are of great consequence. There have been mistakes in regard to production: the machine is

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[Mr. White.]

creaking in many places; but let there be no mistake, either here or abroad, as to the fact that we are making a prodigious and magnificent effort. What we have to bear in mind now is that, although we have done so much, there is still much more to be done. We were told by the Minister of Labour and National Service recently that we required an increase of 30 or 40 per cent. in production. He did not say in the production of what the increase was needed, or what volume of production he anticipated; but we are not producing all that we might. I do not suppose that we ever shall; one hundred per cent. perfection is not given to mortals to achieve. But we can get a great deal nearer to it. One of the reasons why we are not yet attaining maximum production is that there is still, in all sections of society, a considerable number of people who have lost the sense of the urgency of the peril in which we stand. There is no question about that. People are prepared to discuss relatively trivial matters, many of them irrelevant, with an ardour which is most remarkable. They can be compared to Nero on a famous occasion. We have to take whatever steps are necessary to bring home to every individual the immediate urgency of the peril and the important part which he, as an individual, is called upon to play.

I pass to another aspect of production which is, to some extent, in the same field. There is criticism which is justified, which is based upon information coming within the observation of those who make the criticism. There is a great deal more criticism which is not sound because it is based upon supposition, theory or ignorance and which ought not to exist and need not exist. There is perhaps nothing more frequently heard than the complaint that a factory is only working at a quarter of its pressure, that contracts can be increased by 20 or 30 per cent. or that men are standing idle in this place or in that. The Prime Minister said, in a remarkable phrase, "We are in this struggle together; we are all in it." I want to see the spirit in industry which will make it clear in every field of our war operations that we are all in it together. One sees the sense of frustration and indignation in workmen that their labour and skill are not being properly utilised. This arises in a multitude of cases that have come under my observation because they do not know what is going on. The time has come in industry when all the cards should be put upon the table face upwards. If there are difficulties in the way, the machinery of the works council should be established everywhere where it is not established to-day, or some other suitable machinery, so that there may be in fact the most complete co-operation between the managements and the workmen. I can say that, having had considerable opportunities for observation in the field of production in recent months where that machinery is in operation, better results are being obtained.

Much advice and counsel are given to the Government as to what they are to do to get up our production to the maximum point. There are some people—I am not one of them—who base their solution upon the superman. I might be more confident about that solution if I knew the superman and had a talk with him and found out what he was going to do, but in the absence of the necessary desiderata I do not feel very enthusiastic about the proposal for a superman. But there are other matters in which we could do a good deal to integrate and bring into a more coherent form our efforts at the present time. Are we certain that all the knowledge that has been acquired is shared out over the whole field? Are we satisfied that our supply departments are very much more than ordinary distributing departments and that this network of bureaucratic organisation which spreads over the whole of the country, with supply officers here and there, is really effective? Are we satisfied that we have a production executive in this country and that it is anything more than a secretariat? I sometimes think that it is little different from the scope of the operations which prevailed when Lord Caldecote—Sir Thomas Inskip, as he then was—set out to co-ordinate the defence of this country with the assistance of a secretary and a typist.

There is urgent need for the establishment of a technological production board, consisting of production engineers and other technologists, to survey the whole field and engage in research to see that the best methods, whatever they may be and wherever they may be found, and the best and most suitable craft are used and put to the greatest advantage. If we had

had a body of that kind, we should not have had such a state of affairs as, for instance arose in the Stroud Valley. We want a body of that kind. I am told it is not necessary. My right hon. Friend the Lord Privy Seal yesterday said that while the Government were anxious to welcome considerations for improvement in research, production for war purposes required so many different processes that it would not be practicable to set up a single body with the suggested functions. He further said:

"Experiments and research towards improvement of production methods are constantly being carried out in the most important establishments, and means exist for the interchange of information so obtained."—[OFFICIAL REPORT, 27th January, 1942, col. 556, Vol. 377.]

No one with any knowledge at all of affairs could imagine that machinery for the exchange of views did not exist between the Departments. If anybody were to tell me that no active use was being made of these facilities, I should require a great deal of evidence to that effect. The Production Ministry already has access to the best independent scientific experience. I know that they have, and I share the appreciation that my right hon. Friend expressed yesterday of the gratitude of the country for the services rendered by these experienced people. But the gist of the matter is that everybody's business is nobody's business. It would be a great pity if some organisation of this kind were not set on foot. It is imperative in this war that at an early date we should have some sort of regional board with greater executive powers. Properly constituted, they would have knowledge of the production capacity of the locality and what factory was obsolete and ought not to be employed. No matter how many scores of people might write letters to Members of Parliament saying that production could be 50 per cent. more and that the Department could not give them help, they themselves would know of these things. They could check the distribution of contracts in too great volume or too little volume, indicating the fluctuation one way or the other.

Production in this war is not the problem of production of the last war. It is true that we have to learn from the enemy in many directions. In the last war a firm was given a contract, and they carried out the same kind of contract until the "Last Post" was sounded, but in this war there is constant interruption because we have to change methods to meet the new conditions. The regional organisation is one which calls for careful survey and consideration, and I do not doubt that those who are responsible in the Ministry of Supply have given consideration to such an organisation. While we need not copy the German organisation completely, at all events it is imperative that the various Supply Departments should be knitted more closely together ministerially, and perhaps it is more important at this stage that that condition should be applied to the regional level also.

I want to mention another imponderable thing which is marring our war effort. I hope I may be forgiven for raising it in this Debate, but there is a growing feeling in this country, among civilians and Service men alike, that they would like to have a much clearer idea of the kind of peace for which we are fighting. The only one of which they can think is that which happened after the last war, and they say, "We do not want to have another period of the 'dead end'." We cannot disguise from ourselves that 10 or 15 years of unemployment have left among our fellow citizens a certain number of individuals who, to put it bluntly and brutally, still feel that they have not a frightful lot to lose. I do not like to say it, but it is so. The Prime Minister cannot survey the whole field at the whole time. In the formation of his Cabinet he formed a body—I do not know whether it is proper to call it a body—but at all events he appointed a Minister with a Department to develop ideas of peace-time reconstruction, to rebuild Britain and to re-organise town and country planning and social services. In fact he and his Department were to rebuild Britain physically first and then morally. I remember on one occasion talking to a distinguished Frenchman about the appointment of a Minister who had been appointed to his Government, and he said, "he is still in the stage of hope; he has not yet become a deception." There are some of us in this House, I know, who, when they look at a Minister and his Department, if he has one, are inclined to believe that the line of demarcation between hope and deception has become very dim.

There will be a far greater effort in the field, in the factory and in every walk of

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[Mr. Wilson.]

desires to see some end to it, but those who share the views of my hon. Friend and I, although we recognise that we are an insignificant minority both in the House and outside, have a certainty in the ultimate triumph of spiritual forces based upon our faith in the supreme power which is available to all of us. As the war proceeds, we are bound to recognise that the exercise of powers of destruction must increase and that the deaths and suffering of countless numbers must also increase. We should be delighted to see an end to all their suffering and our own very grievous anxieties. I venture to ask hon. Members whether, without any hesitation, they really believe that the present methods will bring us that liberty and that better world which we all most earnestly desire. We may well ask ourselves also whether there has ever been any war the outcome of which has been the achievement of those desirable ends. There is another question which I think we should do well to ask ourselves. How does the Creator, the loving Father of us all, look upon the condition of the world to-day and all that is happening therein? While we may find it difficult to answer that question here, the time will come when, before another tribunal of an altogether different character from any of those to which we are accustomed to think of now, that question will have to be answered. I suggest, with all the reverence possible, that whether in peace or in war He can show us the way. Jesus said a good many years ago that what is impossible for man is possible for God. He meant it, and down the ages we have had men and women who have witnessed this truth. David Livingstone showed it when he traversed Africa, Mary Slessor showed it when again and again she faced the cannibals, Theodore Perrell proved it to the wild Pathans of the North-West Frontier and the Salvation Army lassies and others have shown it in facing situations which everyone has regarded as completely hopeless. All these people have shown dauntless courage, as have countless men and women in this country during heavy blitz attacks. They have had to meet these attacks without preparation and without thought, and they have done all they possibly could in the most courageous manner to save human life. To-day, courage is needed by all of us, so that we can do everything possible in the direction of saving human life. I hope that the House will forgive me for expressing myself in this way, but I believe that there is no limit to what we can accomplish through Him if we are faithful to the highest visions we have seen.

Major Cazalet (Chippenham): It is always a nice point whether criticism of the Government, especially in time of war, is the highest form of patriotism or the basest form of treachery. Several speakers during this Debate have taken both points of view. I remember that when the Government were criticised at the time of the Norwegian crisis it was then considered to be the highest form of patriotism to criticise the Government; in fact, it put the present Prime Minister in his position, for which we are all devoutly grateful. My only regret is that the Prime Minister cannot on certain occasions, perhaps once in every six months, step down from the Front Bench to his old place and give us one of those critical and of course constructive surveys to which we were accustomed to listen for 10 years before war started. I am sure it would be a tremendous tonic for all of us, including even for some Members of his own party. No one realises better than I the limitations of amateur strategists. In the last war I happened to be at the Supreme War Council at Versailles, and relatively I knew everything, whereas to-day I know nothing. Without knowledge of facts and the necessary information which it would be wrong for me to have, I realize how difficult and indeed impossible it is to pass any considered judgment on strategy. Nor do I consider that it is the duty of the House of Commons to direct strategy. Hon. Members are emboldened however to make certain observations.

If a year ago or even less I or any other Member had been endowed with the gift of prophecy and had foretold exactly what course the war would take and had warned the Government accordingly, there would not have been a Member of the Government who would have listened. As the Prime Minister has said, the repercussions of any one single event of this war are so unexpected that even he hesitates to prophesy. Take the case of Greece and Crete, about which the Government are often criticised. Greece and Crete have always seemed to me to

be a proof that God was on our side, rather than an exhibition of great military skill in either conception or execution. After all, we went into Greece largely for political and moral reasons, and we defended Crete because we could not retire to Egypt without first stopping there. In a few weeks we were driven from both, a month in Greece and a month in Crete. All our men were driven from these countries, except for a few who to-day are still there and are being cared for, hidden and provided for by the heroism and self-sacrifice of Greek citizens. In spite of this, I believe that the Crete and Greek campaigns may well have been the turning point in the war. There were two results. Firstly, as everyone knows, they held up the German attack on Russia by at least two months until Generals December and January had come to the aid of those heroic Russian soldiers.

The second result of the campaign is this: The defeat and annihilation of practically all the German parachute troops, the destruction of nearly all their gliders and the immense difficulties the Germans encountered in trying to convey seaborne troops, all of which were brought about by a very small force with practically no air power, must have played a great part in making the German High Command wonder whether the invasion of England on these lines was ever a practical possibility. I give the House the information as it came to me. I was told that a German general in Athens stated that the German casualties in Crete alone were in the neighbourhood of 25,000.

It may well be that the very ease with which Japan has extended her activities throughout the Pacific, thousands of miles away from her bases, may in the long run be her undoing. It is really rather a gloomy thought to learn from the Far East how little we have gained from past experience. First of all there is our Intelligence. Either it was wrong, inadequate or it was ignored. We under-estimated the Japanese, as we have under-estimated our opponents before. Personally, I consider that the Japanese activities in the Pacific are a model of combined operations. As in the case of Italy, various countries gave supplies to Japan almost to the end. When the Japanese entered Siam we failed to realise the full importance of their act, as we did when the Germans entered Bulgaria. We established aerodromes, but we failed to defend them or make preparations to destroy them in case of retreat. We had no one person in control, as we had in the Middle East, though I realise that this is not an exact analogy. I believe it is impossible to exaggerate the usefulness of the Minister of State in Cairo. I believe that every Service chief of a Department, every Ambassador and High Commissioner is profoundly grateful for having on the spot someone who can and will take a decision; especially someone of the ability of the Minister of State. [*Interruption.*] I believe that in Singapore there was a Governor who was even also another G.O.C. of troops, an independent naval and air commander as well as a Minister from this country. I believe that, if one of these people had been given control from the beginning, certain decisions might have been taken which would have improved our position.

Mr. Beverley Baxter (Wood Green): Many of us feel that this institution which we are developing, the appointment of a commander-in-chief of a district, is not a happy one. That is why the question was raised. It is not the Minister's qualities, but I think the system is bad. Most of us are delighted that we have in the East a general who is in command without a Minister.

Major Cazalet: When the appointment was made I shared by hon. Friend's view, but I believe that every commander-in-chief would express gratitude for having someone on the spot who can make a decision. I say this from by personal experience. Lastly, we had the lamentable exhibition of the tragedy of the two ships sunk through not having adequate air protection. The Government I know will answer that we could not be everywhere. I am not saying, because I do not know the facts, that we ought to have had more troops, more ships or more aerodromes, but what I do say is that we did not make the best use of what we had. It is no good the Government being surprised—I am sure they are not—that Members are somewhat discontented and disturbed at what took place. There is a strong demand—I am delighted that the Prime Minister has told us he has already met it to a large extent—to send more forces to the Far East, but do not let us forget that, whatever may be pressing needs of Australia—and no one sympathises with her more than we do, knowing what we

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[Mr. Price.]

a second front in Western Europe during these critical six months. I have had trouble in my constituency and elsewhere in explaining to some misguided people who have thought that something should have been done in that direction. That kind of criticism will not carry much weight. I am strongly in favour of doing what the Government and the High Command have done, in resisting the temptation to start a second front, in Western Europe, and in sending all we could to North Africa and re-establishing what the Prime Minister said was so important, that is, the front from the Levant to the Caspian Sea, that hole through which Hitler might have swashed his way to the East, that promontory along which during the last 2,000 years the invasions of Europe from Asia have come.

We have effectively stopped that gap against the modern Huns, not coming from East to West, but going from West to East. Thanks to the gallant resistance of the Red Army, the tide is now turning the other way. It is because they have organised their whole front in a way that we could very well imitate that they are able to do this. I was in Russia a good many years ago, at the beginning of the revolution, and I remember that Lenin and the leaders round him were already then preparing plans for shifting the industrial power of Russia from the Ukraine to the Urals. It was due to this masterly conception of theirs that the Russian Army was not smashed up in the summer of last year. If what has happened since 22nd June had happened to the Imperial Russian Army in the old industrial areas of Russia 25 years ago, then, indeed, Hitler would have been in the Urals; but fortunately, owing to what has been done in the meantime and to the steps taken by the rulers of Russia, that event has been avoided. I wish to say, therefore, that I am very glad that the Government have stopped this hole in the East by building up the Levant-Caspian front, thereby keeping in touch with the left wing of the valiant Red Army.

Even so, does that altogether excuse the situation in the Far East? Does it mean that we are altogether paralysed elsewhere? What have the Government done to develop the war industries of India? Why have not steps been taken to develop the production of tanks and aeroplanes in India itself? If we are to take up the position that all major war equipment is to come only from this country, to be sent out there by shipping, it seems to me that we are setting ourselves an impossible task. Why is not India the arsenal for the Allies in the East? Everything is there—coal, iron, blast furnaces and a huge potential industrial population. The question arises, too, Why have not secondary industries like the motor transport industry been developed in India? A Question on this point was put on 18th December by my hon. Friend the Member for North Camberwell (Mr. Ammon) and he received an answer from the Secretary of State for India which I thought was extremely unsatisfactory. He said:

> "The extension of the war has not increased the resources available for the establishment of an automobile industry in India."—[OFFICIAL REPORT, 18th December, 1941, col. 2069, Vol. 376.]

In reply to a Supplementary Question he said that the proposal which had been made—from a private source—was one for developing the motor industry after the war. I submit that India has the resources during the war to develop still further her great industries. Why wait for private industries? Why should not the State take a hand in this? I have a very grave suspicion that the Government have no policy in regard to the development of India's industrial resources and are prepared to leave it to private interests, to big industrial undertakings in this country and in the United States who are not in the least degree interested in developing what they think may become competitive industries out there. That, I think, was the real answer why nothing was done; but we have to reflect that if we are to build up the Far Eastern front we must rely upon what we can produce here and send out there in ships, thus putting a colossal strain upon our shipping resources.

Then there is the question why we have not used the man-power out there more than we have. I believe that the Indian recruiting campaign has been fairly successful, but it would have been better if we had had the equipment. Why has not more been done in the Malay Straits? There is there a large Chinese population who hate the Japanese. Why have they not been called in to form local Defence Forces? There have been letters in the papers recently indicating that no steps

have been taken because of the patriarchal sort of administration that exists there, because our Government in the Colony looks upon the Chinese and the Malays as people who are to be looked after in a fatherly sort of way but that when it comes to the defence of the country that task must be left to our white men. It looks as though Colonel Blimp, largely demised in this country, is very much alive East of Suez. An hon. Member says that he is very much alive here, but I think that he is almost *in extremis*. What I am worried about is his very lively existence East of Suez. I think there is not much Colonel Blimp here. It is Major Red Tape that we are suffering from in this country; he is equally dangerous.

I come to the second point of my criticism: Why do we have these serious production troubles in this country? I say that it is Major Red Tape who is largely responsible, causing muddles in the Production Executive. Our production is nothing like what it might be. I am continually having complaints from certain quarters in and round my constituency. They come partly from shop stewards who complain of large redundancies and of people hanging about doing nothing. I am also continually getting complaints of inequalities in regard to transport arrangements. Men working in one factory have their cost of transport partly paid by the employers or by the Government, while others working in a factory close by and doing exactly the same work are having to pay 8s. or even 10s. a week from their earnings for the expenses of transport. I have written to London pointing out that this has a bad moral effect on the workers, but the only result is that it starts the old game of one Department "passing the buck" to another. Nobody wants to take the responsibility.

It is quite clear to me that the Production Executive is not functioning as it should. It is not breaking up the bottlenecks and solving the other problems which are causing so much worry and affecting production in industry. It seems to me that the Production Executive is an arena of struggles between one Department and another, neither wants to accept responsibility, and there is nobody at the top who is able to impose responsibility and to say that this or that is to be done. I am not sufficiently acquainted with the position to say whether it is possible or desirable to have a Minister of Production. It may be, or it may be that some other arrangement would be better, but knowing what goes on and how the workers come to me with complaints I know that something has got to be done. There must be some other arrangement with a responsible person at the head. What we require more particularly in the responsible head is some one with managerial capacity and technical qualifications. There should be technicians and men who understand the working of industry. We should get rid of the influence of private capitalist finance on the one hand and of Civil Service red tape on the other. They both interfere with efficient production. What we need is sound management, by men with great qualifications and knowledge put in the position to deal with our very difficult production problems.

It is no use the Prime Minister asking us to look back and to see how much better things are now than they were a year ago or were in the last war. All that is granted, but that is not the true comparison. The comparison which we must make is between our production now and what it might be if we used our full capacity. Unless in the course of these Debates I have satisfactory answers from the Government to my questions, I do not feel inclined to support the Vote of Confidence.

Mr. Beverley Baxter (Wood Green): I propose to confine the few remarks which I wish to address to the House to some comments on the Prime Minister's speech and upon the Government. I would first deal with the critics of the Government and the nature of the campaign of attrition which has resulted in the present political situation and the present Debate. I am very much afraid that the power and the rights of criticism have been damaged by exaggeration getting out of hand and out of proportion in the Press and in this House. One need hardly say that the tasks of government are difficult at any time, but in war they are supremely difficult. The task of the House of Commons is to criticise the Government constantly, but when that criticism makes government itself difficult and almost impossible it is time to turn upon the critics themselves and to examine the sowing which has resulted in this somewhat doubtful harvest. Not only have the Prime

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Mr. Deputy-Speaker (Colonel Clifton Brown): If the hon. and gallant Member would ask a question of me instead of turning his back, he might be heard.

Commander Bower: I apologise, but I had to look at my hon. Friend to see whether he was sitting down to give way to me. I meant no discourtesy. I was saying to my hon. Friend that surely he is not suggesting that Lord Halifax was responsible for torpedoing the American battleships at Pearl Harbour.

Mr. Baxter: If my hon. and gallant Friend would wait until I developed the irony of my argument—[*Interruption.*]—I repeat for his somewhat nautical intelligence—I apologise to the Navy—the statement that no Ambassador could have accomplished more than that the country to which he is accredited should come into the war on our side. That is a fair statement. But still there is the cry, "Lord Halifax must go." Nobody could have done more than that the country to which he was accredited should come in, like Russia. My hon. and gallant Friend anticipated what I was going to say. Japan attacked Pearl Harbour, and America came in. The Germans attacked Russia, and Russia is in. But what is the attitude towards the third Ambassador? His reputation is something which is reaching fantastic heights. I feel that when he comes back some of the hon. Members opposite will be strewing leaves for him to walk upon, although I well remember his peregrinations in and out of the Labour party at a lighter moment of our lives two years ago.

Having said what I have wanted to say for a long time, I shall endeavour to burn a boat or two by speaking about the Prime Minister's speech. Mr. Chamberlain had an umbrella which he kept furled, and which became famous. The Prime Minister has produced an umbrella far bigger than that of Mr. Chamberlain, a vast thing like those you see on Scottish golf courses. He has invited the whole of his Ministry to come in underneath. Not one drop of rain shall fall upon a Minister unless it falls upon him. I think that is magnificent; I think it is touching; I think it is rather depressing. This is the situation now: "If anybody is to blame it is I," "*L'Etat, c'est moi.*" "The Government is myself"—which does not seem quite workable. After all, referring again to Pearl Harbour, the President of the United States is Commander-in-Chief, but he did not say "I alone am responsible." He dismissed a general and an admiral.

Now, according to this ruling in the Prime Minister's speech it is "Hands off everybody except me." Quite frankly, we do not want to get rid of the Prime Minister, or to injure his prestige, or to add to his burdens. But it seems to me that if this House is not to be allowed the opportunity to criticise individual Ministers and, if necessary, urge the removal of those Ministers, I think the House is being badly done by. The Prime Minister used at Washington, and yesterday, the words "This House, whose servant I am——" words which were spoken first 300 years ago by Mr. Speaker Lenthall when Charles I came to the House of Commons, great words greatly spoken by the Prime Minister. I do hope that he will not really stick too closely to his umbrella; probably he will not. We had visions in that speech yesterday of what is emerging into a one-man Government. After all, Napoleon had his marshals. The Prime Minister, by a combination of what might be called despotism and paternalism, is reducing his Ministers to lieutenants. There are no marshals among them, unless it be Lord Beaverbrook, who made himself a marshal. It is only fair to say that part of the problem which has brought this tide of criticism to such a pitch has been the Prime Minister's absence from the country. I can remember in my days of popular journalism, which are dead, Mr. Ramsay Macdonald went abroad so often that once when he was coming back, I wrote a headline, "Mr. Ramsay Macdonald to visit England." Fortunately the Prime Minister does not go away unless it is urgent that he should do so, and he has done magnificent work abroad. Yet who can deny that government almost ceases when he goes away? The one-day meeting of the House of Commons which we had was like a school without a teacher, but not so much fun. We have no Government when he is away. I do not think that is wise or a thing which should go on. We must have Cabinet responsibility, but also greater responsibility given to Ministers.

Finally, it seems to me, the situation resolves itself for us as Members of the House into something like this: There are those who say that the Prime Minister is

a legend; if that is true, I am going into the Lobby to vote for the legend. There are those who say he is a superman. If that is true, I am going to vote for the superman. But if, as I suspect, he is a man of great gifts but capable of error, like the rest of us, I am going into the Lobby to vote for that man. No matter how we point out what we think is wrong, no matter how we may disagree with his refusal to give us a Ministry of Production, which everybody wants, and with his action, when we ask for a smaller War Cabinet, in enlarging it by Empire delegates, these things we regret, not that the Empire is to come in, but that it should come in in that way. In spite of all that, he has given to this country a renaissance, a new vision of the heroic part we have to play in history. He takes too much upon himself perhaps; he does not reduce marshals when he should, but I have had the opportunity of being abroad in this war, in Portugal, in Canada, and in the United States, and I can tell the House that the figure of this one man looms up like a giant from a distance. We are the centre of a great Alliance. This man personifies the spirit of that Grand Alliance. Therefore, in conclusion, I think it would be a great pity if in petulance and in excitement we should reduce the stature of the Prime Minister. I only ask of him one thing, that he will add to the debt we owe him by becoming a greater Empire figure than he has been in the past. That we must watch, and that we need, but I shall vote for him as a great leader, and I hope that the House will continue to point out his errors, undismayed by the *débacle* which the critics will experience when the Vote is taken at the end of this Debate.

Lieut.-Colonel Elliot (Glasgow, Kelvingrove): The hon. Member for Wood Green (Mr Baxter), in a contribution which delighted us, embarked on two very dangerous experiments criticising Lord Beaverbrook and indulging in irony on the Floor of the House. I trust he will receive no bad effect from either departure from the normal. I shall do my best not to imitate him in either. In the closing passages of his speech he came down to the Vote before us, the Vote of Confidence, and he came squarely down on the point that he intended to vote for it. That is the problem that confronts all Members to-day. It is clear that the House was greatly impressed by the survey of the war position which the Prime Minister gave. There were many things which were omitted from that survey, but still, in an hour and a half, he reviewed the whole sphere of the war in a way which made us thankful that the speech was delivered to the House of Commons, a great deliberative Assembly, not over a wireless to millions who might not be fully able to understand. But the House, for all that, is restive and uneasy, and no one can deny that at such a time, when a new phase of this great war is pending—and no war in history has ever divided itself more clearly into successive phases than this—that with such a new phase opening, it is right that there should be a searching of hearts.

It is a question whether the uneasiness and restiveness are due to individuals or to events. I take the view that they are due to events and to the huge catastrophies which have come upon the world, rather than to the failure or the success of single individuals. To use a Spanish proverb, "It is difficult fighting when there are two bulls in the ring." Now a third bull has come into the ring, and the situation is more difficult. A new matador has come with the bull, who will more than make up for all that Japan has done to us and to the world in her assault on civilisation in the Pacific; but still, Japan is a young bull, a fresh bull, and a bull that will require the utmost efforts of all of us, before it is brought to the ground. The difficulties of the Government are certainly partly due to the audacity and hardihood with which they have confronted many of the situations with which they have been faced. On some occasions this course has been crowned with success; on others it has not been at all so successful; but when we blame the Government for confronting the situation in the Pacific with an audacity which makes us believe that in some cases there must have been miscalculation, let us not forget the occasions when audacity brought great reward. In 1940, when Italy came in and France fell out, audacity was the only course, because it was either audacity or abdication.

Yet the campaign upon which we were then involved in Africa was one in which, by all the laws of number, we should have suffered disasters and injuries scarcely less than those we have suffered in Malaya. We began with the evacuation of Somaliland. After that, we took an

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offensive where none was justified, and we succeeded in clearing the Italians from the shores of the Indian Ocean and the Red Sea. These were linked with the campaigns of General Wavell in North Africa, and were marked by a hardihood and a masterliness scarcely surpassed in war. It may be that, as on hon. Member opposite said, there comes a time when things begin to go wrong for the Government. It may be that such a bad patch has been struck now. But let us not forget that in the attack which has been launched upon the Pacific States by Japan, an attack has been launched in an area of the world where profound peace had brooded for many, many years. It is quite true that there was danger, and grave danger, from Japan, which has been mentioned by writers for years past. But in Malaya, in the Dutch Islands, the accusation—and it is an accusation from all over the House—has been made that not sufficient time and trouble have been given to training the people for war. That is a new point of view. It is a point of view which we shall hear again and again. No doubt, those responsible are greatly to blame, but an accusation that native populations have not been sufficiently trained and armed for war is a new kind of accusation to hear on the Floor of this House, and especially in the quarter from which it comes.

This is an iron age. The sword has come into Asia. It will be necessary not merely for Europe to fight in Asia, but for Asia to fight in Asia. It will not be sufficient for Europe to throw some sort of a sword and buckler over the populations of Asia; we shall have to do what has never been done by us, in helping the great populations of Asia, not merely of China but of India, to stand up for themselves, because it is clear that in the age to which we have now come no population can be defended by another population, and each great continent must be able not merely to fight, but to arm itself from the resources of its own soil.

Earl Winterton (Horsham and Worthing): My right hon. Friend seems to assume that this question has now been raised for the first time. On the contrary, we had a Debate on it in August, 1940—for which I asked, and which I had the greatest difficulty in obtaining—and hon. Members in all parties then urged the Government to arm the populations in Malaya, in the Crown Colonies, and in India.

Lieut.-Colonel Elliot: I would not deny the long associations of my right hon. Friend with the Indian Empire——

Earl Winterton: I am not talking of that. but of the Debate.

Lieut.-Colonel Elliot: — or the Debate which he has mentioned. I have myself heard him in subsequent Debates saying that it was difficult to get the House of Commons interested in the question. Far be it from me to deny that the question has been raised before, but I say that, since the assault by Japan, it has come up as a matter of keen debate, on which there is astonishing unanimity in all parts of the House. I was saying that the audacity of the Government, the risks they have run, are subject to censure in the case of Malaya. Our resources of aeroplanes and ships have been concentrated rather on other theatres of war, the Russian theatre and the Libyan theatre, because, although it is true that it might have been possible to produce more equipment there, ships would have been necessary to take it there, and the ships were concentrated on other needs. Now we hear the reproach from Australia that equipment was not available. I would only say that in 1940, when we were arming the people of this country with shotguns against the German Army, which had struck down France in six weeks, we were sending away our invaluable tanks and other equipment in ships which had to go round the Cape of Good Hope, to another theatre of war, many thousands of miles away.

It is true that great risks have been taken in the Pacific; but great risks were taken here, great risks were taken everywhere, because of the extreme paucity of the material which we had with which to confront the enormous concentrations of arms and enemies with which this country was faced. Time after time, that policy was successful. I have spoken of the African campaign. There was another series of—one can scarcely call them campaigns, although in previous history they might well have counted as such—in which we secured kingdom after kingdom in that front between the Caspian and the Levant. To secure them we embarked upon a series of marches, with a

force of not much over a brigade. It marched to Habbaniyah aerodrome, thence on Bagdad, from Bagdad to Mosul, back again to Bagdad, thence to the assault on Palmyra, turning the whole flank of Syria back again to Bagdad, and up the Paitak Pass to join hands with the Russians at Teheran—a feat of which too little is known. Our own regiments, your English regiments, no Scotsmen among them, not a Colonial—the Household Cavalry of London, the Wiltshire Yeomanry, the Essex Regiment and two batteries from Grimsby taken from the docks at Suez and plunged into the desert in the face of a temperature of 120 degrees, and not a man fell out.

Mr. Gallacher (Fife, West): Why has the right hon. Gentleman said that there were no Scotsmen among them?

Lieut.-Colonel Elliot: I said it because it is true. Although I will do my utmost to claim credit for the Scots where credit is due, I wish also to pay my tribute to the valiant efforts of the fighting men of England, because they too have done nobly. It is right that in their great feats of arms they should not be entirely neglected.

Mr. Kirkwood (Dumbarton Burghs): But there are enough Englishmen here to boost Englishmen without you starting to do so.

Lieut.-Colonel Elliot: Nothing has done more harm in other countries than the feeling created that the English have taken no part in it. It is the complaint of other peoples as well. Time and time again we have had complaints from Australia, New Zealand, Canada and America asking, "Why cannot we hear of what the English are doing, because one would think that the whole of this war has been fought by other people and that the English themselves are merely egging-on other people." That campaign was fought by a handful of men, yet these great risks cannot always come off. Sooner or later the table will take its toll. Although finally one may succeed, one must allow for the occasion when the throw goes against one. Though many a time the throw has gone against us in Malaya and in the Pacific lately, we must realise that the chances we take there are no greater than those we have successfully taken in other theatres of war. Yet in this theatre we have not succeeded on the whole. Why not? Because we have there a great, new, first-class military Power coming into action on the spot, with forces drawn from its own soil and trained for fighting in its own seas. I was very greatly struck with the passage in the speech of the Prime Minister yesterday when he said that on coming back from America he had one lesson which could be expressed in the word "China." That was a statement of very great importance, and surely to that we in this country ought to be able to add the word "India." The danger to us of believing that we can fight a great, first-class, military Power like Japan with our fingertips at arm's length is a danger which will run this country into the greatest risks in time to come. Surely the demand which has been made from all parts of the House is one that should be made.

Therefore, I ask—and this is germane to the Debate which my right hon. Friend the Member for Horsham (Earl Winterton) raised 16 months ago—What is the present position of the Dehli Council? Has it been reorganised since 7th December? What is its present personnel? What are its present functions? What finances are open to it? All these are questions which we would like to have answered. The organisation was brought into existence to deal with the problem of supply in the Far and the Middle East. We have heard that reorganisation has taken place in Australia and New Zealand. Supply Councils have been set up in Washington and elsewhere, but what of this great Supply Council which has existed for a considerable time and of which many of us had great hopes? Has it fallen into some sort of abeyance? If it has been reorganised, we wish to know what the reorganisation really is. It is a piece of organisation which this House believes very strongly ought to be used to the full.

The question has been raised from the opposite side of the House about the promise of Dominion status to India at the end of the war. These are questions which raise the most difficult political issues, but the questions of industrialisation and of the further production of weapons—guns, aeroplanes, tanks—are of great interest now, to-day, to the fifth, sixth or seventh steel producing country of the world, which India is already. There are questions which India ought to be able to solve. The danger before us

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now is that we should not recognise the new climacteric of the war. The Prime Minister himself has said that the fourth climacteric was the great assault of Germany upon Russia. The assault of Japan upon the Eastern States is certainly of no less importance. In fact, it may prove in world history of even greater importance. The time to deal on purely peaceful lines with these great Eastern possessions has definitely failed and broken down. Malaya and Java were areas where the botanists of Kew Gardens covered the whole Malayan peninsula with rubber trees and where in Java the botanists of Pasaroan produced sugar canes which were the envy of the whole world and brought enormous prosperity to their country.

Mr. Gallacher: But not to the people.

Lieut.-Colonel Elliot: They brought great prosperity to the peoples of those countries. The people have had prosperity, freedom from slavery, from war and from many of the things which white civilisation has brought to other parts of the world, and yet it was not enough. We armed Africa to fight for Africa, and the Abyssinian campaign was won very largely by African arms, but Malaya, "No," and Java, "Question." The Garden of Eden is not enough nowadays, and both in China and in India that lesson is beginning to be learnt.

Those of us who believe in a greater and more vigorous prosecution of the war naturally do our best to put it forward to the Government and the Prime Minister. I do not believe that it lies within the competence of the House to dictate to the Prime Minister as to who his colleagues should be, because the commission given by the King to the Prime Minister is to form a Government, but we can say that in many respects we are dissatisfied with the results which are being obtained. We bring the matter forward, as we ought to do, to the Prime Minister and exercise the friendly right of criticism and ask him to see that these things shall be done better. For instance, the fertility of imagination and invention which used to be one of the glories of this country does not seem to be working out to the full at the present time.

I do not believe that scientific thought is being employed as fully as it might be. I should like to hear more about that. I was astounded, as many must have been, that Sir John Russell had been asked by the Minister of Information to act as *liaison* officer in Russian affairs. Sir John Russell is one of our greatest scientists in the full power of his vigour in regard to soil and agriculture. In the past, as the result of scientific research and invention, there have been great achievements in our wars and I would ask whether the same fertility of imagination is being brought forward and used to-day.

All of us in touch with scientific circles ask that because we know of our own knowledge of many eminent men whose abilities are not being used to the full. It is, then, all the more remarkable that Sir John Russell has been asked to give part-time service as a liaison officer with the Ministry of Information on general Russian questions instead of utilising to the full his ability and knowledge of the special problem of which he is such a master. In all those things we want to know whether the mass production upon which we are embarking is being fertilised by an adequate amount of thought. There was a definite reference in the Prime Minister's speech yesterday to Libyan equipment. He said:

> ". . . where our men have met the enemy for the first time—I do not say in every respect, because there are some things that are not all that we had hoped for—but, upon the whole, we have met him with equal weapons."—[OFFICIAL REPORT, 27th January, 1942; col. 597, vol. 377.]

That is quite true of the quality and design of some of the equipment being used in Libya. The utmost attention should be given to these men of thought, who alone can lay down the blue prints and plans upon which engineers and producers can later really make the equipment which is worth while. But, for the present, there is no doubt whatever as to the action which the majority—I believe the overwhelming majority and, it may be, unanimity—of the House will take. The Prime Minister asks for confidence. He asks for it on account of the great task which is before him, and he assumes responsibility for competence for that task. It is to the tribunal of events that the Prime Minister has made his appeal, and in that appeal this House and this nation will assuredly support him.

Mr. Shinwell (Seaham): In his opening speech yesterday the Prime Minister enlivened the House with one of his

characteristic orations. His review of the war situation was arresting and illuminating. Whatever opinions are expressed in the course of our deliberations about the Government's conduct of the war, we are grateful to him for undertaking an adventurous voyage, for his heartening speeches and for his magnificent contribution in cementing the relations between two great English-speaking peoples. However, while grateful for his resource and courage, we are not enamoured of his challenge to the House. Votes of Confidence may prove to be a snare and a delusion. After all, my right hon. Friend starts off with a tremendous advantage. Around and behind him reside all the instruments of easy victory. If he were as well equipped for war as he is for meeting a challenge from hon. Members, our forebodings regarding furture events might be less melancholy than they are. One way and another the Prime Minister has over 100 colleagues in his Government, all reliable devotees who will march into the Lobby at his word of command. He has at his disposal the political Hurricanes, the Spitfires, and even the tanks—true, not possessed of remarkable speed. The critics are not so well equipped. Therefore, my right hon. Friend must not take advantage of his position and our numerical and mechanised inferiority.

Moreover, he has previously availed himself of the confidence of the House. Last year he received a remarkable demonstration of confidence when no fewer than 447 hon. Members rallied to his side and only three could be found to vote against him. On what assumption did he gain that Vote of Confidence? It was on the understanding that the Government would pursue the war with the utmost vigour. If, as my right hon. Friend declares, a Vote of Confidence is itself a contribution to victory, this Debate is irrelevant, for no criticism would have emerged. Apparently, that almost unanimous expression of support failed to achieve the desired result.

Let me offer a suggestion which may commend itself to hon. Members. Why not have two Votes of Confidence, one a Motion of Confidence in the Prime Minister, and another in the remaining Members of the Government? The result might prove interesting. In the first case, probably 90 per cent. would vote for the Prime Minister, including, of course, all the Members of the Government who are devoted to their leader. In the second instance, it is probable that 95 per cent. of hon. Members would vote against, and that might include the Prime Minister, who presumably knows his Government. At any rate, it would be an innovation and enable hon. Members to express their innermost and pent-up emotions on this issue. But if my right hon. Friend feels impelled to force a conclusion, the assumption is that, in addition to fighting the Nazis, the Japs, and, of course, the Italians, he feels equal to bearing the whole burden of the Government on his shoulders. That is indeed a heavy responsibility. In those circumstances, we can only extend to my right hon. Friend our heartfelt sympathy, although his decision may prove fatal to the national interests and plunge us into irreparable disaster.

In the last few weeks we have witnessed a steady and deplorable deterioration in the war situation. It is monotonous and distressing. One setback after another is reported, and, apparently, worse lies before us in the coming months. Nor have we any assurance that the blows can be warded off, for neither the means of attack nor adequate defence are in our protection. The House is not responsible for this situation. For many months questions were asked on the subject of Japan's war preparations. There have been questions on the subject of production and equipment for our Forces in the Far East and elsewhere, and reference was frequently made to the subject of shipping facilities and supplies of raw materials, and also to the position in Thailand, Burma and India. But we were constantly fobbed off by assurances, and Ministers repeated the familiar formula: "the Government have the situation well in hand." Indeed, hon. Members were occasionally subjected to vicious attacks by Ministers whose outstanding feature seemed to be their capacity for deluding themselves, and who urged that recriminations could not assist us. That may be so, but we must afford ourselves some degree of protection against recurrence of such incidents, and the heroics and platitudes of the last 18 months.

Therefore, let us, in the light of past declarations, consider the case presented by the Government. So far as we can ascertain, the explanation offered is that we cannot be strong everywhere, and that our weakness in the Far East was due to the need for providing munitions in other

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theatres of war. When did the Government make the discovery that we were weak in the Pacific, in Hong Kong, and in Malaya? Were the facts brought home to them in the last six months? Were the various Commands in the Far East, and the Government of Australia, correctly informed on the position, and, if so, with what result? Furthermore, in face of our now admitted weakness in the Far East, why did my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister declare at the Mansion House our readiness to resist Japanese aggression and that if the peace of the Pacific was broken, the combined fleets of the United States of America and Great Britain, consisting of battleships, aircraft-carriers and ancillary vessels, would be more than a match for the aggressor?

Mr. Kirkwood: What was the date of that?

Mr. Shinwell: November, 1941. In all the speeches delivered by my right hon. Friend, the impression was conveyed of active preparation, and never at any time was there any suggestion that owing to our present obligations in Libya, the possibility of invasion, and the character of our aid to Russia, we might find ourselves in an inferior position in the Far East. Presumably, if the Japs had delayed their aggression, Government spokesmen would still be boasting about our extensive preparations, and we should be none the wiser. Was the fact of our weakness conveyed to the United States and China, both of them friendly Governments and equally apprehensive of Japanese aggression. And did we urge upon those nations the need for effective preparation, and, again, with what results? At this stage it is appropriate to ask the Prime Minister whether our strategy was determined by the conviction that the United States would provide ample protection in the Pacific. That may be the true explanation. At any rate we must now face the fact that a completely new situation has emerged.

Our capacity to resist the enemy in the Pacific seems negligible, and may remain so for a considerable time. Indeed, both President Roosevelt and the Prime Minister have made it abundantly clear that we cannot hope to assume a real offensive until the middle or the end of 1943. We are therefore making a fresh start. Even the decision to create a new defence force and provide, in the words of the Secretary of State for Air, tough and mobile elements to guard our air-fields after more than two years of war seems to indicate the Government's belief that we have entered on a new phase of the war. Strangely enough, this decision was reached several months after the Prime Minister warned us of the probability of invasion on 1st September. Apparently we were not even prepared for that contingency and it is not yet clear whether our defences at home are adequate. If we could not safeguard our interests in the Far East because there existed a lack of equipment or shipping capable of being employed in that theatre of operations, in other words, if the Far East had to suffer owing to the large supplies being sent elsewhere, let us consider the quarter to which they were sent and to what effect.

It is alleged that we were compelled to deprive the Far East of supplies because of our Russian commitments. This is surely fantastic. If we are expected to accept this explanation, perhaps the Government will inform us what was the actual quantity of material sent to our gallant Russian Ally? Of course, it will be urged that to disclose the figures would not be in the public interest. But why not? If we have sent vast quantities of aircraft, guns and tanks to Russia the disclosure should bring no comfort to the enemy. It might frighten the enemy because then they would realise what they are up against. But if the Government decline to disclose the amount of aid rendered to Russia, how are we to judge whether their excuse that we could not give material in large quantities to the Far East and also to Russia is sound? Perhaps I can assist the Government.

Apart from some raw material, it was only in September that we began to assist Russia with aircraft and tanks, and then obviously only in small quantities. On Lord Beaverbrook's return from Moscow he promised to speed up supplies and started his campaign throughout the country. In the time available it is doubtful whether we have sent to Russia much more than 1,000 aircraft, 1,000 tanks and probably the same number of guns. If the Government say it is more, I shall, of course, accept the correction, but this is only about a couple of weeks' production, that if, if the Government's declarations about our rapidly expanding

output are accurate. This is only chicken feed in relation to the vast needs of our Ally in their epic-making resistance on the Eastern front, and it is an exceedingly small percentage of our vast output.

Clearly it was not owing to Russian demands and our readiness to meet them that our fine and gallant men were forced to surrender in Hongkong and our splendid fellows are enduring so much in Malaya. The Government's explanation is not reassuring. The amount of aid we gave to Russia is as nothing alongside the phenomenal assistance our Allies are rendering to us in the terrific effort they are making to destroy the Nazi military machine. Russia is regarded as a backward country and not highly industrialised like Great Britain. Yet, after what amounted to a decisive defeat, she has effected an amazing recovery which has magnified the stature of the Russian people and proved fortunate for ourselves. If the Government persist in their statement that we cannot be strong everywhere, what amount of aid shall we give to Russia in preparation for Hitler's spring offensive, which will lock the Russians and the Nazis in a deadly struggle, on the outcome of which the fate of civilisation may be determined?

On the other hand, perhaps it was the Libyan campaign which swallowed up the bulk of our resources. We had prepared for this campaign for more than five months, according to my right hon. Friend; we had, at least, reached equality with the enemy and we possessed superiority in the air. Moreover, the battle might almost be over in a few hours and it was more like a battle at sea than on land—so declared the Prime Minister. It has been prolonged beyond expectations. Instead of the destruction of General Rommel's forces no more than 40,000 men were captured. This means that 80,000 are intact and are now apparently reinforced and are capable of taking the initiative. It is interesting that we should try and console ourselves for the Malayan disaster by a success in Libya. The Government maintain that there was a choice between reinforcing Malaya and the creation of a second front in the Near East, and that the latter had priority. That argument is no doubt sound having regard to the precarious position in the Caucasus; but, after all, General Rommel's forces were not large, and a more substantial reason for a prolonged campaign, and particularly the recent setback in view of our mechanised strength and the Prime Minister's glowing assurances, should be forthcoming. All things considered, while the Libyan campaign may not be regarded as a strategical failure, it cannot properly be described as a success. It has not liberated our forces in the Mediterranean nor paved the way for an attack on Italy and the creation of a real second front.

To what can we ascribe our failures? Is it still the lack of equipment, the lag in production and the absence of efficient organisation in our munitions industry? Surely that cannot be the cause. After all the assurances of Lord Beaverbrook, the incurable optimism of my right hon. and gallant Friend the Minister of Aircraft Production, and the Prime Minister's repeated assertions of our vast and expanding output, we must assume that the production problem has been solved. That is not the considered opinion of prominent production experts, or of trade union leaders, nor is it accepted by the vast army of shop stewards in Coventry, Manchester and other munition centres who have recently disclosed the existence of idle men and idle machines and a vast waste of our resources. Still, the Government know better. They have access to all the facts. Consequently, we seem to be faced with this dilemma. If our production capacity is being sufficiently organised and output is advancing, we should be rapidly overtaking the shortage of equipment. Therefore, that is no longer an excuse for our lack of strength. [An Hon. Member: "Shipping."]

The cause of our failures must be found elsewhere. Have we adopted the correct policy towards the natives of Malaya and the Chinese Government who, it is alleged, offered to render assistance? Was it due to a failure to co-ordinate our policy and take the Government of Australia fully into our confidence? If so, the Government must accept responsibility and deserve condemnation. On the other hand, if there are difficulties in our production due to the Government's refusal to avail themselves of the constructive proposals frequently urged in the House and outside, and this has retarded the output of the right type of war material, the Government must take a full share of the blame.

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[Mr. Shinwell.]

Suppose we ignore my right hon. Friend's challenge and consider our position dispassionately and objectively. Can we derive any lessons from the experience of the past two years? If so, what ought we to do? If the House is in the mood, I beg to offer a few suggestions, but warn hon. Members that in doing so there will be some repetition, for most of it has been said by hon. Members in previous Debates. Nevertheless, it is a more useful form of repetition than the repeated declarations by Members of the Government on winning the war, or their certain knowledge about the final outcome, made usually without the slightest justification. If, according to President Roosevelt, we are not in a position to undertake an effective offensive until some time in 1943, we have now an opportunity to prepare a comprehensive plan for victory. That plan must be based on the fullest development of our productive capacity, in the revision of our shipbuilding policy, in the correct adjustment of imports by the adoption of a comprehensive rationing scheme based on the principle of complete equity, combined with an efficient home defence plan and the proper use of our labour power.

To begin with, the Prime Minister—I say it with the highest respect—must abandon his stubborn attitude on the subject of co-ordination in production. We must have a Minister, not necessarily superseding other Ministers associated with production, but presiding over a Productive Council and not hampered by departmental duties. His task must be to co-ordinate, supervise and instruct, and to see that his policy, which is derived from his association with the War Cabinet, is faithfully carried out.

His function in the sphere of production should be as important as that of his colleague who occupies the exalted position of Minister of Defence. In every munition area, a regional organisation should be created with power to direct and transfer labour, whether manual or executive, to remove machinery and material from one factory to another, to dismiss inefficient managements, and to take over any industrial undertaking which can be utilised in the war effort.

At present there are two local supply organisations, one under the supervision of the chairman of the Production Council, the Minister of Labour, and another under the control of Lord Beaverbrook. Such overlapping is bordering on insanity. Although the Minister of Supply may be offended by the creation of a unified control in area production, we cannot allow him to stand in the way. Incidentally, the Prime Minister might do as the right hon. Member for Carnarvon Boroughs (Mr. Lloyd George) did in the last war, when he met representatives of the workers and some of the men themselves, to hear what they had to say about the obstacles to greater production. It might do him and the nation much good.

Our shipping position has steadily deteriorated. In spite of the optimism of members of the Government, we are in a relatively worse position now than before the war in the Pacific. The Japs have developed a shipbuilding policy far more advanced than ours. They have a vast number of large and fast transports at their disposal, all of which can readily be converted into armed raiders. In the last few years the majority of their vessels show a speed of not less than 15½ knots, and many of them are of much higher speed. Their tankers are vessels with speeds ranging from 16 to 19 knots. Our policy since the outbreak of the war provided for vessels of nine and 10 knots and tankers of not more than 12½ knots. We must revise our policy now and plan to build within the next two years vessels of higher speed. If we fail in this matter, not only will the Japs and the Germans surpass us during the war—for it is certain that the Nazis are not idle in this department of production—but we shall suffer in peace time, when great efforts must be made to maintain our position as a maritime nation.

To rely on the shipping programme of the United States of America would be sheer folly. Naturally, many vessels will be turned out in American yards, but the American programme is vastly greater than their capacity for performance. Lord Rotherwick, President of the Chamber of Shipping, has contested the figures of shipping submitted by the American President and has reduced them by almost half; at any rate, at least 5,000,000 tons of the proposed U.S.A. shipping will be of slow speed and of standard type. That the shipping position is grave is demonstrated by Admiral Land, head of the

American Maritime Commission, who is reported as saying:

> "Before Japan entered the war it appeared as if combined Allied shipping construction was overcoming losses. There has been a setback in this phase of our effort. Since 7th December, losses by sinkings and capture have been large, and increased activity by surface raiders and other vessels is expected."

Thus speaks Admiral Land. Last year, in spite of diminished sinkings, we lost over 4,000,000 tons of shipping. On the assumption that no greater losses are incurred, and that the United States programme is actually completed, we shall be in possession of a smaller amount of shipping in 1943 than when the war began. The American ships have yet to be built, and our military movements are dependant upon their construction. Nobody can be allowed to under-estimate the gravity of the shipping position.

Obviously, this affects our import position, and whether we like it or not, we must become reconciled to fewer imports of food. It is essential to revise the whole of our rationing system. Lord Woolton swears by his so-called flexible method of rationing, but instead of the switchback system of raising and lowering the rations of various articles of food, it would be preferable to provide a level of rationing on a lower scale, preserving stocks, and making certain that the whole system is based on the principle of equity so that nobody receives more than another. In short, we must accustom ourselves to fortress economies, to cut down rations and to share what is going more in accordance with needs and less in accordance with ability to pay.

This in turn leads to the question of labour supply. We have a vast field to cover, and our resources in men are not equal to the demand to liberate men for overseas and at the same time provide for home defence. We must secure the adequate defence of these shores, and also free men for the purpose of increasing production. It is essential to train every able-bodied man between the ages of 18 and 60 in the use of arms. This may involve an extension of the Home Guard or the creation of a Citizen Army. This by no means exhausts the possible revision in our policy, but it will suffice for the present. At any rate, the Government may rest assured that we shall press for changes in policy as long as, in our judgment, the whole weight of the nation is not fully utilised in the war effort. Perhaps after my speech the Prime Minister may feel disposed to abandon his challenge to the House and devote himself to a consideration of the constructive proposals frequently made by hon. Members. If he should prefer to adopt this course, he need not fear criticism, nor doubt the devotion of hon. Members. Whatever may be thought of those who venture to offer criticism of the Government, we are as single-minded in the desire to gain a speedy and conclusive victory as any of those hon. Members who are regarded as the loyal supporters of the Prime Minister. But should he be determined to pursue the matter, he will permit me to submit the appeal to a person more eminent in his day than I can hope to be in mine:

> "It may seem paradoxical to say that the incapacity which Pitt showed in all that related to the conduct of the war is, in some sense, the most decisive proof that he was a man of very extraordinary abilities. Assuredly, one-tenth part of his errors and disasters would have been fatal to the power and influence of any Minister who had not possessed in the highest degree the talents of a parliamentary leader. While his schemes were confounded, while his predictions were falsified, while the coalitions which he had laboured to form were falling to pieces, his authority over the House of Commons was constantly becoming more and more absolute. If some great misfortune had spread dismay through the ranks of his majority, that dismay lasted only till he rose from the Treasury Bench, drew up his haughty head, stretched his arm with commanding gesture, and poured forth, in deep, sonorous tones the lofty language of inextinguishable hope and inflexible resolution. Thus, through a long and calamitous period, every disaster that happened without the walls of Parliament was regularly followed by a triumph within them."

Does my right hon. Friend recognise himself in that vivid and colourful description of the younger Pitt by the eminent historian, Macaulay? It is a significant quotation and applicable to the present situation. My right hon. Friend may receive the confidence of hon. Members, and emerge with a great Parliamentary triumph. But while we are debating and marching through the Division Lobbies the war position will be steadily deteriorating, no matter how triumphant he may be, and no matter how strong his majority. That will not bring us nearer to victory nor will speeches, however inspiring. Nor can we rely on optimistic assurances and predictions on the final outcome of the war. Victory will be determined by an appreciation of the

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magnitude of the conflict, by the most efficient organisation, by sound strategy and able diplomacy, by the fullest use of our national resources, by ruthless activity and the elimination of every impediment that bars the way to a victorious conclusion of the struggle.

Major Randolph Churchill (Preston): It has long been noted that one of the weaknesses of Coalition Governments arises through the absence of an organised or canalised Opposition. Certainly, having listened to the Debate during the last two days, I have been tremendously impressed with the extraordinary diversity of criticism which has been directed against His Majesty's Government from all quarters of the House. Criticism which is largely party in its origin comes from those people of the Left who would like to see what they call all the men of Munich driven from the Government. On the other hand, there are certainly people in the Tory party who would like this, that or the other Labour or Liberal Minister removed. Then, you have the critics who say that they have no quarrel with the Prime Minister but who apparently want to get rid of all his colleagues and replace them with others. Perhaps the best example of this confusion of opinion among the critics was shown on the part of the hon. Member for Seaham (Mr. Shinwell), who not only contradicted so much criticism that had come from elsewhere, but in two successive sentences contradicted himself. At the very outset of his speech he rebuked the Prime Minister for having made this challenge. He then said that, after all, the Prime Minister had this enormous voting machine with which he would hurl back the challenge of the House. I am not clear from his statement as to who is making the challenge, in his opinion; whether this challenge is made by the Government or whether it is the critics who are doing the challenging.

I must say that I marvel at the relish, I might almost say the gusto, with which the hon. Gentleman referred to any pieces of bad tidings he could discover about the progress of the war. One could almost see him licking his lips when he was telling us how unfortunately the campaign in Libya had turned out. He was even more naked and unashamed, he almost shouted "Hurrah," when he told us that the estimates of President Roosevelt of shipbuilding capacity were almost doomed to failure, and that anyway they would be extremely slow ships. But there is one other aspect of criticism on which I would like to say a word. Two hon. Gentlemen at least, the hon. Member for East Fife (Mr. Henderson Stewart) and the hon. Member for South Croydon (Sir H. Williams) would not accept the usual policy of excusing the Prime Minister from the criticism. They thought that he had too much power, and that that was very bad and that the power should be removed from him. I should like to ask whether they think that the Prime Minister enjoys as much personal and political power as Hitler, Stalin, or Chiang-Kai-Shek, or even President Roosevelt? Under the Constitution of the United States, the President has incomparably greater power than any Prime Minister of this country could have, under our Constitution. I must come back to the hon. Gentleman the Member for Seaham. He was so upset about the supplies that we were sending to Russia. They were merely chicken-feed in comparison with what the Russians had. Perhaps if Premier Stalin had had gentlemen like the hon. Member among his associates, to impede him in his efforts to rearm the country in the last 10 years, the Russians might very well have had less.

But what does all this criticism boil down to? It boils down, on every hand, to the fact that people say, "This is a very bad Government." I was particularly amused by those members of the Conservative party who were upset at its being such a bad Government and were rather speculating whether they could strain their consciences far enough to support a Government with so many inferior people in it. When one remembers not only the willingness but the pleasure with which they supported Administrations composed of incomparably inferior Ministers, it really staggers one that there should be this sudden desire among them for perfection. Perhaps, as so many members say, this is not a very good Government, but ought we not to ask ourselves, is it a very good House of Commons? Where did it come from? [An Hon. Member: "Some of us were elected."] Certainly, it was elected in 1935, when all three parties supported the policy of applying sanctions in order to stop Mussolini's threat to Abyssinia. It made a great success of that, did it not? I do not wish to raise past issues, but these things must be said. It is the Parliament of Munich, it is the Parliament which failed to rearm the country in time. Practically every Member who has criticised has gone along the Treasury Bench and selected his scalps—some only a few, some many. I think that we should look around the House and see where we are to restock the Treasury Bench from if the advice of the critics is to be taken. First, what about the hon. Gentleman the Member for South Croydon? I was most interested in the speech he made yesterday. Talking of Under-Secretaries—a topic which seemed particularly to interest him—he said:

> "By Act of Parliament we say that there shall be a Parliamentary Secretary, but his duties have never been defined. No one in the commercial world would ever take on the job."—[Official Report, 27th January, 1942; col. 644, Vol. 377.]

I do not know what experience the hon. Member has had.

Sir Herbert Williams (Croydon, South): I did not say that.

Major Churchill: I have taken it straight out of the Official Report, and here is what the hon. Gentleman said:

> "By Act of Parliament we say that there shall be a Parliamentary Secretary, but his duties have never been defined. No one in the commercial world would ever take on the job."—[Official Report, 27th January, 1942; col. 644, Vol. 377.]

What is interesting is that although I do not know what experience of the commercial world the hon. Gentleman has had, it did not deter him from accepting a position of Parliamentary Secretary some years ago, but he evidently seems to want to rule himself out of that now. Speaking a little earlier about how bad the Civil Service service was, he said:

> "It is tolerated by Ministers, nine-tenths of whom have never in their lives earned £500 a year in ordinary industry."—[Official Report, 27th January, 1942, cols. 643 and 644; Vol. 377.]

What a standard to set up by which we are to judge the competence of Ministers. But if that is to be the standard and the Government are to be reconstructed as the hon. Gentleman hopes, he should either let everyone know, or at any rate let the Government know through the usual channels, what his income is or the income he ought to get from a job in ordinary industry. I do not know what extraordinary industry there might be. The proposition of the hon. Gentleman is that, if you can only earn £500 a year, you cannot be in the running for the position of Under-Secretary. It is too bad. Perhaps, on the other hand, if he was making a couple of thousand a year, he would be in the running to be a fully-fledged Minister, and I suppose that £10,000 a year would qualify him for the War Cabinet.

There is always the possibility that new talent may be found outside this House, and in the last few years a considerable number of able Ministers have been brought in from outside the political world. The Minister of War Transport, the Minister of State, the Minister of Labour, the Minister of Food, the Lord President of the Council and the President of the Board of Trade have all been brought in from outside. I am not going to go into that, because I gather that it is the view of a great number of Members of the House that we ought to observe the principle of the closed shop. I must continue my peregrinations around this House and naturally must look to the critics, as they are the men who know how to win the war. I come next to the Noble Lord who has represented Horsham (Earl Winterton) for so many years in this House. I have been away for some time, but it has been a delight to me when receiving the Official Report abroad to read how more and more years he is piling on to his record until I think we may almost call him the stepfather of the House. No doubt his claims to office are very high. We all remember how some years ago——

Earl Winterton: In reply to my hon. and gallant Friend's delightful interlude, which is so pleasing to the House, may I assure him that I have no such ambitions? May I also make a disclosure? I have one secret ambition, and that is to be a military spokesman, where I can exercise my natural talent for inaccuracy.

Major Churchill: The Noble Lord has given a very fine example of his genius for inaccuracy, but in spite of that inaccurate, inappropriate and irrelevant interruption, may I point out that in his case we can judge better than we can

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[Major Churchill.]

judge other members of the shadow Cabinet because part of the Noble Lord's previous Ministerial experience was to reorganise a certain section of the Air Ministry, and we know how he clowned himself out of the job in one afternoon. Then we simply must not overlook the claims of the hon. Gentleman the Member for East Fife. Speaking in the Debate yesterday, he took a very noble and high line. He said:

"I want to say at once that with some of that criticism I have little sympathy. I am referring to that kind of criticism which, in assessing responsibility, seeks to draw distinction between the head of the Government and the Administration which he controls."—[OFFICIAL REPORT, 27th January, 1942; col. 659, Vol. 377.]

But I find that on 8th June last year, speaking at a War Weapons Week meeting at East Fife, he said:

"We are being beaten in the Mediterranean because of dithering strategy, bungling organisation and appalling lack of foresight. Greece was bad enough but Crete was worse. Now we are dithering again and we are waiting patiently and politely until the German troops establish themselves in Syria."

That was two days before the long and carefully prepared campaign in Syria opened, with such good results. He has not given one word of thanks to the Government for that; he has gone on to find other examples of what he called the dithering and blundering. He went on:

"The Prime Minister had better change his Government of speckled talent if he does not wish to suffer the fate of Asquith in 1916. We cannot tolerate another wait-and-see policy in this war."

Now he is trying to separate the Prime Minister and his colleagues. The hon. Member added:

"Though a profound admirer of Mr. Churchill I say to him, 'Get rid now of those small-minded mediocrities who still encumber some of our higher and lower posts."

I do not think that the new Government we are forming would be complete were we to overlook the variety of the hon. Gentleman the Member for Ipswich (Mr. Stokes). Perhaps the hon. and gallant Gentleman the Member for Epsom (Sir A. Southby) will not be offended if I take the hon. Member and himself together. I doubt which of them will be the more offended. I am not suggesting they have very much in common, but it appears to fit appropriately into the topic on which I am speaking. First, on 8th January, the hon. Minister for Ipswich attacked the Prime Minister, because he had said:

"This is the first time we have met the Germans at least equally well-armed."—[OFFICIAL REPORT, 20th November, 1941; col. 476, Vol. 376.]

The hon. Member for Ipswich continued:

"Was this really the case? I do not believe it."—[OFFICIAL REPORT, 8th January, 1942; col. 157, Vol. 377.]

I wonder why the hon. Member did not believe it. In the same speech, he made some allusions about His Majesty's ship "Courageous." When he was asked how he knew it, he said that everybody knew it, and when pressed further on the point, he slid away and seemed to have no good foundation for his statements.

Mr. Stokes (Ipswich): Is that all the hon. and gallant Member proposes to say on this matter, because if so, I might as well correct him? I made no reference to His Majesty's ship "Courageous," and I want to ask him how he himself would feel in a battle when the enemy had armour on new tanks which could outshoot our own tanks.

Major Churchill: I am just coming to that matter. I beg the hon. Member's pardon; it was to His Majesty's ship "Glorious" that he referred. The particular point to which I wish to attract the attention of the House is this. It has been suggested by a number of people that the Army that broke into Cyrenaica under General Auchinleck's command on 18th November was inadequately equipped for the task which it was set, and that, of course, has caused a good deal of anxiety and concern on the part of many hundreds of thousands of people in this country who have friends and relations taking part in that battle. If it is not true, it seems to me to be most undesirable that such an opinion should be created. We have heard a great deal about the superior gun in the German tanks. It is perfectly true that the Germans did have, at the beginning of the battle, a small number of tanks which had a much more powerful cannon in them than any of which we disposed. On the other hand, at the other end of the line, they had a considerable number of markedly inferior Italian tanks which were in every way inferior to everything we disposed of, so that definitely, on balance, our tanks were better than theirs. In addition, we had a superiority

in numbers that amounted at least to seven to four. In the air, our superiority was even more marked. The Germans had quite a small number of Messerschmitt 109 F's which were far superior to the Hurricanes and Tomahawks, which were our fighters. On the other hand, they had a very large number of obsolete dive-bombers which were cold meat for our Hurricanes and Tomahawks, and also a large number of inferior Italian machines. Not only in numbers, but in quality, we had decisive superiority in the air.

If any hon. Member doubts that to have been so, how does he imagine that, if we did not have superiority in the air and in armour, we were able, in a comparative short space of time, to chase General Rommel out of Cyrenaica and in that process inflict losses on him of three for every one of ours? It is quite true that now the battle has taken on a new phase. The hon. Member chortles with delight at the new phase which the battle has taken on. [*Interruption.*] You can see him chortle. [AN HON. MEMBER: "The hon. and gallant Gentleman said we had a preponderance of men——] No, I did not say we had a preponderance of men. My point was that, with great inferiority in men, when the force we deployed was never more than 45,000 against an army of from 110,000 to 120,000, we largely destroyed that army. It seems to me to be only common sense that that result could not conceivably have been procured unless we had had that decisive superiority in armour and in the air.

It is true that now, having got 400 miles from railhead, the conditions strategically are not in many ways as favourable as they were at the outset. It was only to be expected that that would be the difficult part of the campaign, because we did not, in fact, succeed in the earlier stages in destroying the whole army. That expectation was unfortunately disappointed. No one should be surprised that the battle should now go through a difficult phase. After all, when we left Cyranaica at the time of the Greek and Crete campaign, General Rommel rallied quickly and came across Cyrenaica but could go no further. Obviously the difficulty is inherent in the geographical situation out there, but it cannot go on indefinitely. It may be that General Rommel has now brought in reinforcements, and probably all the new tanks which he has obtained are of the latest type. That may put us at a disadvantage, which did not exist before.

Mr. Stokes: Before the hon. and gallant Member leaves that point—he speaks with such authority as a soldier—will he tell me on what occasion he has been, as a soldier, in a battle where he has been shot at by the enemy at 1,500 yards?

Major Churchill: I did not, as a matter of fact, come here to speak of my personal experiences. The hon. and gallant Member for Epsom stated on 8th January:

"Why was the campaign in Libya necessary at all, with all its expenditure of life and effort? Because early last year we made the tragic mistake of allowing political and sentimental considerations to interfere with military strategy. Unless we could have continued to hold all that General Wavell's brilliant campaign had obtained for us at such trifling cost we should never have embarked on the expeditions to Greece and Crete and thereby lost Libya."—[OFFICIAL REPORT 8th January, 1942; col. 119, Vol. 377.]

I am bound to say that I am astonished at such a suggestion coming from an hon. and gallant Member who is not only a politician but who has also had Service experience. Why should a Member of this House use the word "political" when he is talking about strategy in an offensive connotation? Surely it reveals the most extraordinary ignorance in warlike matters—certainly our principal enemy, Hitler, has shown himself a master in using politics, diplomacy and propaganda all mixed up in war—to use that to cast doubts on the wisdom of a decision taken by the General Staff, and suggesting that they were political and sentimental. I certainly hope that political considerations were borne in mind. The hon. and gallant Member, as is plain from the latter part of his remarks, thought so little of politics that he maintained that we should never have gone into Greece, although we were pledged and had given our word, because it was a lot of sentiment. If we had followed this course, I do not think that we should done our reputation in the world very much good. It is becoming increasingly realised by thoughtful people that the Greek and Crete campaigns delayed the German invasion of Russia by at least six weeks, with possible decisive results not only upon the battle, but upon the whole future of the war.

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[Mr. Lambert.]

complacency, based upon the idea that we are bound to win this war. Everyone may be confident about the matter, but when I read accounts of the divergence of opinion about vengeance, or retribution and the views of planners, I am inclined to suggest to those gentlemen that it would be far better for them to catch their hare before they endeavour to cook it. I think, as one who went through the last war, that we have a right to congratulate ourselves here, inasmuch as we are not experiencing the privation we experienced during the last war; nothing near it. An hon. Member asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer a Question, and brought out the fact that we spent £300,000,000 on beer, £300,000,000 on tobacco and £90,000,000 on spirits in one year. That does not seem to indicate very much deprivation. Then there is the enormous number of people who have never been so well off, and never had so much money. I remember in my younger days talking about the Income Tax. I heard so many people say, "Oh yes, we should love to have a chance of paying Income Tax." But I am not sure that there is a great rush on the part of those whom my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer has roped in to pay Income Tax, though there is not the smallest doubt about it that a large number of people are much better off to-day than ever they were. They have never been so well off as regards money. Knowing what the Ministry of Food is doing, I must say also that I think Lord Woolton is doing an extraordinarily good job of work. If eggs could be decontrolled they would be 1s. each. Even with my small number of poultry I could make a lot of money.

Mr. Stephen (Glasgow, Camlachie): What is an egg?

Mr. Lambert: I will bring the hon. Member one some day. The Prime Minister has asked for a Vote of Confidence. As far as I am concerned he will get it. You cannot have a war conducted by the House of Commons; you must support the Government or change it. If the Prime Minister is not capable of constituting his Cabinet, he is not capable of conducting the war. I am not going to say anything about my opinion of the various members of the Cabinet. We have had enough of that. One could express opinions, but I say that so long as we have the Prime Minister at the head of affairs we must trust him and I should be very sorry to see him have a rebuff, for I know that, in that case, England would have had a reverse.

Captain Sir Ian Fraser (Lonsdale): The hon. Gentleman the Member for Seaham (Mr. Shinwell) jeered at the Prime Minister—I think that is the right word—and in the course of his jeer he complained, by reference to Macaulay, that the Prime Minister had been guilty of expressing "inextinguishable hope." I cannot help feeling that the great mass of the people in this country and in this House would feel that that "inextinguishable hope"—let us bear on those words—derived from the personality of the Prime Minister and from his expression of it, was one of our richest gifts at a time of deepest peril. I think we owe the right hon. Gentleman much for that. If that is the only contribution he makes towards our efforts in this war it will, perhaps, be one of the greatest. I cannot help feeling sickened, if I may use the word, by the apparent desire and relish with which certain hon. Gentlemen seek to find out weaknesses in our armour and to expose them to the world and to our enemies.

It seems to me that hon. Members of this House, this centre of liberty and freedom, have the right and indeed the duty to come here and report what they find wrong in their constituencies, in industry, or in armed Forces, privately if that seems to them to be most discreet, or publicly if that seems necessary. That is, after all, one of our most cherished and proper duties. I cannot help thinking, however, that when certain hon. Members spend all their time here, day after day and week after week, always digging up the ground to see whether the worms are there, instead of going into the garden to enjoy the sunshine and fresh air, they are attracting to themselves the critical part of the nation, and are likely themselves to be deceived as to the volume of criticism which exists.

I have been present at meetings of business men and others when they have had some "grouse," some difficulty, and someone has said, "We have represented this to the Ministry and we cannot get any answer, we cannot get any action." Another will say, "Let us have it raised in the House. Who can we get to raise

it?" Inevitably, the names of a half-dozen Members who are always raising matters of criticism are mentioned. It is one of our functions, but I question whether those Members are not misled by the volume of correspondence of a critical nature which comes to them just because they have rather made their names as critics. I do not suggest that it is wrong that that should be so; it is a function of the House to criticise, but I do suggest that those hon. Members should be warned, lest their correspondence and the number of approaches that come to them should lead them to see so plainly the difficulties, disappointments and muddles which undoubtedly exist that they overlook the very large degree of splendid work which is being done by managers and men in our factories throughout the land.

I was not able to hear the whole speech of the hon. Member for Seaham, but I heard most of it. For some time he developed the criticism that the Prime Minister had said, in November, I think, that we were not in too bad a way in the Far East and that if the Japanese were to make war, the American and the British Fleets would, together, give a good account of themselves or would be there to stop them. His criticism, it seemed to me, was not on the major question of whether our strategy was right in placing what resources we had in Russia and the Middle East. His criticism was rather that the Prime Minister said we would stand up to the Japanese and that those two Navies would be, if not very superior, at any rate, strong. What was it that the Prime Minister said? Japan had not then come into the war. It was the Prime Minister's hope that they would not come in at that time, perhaps not at all. Could any Prime Minister, could any leader, could any of us, go round saying that if the Japanese came in, it was quite certain that they would be able successfully to bomb Pearl Harbour and sink two of our great battleships, perhaps more, that our Navies were inadequate and unable to fight the Japs, and so that the flag must be hauled down? Is that the kind of thing you can say before a country comes into a war?

Much more criticism is levelled against commanders in the Far East, and other commanders because, from time to time, they say reassuring things to their troops and the newspaper men. Are we to go around proclaiming that we have two men and a boy holding many of our outposts, because it happens to be so? Is it not plain that we must have the courage to go on defending many lines and points with two men and a boy and pretending that we are strong at those points? Is it not obvious that we must be caught out many times and have our bluff called? It seems to me that now is the time when this House of Commons should prove itself to be composed of men who can be friends of the Government during evil times. It is easy to be a fair-weather friend, but it is during the bad times, when our people need reassurance, that we, who have access to a little more understanding and knowledge of events, and of what is going on, than is vouchsafed to all our constituents—it is then that such small leadership, guidance and encouragement as we can give is, perhaps, of very great value to our country.

I notice that those who wish to change the Government do not specify the persons who should be removed. That is not fair. It is not the Parliamentary method to challenge people without mentioning their names, nor does that make it possible for a straight answer to be given. The vague statement that the Government should be strengthened leaves every Minister under the suspicion that it is he who is being talked about in the Lobbies and in the Smokeroom. I think the occasion should be taken when each Department comes up for its Vote, for the critics to challenge each Minister who is, in their view, doing his job ill. Incidentally, that would have the advantage that the Ministers would be brought out to defend themselves, instead of the whole defence of unspecified persons being imposed upon the Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister, I think, made reference to this point, but, whether he did or not, it is one which has been very much in my mind—the question of the silent Member. About 10 persons speak in each day's Debate. In this Debate, about 30 Members will speak. It will be found that about half or one-third of these are Members who keep on speaking, as they are perfectly entitled to do; they, no doubt, feel that we cannot have too much of a good thing. Far be it from me to say that that is not so. But we may well have regard to the scores of

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she had gone to war in the Munich period. If, after nearly 2½ years of war and four years of rearmament, we are not yet in a position to wage war effectively in any part of the world, what would have been our position in the Munich period in 1938? The position of my hon. Friends and me was opposition to war. Mr. Neville Chamberlain and his supporters opposed war because they could do no better than compromise in the dangerous situation then facing them. There is one thing I am bound to say. In certain situations it is conceivable that some men may change their ideas concerning war. I have never been opposed to that, but I am opposed to their parading themselves in the country as super-patriots after they have for years in this House opposed rearmament and every preparation for war. If in this war I had changed my opinion, I would have come to the House and taken the penitent's stool, and said that a change of opinion had been forced upon me and that I regretted my past actions in opposing armaments.

I remember a famous phrase which the hon. Member for Seaham used at a conference in connection with my hon. Friend the Member for Bridgeton (Mr. Maxton). He said, " You have no right to ride two horses," but that is what the hon. Member for Seaham is doing at the present time—he is inside the Government and outside. One of the greatest difficulties in this House it to form an Opposition. Efforts to form an Opposition, no matter how small, have been destroyed and sabotaged right from the early days of this Government. The right of an intelligent Opposition to take the floor of the House has been destroyed. No matter how difficult it might have been for an intelligent Opposition to hold the fort, they might have rendered a service to Parliamentary democracy in fighting for reforms to which the country is entitled even during a period of war.

I say, even as an anti-war representative, that the overwhelming masses of the people in this country are behind the Prime Minister at the present time. They see in him a man who is head and shoulders above any other individual on the Front Bench. I am not in the running for a position in the Government, and we are not seeking to become an alternative Government at this stage, but we are prepared to pay homage where it is due. Although I am critical of the Prime Minister, I have always admired him. He has the power of oratory, which can be used for good or evil, and, undoubtedly, his oratory has held the people of this country during the period of the Dunkirk evacuation and during the other periods of retreat from military disasters. But the Prime Minister not only has the power of oratory. He also has guts. When he was in opposition to the Baldwin, MacDonald and Chamberlain Governments, he frequently went into the Division lobby against them, in spite of the " whipping " of which this House and the orthodox parties of this House are masters. But this puerile and puny Opposition, if you like to call these individuals an Opposition, who are riding two horses, are afraid to carry their vote into the Division lobby. They always talk about retreats, in Dunkirk, Crete, Greece and Malaya, but they refuse to go into the Division lobby in a time of emergency, when they are supposed to be acting for the good of the country.

The present position is being used in order to overthrow and destroy the Ministry. Not only that, but at week-end meetings in different parts of the country, Labour people ask me, " What is this we are hearing about incompetence and inefficiency? " Who are telling these stories? They are members of movements in this House, in the smoke room and elsewhere. Yet these people do not dare to beard the mouse or the lion in his den. One hears the questions, " What about Greenwood? " " What about the lack of courage of Attlee? " " What is this I hear about Dalton? " All these things are asked in the country of me, an outsider in the Labour party. What is doing more to undermine the Ministry than anything else is the insidious, secret, round-the-table propaganda which is going on against these people in the Government. Do not let the Prime Minister close his eyes to it. Is it a fact that he is compelled to keep the Ministry together because the old die-hards of Transport House and the Carlton Club insist on certain persons being considered for promotion? We know that in peace-time the people who were always sunning in the eyes of Transport House and the Carlton Club were the docile individuals of the die-hard school of either camp who were prepared to take their orders from those outside bodies.

We want virility in the House, whether there is peace or war, and we want independence. The Speaker once said that Parliament should be used in an effective manner by the cut-and-thrust of debate. I believe in the cut-and-thrust of debate openly and honestly carried out. Many of the Prime Minister's colleagues are quite capable men. This yowl concerning the men of Munich was like the cry for a Western front. It has always been a parrot cry adopted by people attempting to evade the responsibility for their own double-crossing actions. What if people began to cry now for an Eastern front between Japan and Russia, as a Western front was called for when we were in great difficulty and danger? The difficulty about this war is not altogether inefficiency, although there may be inefficiency in different Departments. There is always inefficiency in Government Departments and with certain people. But the price that you are paying to-day is the price, not of defence of the country, but of holding and having a great Empire spread over the whole of the world while you are compelled to have a striking force of tremendous dimensions in every part of your Empire.

A year ago my sister and brother wrote to me from Brisbane. The whole of my family are in Australia, and I spent two years there myself and had a very fine time. They suggested that during the bombing period my wife and I should consider whether she and her boy of 11 should not go out for the period of the war to Brisbane for safety. I wrote back and said, I invite you to come to this country for security, because, unless I am greatly mistaken, you will need security from Japan before the war is over. I always took the view that this was a war between groups which were fighting for certain material advantages and that, if Japan could not use the period of the war to drive American and British capital and finance out of the Far East, America and Britain jointly could put Japan in her place in peace-time in a very short period. I assessed it in that way, and I believed that it was a case of " now or never " for Japan. I remember saying in a speech before Japan struck that the last shots had not been fired in this war and that Japan would strike in order to drive America and Britain out of the Far East. Australia is now feeling the danger of the nearness of Japan's military victories in the Far East. Let me say this in a friendly manner to Australia. The Japs will come nearer and may attempt an invasion or they may invade. There are many in Australia whose one fear is invasion of their country by what they call the Yellow Peril. Japan is at the moment 750 miles from Australia, but the Germans were 21 miles from this country when they were bombing it mercilessly and unceasingly. When they were bombing this country Australia did not think it was such a pressing problem to them; they were secure from that, but to-day the reaction is for Australia to develop that fear which is natural with a population in such a position, and they come to this country for aid.

I realise that this country is at war, and I try to take as good an outlook on the war as possible. Although I and my friends are opposed to it we have no desire to see disaster happen to this country. It has always been in our minds that there was just a thin line dividing us on the question whether this was a war for something that was worth while or, as we believe, a war for hard material interests. This struggle in Malaya goes on and on pressing energetically and remorselessly nearer to Singapore. We hear stories of the white sahibs who have been out there, and they have been pictured as drunken gentlemen who have done nothing to develop any decent defence of that country. The war out there, so far as I am concerned, is not a war for freedom, democracy and Christianity, but a war for rubber, oil and tin. We are told that Japan holds only a year's or 18 months' supply of oil and petrol. Where did she get it from? She got it from America and the Dutch East Indies. When she was assisting the Axis by refuelling submarines the oil interests were pouring oil and petrol into Japan to help them to store up those great resources which are now being remorselessly used against this country and America. The hon. and gallant Member for Preston (Major R. Churchill) said a very true thing regarding how America came in. The Prime Minister, on the other hand, said yesterday that America came in to defend her own interests. Japan brought her in just as Germany brought Russia in. It was not the right hon. and learned Gentleman the Member for East Bristol (Sir S. Cripps) who brought Russia in,

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but Hitler. Therefore these two countries have extended the war tremendously.

Has the last blow been yet struck? Is Spain destined to allow troops to go through at some more critical period in this war? Will the war extend until it embraces the whole of civilisation, and are we taking sufficient stock of the road we are travelling? To my mind we are travelling along a road where there seems no terminus. I do not see the dispelling of the dark clouds. I see these disasters overtaking this country—the tentacles of the Nazi machine being spread throughout the world, dissipating our strength over every corner of the world, and then, when it has been so dissipated, striking a mortal blow at some part of the heart in order to try to destroy the power of this country. In the spring, after Japan has safeguarded her bases and her mainland, she may attempt a gigantic effort with Hitler to try to crush Russia. If that were accomplished this country would be completely "on the spot." And do not rule it out from being a possibility in this war, because to me, a layman, looking round the field of operations, that is the most natural thing to attempt. If Russia were crushed between Japan and Germany then they could sit back very pretty and wait upon some form of agreement with this country, or surrender, in order to terminate the war.

We have a golden opportunity—here I want to put my own point of view, or our own point of view—and I ask what is being done in order to bring the whole of the threads of this campaign into some united coalition by a decent form of gesture or concession or reform. Does the Secretary of State for India, with this rump of democracy which he has in India, created just as Hitler has created a Government in the occupied territories, expect to see India fully in the war? Suppose he were to say to the great mass of the people of India, "We promise you that we will give you even Dominion status, if you like, and will assist you on the way to full-blooded democracy, will do everything to stimulate democratic institutions and let you become a partner of the British Empire." Even if he did that, does anybody think that the arrest of U Saw, the Premier of Burma, is doing anything but adding oil to the present conflagration? He is sure to have a tremendous number of supporters in Burma, and we are turning every one of them into an active opponent of our Administration.

I remember going to Southern Ireland during the last war. Of course, I could go then. I was a civilian and not a Member of Parliament, and we had not a Socialist Home Secretary but a Tory, who professed less of democracy but acted more in the spirit of democracy. When I met the people in Southern Ireland, they used to amuse and interest me. They would say, "What have you come for?" Their first question was to ask how we were getting on with the war in Scotland. That is the sort of attitude that is being adopted in India and various other parts of the Empire. One hon. Member was startled to find a feeling in the country expressed by people saying to him, "After all, we have not much to lose in this war." Many men in this country have gone through a very gruelling time since the last war, and I would ask hon. Members to consider the effect of that. It is easy for the comfortable person with a decent income and vested interests, whether on the Front Bench of the House of Commons or in business, to say that a great disaster would befall us if there were an Axis victory, but for men who have gone through that gruelling time it is different. Some men have been on the means test for 10 years. They have no blankets or anything decent in their homes, and when I hear them talk about the dangers of Hitlerism, I confess that I am sometimes amazed at the spirit of those people.

Hon. Members must recognise the birth of a new order, whether they like it or not. It may be that the world will go through the process of civil war in every country before this military war is ended. The process of change is taking place. As Karl Marx once said, out of disaster and war will come civil war, and out of civil war will come the birth of a new order. We are witnessing the birth of that new order out of blood, tears and sweat, as the Prime Minister has already said. A revolution is taking place, but it does not take place in the only place where it should, and that is in the minds of men. The machine is using men instead of men using the machine. We are asking hon. Members to recognise the coming of this new

order. Many of you with ability may, if you wish, become the supervisers, commissars or representatives in the new order, which is bound to come in this country. Members of the Labour party went into the Government and were supposed to be the forerunners of that new order, but they have gone asleep on the job.

We are therefore demanding in this House and in the country a Socialist Britain as the way to impress the common people of the world to recognise that we have something real to offer them instead of only blood, tears, sweat and toil for rent, interest and profit. The bondholders of Malaya, with their tin mines, oil wells and rubber estates, have robbed and beaten the natives of those parts in the most merciless manner, and we have no right to expect the natives of those countries to respond to our call. They have known very little else in the whole of their lives but blood, sweat and toil, which mean no change to them. We are a small party in this House. We are not seeking to single out individuals in the Government. Military disaster has brought this Debate. If the war had gone well, no Debate would have taken place. Incompetence would never have been recognised or known. Ours is a principled opposition by a small number of men who are trying to enlarge their party and their adherents in the country. We are pointing out that the way to achieve the new order is to provide something really worth while in this country and in every part of the world where this country has control.

We are not animated by a desire to advance ourselves politically or economically, or by antagonism to certain individuals in the Administration. We say that those who are critics of the Government and who believe the Government to be inefficient and incapable could render the greatest service to this country and to the world, as well as to their own war effort, if they went into the Lobby and did as the Prime Minister said, challenge the Whips by taking their courage in both hands and voting against the Administration they believe to be incapable and inefficient. Therefore we shall go into the Lobby, even though as before there will only be a small number of us. Our voices are raised for humanity, for social change, for the new order, for a Socialist Britain that will give every human being in this country a stake in that order, something that he will feel it is worth while to defend, to stand up for and to be proud of. Therefore, as Socialists, we clash with this Government of national interests which has been formed in this country for the purpose only of waging war and killing men. We exist for the purpose of bringing relief to humanity throughout the world, and for the end of disease, poverty, unemployment and war. That can only be done by changing those ghoulish interests, those bond-holding interests throughout the Empire which are using the bodies of men to defend their interests. We demand in this country and in this House that a recognition shall dawn in the minds, hearts and intelligences of human beings that the world is pressing forward, is gasping, is in dire need of that new order. Nature has given in abundance all the materials and resources that every human being needs, but they are held by a few, to the exclusion of the many, in order that they shall trade and live a life of luxury and pomp upon the poverty and servitude of the masses abroad.

Mr. Granville (Eye): I have listened to the hon. Gentleman's powerful speech with a great deal of interest, and I think the House of Commons has a great respect for his oratorical powers, but I am afraid that I cannot follow him as far as the Socialist Britain which he envisaged in his peroration. I am, however, at least one of those who are convinced that this country will never go back to where it was before the war began. I would like to reinforce what the hon. Gentleman said in his very powerful speech to the Secretary of State for India. I think that the right hon. Gentleman the Secretary of State for India has a great responsibility upon his shoulders to the people of India, to the people of this country and to the British Empire. I hope that we shall be able to mobilise to the full the resources of India, and I hope to see the day when the Prime Minister's offer, which has been made to the Dominions, will also be made to the people of India, to choose leaders who can sit in a War Cabinet in London.

The Prime Minister in his speech appealed to the House of Commons to be frank. I think it was the late Mr. Joe Devlin, who was one of the great fighters in this House, who said that the House of Commons is always at its best when it is

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frank. We have had speeches to-day and yesterday which at least show that Parliament is being kept alive. We are seeing the House of Commons function, showing its authority as the Prime Minister has always appealed to it to do. I believe that this is what the country wants from Parliament. I do not think that the people want a sham Debate in the House of Commons. I certainly do not think they want political manoeuvre. I speak for myself, and I belong to no clique or conspiracy, and, like the ordinary back benchers in this House, I am anxious to do all I can to help the Government win the war. I believe that, in a time of war, a democracy and the unity of a democratic people depend upon all criticism of the Government being subject to the national conscience, the single urge to win the war.

The Prime Minister is a great Parliamentarian. The Prime Minister is also very well informed on public opinion. I believe that when he came back from his trip across the Atlantic he was told by his advisers, and found out for himself, that public opinion here is anxious and disturbed at the run of events and is anxious and disturbed at the men who were left in charge of running the war effort of this country during the absence of the right hon. Gentleman abroad. The hon. and gallant Member for Preston (Major R. Churchill) to-day said that we ought to be frank and voice in the House of Commons some of the criticisms that were made in the country. I agree with him. I shall be frank. I say to the Prime Minister, with his enormous authority, enjoying the confidence of the people of this country, that without him his Government would not last for three weeks. Unfortunately, the Prime Minister does not see them when he is abroad. It is impossible, but had he been in a position, by some process of television, to have seen the Government which sits upon that bench before Christmas, they were, in boxing parlance, politically "out on their feet." Ministers who sit upon that bench, whether they be Ministers or Under-Secretaries, are, in total war, like commanders-in-chief in the field, they have enormous responsibility in their hands. In my view—and nothing that has taken place in this Debate so far has changed my opinion—the people of this country have confidence in the Prime Minister and his powers of war leadership. I believe that if you could get a Gallop Survey, or whatever they call it, if you could get a reflex of public opinion in this country, it would show that public opinion is not satisfied with the Administration, with the men, and with the team, acting as they do as commanders-in-chief in total war, a team which is responsible for running the war effort at the present time.

Mr. Tinker (Leigh): How would the hon. Member try to get that? He would have to pick the men out he did not want. He would have to ask the public if particular men ought to go. How would he arrive at a decision on those points?

Mr. Granville: I do not intend to indulge in a competition of putting a cross against names; I shall not fall into that political trap. I will deal with this point in the course of my speech, and I hope that I shall answer the hon. Member. Before Christmas, the House of Commons exercised its authority. The Government tried to get rid of us for another of those long Adjournments. The House remembers perfectly well what happened. It was one of the very few occasions since this war began on which the House of Commons exercised its authority, with the result that we did not get a long Adjournment. The House met on 8th January instead of on the intended later date. I read in the papers of a 1922 Committee revolt. I read in the papers of intrigues against the Government. I hope the Prime Minister and his advisers are not taking that view of the situation. I do not think there has been a 1922 Committee revolt. I think the opposition to the long Adjournment was due to growing anxiety in the public mind and the fact that, while people have full confidence in the Prime Minister, they have not complete confidence that he has the right win-the-war team to back him up. The Prime Minister is one of the greatest Parliamentarians of our time. He is sensitive to public opinion. Newspapers which were attacking the Government, demanding all kinds of things, imploring Members of this House to speak out on behalf of their constituents and of democracy, appear to be something like a petrified forest. What did they expect the Prime Minister to do? Did they expect him to come back from America and say, "I see there is a considerable body of opinion which is anxious about the course of

events and wants to see changes, so I am going to meet the House of Commons and reform my Government"? I do not think that that is the sort of thing that anyone could have expected the Prime Minister to do.

He came here, as is the right of every Prime Minister, to ask for a Vote of Confidence. I do not quarrel with his demand. He is going to get his Vote of Confidence, but I will venture to prophesy. This House will give the Prime Minister his Vote of Confidence, but I make a prophecy that, within three months, the Prime Minister will reconstruct his Government. When I am asked to name some of the people whom I would turn out and some that I would put in, I will say that I sincerely hope that the great authority and the great abilities of the right hon. and learned Gentleman who represented this country in Moscow, who has first-hand knowledge of the Russian war machine and of how it achieved its magnificent success, will be given a place, in order that this nation and the British Empire may have the great benefit of his experience.

Mr. Tinker: If a place is to be found for the right hon. and learned Gentleman, whom would you shift out?

Mr. Granville: I will come to that in a moment.

Mr. Baxter: Does my hon. Friend think that our ex-Ambassador has a knowledge of the Russian military machine and that our Military Mission to Russia has not seen anything?

Mr. Granville: I do not know how far our Military Mission is from the front line. I urged a little while ago in this House that we should send people to the front line. I have always been an admirer of the right hon. and learned Gentleman who has been our Ambassador in Moscow. I remember when he stood at that Box and made a maiden speech in defence of the Taxation of Land Values Bill. It was one of the greatest speeches to which I have listened in the House of Commons. I hope that we shall see the right hon. and learned Gentleman giving this country the benefit of his experience in Moscow. He carried out his mission with great diplomacy and skill during difficult days, when a lot of people were wondering how long the Russians would last.

Why should anyone suggest that the critics ought to be depressed? It was suggested in the House of Commons, both to-day and yesterday, that the critics ought to be depressed, but the critics are getting their way about these things. I have demanded an Empire War Council in the House of Commons now for a year, and, as my hon. and gallant Friend said, all I got was a raspberry. Many of us have advocated that there should be closer machinery for co-ordinating the war production of the British Commonwealth and of America and that the British Empire and America should pool their resources. We have advocated this for over a year, but now that the Prime Minister has been across the Atlantic he has done it. Does not the House of Commons think that it would have been a much better thing if, under cash-and-carry or lease-and-lend or any of those organisations, we had done this a year ago and created the framework, so that when America came into the war we might have been in the position, not of the terms of a 1943 offensive, but of a 1942 offensive? The critics have asked for an inquiry into what has happened in Malaya, and the right hon. Gentleman the Lord Privy Seal has announced that an inquiry is taking place. I hope that we are to have the report as quickly as the Americans gave their report upon Pearl Harbour, and that, if in that report it is found that mistakes have been made, no matter by whom, whether by Service men, Ministers, or members of the Government, we shall be told who is responsible, so as to give an assurance to the public of this country that that sort of thing is not likely to happen again.

At last we have our Empire War Cabinet. I have been studying the OFFICIAL REPORT, and I am trying hard to find out from the Prime Minister's speech exactly whether we have an Empire War Cabinet, because the right hon. Gentleman the Prime Minister said that the Dominion representatives would be invited to the Cabinet table but that this would not in any way interfere with the responsibility of the servants of the Crown. I understand that discussions are taking place between the Dominion capitals and the Government, and I would like to ask the right hon. Gentleman whether the Dominions are to be really represented in Downing Street. No one has the right to say to the Prime Minister, "You must

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tion fully carried out, instead of which we had negation and no policy at all, and we have handed to the people of this country a war of this kind unprepared. Now if you say to me, "Are there no other leaders? Name them," I say to the House of Commons, "There are men who have been in continuous office for 11 years." If you tell me that democracy, freedom, liberty, the Parliamentary system of government, the Mother of Parliaments, cannot provide new leaders, younger leaders, better leaders, untried leaders, I say to you, "You will never win this war on your established reputations."

Mr. R. Morgan (Stourbridge): The hon. Member says the Ministers who are incapable are men who have sat on the Front Bench for 11 years. Do I understand from that that he only indicts members of the party to which he himself really belongs and that all the others are exonerated according to his own statement? It is very unfair to attack Members all the time unless you specify who they are.

Mr. Granville: I do not think it is the function of the House of Commons to make a list. It is up to the House of Commons to say to the Prime Minister what I am saying now. Look around and find young men, new leaders. Look around, if you like, among the Services, some of the men who fought the Battle of Britain, some of the young men in the R.A.F. Are you going to say that all the channels and avenues are to be blocked and that the party system of government is the factor that matters? The Prime Minister will get his Vote of Confidence. But I venture the opinion that public opinion will get its changes. There will be no putting the critics on the spot or taking them for a ride up the river, or whatever it is called. That will not happen, because the critics have been right, and many of the things that they have demanded have been or are going to be carried out by the Government in the immediate future. I believe the Debate has done good. It has enabled Members on all sides of the House to say what they want. This is a democracy. This is where we have the right of free speech. It cannot be the sounding board for one speaker, because it is not. It is not a Reichstag or a Grand Fascist Council. I believe that the House of Commons, as the Prime Minister himself has said in a dozen ways and on a dozen occasions, is the final authority. I believe the House of Commons, by exercising that authority, should ask the Prime Minister to give the country a reconstructed Cabinet and should appeal to the whole country to back him up in his great effort.

The Lord Privy Seal (Mr. Attlee) *rose*——

Mr. Gallacher: On a point of Order. In view of the fact that the Rule is suspended, would it not be desirable that the Minister should wait——

Mr. Deputy-Speaker (Sir Dennis Herbert): The hon. Member has raised this kind of point before as a point of Order. It is not a point of Order. He must accept what happens when the Chair calls anybody to speak.

Mr. Sloan (South Ayrshire): Is it not a point of fair play?

Mr. Attlee: The Government opened this Debate with a speech by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. It has run for two days, and I think that perhaps it is appropriate that a Minister of the Crown should speak at this time and answer some of the points which have been made in the Debate. We have had a very interesting discussion, and, if I may say so, a much more representative discussion than we have had for some time. There has been a tendency for debates on general subjects, in my view, to be left too much to one or two Members who are not necessarily very representative of the opinions of the House of Commons. To-day and yesterday we have had some real debate; there has been the play of debate and answer from side to side of the House. The hon. Member for Eye (Mr. Granville) ranged over a large number of topics. I thought that some of them had been dealt with rather more specifically and coherently by other Members, and I propose to deal with them in saying something of other speeches. It struck me at one point in his speech that he rather recalled the old fable of the fly that sat on a carpet and said, "Gracious, what a dust I raise!" because it seemed as if everything that had happened had been due to him. I was rather surprised when he suggested that a year ago we ought to have had the

kind of arrangement that we have with the United States of America now. He must realise that the kind of arrangement you can have between two Allies is different from that which you can have between a neutral State and a belligerent.

Mr. Granville: What I said was that we have certain machinery because America was supplying us with arms, and I suggested that we should make arrangements for pooling the resources of both countries.

Mr. Attlee: I do not think that is a very valuable interruption. The hon. Member has verified the point I made. The only other distinctive point he made was one which the Prime Minister has dealt with. That was the complicated and difficult question of the working between the different parts of the British Commonwealth in regard to War Cabinet representation. The hon. Member a little tends to assume that when he puts forward a view it is the view of all the Dominions. The Dominions are separate and distinct nations, and it is a mistake to think that there is a Dominion view that ought to be heard. The Dominions are equal with us, and they have their distinctive views. It is a mistake to think that necessarily they all take the same view of what form of machinery should be set up, or, if they did, that that view was the view put forward by the hon. Member. I do not desire to carry the matter further, because it is a delicate matter, but the hon. Members does sometimes assume that he knows more than the Dominion Governments and than those members of the Government who have been sitting in Cabinet with Dominion Ministers.

The Debate was opened by a well-thought-out speech by my right hon. Friend the Member for East Edinburgh (Mr. Pethick-Lawrence). He put some specific points to which he wished a reply from the Prime Minister, but there are one or two points with which I would like to deal. There was the point about sending reinforcements to the East. The right hon. Member rather tended to say, "Seven weeks have gone; what have you got to say for those seven weeks?" Of course we cannot say what reinforcements we have sent, because if we tell the House, we are telling the enemy, but I can assure my right hon. Friend that reinforcements were sent on their way to the East at the earliest possible moment, and that they were drawn from those troops that were most readily available, and other troops and reinforcements are to be sent. But he must remember, as I am sure he does remember, the long distance that has to be travelled in taking reinforcements to that distant theatre of war. He must also remember the limits of our shipping capacity and of our escorting capacity.

The Debate has shown, I think, the desirability that there should be a Vote of Confidence by this House. The speeches by the hon. Member for South Croydon (Sir H. Williams), the hon. Member for Kidderminster (Sir J. Wardlaw-Milne), the hon. Member for East Fife (Mr. Henderson Stewart), and the hon. Member for Seaham (Mr. Shinwell) did not show that there was a lack of need for a Vote of Confidence. They showed there was a need for a Vote of Confidence. Let me say at once that a Vote of Confidence in the Government does not imply that everybody who votes for it believes that every part of the Government's personnel is the best that could possibly be had. If that were so, I am afraid you would never get a Vote of Confidence in any Government, because in a healthy and self-confident House of Commons there must always be a very large number of Members who are confident they could fill some or all of the available offices much better than their actual occupants. The hon. Member for Kidderminster seemed to imply that you could not always vote for a Government as a whole. I have known Governments members of which would have found it difficult to vote for a Vote of Confidence in themselves because it necessarily included others.

The second point is that a Vote of Confidence does not imply that everybody is satisfied all the time with everything the Government have done. Of course, there is room for improvement, and it is only in totalitarian States that it has to be an article of faith with those who wish to keep their heads on their shoulders that everything the Government do is right and that the Führer for the time being can do no wrong. In this House we assume as an axiom that the Government will make mistakes, and we are never disappointed. You are bound to have mistakes. This House exists to point out and correct those mistakes. Of course, it is a question of the way in which one does that, and I have noticed in the course of this Debate

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[Mr. Attlee.]
that there is a difference in attitude among Members of the House. Broadly, it was a difference between the realists who know what the difficulties are and those who see everything through rose-coloured, optimistic spectacles. I think the greatest optimist in the House is the hon. Member for Seaham. He seems to believe that if this country were fully organised as he would have it organised, we could have met the attack on these Islands, could have assisted Russia, could have run the Libyan campaign and still had enough supplies, and ships to carry those supplies, to meet the full force of Japan. I say that is an extravagant optimism.

Mr. Shinwell: That is precisely why I did not say it or suggest it.

Mr. Attlee: I am afraid that is what the hon. Member did suggest.

Mr. Shinwell: I beg pardon.

Mr. Attlee: I certainly saw a statement. There was a statement, which we can look up in the OFFICIAL REPORT, very much on those lines. I have also seen it in a report of one of the hon. Member's week-end speeches, which are always very well reported.

Mr. Shinwell: If my right hon. Friend is anxious to interpret speeches correctly, will he not understand this, that I was dealing with the Government's case? The Government's case was that they were unable to strengthen our position there because they had sent forces elsewhere, and I was trying to show that forces had not been sent elsewhere.

Mr. Attlee: The assumption of the hon. Member was that the incapacity of the Government did not allow them to be strong enough at all points. [*Interruption.*] Let us have it clear. I have a quotation from a speech made by the hon. Member on 13th November, in which he discussed this very thing and in which he said:

> "It is by no means certain that by placing large Forces in the Near East we provide the best safeguard. Diversions elsewhere may prove to be more effective. In spite of gallant resistance, Soviet Russia was forced to yield territory. She may recover lost ground, and that is our fervent hope. Nevertheless, the Nazis can dig themselves in and hold the Russians. While large forces are immobilised, or even engaged in the East, Hitler will be free to reorganise his resources."—[OFFICIAL REPORT, 13th November, 1941; col. 121, Vol. 376.]

The hon. Member was thinking then that we should not think too much about the Near East.

Mr. Shinwell: The Near East.

Mr. Attlee: Quite. He took the view that we should put our Forces in to support Russia. How much stronger would his case have been if he could have said that our Forces were immobilised in the Far East. He was not thinking of the Far East. He was thinking that rather than divide our Forces it might be better to let everything go in the Near East and throw everything into Russia. That is a sound strategic line, but it is a very different thing from going around and telling people that it is only the fault of the Government that we cannot have enough Forces. That is a curious optimism.

The Prime Minister said in his celebrated speech that he offered us only blood, toil, tears and sweat. That has been our lot, and that is what we have to expect, but there are undoubtedly Members who, since the blitz stopped, have taken the line that that is not true and that something very terrible will happen if we do not have an unending series of successes. Believe me, we have never been in that position. We have never been in an easy position. We have never been free from the possibility of great dangers and difficulties. We have never had elbow room to move freely. We have had to face immediate danger after immediate danger. It is all very well to suggest that this or that ought to be done, but we ought to carry our minds back to what the conditions were when what is suggested would have had to be done. Last summer no one knew definitely whether Hitler would attack Russia. It was not certain at that time. Even the Russians themselves were not convinced that he would try it on. Obviously, therefore, at that time and in those months you could not have afforded to send great Forces away to the Far East. It is the essence of the difficulty of our position and our widely extended area that it takes a very long time for a decision to work itself out in the actual arrival of reinforcements anywhere.

As the time went on, there was the contest in Russia. In November, hon.

Members' minds were set on the question of a vitally important Russian front. They were perfectly right. It was vital. We were not at that time free to take action elsewhere. We had to see what was happening there. I suggest, therefore, that at no one of these periods were we in that easy position in which we could anticipate success. Believe me, it is very remarkable that we have avoided absolute disaster since the fall of France. Let me say again, that I do not think hon. Members always realise just what the equipment of modern forces really means. I rather think that the hon. Member for South Croydon was thinking of his experiences in the last war, and of the kind of equipment a division required in those days. Now you have to equip a division to meet enemies very strongly and powerfully armed, and remember, their armaments do not remain static. Criticism is made that we are outmatched in some particular weapon, but it may well be that, at another time, they are outstripped by us. In war there is always a pull across, first one getting on top and then the other. One can easily see that the longer the time required in sending out reinforcements, the less you are able to put into the field the very latest material you have in hand. These matters must be considered. But the hon. Member for East Fife (Mr. Henderson Stewart) saw nothing but mistakes everywhere.

Mr. Henderson Stewart (Fife, East): Oh, no. What I said is in the OFFICIAL REPORT to-day. I recognised and paid tribute to the Government for the successes they had had, military, diplomatic and industrial in many fields. In some fields I said they had been outstanding. I criticised the mistakes.

Mr. Attlee: Perhaps my hon. Friend is looking at the wrong page. This is what he said:

> "It is not merely mistakes. As the Prime Minister said, you cannot avoid mistakes in a far-flung, varied war of this kind. Speaking for myself, and I believe for many hon. Members here, and a great many thinking people outside, the gravamen of the charge we make against the Government, and the root cause of the country's disquiet, is the repeated misjudgment shown by the Government in nearly every theatre of war where British troops have been employed. It is this lack of sound judgment in sizing up a situation in terms of strategy, supplies and manpower . . ."—[OFFICIAL REPORT, 27th January, 1942; col. 662, Vol. 377.]

Mr. Stewart: Quite right, I said both.

Mr. Attlee: It is always possible for the hon. Member to vie with himself, so to speak, but I take it that he really intended that.

Mr. Stewart: I did intend it.

Mr. Attlee: Yes. My hon. Friend is the man, who, himself, shows a lack of strategic judgment. Upon all those points he has never thought out what the problem was He has thought that it was so easy, and that everything was a mistake, because he has never realised the kind of thing we have been up against. We have been up against a tremendous military machine and now we are up against another great military machine, and the hon. Member says that we have made great mistakes in our strategic judgments. I wonder what that means? Does it mean that, a year ago, the hon. Member would have put all our available forces into Singapore? Is that what he thinks would be sound strategic judgment? Or perhaps his sound strategic judgment would have said that we must not put troops into Libya but must keep them at home.

Mr. Stewart: Or that we must not send two great battleships to Malaya.

Mr. Attlee: Is that a matter of naval strategy?

Mr. Stewart: It was a mistake.

Mr. Attlee: That may be so, but we are bound to rely upon the expert advice of experienced naval officers. [AN HON. MEMBER: "We judge by results."] That is the danger of judging by results. In all war there is nothing more dangerous than to judge entirely by results, without considering conditions. War is not betting on a certainty. Every great commander, whether at sea or on land, has had to take risks. When those risks have come off, people say "wonderful strategic judgment." If something does not come off, every person who knows nothing about it says, "shocking bad strategic judgment."

Commander Bower: If the hon. Gentleman will parden me—for I have had no opportunity of speaking in this Debate—we are really in a rather unfortunate position, because we have not been told why those ships were sunk or what the mistake was. It is quite obvious to the meanest

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[Commander Bower.]

intelligence that there was a very grave mistake somewhere, which cannot be explained away by saying that justifiable risks were taken, because we know enough to say that the risks taken were not justifiable in any circumstances whatever.

Mr. Attlee: I would prefer to get the views, which I have not yet got, of the responsible naval officers rather than to rely on the *a priori* view of the hon. and gallant Member, even though he also has had a naval career. Then there is the hon. Member for Kidderminster. He is another Member with rose-coloured spectacles. He said that we did not see what was the position in the Far East. He has had great experience, but I do not think he could ever have been deceived had he looked at the situation. No Member who looked at this matter on the map, and considered the forces which Japan had, could have been deceived into thinking it was easy to defend the Malay Peninsula. The hon. Member said, "We have been deceived." I gather he was deceived because a general, in an Order of the Day to his troops, did not say, "We are in an awful position; we shall be beaten." I am sure he would not form his judgment on that. He knew perfectly well that the position in the Pacific depended upon command of the sea and that we had not got that. The command of the sea went very badly with those first attacks. When you consider the defence of that long peninsula, you must realise that you could put your troops in there, but if you had not got command of the sea—and that coast is a very long one—you would be faced with the possibility of being outflanked. He asked: Had we noticed Singora? Of course we had, but it was in Thailand. Thailand was not British territory; it was under the influence of Japan but was still an independent country. Of course, we had our plans made, but could we have attacked Thailand and brought war upon us from Japan without any assurance of United States support? In that case, Singora would have been only a trap. These things, believe me, are considered.

Sir J. Wardlaw-Milne: The right hon. Gentleman must not put in my mouth that I suggested that this country should attack Singora. No such suggestion was ever made. I hope I made it perfectly clear that I asked the Government whether they had considered the possibility of attack *via* Singora, not that we should attack Singora?

Mr. Attlee: Of course we made our preparations there. But, as I say, the defence of Malaya depended on sea power. We were weak there. Could we, then, go out and invite attack by telling everybody that we were frightfully weak there? I have never concealed from anybody the dangers and difficulties we saw in connection with Japan, but is it a right thing to state that publicly and invite attack by saying, "This is a very weak place. Japan, come in"? The hon. Member for Seaham took the line, I gather, that what we gave to Russia was small, that 1,000 tanks or 1,000 aircraft would be very small, and a great deal of his speech was devoted to the question of our supply. It was not until the very end of that speech that the most vital factor of all, though it is the subject on which he has very great knowledge, that is, the shipping question——

Mr. Shinwell: I have spoken about that often enough at public meetings and in the House, in public and secret, and my advice was not taken.

Mr. Attlee: If the hon. Member had joined us, we should have been glad of his help. The short answer is, that what he does not seem to realise is that the shipping position invalidated the whole of the rest of his speech. That is what conditions how much stuff you can send out, at what time, and what operations you can carry on. What is the good of pointing the finger of scorn at us and saying, "You have even less shipping than when the war started," after we had the Battle of the Atlantic, after we had carried supplies to the Far East and the Near East and everywhere else, after we had had tremendous attacks on our Fleet?

I think it is to the credit of the workers of this country that the output of ships has been kept up and that, under blitz conditions, we have had record output, despite the closing down of many yards in peace-time. It is difficult enough to keep up that output. There is not only the volume of merchant ships, but the output of naval vessels, to be kept up, besides the constant work of repairs, caused not only by enemy action, but—what is sometimes quite ignored—by the action of the elements. Remember that

this country did not expect, when the war started, that we should have to deal not only with the Atlantic, but with the Mediterranean as well. There was no French Fleet, no Italian Fleet, no Japanese Fleet, to help us, as in the last war. I doubt, when we get all this criticism about how we ought to send things here and there, whether the critics realise the debt that we owe to the Navy and the Mercantile Marine. It is rather poor thanks to them to suggest that much more could have been done. I do not believe that, even if the hon. Member for Seaham had been in charge, he could have done any more.

Mr. Shinwell: Does the right hon. Gentleman suggest that our criticisms about shipbuliding and convoys and the rest of it, were an attack upon the men in the Navy?

Mr. Attlee: No, I am saying that the hon. Member is ignoring that tremendous Service.

Mr. Shinwell *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Attlee: The hon. Member may not think so, but I thought that the whole of the first half of his speech, which was one long sneer, was vitiated by the fact that he did not realise this vital part of our war effort, and that the existence of this difficulty made nonsense of his argument.

Mr. Shinwell: No wonder you get criticism.

Mr. Attlee: I do not mind criticism. And I shall never lack it while the hon. Member is about. Another point that has been raised is whether we are making full use of the man-power of Asia. That question was raised by the hon. Member for North Islington (Dr. Haden Guest), my right hon. Friend the Member for East Edinburgh, and other Members. It is true that there is a great reservoir of men in the Indies, Malaya, and elsewhere, but the mass of them are untrained and unarmed. Everybody knows that after our losses in France we were hard put to it to arm our Regular troops, much less our Home Guard, for the defence of this country. Everyone will agree that that armament had to have priority. Secondly, we had to arm for the Libyan campaign. We had to build up our Army. Obviously, you have to allot arms to the people who are to be trained first and who are nearest the most immediate point of danger. If those arms had been sent out for large armies in Malaya or India, Members of this House would have got up to ask why we had not armed the Home Guard. The second point is that, while there has been an immense increase of recruiting for the Indian Army, the amount of troops that could be raised at one time is necessarily restricted by the amount of the training cadres we have got—the amount of trained personnel.

The same kind of point arises with regard to the need for making India the great arsenal of the British Empire in the East, and there is a great deal to be said for that suggestion. That was a long-term policy, and I think much more ought to have been done in past years But, in the actual circumstances of the time, the restriction was machinery, machine tools, and trained personnel. Why not, they say, build aircraft in India? I would have liked to have seen that done, but at that time you had to put your aircraft machinery and skilled personnel into factories near at hand, because that was the place which at that time urgently needed the aircraft.

It takes time to build up a great industry just as it does to build up great armaments on sea, land and air, but I should not like anyone to think for a moment that the Government are in the least neglecting that great source of man-power, or that there is any feeling whatever, as was suggested, that these people were not fit to fight. I should have thought that the record of our Indian and African troops in this war would prevent that from being thought, but we are restricted by the fact that, though India has great potential economic power, she has not very much actual power to be turned over, although she has increased her production tremendously. However, the Far Eastern Supply Council of the various countries in that part of the world have been working together, one making up for the deficiencies of the other, and all developing that for which they are most suited, and there has been a very great increase of industrial production in the East.

Mr. S. O. Davies (Merthyr): Would it not have been easy to transport machine tools rather than to transport armaments to the Far East? Why could not these machine tools have been obtained from the United States when the war had not commenced in the Pacific?

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Mr. Attlee: At that time there was tremendous pressure upon machine tools everywhere. We had to get anything we could from America, and we could not scrape up enough here.

Mr. Gordon Macdonald (Ince): Or get workers either?

Mr. Attlee: We have also to make use of trained workers on the spot. After Dunkirk it was a bit of a hurried job. The hon. Member for South Croydon seemed to have very bitter memories of the time when he was an Under-Secretary and that an under-secretary's life is not a happy one, and I gather that he seemed to know surprisingly little about the working of government. It is not very sensible to make the kind of suggestion that at the Defence Committee the chiefs of staff sit round silently and listen to long lectures by the Prime Minister, and because they are officers they are afraid to open their mouths. That is entirely untrue. No Chief of Staff, no First Lord and no Chief of the Air Staff would be fit to hold his job unless he was prepared to argue his case and put it freely and without fear before the Committee of Defence. I can assure hon. Members that the imaginary picture drawn by the hon. Member for South Croydon is entirely untrue. I do not think that attitude is very fair when at the same time the Prime Minister is represented as someone who will never listen to anybody else and as a dictator. Believe me, that is quite wrong. The Prime Minister is not a person who will take exception to people arguing nor is he a person who claims that apart from the rest of the Government his word is good all the time. As a matter of fact, he is one man working in a team. I suggest it is not a good thing to hear Members suggesting that the Prime Minister is a dictator. It is not very helpful when we are fighting against a dictatorship. The Prime Minister has always been a sound democratic man and a sound House of Commons man, and anybody less like a dictator you could not find.

Points have been raised about the Ministry of Production. The organisation of production is not a very simple thing. I will look closely into the points put by the hon. Gentleman the Member for Seaham, although I think they were a little too neat, too rounded and complete. It is often easy to sketch a nice scheme on paper but you have to remember that in production you are not only dealing with things; you are dealing with human beings and it is not so easy. They are not like chess pieces which you can move about here and there. You must get the good will of the workers and management.

Mr. Ellis Smith (Stoke): You have it.

Mr. Attlee: I mean not only generalised good will but specialised good will. Believe me, the Government have not an absolutely closed mind on this question.

Mr. Ness Edwards (Caerphilly): Would my right hon. Friend also consider the speeches which he made on this problem when he sat on this side of the House?

Mr. Attlee: Certainly, I have always considered them. I think the principles I put forward were perfectly sound, and I have only to modify them in accordance with actual conditions as I find them. I think the hon. Member for Seaham will find that he will have to do the same when he comes to apply his theories, should he ever take office. As I have said, the Government have not closed their minds on this question of the organisation of production, but I think it is a mistake to think that all the difficulties can be got rid of by putting in a kind of superman to run the whole thing. I notice that the hon. Member for the Eye Division of Suffolk at one time appealed to the Chancellor to look at the matter from a monetary point of view and at another time to a Minister to look at it from a production point of view. I say, frankly, that while we must keep down costs and so on, the things that matter most are machinery, materials and man-power rather than pounds, shillings and pence. That is the point of view which must be borne in mind.

Finally, there has been a number of excellent suggestions put forward in this Debate, and the Government will look at them all. They cannot adopt them all, because, quite rightly, some of them contradict each other, but the value of a Debate like this is not, I think, in delivering attacks on individuals but in its constructive suggestions. I do think, however, that when attacks are made, and when it is suggested that there should be removals from the Government, it would be nice to know who they are. It would be nice, too, to know sometimes who

would replace them. I do not think it is right to say that the Prime Minister tried to put up an umbrella over all his colleagues in the Government. I think he was merely enunciating what is a perfectly sound constitutional doctrine—that members of the Government have a collective responsibility. He was pointing out that it was unfair to seek for a scapegoat somebody who acts under orders and not to bring it to the responsible Minister. When things are difficult, there is always an inclination to sacrifice it may be a general, it may be an admiral, it may be a civil servant, or, on occasions, it may be a Minister. If a Minister is not doing his job, by all means throw him over, but do not make an attack on someone just to get a scapegoat. I think that was what the Prime Minister meant when he said he was not prepared to buy off criticism by finding some convenient goat caught in the branches that might be sacrificed.

I have not dealt with all the points raised in the Debate, because it is impossible to follow all of them, but there will be a further reply later in the Debate. I have tried to deal with some of the points hon. Members have made. I have asked hon. Members to give the Government a continuance of their confidence in the sense in which a Vote of Confidence is always understood in the House, not as one of meticulous approval of every individual and every action, but of general agreement with the Government on their policy and faith in their determination to carry us through to success.

Captain McEwen (Berwick and Haddington): Having listened to most of the speeches that have been delivered to-day and yesterday, I think it right to say they have revealed two things quite clearly and obviously. In the first place, there is no division of opinion whatever on the question of the Prime Minister as a leader, and in the second place, there does exist disquiet in the public mind, which arises from the unsatisfactory position in the Far East, and which tends to canalise itself into a desire to see changes in the personnel of the Government. I believe, in the first place, that we in the House are on very uncertain ground indeed when we set about criticising war strategy, which must be left to those whose particular business it is. It seems to me also that we are occasionally apt to fall into the error of drawing false comparisons.

For example, the right hon. Member for East Edinburgh (Mr. Pethick-Lawrence) asked, among other things, why it was that a scorched earth policy had not been carried out in Malaya. No one—and least of all myself—would dispute the magnificent defensive and offensive fight put up by Russia during the past seven months, but to imagine that, because a scorched earth policy can be carried out successfully there, it can also be carried out with equal success anywhere else is mere folly. An article which appeared in yesterday's "Times," entitled "Realities in Malaya," which had an authoritative ring about it, gave a very good answer to that question, and in any case the present regrettable situation in the Far East is plainly not this Government's fault, for it arose in the first place from events which occurred at Pearl Harbour. It is true that subsequently we lost two capital ships, and that, I believe, is what really aroused the British people, for we can put up with almost any other kind of reverse with equanimity, but not the loss of ships. A deeply-rooted instinct tells us that that is a really serious matter. Some blame the Prime Minister for the fact that those ships went into the Gulf of Siam without air protection, but personally, I should say that it was much more likely to have been the fault of the Admiralty, which has always been far too inclined to disbelieve in the efficiency of air attack.

I believe that the Prime Minister, however, was wrong when he said that the public did not want any scapegoats made. I do not know about scapegoats, whether caught in branches or otherwise, but there is nothing the public enjoys more than to see Ministers being sacked and changes made. They love such changes. It gives them a pleasant feeling that things are on the move. Therefore, should the Prime Minister at any time decide to deprive himself of the services of this one or that one of his present advisers, we can be assured of widespread popular approval. It is most invidious to mention names, but one might perhaps be thought chicken-hearted not to do so, and so I will mention one. I will mention the name of Lord Beaverbrook. The gravamen of the charge against Lord Beaverbrook is briefly this: That his effect on

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[Captain McEwen.]
any given industry is of a perniciously mixed cocktail, highly stimulating for an hour or two, but leaving a particularly virulent hangover for ever after.

I hope it will now be clear to the House that, on the major issue, I shall have no hesitation in supporting the Government. The Prime Minister himself gave us two very cogent reasons for doing so. He did so, firstly, when he referred to the idea abroad that it was necessary only to get rid of what has been called the "Churchill clique," and a new Government would take its place which would come to terms with Germany. That is an idea which ought, at all costs, to be scotched, and the only way of scotching it is by supporting the Vote of Confidence. The second reason was given by the Prime Minister at the end of his speech, when he frankly informed the House that he found the burden of the war heavier now than at any previous time. If we are agreed, as I think we mostly are, that the Prime Minister is a God-sent leader of this nation in her hour of peril, then to any man who loves his country the right course is clear, namely, that unity must be maintained at all costs, and that his leadership must be approved openly and before the world.

Mr. Gallacher (Fife, West): It must be stated that the powerful speech of the Prime Minister completely demoralised the Tory opposition. It was very desirable that that should be so, because that opposition is an utterly unscrupulous and pro-Fascist opposition. They want to see changes in the Government, but not for the purpose of bringing about political developments in the Government, in keeping with the political development which is taking place in the country. I am for changes in the Government. Any changes in the Government should be determined by the general strategy in relation to the war, and the personnel of the Government should be in accord with that strategy. No one is better in putting forward extraordinarily valuable strategic arguments than the Prime Minister, but I have noticed, time and again, that he is very weak in drawing conclusions from such arguments. For instance, everyone will notice that the Prime Minister emphasises and re-emphasises the importance of our relations with America, of our alliance with America and of his own personal relations with President Roosevelt. Is that right? Is that the correct conclusion to be drawn from his strategic arguments?

No, it is not. The Prime Minister said yesterday that Japan might be defeated but that would not of necessity mean the defeat of Hitler, but that if Hitler were defeated, it was finish for Japan. In general, everyone agrees with that view. The general strategic line is the defeat of Nazi Germany as a sure means of a victorious conclusion to the war.

If the main line of strategy is the war against the Nazis, what is the main political line? Is it not the closest possible alliance with the Soviet Union, much more so than the alliance with America? I have nothing but respect for the President of the United States and the American people, but is it not obvious that, if political associations and developments are determined by strategy, the Soviet Union comes first and not America? You put America first. Why? Because it is in accordance with our strategy? No, because it is in accordance with the political prejudices of the other side. America is a capitalist country and this is a capitalist country. The alliance with the Soviet Union should be carried out in the most effective manner, so as to secure the speediest possible end to the tragedy of this war.

What is demanded? Political co-operation, military co-operation, industrial co-operation. If you ask: Can we get real political co-operation with the Government that exists at present? I say "No—not by the men of Munich." Names? The American Ambassador, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Secretary of State for War, the Ambassador to Madrid, the Minister for Aircraft Production—you cannot expect those men to give loyal political co-operation to the Soviet Union. They are as bad as some of their critics, particularly the hon. Member for South Croydon (Sir H. Williams). He would like to see the only man who has proved himself, next to the Prime Minister—the Minister of Labour—out of the Government. Why? Because the hon. Member for South Croydon is a Fascist and has all the attributes of a Fascist. [*Interruption.*] I mean that the hon. Member for South Croydon would like to get the Minister of Labour out of the Government.

The Minister of Labour (Mr. Ernest Bevin): Do you want to keep me in?

Mr. Gallacher: Well, I think I can tolerate you. The hon. Member for South Croydon sent a letter to the editor of the "Daily Worker" and said:

> "I am not quite clear why you should call yourself a newspaper of the Left, because I am unable to trace any fundamental difference in principle between Communism and Fascism."

I remember the Prime Minister on 22nd June taking a clear and statesmanlike attitude when he placed the unsheathed British sword alongside the hammer and sickle. He said it did not mean that he agreed with Communism, and no one will quarrel with him for saying that, but when the people of the Soviet Union are battling in defence of their homeland against brutal, ruthless and merciless invaders, the Member for South Croydon cannot see any difference between them and Fascists? The hon. Member for South Croydon does not want to see the difference, because he is a Fascist and the Nazis are his friends. Because he cannot openly defend his friends, he tries to blacken their enemies. The hon. Member for South Croydon is very fortunate that I am not Home Secretary, or he would be in very great danger. So would many more of them on the other side. The closest political association with the Soviet Union is demanded of the Alliance, and that should be the deciding fact, so far as the Prime Minister and his reorganisation of the Government are concerned. The right hon. Gentleman should have a Government that is 100 per cent. for the closest possible political co-operation with the Soviet Union. That is what our strategy demands. It also demands military co-operation.

The Prime Minister tried to give the impression yesterday that the Government have given Premier Stalin all he wanted. He then went on to make scathing remarks about those who demanded a second front. How is it that the Nazis, with all their terrible commitments on the Russian front, are openly talked of as possibly making an invasion of this country, yet the very suggestion of a second front by this country is something out of all possible consideration? The Secretary of State for War once made a statement saying that there was a serious danger of invasion by the Nazis because the Continent was only a short distance from this country. But if the Continent is only a short distance from Britain, then Britain is only a short distance from the Continent, and we have more shipping than Germany. We have also as many effectives and as much armament for making an invasion as Germany has, considering Germany's commitments in Russia. Why should it be said that if we try to make an invasion, it would be another and a worse Dunkirk? Cannot hon. Members realise in such a situation as exists now, when hammer blows are being struck at the German military machine, that if we had an Army on the Continent we could finish the Nazis off? I know it would be a difficult matter, but while the Prime Minister makes these criticisms of the amateurs who are talking about a second front in Europe, may I remind him that the well-known "amateur" strategist, Joseph Stalin, asked for a second front in Europe, and said in November that he expected, within a very short period, that there would be a second front?

We want not only political and military co-operation, but industrial co-operation with Russia. The Minister of Labour is the man who is capable of getting that if he will use his strength and power, not only as a member of the Government, but through the support he has in the Labour and trade union movement, to bring about an entirely new situation in the industries of this country. It is no use Members saying that everything is well or that production is going fine. The Prime Minister may say that production has doubled during the past six or seven months. We have opened enormous new factories and brought in new masses of labour, so surely there will be more production, but it is not more production per man. The situation is absolutely alarming, and it is necessary that something should be done about it. The treatment of the working class by some employers is appalling. These latter are not concerned about production. They are concerned about maintaining their power over the working class through managerial control, and think of the men as minders of machines or as parts of the machine. There is a need for the Minister of Labour to protect the working class.

Last Thursday a deputation came here from the shipyards. I being an old shop steward, they came to see me. I told them they would do far better to meet

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the shipyard Members. While I am on the job doing my best to get those shipyard Members of Parliament to meet them, a policeman comes to me and says there is another deputation waiting. It is a deputation which has come up from the Midlands with a terrible story, not only of idle machines, not only of men killing time in the factories, but of several thousands of skilled men actually unemployed. Is that industrial co-operation with the Soviet Union? In the "Sunday Express" I read an article by John Gordon in which he discussed the calamities that are facing this country, the disasters, great and small. Where does it lead him? It leads him to this: Put your trust in Russia—as though the people of this country had no traditions, no history. When the German mechanised forces were driving across Russia, when Moscow and Leningrad were threatened, could you imagine someone over in Russia printing in the paper, "Everything is all right; put your trust in Britain"? No. When they were faced with such a situation it was a case of everybody in the factories giving of his or her best. No employer was there to stand in the way, nothing was allowed to stand in the way. Everybody in the towns, in the villages, was giving of his best; every man and woman was on the job in the factories and in the towns and villages, at the front and behind the front.

What have we here? I had not finished with the deputation from Coventry when the policeman said, "There is another deputation." It was a deputation from the aircraft factories. Three deputations on one day, all with the same story, all with facts and figures. Much of it has been circulated to the Members of the House, I believe—at any rate much of it was circulated at a meeting upstairs on Thursday afternoon. Take a simple case like that of the miners who are on strike. When the strike took place why did we not see an employer arrested for having a strike on his premises? Let us have two or three employers thrown into gaol as an example, and we shall soon get the strikes stopped. What has happened is that two or three miners have been arrested and sentenced to hard labour and are now in prison. Is the Minister of Labour coming in to protect those workers? Shameful things are going on.

I have a Question about the case of a young woman in Johnstone. She has asthma, and her medical man advises her that her job, polishing, is bad for asthma. She leaves her job and goes to the Employment Exchange, and she is ordered to go back to her job. She does not go. At three o'clock in the morning the police come to the house, force their way in, take that young woman out of bed, take her down to the gaol, and throw her into a cell—a cell with a cold stone floor—and she is kept there till 9 o'clock. The Secretary of State for Scotland writes to me and says that this was all due to a mistake on the part of the procurator-fiscal. It was not intended that the policeman should make an arrest but that a warrant should be served so that she could come down to the Court the next day. What sort of men are they who, holding official positions, can at 3 o'clock in the morning, "Go and disturb this household and get this woman out of bed"? Would any Member of the Government issue an order to fetch any Member from those Tory benches out of bed at 3 o'clock in the morning and put him in a cell? Would it be done to any employer? Can hon. Members imagine what would happen if it were done to an employer? Will the Minister of Labour not give protection to these workers? I have asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether the people responsible in this case will be punished, but there is to be no punishment. Would the Soviet Union allow anything of that character to derange the organisation of industry or annoy or interfere with the workers? It would not be done, make no mistake about that. Somebody in this case should be dealt with by being dismissed, or even sent to prison. It is a crime to go at 3 o'clock in the morning and treat a young woman in that way.

Take another case, of a man in my constituency. He has had very many accidents and is a partial cripple. He is working away from the pits. Two medical men and the Secretary of the Fife Miners' Union, Mr. James Cook, have expressed the opinion that the man is unfit for work at the coal face. An officer of the Ministry of Labour sends a doctor from Dunfermline to look at the man. This doctor has a notorious record, particularly in connection with compensation cases, for sending men back to work before they are fit. He gave the opinion that the man

was fit for work. The man did not go to the coal face, and he was arrested, taken before the sheriff and sentenced to 14 days' imprisonment. The man has the cleanest record that any man could possibly have. I wrote to the Lord Advocate about it, drew his attention to the action of the sheriff and criticised the sheriff. What does the Lord Advocate tell me? He tells me that that sheriff has no jurisdiction. When the man is brought before him he has nothing to do but sentence him.

Mr. Moelwyn Hughes (Carmarthen): On a point of Order, Mr. Speaker. May I ask whether these remarks have any relevance to the Motion which this House is now discussing?

Mr. Speaker: In speeches dealing with Motions of this kind, it is not always easy to decide what is relevant or what is not, but, from the point of view of the hon. Member who is addressing the House, I think the remarks are relevant.

Mr. Gallacher: When I am criticising the Government because of certain actions on the part of the Government or of officials who represent the Government ——[*Interruption*]. On a point of Order. I have been in the working-class movement for 40 years, or very nearly, and I have never touched an unclean penny in my life. I consider it shocking that the hon. Member should suggest that I am getting money by addressing other Members of the House.

Mr. Hughes: I have never suggested anything of the kind, either by word or imputation.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member should not accuse another hon. Member of making any such suggestion. He certainly did not do so in my hearing.

Mr. Gallacher: I saw him, and the hon. Member for Dumbarton Burghs (Mr. Kirkwood) saw him make a gesture with his hand towards his pocket. What I would like to know is, how this miner was found guilty and who found him guilty. It was not the sheriff. The sheriff had no jurisdiction. He was just sent to the court to be sentenced. Somebody, either an official of the Ministry of Labour or the doctor, decided he was guilty and sent him to the court, and all the sheriff had to do was to sentence him. This sort of thing does the greatest possible injury to production. It is not confined to the individual. The whole area is affected by it. There is not a part of Fife where you can go among the miners and not find them talking about this disgraceful action against this particular miner. Workers in and out of the factories are similarly talking about the disgraceful action taken against the young woman in Johnstone.

Mr. Bevin: I do not want there to be any misapprehension about the administration of the law so far as I am concerned. It is not correct to say that the sheriff has no jurisdiction. The position is this: In England and Wales, under all these Acts and Regulations, I as Minister of Labour am responsible for the prosecution. In Scotland, according to Scottish law, I have to hand over to the Procurator-Fiscal. The case is tried in accordance with Scottish law. There is no direction to the sheriff, there is no automatic action of any kind, and I hope the hon. Member will be clear on that point.

Mr. Gallacher: I thought I was clear on it. I wrote to the Lord Advocate, and I have his letter, in which he says it is wrong of me to say the things I did say about the sheriff, because the sheriff has no jurisdiction. Someone has jurisdiction, if not the sheriff. This sort of thing, and the general situation in industry, is holding up production in every direction. I want to put this to the Minister of Labour. The Lord Privy Seal, speaking from that bench to-day, denied most emphatically that the Service chiefs gathered at the council table with the Prime Minister had to sit dumb and silent. He said that the Service chiefs had not only every right to speak freely, but that it was their duty to speak freely, and that they would not be worthy of their positions if they did not. I ask the Minister of Labour how it is that the men who use the machines have the right to sit round the council table and speak freely, while the men who make the machines have no right to do so. It is nothing to laugh about. It is one of the most important questions before us from the point of view of strategic and industrial co-operation with the Soviet Union. If we are to get the maximum production, the employers will have to stop interfering with production and with labour. There will have to be

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active shop stewards in every factory, active committees in every factory, breaking the bottlenecks and allowing the work to go on.

One of the essential things for getting production in this country, and one of the most important factors if war strategy determines policy, is the "Daily Worker." Lift the ban on the "Daily Worker." Why is it not lifted? Not a Member would dare to argue that the "Daily Worker" would not be a great help to production. Why is the ban maintained? Because the Government, and the supporters of the Government, are not so much concerned about the war, but they are greatly concerned lest there should be any advance of Communist opinion in this country.

Mr. Bevin: I think it might be made clear that we have never associated the "Daily Worker" with the high strategy of the Soviet Union.

Mr. Gallacher: I am not discussing the high strategy of the Soviet Union. I am discussing the complete lack of high strategy by His Majesty's Government, and the fact that their blind adherence to Toryism makes them incapable of developing effective strategy. If it was not a matter of blind adherence to Toryism, and the desire to maintain the old system at all costs, there would be no question about lifting the ban. We are told we are going to get a new world. Every Tory hopes to have the old system in the new world. I would rather have the old world with a new system.

To return to the question of military strategy, why is it we did not get a second front in Europe? Is it because it was impossible? Is it because there were such difficulties that they could not be overcome? No; it was because the Tories in this country, and some Labour leaders who take their politics from the Tories, had no faith in the people either of this country or of the Soviet Union. I used, in the early days of the war on the Soviet lines, to be asked the question, "How long is the Red Army going to hold?" I was always being asked that in the Lobbies here. Some Members seemed to think that I run the Soviet Union by the questions they asked me. But it is now quite obvious to all of them that Stalin and his colleagues are quite capable of doing the job without me. I am quite satisfied that the crowd on the other side are not capable of doing the job. There was no faith in the people of this country, and everybody knows we heard the word going round that they would last maybe a month, maybe two months. The Minister of Home Security, when the question of the "Daily Worker" was raised, told those who saw him on the matter not to encourage the campaign because Russia might go out of the war at any time and the "Daily Worker" would change its policy again. Listen to what the Prime Minister had to say yesterday. Here is why you did not get a second front. How is it possible to develop strategy, how is it possible really to conduct the war when you do not understand the forces you are dealing with on your own side, let alone the other? The Prime Minister said:

> "This was a decision of major strategy and policy, and anyone can see that it was right to put it first"—

that is, support for Russia—

> "when they watch the wonderful achievements, unhoped for, undreamed of . . ."—[OFFICIAL REPORT, 27th January, 1942; col. 595, Vol. 377.]

There is the reason why we did not get a second front. There is the reason why there is no effective military strategy, no effective industrial strategy. I say to the Government that the fate of the people of this country is linked up with the fate of the people of the Soviet Union. The political alliance must be developed, and it is necessary to get a Government that will make that alliance complete. I have not much regard for the Government, but the Government carry out the alliance with the Soviet Union to a considerable extent, though not so far as I would like to see it, and give assistance to the Soviet Union, though not to the extent that I would like to see. I consider the Tory Opposition to be the most unscrupulous, the most vicious, that we could possibly have in this House or in the country. Its desire is not to strengthen the Alliance of the people of this country with the Soviet Union. Its desire is to weaken the Prime Minister.

Mr. Speaker: There is a Standing Order with regard to tedious repetition. If the hon. Member pursues this repetition much more, I shall have to ask him to sit down.

Mr. Gallacher: I am sure that that is a measure that would be used against me and would be ignored so far as other Members are concerned.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member will promptly withdraw that accusation against me. If he does not do so immediately, I shall have to tell him to leave the House.

Mr. Gallacher: I withdraw that accusation. But I suggest that when an hon. Member is concluding his speech it may be permissible for him to repeat something of what he has said before.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member cannot possibly say that I know when he is going to conclude his remarks. I would not have suggested that it was repetition if I had known that. [*Laughter.*]

Mr. Gallacher: I could say something about that artificial laughter. We have all heard many stories about the kind of laughter that comes when somebody in a particularly favourable position makes a joke. I was saying that the Tory opposition seeks to weaken the Prime Minister and the Government, not to strengthen the Alliance with the Soviet Union, but to sabotage the Alliance and bring about the possibility of an alliance with Nazi Germany against Soviet Russia. In view of that fact, in spite of my opposition to the Munichеers and my feeling that there is much that is wrong in the Government, I will give a vote for the Government when the Division takes place.

Lieutenant-Commander Gurney Braithwaite (Holderness): On the Monday when the House was hurriedly summoned on account of the Japanese blow in the Pacific, I remember saying to a friend that the critics would now take on a new lease of life, and that probably in a few weeks we should have a showdown in the House of Commons regarding the Government's conduct of the war, in view of the likelihood of Japan running amok in the early stages of the war. It is natural that, with the opening-up of new hostilities, accompanied by adverse events, the House should desire to take stock. I come here at this anxious time to give whole-hearted support to the Government for their conduct of the war in the strategical sphere. Public opinion is apt to be swayed by the views of military experts, who dilate at great length in the Press. Such gentlemen fall into two categories. First, there are retired officers, who have given in their day and generation great service to the country, but whose views on this war are generally expressed in terms of the last war, and in some cases of the war before that. The second type of military expert—for which I have no respect—is that represented by professional journalists, dramatic critics and others, who have been accustomed to wield facile pens on many subjects, but the majority of whom have never been in uniform, much less on active service.

This Debate has been useful because it has brought us back to first principles. One is that on our ships, particularly our merchant ships, depends the apparatus which has enabled us to hold out in the state of siege in which we found ourselves immediately following the fall of France. Not much has been said so far about the Battle of the Atlantic, which I would refer to and call the battle of the Seven Seas, as a more accurate description of the work of the Royal Navy and the Merchant Navy in that connection. I believe that in the last four or five months there has been won in the Battle of the Seven Seas a victory as vital and beneficial to the outcome of his war as was Trafalgar in the days of our conflict with Napoleon. The last four months have seen the turning point of the sea war as far as our merchant shipping is concerned. The hon. Member for Seaham (Mr. Shinwell) was very garrulous on this subject at this time last year. He was a consistent critic of the convoy system. He is now silent on that particular subject and is in search of fresh spheres of activity.

The second problem which the House should do well to bear in mind is that it is inevitable for a country which runs its peace-time army on a small voluntary standing army finding itself at war with great continental Powers with a military organisation based on conscription, that the war should be a long one in those circumstances. During military training and in the early stages of such a war it is also inevitable that that army can have no more than a nuisance value and can only be put in places for the time being where it is most useful. As one whose service in two wars has been with the Royal Navy, I have been disgusted at some of the attacks made upon our sister Service, the Army, and at the scorn turned upon it because of certain evacuations which have

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taken place. I always feel that we can take comfort in these matters from history. It is true that in the Napoleonic wars we conducted 20 evacuations of one kind or another during that long struggle. If anything, we seem to be losing our form in that respect in this war. I believe that the total at the moment is a mere half dozen. It shows that, as a Power which rests upon the seas and upon a small standing Army, we must expect that sort of thing in the early stages. That nuisance value has been very useful. The Crete affair may well have saved Moscow, but that is a matter for the historian of the future. At least the Army put a spoke in Hitler's Russian campaign during its resistance in Crete.

Those who, some weeks and months ago, vociferously demanded the dispatch of every available tank and aeroplane to Russia, and incidentally at the same time demanded the opening of a Western front, are now asking why those same tanks and aeroplanes are not in action in Malaya. This comes from the same people and from the same sources. The hon. Member for Seaham is one of them. I know that that campaign is being actively demanded even to-day. I want to say in the plainest possible language that the Government have chosen wisely, with the forces and equipment at their disposal, and that in any case such criticisms come strangely from those who persistently opposed provision being made in days gone by. If news from the Far East is at present menacing, we have had a surplus of good cheer from the Russian front, where the whole enemy plan has been thrown into a confusion which bids fair to be fatal to Hitler.

Many hon. Members have paid tribute to Russia's great military achievement, but I believe that we also owe her a debt in the diplomatic field. It is like a breath of fresh air to me to hear Soviet spokesmen, making no bones about it, saying quite plainly that they will see that the Hun swallows large doses of his own medicine. War is coming with full intensity to the land that gave it birth. I welcome that declaration because it has done much to hearten our own people. Undoubtedly, the feeling in the country, even at this hour, among some of our Ministers, including the Foreign Secretary, is that they are inclined to be squeamish about letting events take their logical course. When the time comes, as it will, for Russian, Polish and Czech troops to stand on enemy soil, I hope this country will be deaf to the whinings of the pseudo-democratic Government which will surely be set up in Germany with the hope of avoiding dangers from the countries they have ravaged, in some cases for the second time in one generation. If we attempt to interfere with that salutary process, we shall make enemies of those who are now our Allies and probably initiate a fresh conflict before the embers of this have died out.

The Prime Minister achieved much during his visit to the New World, and I would particularly acclaim the coming to Northern Ireland, and shortly to this country, of American troops. I believe this is a tremendous and historical event which should lead to long and fruitful co-operation between the English-speaking peoples who alone can initiate economic revival when peace returns. Much, however, must depend upon harmonious relations being established between all ranks. This new army of deliveration and our troops must be encouraged to fraternize and "hob-nob" together as much as possible. With all respect to my hon. Friend the Member for the Sutton Division of Plymouth (Viscountess Astor), one can envisage them taking alcoholic refreshment together in our towns and villages. There is, however, an obstacle to this useful liaison. Their rates of pay place our men in the position of poor relations, unable to stand their corner without rapidly dissipating their meagre pocket-money. I realise that the whole question of the remuneration of our Fighting Services is at present under most active consideration, and I look forward to a favourable announcement from the Prime Minister himself. We have not got far with his colleagues on this matter. This is a state of affairs which has an adverse reflection on our sense of justice and proportion. The Prime Minister is asking us to give him a Vote of Confidence. During my time in the House I have voted with the Prime Minister on a good many occasions, sometimes when three-line Whips were sent out instructing me to do the opposite. I voted 10 years ago with him on the Statute of Westminster, about which, if a small minority had had their way, we should have not had our present problems.

I am not one of those to be intimidated by three-line Whips. The Prime Minister will get my vote for his handling of the acute operational problems of the day. If at the same time he can lift the great cloud of financial anxiety which overhangs the hearts and homes of the brave men of our British rank and file, then he will enable the armies of freedom to march forward together in cheerful and ever-increasing momentum towards their goal in mankind.

Commander Bower (Cleveland): I will not detain the House for long at this late hour, but I think this has been a valuable Debate. On the whole Members have tried to make their speeches devoid of prejudice, above all, of emotion, and have tried to take an objective view of the very grim realities with which we are faced at the present moment. How grim these realities are few of us realise, especially in the calm and cloistered atmosphere of this Chamber. It is true that this war must be considered as a whole. I whole-heartedly support the Prime Minister in that particular view. We cannot regard one situation as being divorced from the whole picture. But I submit that the concern which has been widely expressed in the House, the Press, and the country, is justified. I can see no reason whatever for any resentment at it. A certain amount of resentment has been expressed in the House. I believe that is an unreasonable attitude to take up, because, with a very few exceptions, throughout the country every one of us wants to do everything he possibly can to win the war, and surely, if some of us feel that the Government are not going the right way about it, it is not only our right but our duty to draw attention to that. We have heard a great deal in the last few months about production. I agree that production is all-important, I agree it has not been altogther satisfactory; but I shall not talk about production now. I want to make this point, which is one of absolutely cardinal importance. All the production in the world will not win this war if it is misapplied when we have it. The finest tools in the world will soon blunt and break in the hands of an incompetent or bungling craftsman. Therefore, I want to focus attention on the management of the war; in other words, on the Grand Strategy of the war.

There are many principles of war. One of them is that known as economy of force, which enables one party to contain or immobilise a large portion of the forces of his opponent while he destroys other portions piecemeal. That is what is being done to us at the present moment. It is, I admit, partly unavoidable. We have had revealed to us some figures. A few thousand men are all that have been engaged in Libya, with not very satisfactory results; but the Prime Minister told us months ago that we had half a million men and more in the Middle East. Those men, whether we like it or not, are being contained at the moment. There is another part of the war effort which is being contained. Here we cannot help it. It is the enormous portion of our war potential which goes to fight the battle of the Atlantic. I have myself taken part in that, and I yield to none in my admiration of the Navy in the terrific job they are doing all over the world—making bricks without straw. But though we appreciate the appalling difficulties the Government have to face, especially with regard to shipping—which is much more serious than most of us realise—surely, realising that, it is all the more important that we should make proper use of the limited resources at our disposal.

In recent times a heresy has grown into our concept of strategy. It is what I call the policy of the bludgeon. One Minister after another tells us that the time will come when so many tanks, so many aircraft, so many guns, so much ammunition, and so on, will be in our possession that we shall be able to overwhelm the Nazis. I think that even with the United States and China in the war, that kind of statement requires a great deal of very careful examination before we accept it. Strategic bombing has been held out for months as being the thing that will flatten out Germany. I do not believe that. Neither side will win this war by bombing. My hon. and gallant Friend the Member for Ormskirk (Commander King-Hall) and I, quite independently, have worked out the proportion of bombers we should require to have in order to carry out the same intensity of bombing as Germany carried out on us last winter. My hon. and gallant Friend's figure was 2.9 and my figure was 2.7. We should require from 2½ to 3 times as many bombers as Germany in order to carry out bombing of the same intensity.

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[Commander Bower.]

That makes it clear that nobody will win the war by bombing. We have the wrong conception of the air weapon, and that is where the Germans have something on us, because they have always called it the Luftwaffe, the air weapon. It is only a weapon, a very potent one in many respects, but it must be regarded as such.

I had for many years to study the Far Eastern situation. Singapore was designed and built to prevent exactly what the Japanese are doing at the present moment. It was built and designed for no other purpose. For 20 years we have been designing the greatest and most impregnable fortress in the world. We have spent £20,000,000 on it, and how long is it going to last? In this connection I should like to make a point which so far has not been touched upon. The Defences of Singapore are absolute and not relative. They are not relative to the total forces which we have at our disposal It is like a motor car. When you take one wheel off the thing will not go. The defences of Singapore were designed for so many guns, to include a number of submarines, and, most important of all, to include a number of torpedo-carrying aircraft.

I ask the House to consider what the Japanese have done. They have landed, in many cases on open beaches, from merchant ships which have had no harbours to protect them—at the moment, of course, I am not talking about Singora. In no case, so far as I know, have these landings been interfered with. When I was at the Naval Staff College as long ago as in 1924, we were intimately concerned with the defence of Singapore, and it is quite wrong to say, as has been said, that it was never considered possible that an attack would come from the land side of Singapore. That is not true. We considered it a great deal at that time, and, if the Prime Minister will look up the archives of the Naval Staff College, of the R.A.F. College and the Military Staff College—all three Services work together—he will find that most years, from 1924 onwards, there has been a comprehensive scheme dealing with the Far East question and the defence of Singapore.

Mr. Woodburn (Stirling and Clackmannan, Eastern): What was done about it?

Commander Bower: That is what I want to know. I have been out of the Service for more than 10 years, and I do not know. A very distinguished officer, who was one of my instructors at the Staff College, wrote to me and said:

> "Please raise this in the House of Commons. When I think of the days and weeks you and I have spent thrashing out the defences of Singapore, all I can say is what in God's name has happened."

I do not pretend to know more than I do, but I do assure the House that the facts which I have given are true. I emphasise the point that the defences of Singapore were absolute and not relative to anything we might have, and that they were planned in detail years ago.

Mr. Stokes (Ipswich): When the hon. and gallant Member says "absolute," does he mean irrespective of whether America was in the war?

Commander Bower: Certainly. I am talking about the various items of the extended defence system of Singapore—aerodromes, aircraft, submarines and so forth. It is quite obvious, I think, that they have been let down. Personally, I think that Singapore had been more or less forgotten. It was five or six months ago when the Japanese went into Indo-China, and we all realised then that it was no longer a question of whether Japan would come into the war, but when she would come into the war. Even then there was time to prepare. We have been told there was not enough shipping, and yet it appears that there is plenty of shipping to send out the reinforcements now, when it is too late. In the last few weeks we have gone tumbling down a slope which I cannot see us climbing up again within any measurable number of years—a Member yesterday talked about retrieving the situation in a few weeks or months—in Singapore because our only possible first-class base in the Near East has gone for good and will be used against us. Our communications with Australia will be cut, the lifeline from the United States to Rangoon and the Burma Road will be cut, and Japanese cruisers will be all over the Indian Ocean. There appears to be no end to the possibilities.

A rather interesting article appeared in an American magazine on 18th November, and I want to read extracts from it, because they are rather relevant to this situation. It was by one who was for 14

years the "New York Times" expert on Far Eastern affairs and, therefore, I imagine, a journalist of some importance:

> "When Japan moved into French Indo-China last July there was dismay in the State Department at Washington but there was jubilation in the Navy Department. To diplomats it meant that Japan had taken another aggressive step, but to the Navy it meant that Japan had finally made herself vulnerable. Japan has stuck her neck way out. American planes from the Phillipines could attack the Japanese convoys from the East. Planes from the Dutch East Indies could harry them from the South, British planes from Singapore and the Malay States could attack from the West while other planes from Burma could blast Japanese troops in Indo-China. Not only would our planes and those of our allies harry Japan's convoys but American, British and Netherlands submarines—collectively, scores of them—would send torpedoes crashing into those slow ships and swift allied destroyers would hang on to the convoys like wolves. Now Japan must run the hazards of war alone. Now she has made herself dangerously vulnerable by occupying Indo-China, and now American shipments of war supplies to the Philippines, the East Indies and Singapore, growing greater from week to week, increase that vulnerability. When the clash comes, the Japanese fleet will have to stay in home waters to guard the islands of the Empire against naval raids. Our own fleet will cruise somewhere West of Hawaii with scout planes far over the seas day and night to prevent surprise attacks on the Pearl Harbour naval base or on our own West Coast cities. Hong Kong will be a thorn in Japan's side."

I have quoted that because, allowing for a little journalistic exuberance, it paints a picture which might quite easily have been true. It paints a picture which most of us have had in our minds because of these extraordinary communiqués that we had, not only from Ministers but from the Far East itself. We cannot get away from the fact that the Far Eastern situation was, to use a Staff College expression, completely misappreciated by the Government. That has come out already in the Debate. I do not believe the Government said to themselves, "Libya is so important that we must let the Far East go." I do no think that if they have appreciated what the Japanese were going to do, they would have taken the steps they did and allowed them to secure control of these vital communications. Think what it means not only with regard to rubber and tin, but with all the other commodities, such as tungsten and wolfram, that come from Burma. Where are we going to get them from? Are we to be compensated for the loss of Malaya by flourishing rubber plantations in the Western Desert—even if we get it?

The Government are the management, they are the board, and I hold them responsible for the strategy that has led to this position. Some of the people in the Government and their advisers are those who blundered in Norway. There have not been many changes. They were responsible for Norway, Dakar, Greece and Crete. I believe that there are bright angles to some of these events. It may be said that Greece and Crete saved the situation somewhere else. I am inclined to be doubtful of it myself, and I think that it is a good get-out, because we cannot say whether it was so or not. The Prime Minister, as Prime Minister and as Minister of Defence, is a kind of Jekyll and Hyde. If you had two men, Jekyll could say to Hyde, "Are you quite satisfied with everything in the Far East? Is all well?" Hyde says, "Yes," and then six weeks later there is an appalling débacle, and Jekyll says, "Hyde, you have let me down; you must go out and be High Commissioner in Tasmania." That will not work under the present system, because if Winston says, "Churchill, you have let me down," Churchill says, "But you cannot sack me, because Winston is an international figure and has got to remain." So the two identities, Jekyll and Hyde, have both to remain, and I consider that that is undesirable.

I will make a constructive suggestion. It is that the Prime Minister should relinquish the post of Minister of Defence. I go further and say, Abolish it. It is an innovation which, judging by results, has been most unfortunate. I cannot understand the Prime Minister's dislike of making changes which are necessary. I do not think that any of the changes which have been suggested in various quarters would really shake the unity of the country to its foundations. I do not think, supposing, say, the Home Secretary were removed from the Cabinet, that the roof of Transport House would fall in. If the Chancellor of the Exchequer were removed, I do not think that the whole Tory party would blow up. There is always a Goschen around the corner. The Prime Minister will appreciate that allusion. I cannot see why changes should not be made, and I suggest to the Prime

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Minister that the time has come to make them. I suggest also to the country that the time has come to examine very carefully how this war is being run and by whom. I have said that once already, and I say it again, because it is so important. Production is all very well, but what is the use of it if you throw it away? I think that we are in a very desperate position. I think that should be said. People will say that I am a pessimist and a defeatist. I am not. I still believe that we shall win through, but at the present moment I cannot help but say that the events of the last few weeks have convinced me that drastic changes will have to come, whether the Prime Minister wants them or not—drastic changes in the whole direction of our war strategy. Otherwise, we shall not win through.

Commander Sir Archibald Southby (Epsom): I apologise to you, Sir, and to hon. Members for detaining the House at this hour, but perhaps the fact that I have, I think, sat through every speech made in the two days will make it possible for my colleagues to be a little lenient. Whatever differences of opinion there may be as regards the popularity or the efficiency of the Prime Minister and his Government, I think it is universally admitted, even by their most ardent supporters, that not only the people of this country but the people of the British Empire are profoundly disturbed at the course of events in the Far East and in Libya, and the apparent negligence on the part of the Government which those events make plain. In spite of the protestations of the Prime Minister and other members of the Government that they welcome criticism, which protestations have grown more vehement during recent weeks, every hon. Member knows how criticism has been resented and how every effort has been made to prevent the public outside being fully and fairly informed of that criticism. It is all very well for the Prime Minister to say that he welcomes criticism, and then the moment he is faced with criticism, which it is the bounden duty of every Member to offer when he believes that things have been allowed to go wrong, to say that he is going to insist upon a Vote of Confidence and, in effect, to try and cash-in on the personal popularity which he enjoys in this country and which he believes has been augmented by his visits to the United States and to Canada.

I understand, indeed he said it in his speech, that the right hon. Gentleman adopts the attitude that in effect he considers criticism of the Government criticism of himself. He is quite right. Everybody in this House knows that the Government is really a one-man band, a personal dictatorship. He takes on the function of all the other Ministers and of the Service chiefs. If proof of that statement were needed, it might surely be found in the way in which the Front Bench behaved, like a flock of sheep without a shepherd, when the Prime Minister was absent in the United States. This being so, he is, of course, entitled to all the praise when things go right, but he cannot escape criticism when things go wrong. Let us turn to the opinion of others competent to judge in this matter. Writing in the "Daily Mail" of 30th December, Sir Keith Murdoch, who is competent to voice the opinion of Australia, said:

> "The Prime Minister's influence over strategy has undoubtedly been profound, not only because he devotes himself to it and has great confidence in his own judgment, but because the position of the Fighting Service leaders has been weakened by the politicians, who have assumed more and more direct power. The Service leaders have thus become more or less the instruments of the Ministers' decisions and they are, of course, to begin with, Mr. Churchill's choice. In most cases here in Britain, when it comes to important decisions, you may read Prime Minister for Minister."

That, in my opinion, is the root of the trouble. No man, however great—and a great man the Prime Minister most undoubtedly is—can run a war like this single-handed. I differ from others who have spoken. I am not charging Members of the Government, and I am not saying that Members of the Government ought to be sacked. What I am saying is, first, let the Prime Minister choose the best men for the various jobs and then leave those men to do their own work. By all means let them be judged by the success or failure which attends their efforts. By this means Parliament and the public would know whom to blame and whom to praise, and our successful prosecution of the war would, in my opinion, be assured. The plain fact is that the Prime Minister cannot be Prime Minister and at the same time Minister of Defence.

What is almost more serious is the interference which I believe exists with the expert Service chiefs. I have said on more than one occasion, and I still say, that the difficulties in which we find ourselves are due to faulty strategy. The whole of our war effort should be based fundamentally on sea-plus-air power. It that had been accepted as an axiom, as it should have been, steps would have been taken to maintain in the Far East those bases which are vital to us and to any Ally who fights alongside us. It is almost inconceivable that the defences of the vital naval base of Singapore should have been so grossly and unjustifiably neglected. Crying over spilt milk is a very unprofitable pastime, but it is worth while to observe that we are paying now for the tragic blunder which was made after the last war, when we refused to renew our Alliance with Japan. That was a blow to Japanese pride which the Japanese have never forgotten. It drove them straight into the arms of the Axis. The decision may have been right or wrong, but that is what it did. From the time that Japan joined the Axis it was obvious that, sooner or later, she would enter the war against us, that the moment would be well chosen and that she would follow the usual Axis procedure. We should have to expect she would strike without giving any warning. Japan's attitude in China exhibited her growing contempt for us. The Prime Minister and his friends bitterly attacked Mr. Neville Chamberlain for what has been called his appeasement policy, a policy which impartial critics know and which history, when it comes to be written, will show, was designed to avert war when we were as yet unprepared, and to give us a breathing space in which to organise our strength. Now the Prime Minister has told us that in the summer of 1940 we had to close the Burma Road. Why? Because of the threat from Japan. The right hon. Gentleman says the reason was because we had to gather our strength. Was not that precisely the reason why Mr. Neville Chamberlain played for time against Germany? It now appears that what was wrong for Mr. Neville Chamberlain is right for the right hon. Gentleman and his friends. Everybody knows that we closed the Burma Road because we were afraid that, to keep it open, would result in war with Japan.

The Government must have been conscious all along of the deterioration in the situation in the Far East. What did they do about it? Did they arm and equip Singapore, Malaya and Burma? No. When the right hon. Gentleman was having his conversations with the President of the United States, signing the Atlantic Charter and negotiating the leasing of portions of the British Empire to the United States of America, did he emphasise the supreme and urgent importance of holding Guam, Midway, Wake and the Philippine Islands? Were plans then concerted, as they should have been, for co-operation with the Dutch, who now appear, with growing help, it is true, from the Americans, to be bearing almost the whole burden of the offensive war in the Far East? It is Dutch submarines which are operating, not British. Where are the torpedo-carrying aircraft that the defences of Singapore were supposed to have had and which, if they had been properly used and present in sufficient numbers, would have made a Japanese invasion of Malaya impossible? The defences of Singapore are reported as being short of almost everything that was needed—transport, machine guns, tanks, aeroplanes and ammunition. This shortage existed at the time when the Japanese attack was made. It may be that frantic efforts are now being made to rush reinforcements of men and material into Malaya, when it is almost too late. Day by day the situation grows blacker. For lack of all that they ought to have had in order successfully to resist a stubborn, courageous and efficient foe, our men are being relentlessly driven back. What was the good of making outlying aerodromes for the defence of Singapore if inadequate steps were taken to hold them? Once lost, not only do they make the defence of Singapore more difficult for us, but they make the attack upon it infinitely more easy for the Japanese.

We recall, or if we do not, I think we should, the dramatic declaration which the right hon. Gentleman the Prime Minister made in his great speech at the Mansion House, when he pledged this country to declare war on Japan within an hour of Japan going to war against the United States. However right and however welcome that declaration may have been, we were at least entitled to assume that it would not have been

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made unless every effort had been made to render our defences in Singapore impregnable. When the Prime Minister pledged this country to war in the Pacific on behalf of the United States of America, did he take the necessary steps which would ensure naval co-operation between the United States and ourselves? If not, why not? The Atlantic Charter may be a very useful and historic document, but in the middle of a war which is to decide the future of civilisation and the freedom of mankind, a thoroughly well-thought-out co-ordinated plan of offence and defence would have been of infinitely greater value.

Having neglected to provide for the proper defence of Singapore, we made another fatal blunder. We despatched to the Far East two capital ships whose disappearance from either the Atlantic or the Mediterranean gravely reduced our battle fleet. The Prime Minister, with his love of the dramatic, announced, with a flourish of trumpets, that they were going out to Singapore. Why? By themselves they could not hope to engage the Japanese fleet. As reinforcements to the American fleet they might have been of great use, but America at that time was not fighting alongside us, nor were we at war with Japan. But the unforgivable blunder was to send those ships out without assuring them of adequate fighter protection against the attack of Japanese aircraft. They lacked even adequate destroyer protection. The Government must have known of Singapore's lack of shore-based fighter aircraft, and if the ships were to be sent, then obviously they should have been accompanied by an aircraft carrier. I cannot believe, and I will not believe, that expert naval officers at the Admiralty failed to advise that in the circumstances those ships should be accompanied by an aircraft carrier. If they did not so advise, then theirs is the blame, but if they did so advise, by whom was their advice overridden?

The Prime Minister has asked for frankness. I have even heard it stated that orders were given for an aircraft carrier to accompany those ships and that those orders were countermanded by the Prime Minister himself. I am not saying that it was so, but that is what I have heard said. Is it true, or is it not? We have a right to know. That sort of thing should not be said without being answered. The loss of those ships may well influence the whole future conduct of the war. Taken in conjunction with the lack of defence in the Far East, the throwing away of those two capital ships is nothing less than a major disaster. If the Prime Minister is responsible, let him say so. If he is not, then let him set up a committee of inquiry, to determine upon whose shoulders the blame should rest. We might do worse than follow the example set us by our American Allies. They appointed a committee to inquire into the circumstances attending the disaster which they suffered at Pearl Harbour, and they have published the findings to the world.

The Prime Minister may say that criticism of the Government is criticism of himself, and dislike it; he may take the line that he is such a great international figure that nobody dares say a word to him of anything but praise, that all those who come in contact with him must "speak the word well chosen, such as the king should hear," but if he will not listen to criticism in this House, he will have to listen to it from the Great Dominions overseas. The "Melbourne Herald," in a leading article reported in the "Times" on 14th January, said this:

> "It is impossible to escape the conclusion that the weakness and unpreparedness of the Empire's Pacific defences are to some extent due to the faults of Imperial strategy, bred of ignorance and prejudice, for which a bitter price may be paid."

Whatever criticisms the Government must face here and in the Dominions, it is the dead and the dying British, Dominion and Indian troops, in the swamps and jungles of Malaya and Burma, who rise up in judgment against this Government, who have sacrificed them by their crass negligence. Why has the supply of machines and war equipment been inadequate? Because, in the words of the Prime Minister:

> "Had we diverted and dispersed our gradually growing resources between Libya and Malaya we should have been found wanting in both spheres."

What then becomes of all the protestations that the flow of arms in this country is reaching an overwhelming flood, that tanks, planes, guns, equipment of all sorts are pouring out, that American war industry is producing vast quantities, and would produce even faster? The recent Senate Inquiry would seem to show that the view taken of American war output was somewhat over-optimistic. If, after

two years of war, we have to excuse lack of essential equipment to the vital naval base of Singapore on the grounds of the necessity of supplying Libya, Russia and the home front—bearing in mind the lack of equipment which still exists on the home front—then there is something radically wrong with the supply of war material from the factories of this country. Is the material we are turning out in every way satisfactory for the job it has to do? Are there not faults in design as well as faults in production? Let me remind the House that our victory in the last war would have been delayed, and might even have been rendered impossible, had not the scandal of the shell shortage been discussed in this House, in open Session. And let me further remind the House of the far-reaching effects that that Debate had. When the Japanese campaign began we were told day by day, in the Press and elsewhere, that the Japanese advance was being resisted, that Singapore was impregnable; and then gradually there appeared those ominous phrases: "Retiring according to plan," "Shortening a defensive line," and "Taking up prepared positions."

Now we are being told that, of course, we shall hold Singapore. We may hold the fortress of Singapore—I hope and pray we shall, and if the courage of British, Dominion and native troops can hold it, it will be held—but we have already lost Singapore as a naval base, and that is its only real object. Does the House realise this, that the real danger now lies in Burma? Unless we can hold Burma, India, and above all the essential naval bases of Colombo and Trincomali are in deadly peril. Already comes ominous news of retirement near Moulmein, the usual reasons being given—shortage of equipment, outnumbered. Ever since Japan entered the war we have been faced with an unbroken series of reverses which may lead to disaster. Of course, reverses must come in war; you have to take the rough with the smooth. But these reverses are not due to the ordinary changes and chances of a campaign; they are due to lack of preparation, to lack of equipment, to lack of appreciation of the vital necessity for defending certain places whose strategic value is of paramount importance. For those sins of omission this Government must be held responsible. To put right what has gone wrong will be a superhuman task. Are those who were responsible for the present position capable of repairing the damage which has been occasioned by their neglect? I read in one of the Sunday papers a statement that the Prime Minister would insist upon this Debate being made a Vote of Confidence. The last sentence of the paragraph was significant. It ran thus: "He"—that is, the Prime Minister—

> "will demand a Vote of Confidence as evidence to the world of this country's determination to prosecute the war wholeheartedly to the end under his leadership."

I say that this country's determination to prosecute the war whole-heartedly to the end is not, and never has been, in doubt, but it would be a dangerous assumption for anyone to make that this country would not demand a change in Government, or even in the leadership, if it believed, or was allowed to know, that, because of a refusal to make any changes in the Government which were essential for the successful prosecution of the war, our victory over our enemies was being jeopardised. Neither I nor any other Member of this House can shirk the responsibility for the conduct of this war which is ours as Members of Parliament. If, believing that our proper strategy has been departed from, that gross and tragic blunders have been made, and that inefficiency exists, I keep silence, then I am false to the trust reposed in me by those who sent me to this place. I do a disservice not only to those whom I represent, but to the Allied cause if, for reasons personal or otherwise, I put the retention in their places of the right hon. Gentleman and his Government—or any Government—before the winning of the war. For myself, I say, in the words of that greatest of statesmen, Abraham Lincoln:

> "From time to time I have done and said what appeared to me proper to do and say. The public knows it. It obliges nobody to follow me, and I trust it obliges me to follow nobody."

Sir Henry Morris-Jones (Denbigh): I do not apologise for speaking in this House, although the hour is very late. After all, in the old pre-war days we used to sit, as a regular rule, from three in the afternoon to midnight. Surely, in the most important Debate that we have had so far in this war, we are not going to grudge a nine or 10 hours' Debate on the second day. It is only right that everybody who can get in should have the opportunity of expressing his point of

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view. I am not going to indulge in a *post-mortem* on the mistakes of the Government. I will address myself principally to the situation which is before us at present.

Before I come to that, I would like to congratulate the Prime Minister on the wonderful work he has done in America recently. I am, and always have been, a tremendous admirer of the Prime Minister. I have said during the whole time I have been in this House that he is the greatest man in this House. I shall everlastingly be grateful to him, not only for his general services in the last 18 months, while he has been Prime Minister, but for three special reasons. The first is his great courage and buoyancy and the wonderful spirit of optimism by which he held us all when France fell. That alone would be sufficient to make him go down in history as one of the greatest men this country has ever had. I think his broadcast to Russia, when she came into this war, was one of the greatest single events in history, and that it probably altered the whole trend of the war. If he had not made that broadcast, we might have had controversy and a large number of discussions, which might have vitiated the whole character of our effort and of the Russian effort. Then, there was his visit to America, by which I think he has done a magnificent piece of work. But I want to be quite plain in this matter. I suppose that I was one of the " Yes " men in the old days. We " Yes " men are largely responsible for this war having come about. There is no question about that. If we had not been so " Yes," it could have been avoided. Any constructive act of statesmanship by this country could have avoided the war. I would rather be a " No " man occasionally and try to win the war than be a " Yes " man and lose it. From that point of view I reserve the right as a Member of this House to make constructive criticisms when I feel I can do so.

There is one serious omission from the speech of the Prime Minister. I do not pretend to be a strategist. I am purely a layman who served right through the last war in the front line of a battalion, and that is about all I know about war, but the whole character of this war has changed completely since Japan and America came into it. We have not changed our policy in regard to the way in which we are going to wage this war, and the Prime Minister made no reference to that matter. Is it still our intention to maintain a large Army running into millions, the biggest Navy in the world, the most dominating Air Force in the world, as I hope it will be, and concentrate intensively upon munitions, and at the same time maintain our agriculture? I submit that this small country of 47,000,000 people cannot do that. I am as certain as I am standing here that it cannot do it; it is physically impossible for it to do it. Why not, therefore, concentrate upon what we can do—maintain and increase the efficiency of our first-class Navy? I am glad to see my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Secretary to the Admiralty, whose work at the Admiralty we so much appreciate, has been sitting right through this Debate. Why not concentrate upon the Navy, keeping it the biggest and most efficient Navy possible and get the biggest Air Force in the world?

Let us also concentrate upon our production. We must do that. Let us be the arsenal of democracy. We can be, and we shall be. Let us maintain our agriculture and have a small intensive Army, highly mechanised and mobile, of half a million. Or do the Government want an Army of three, four or five millions? We cannot do it. We have immense man-power now. We now have with us Russia and the United States of America, and I hope that the Prime Minister will consider, in connection with the whole new defensive and offensive strategy of the associated Powers, this particular aspect which has changed the character of the effort which we are to make. In many directions we have done very well

Mr. Lawson (Chester-le-Street): I am very glad that I have not heard this question raised in this House before, although I have seen reference to it in the Press, but does the hon. Gentleman suggest that we should reduce the Forces in this country?

Sir H. Morris-Jones: I suggest that we should reduce the original estimate for the Army. I do not know exactly what that estimate was, as the Prime Minister has not told us the exact figure. We know that it runs into some millions, but my point is that this is becoming a naval

and air war. The very life of our Dominions and Empire is involved. Soldiers will not save it; it will be the Navy and Air Force. I say, Make the Army into a small mechanised force. You also have to maintain Civil Defence, which I forgot to mention.

I was about to say, when my hon. Friend intervened, that I think the Government have done many things very well indeed. In many directions the Ministers have been hard pressed, and we do not always appreciate what they do. Take, for instance, the Ministry of Food, which has been a perfect marvel, especially when we think of the way in which we are being fed in this small Island of ours now, after all the sources of supply which we used to have from Norway, Holland, Denmark and France were cut off. I think the Minister of Food and his Parliamentary Secretary have done wonderful work.

I would like to say a word about the defence of our aerodromes. After all, this country is a veritable Noah's Ark, with all the children and Governments of liberty sheltered here. That we have taken big risks with our aerodromes is shown by the fact that only now are we coming to a definite arrangement for their final and conclusive defence. The Prime Minister should call his Air Force and Army chiefs together and say, " You must make our aerodromes in this country as impossible of capture as is physically possible. Bring me your plans in a fortnight." It could be done. Before I sit down, may I say that we have been treated very badly in regard to our news services? The Minister of Information was rewarded with high office for a political fidelity which is unexampled in the history of British politics —a fidelity to leadership at times when the Prime Minister was in the wilderness. That is a time when a man wants fidelity. There are plenty of fidelities when you are in office. Nevertheless, I think the Minister of Information has done well. He has initiated many new reforms, but during the last few weeks he has given us a very limited news service. When I read reports of Soviet broadcasts, I feel that now and again they give us an example. Their news may be a little imaginative in one or two directions, it may not be altogether in accordance with all the facts, but at all events there is in it a spirit of life and colour. and it enthuses one. Why cannot the Ministry of Information supply the people of this country with something of that sort?

At the end of the Debate we have to give a Vote, and it will be an extremely difficult one to give. I wanted to move an Amendment to the Motion which I think might have enabled many hon. Members to get out of the difficulty in which they are with regard to the Vote, but as you, Mr. Speaker, have not accepted that Amendment, I cannot say anything more about it. I come now to the conclusion of my remarks. If production is lagging, does the Prime Minister intend to take the attitude that the Government team must still remain? If the home front is not altogether satisfactory, if there are immense inequalities of sacrifice, if there are many complaints that are unnecessary even in time of war, is the Prime Minister going to say, " We will stick together as a Government "? If Greece and Crete were regarded as disasters, is the Prime Minister still going to say, " We will not budge "? If the campaign in Libya is disappointing, does he say, " We shall still remain a team "? If the Far East has brought news of disasters which this nation had not contemplated before, will the Government still stand pat?

Lastly, if a situation arises in the next few weeks when we may be cut off from our Empire, when large parts of the Empire may go, and we may be unable to render them any succour and may not be able even to communicate with them, will it be any great consolation to the people of the great Dominions and of this country to be confronted with the remark that the Government still remains intact? The time will come, now or later, when an attitude of that sort taken by the Prime Minister will have to be rejected by the House if we are not to forfeit the confidence of the people who sent us here. I say that this doctrine of indispensability, which is the attitude taken in many ways by the Prime Minister, is a doctrine which this country will have to end. I do not consider that our people, who have done so well as a common people, have reached the stage when they are unable to produce leaders in this great effort, but if that stage had been reached, I would have to bow to the situation and say that

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this Empire was passing and that more efficient Empires were coming in its place. But I do not for one moment believe that that stage has been reached. I believe there are capacity, initiative, energy, ability and resource in this nation, and that it can find leaders when the time comes.

Mr. Hammersley (Willesden, East): I must apologise to you, Mr. Speaker, and to the House for speaking at this late hour; nothing but a sense of duty would impel me to do so. The Prime Minister has afforded this opportunity to Members to put forward their constructive criticisms on such matters as appear to them to be necessary in order to advance our war effort. An analysis of the speeches to which I have listened shows the simple and compelling fact that our conduct of the war is governed by our resources—we have to cut our coat according to our cloth. The means at our disposal are limited, and there are many demands made upon our resources, some of which are conflicting. This truism emphasises the necessity that we should get the best out of our available materials, and it is to this particular point that I wish to address my remarks. I am going to confine myself to one important munition of war, namely, tanks. I believe that our resources are being wasted, in the sense that our resources are not being properly used in the production and development of tanks. I believe that this wastage of resources is an important reason for the shortage of tanks, these essential war munitions, in some of the theatres of war in which they are so important a factor.

Before I give my reasons I think that I ought to mention, not that it affects my arguments or the facts, that this is not a matter in which I have got temporary, recent or superficial knowledge. The judgment I have to reach in the matter is whether or not anything I have to say is in the interests of the nation, and it behoves me, in speaking about tanks in a somewhat technical way, to give no information which may assist the enemy in any way. But that does not mean that I should not give facts which appear to be essential because such facts are not generally known. I shall not indulge in any recriminations or in any unnecesary *post mortems*. My anxiety, my very grave anxiety, is about the future. There have been statements made by the Parliamentary Secretary in this House and statements published in the technical Press which have told the House and the country the types of tanks which we are at present producing in quantity. There are three types of infantry tanks, known as the infantry two, three and four. Types two and three are popularly known as "Matildas" and "Valentines." There are two types of cruiser tanks, known as cruisers five and six, but more popularly known as "Covenanters" and "Crusaders." The submission which I have to make is that the mechanical lessons which we ought to have learned from the earlier tanks we produced have not been assimilated in our present tank production, and I shall put forward the suggestion that the prospects of production form most serious grounds for apprehension.

To maintain that statement, I shall refer not to all the various types of tanks, but to two. I will deal with the earliest type of tank and with the latest type of tank. The design of the earliest tank, the Mark II infantry tank, was in 1937. Its first prototype was produced about 1938. A small number were manufactured in 1939. Thus it is obvious that when the war began we had available for production a tank, the Mark II. This tank at that time marked a distinct step forward in technical design. It had good thick armour. It was designed by the Tank Mechanisation Board, but without the co-operation of industry. That fact explains the inadequate production of tanks which we got at the beginning of the war. As all these difficulties of inadequte production have probably now been overcome, beyond pointing the moral that technical design must conform with modern engineering practice, there is nothing that I can usefully say on that particular matter.

There is, however, a further lesson in respect to this Mark II tank which I want to bring to the notice of the House. From the beginning this tank had a very well-known weakness. It was in the method employed to steer a tank of this size and weight. It was originally designed on a specification laid down by the Army Council for a tank which would in effect be a kind of mobile pill box of short range,

but the operations in France revealed the need for mobility, and the necessity for this mobility brought into question this problem of steering. This glaring weakness came up for review time after time, and time after time the Ministry responsible, instead of dealing fundamentally with it, was contented with minor modifications and partial improvements. The result has been that for two years, during which time these tanks have been delivered, the Army has been in receipt of tanks in which this weakness has never been eradicated. The lesson that I want to bring home is not, as so many allege, that this was a bad tank, difficult to make, but it is a tank which the policy of the Ministry has failed to develop into a good tank. It could have been made a good tank, and the reason it has not been is because of the failure to bring home to the responsible people the necessity for eliminating mechanical weaknesses.

Now what about our latest tank? Part of the design of this tank was worked out in 1940, some of it even earlier, but the actual production only began about April, 1941. Therefore it is reasonable to expect that this tank would be the embodiment of the earlier lessons learnt in the war. In some respects those expectations have been realised.

The Financial Secretary to the War Office (Mr. Sandys): My hon. Friend has not said anything that anyone could take exception to as yet, but I hope he will not say anything which could possibly be of assistance to the enemy. He is dealing now with our latest type.

Mr. Hammersley: I propose to be careful. I am really endeavouring to point a lesson, and I do not think that in doing so it is necessary to reveal any secrets. I am saying that in some respects this tank shows the improvements which might reasonably be expected. It is a tank with a better fighting arrangement and so forth, but in other respects it is not mechanically improved. I do not want to go into details of why it does not conform to our requirements, but I want to ask whether we are producing a tank which is not to the standard of mechanical reliability which should be expected. [*Interruption.*] I hope that hon. Members will not egg me on, because the point is that we have not learned the lessons of mechanical reliability, and it is necessary for somebody in the House to make that point.

As long as it is admitted that the facts are as I have stated them I will not pursue the matter. The position is known in the Ministry of Supply and in the Army, and I will make no attempt to catalogue the mechanical defects of the vehicle. I must, however, ask one or two questions concerning outstanding weaknesses. When are we to learn that these troubles have been overcome? I know it is said that the suspension is all right. I do not want to enter into technicalities, but I believe the pitching has been cured. I want to warn the Ministry responsible that if they are relying upon rubber-tyred bogeys as a solution of this question, the Minister must satisfy himself that the technical difficulty of producing a direct bond between the metal and rubber of a small diameter wheel—which cannot easily disseminate the heat produced has been satisfactorily overcome. He must also satisfy himself that the rubber position has not become considerably worse in the last month. I would like to know whether any of these tanks have been sent to Libya; if so, are the reports of their mechanical reliability satisfactory? There are other serious defects in connection with the tank, and it seems to me desirable to find out whether the Ministry has set any limit to the length of time which must elapse before these tanks are pronounced fit for service and any limits to the number which are to be turned out in a condition which is admittedly unsatisfactory. I do not ask the Parliamentary Secretary to answer these matters——

The Joint Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Supply (Mr. Harold Macmillan): My hon. Friend asks a number of technical questions. I would hesitate to move the House into Secret Session, and I think he would not expect me to guide him in any technical detail, because, like the answers to so many other questions, they would be heard outside the immediate confines of this House.

Mr. Lawson: I have some strong views on the question of production, from personal experience, but I have always refrained from speaking on production in public, because I am afraid of dealing with private matters.

Mr. Hammersley: I appreciate that, and in view of what has been said I had

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better not pursue the question of the characteristics of these vehicles any further. I would, however, like to make a constructive suggestion on the organisation. I think that the Minister will agree that in putting forward a suggestion on organisation one cannot possibly be doing anything to assist the enemy, either directly or indirectly. I am speaking of that part of organisation of the department at the Ministry of Supply which has to do with the design and development and production of tanks. The Minister, of course, is responsible as the political head. Directly under him is a Controller-General of Design and Development. He is responsible not only for the design and development of tanks but for all the technical advances and improvements in munitions made in the Ministry of Supply. That is a tremendous responsibility, a bigger responsibility, I suggest, than any one man ought to bear. Under the Controller-General is a Deputy-Controller—I do not think he has much to do with tanks—and under him is the Chief Engineer of Tank Design, and the point I want to make here is that, like his superior prior to his arrival at the Ministry of Supply, he had no experience with tanks. Under him is the Director of Tank Design.

The executive head, that is to say, the Chief Engineer of Tank Design, is responsible for initiating ideas, and I think it will be appreciated that under the present organisation he has no check above and no check below him from people with direct tank knowledge themselves. I do not mean to say that he has not got well-informed assistants, technical, qualified experts; he has; but the point is that in putting forward proposals—and I am now rather dealing with the future—he need not seek this advice. It seems to me important that somewhere in the hierarchy of three or four individuals who are entirely responsible for the design and development of tanks there should be at least one whose knowledge of tanks is not limited by the experience he has been able to assimilate while in the Ministry of Supply. I am not making any attack upon individuals; I am attacking the organisation. The individuals themselves are not responsible for the organisation.

These officials are helped by committees. There are three committees: the Committee of the Tank Board, the Tank Development Committee and the Tank Production Committee. The Tank Board has much less responsibility than it used to have. The Tank Development Committee, I understand, has met only once and has now been abolished. I do not think the Tank Production Committee has met at all. I submit that no impartial examination of this organisation could conclude that it is capable of bringing to the problem of design and development of tanks the ability and knowledge which exist in the country. We have been making large numbers of tanks for two years, and the resulting experience is substantial, the number of persons with special tank knowledge is considerable, but to a large degree the existing organisation ignores both the knowledge that exists and those people who possess the knowledge.

I have been rather critical, but I am proposing now not to restrict my observations to criticism but to put forward a suggestion for a better organisation of the design and production of tanks, particularly in respect of design. The organisation could be much more helpful and would be able to bring into use the knowledge and ability which exist in the country. I suggest that the body responsible for advising the Minister should be a small executive tank board, sitting day by day. It should have four members: a chairman, a director of design and development, a director of production and the War Office representative. I would suggest that the War Office representative should be high up in the hierarchy of the War Office, that he should be a very senior officer with full responsibility and capable of taking decisions. In my opinion he ought to be on the Army Council. The job of running tanks and fighting tanks is so important that a War Office representative should be a member of the Army Council and be in direct touch not only with the General Staff but with the Army's Tank Users Committee. This Tank Users Committee is a most useful body of Army officers with mechanical knowledge and experience of tanks. They know a great deal, but at the moment their knowledge has to filter through the organisation at a low level. It ought to come into the organisation right at the top.

Those are the four members of the Tank Board that I suggest. To deal with the objection that present design and development of tanks does not bring in the knowledge of people in the country who know something about tank production and development. I suggest that the Director of Tank Design and Development should be helped in two ways, not only by his existing organisation of D.T.D., but also by a manufacturers' development committee. There should be an infantry development committee and a cruiser development committee, and the personnel of these committees should be built up from representative firms manufacturing tanks and components sitting on the existing group producers' committees. I am sorry to detain the House. I know these matters are technical, but it is only a sense of duty which makes me give them. It is equally trying to me to have to make these observations at this time, but, somehow, observations of this character have to be made, and Members of Parliament have to seize such opportunities as they have. I am putting forward constructive proposals in respect of an organisation which is admittedly frightfully difficult to organise. I am saying that the personnel of these development committees should be drawn from the existing producers' groups. In that way, all the knowledge and experience available throughout the country of people who are at present building tanks and have been doing so for two years, will be brought into the organisation of design and development.

The immediate matter is to get our latest tank right. It can be done. I have never taken the view that we cannot get this tank right, but it must be dealt with as a matter of urgency, and all the available knowledge for the solution of the various problems must be mobilised. I do not understand why the principal of parallel development should not be adopted. I understand that the Minister is sympathetic to it. I am sure it is right to develop your requirements from different angles but on parallel lines, and to select the best. I must apologise to the House for a speech made at this late hour under considerable difficulties. My plea is that this matter of a better tank organisation must be looked on as one of urgency, not only because of the present but because of the future. I am trying not to exaggerate matters, but I am convinced that, in existing circumstances and with our existing facilities the nation could get more and better tanks. I yield to no one in my admiration for the Prime Minister, particularly in the way in which he can flourish a revolver. I say, Let that revolver be loaded.

Major Stourton (Salford, South): I apologise most sincerely to the House for detaining hon. Members at such a late hour, but perhaps I may point out that I have had to secure special leave in order to come up and try to make a contribution to this important Debate. Opportunities to speak in full-dress Debates are very limited, unless one is very persistent. At any rate, I will promise not to detain the House for more than a very few minutes. There can be no gainsaying what was observed by the hon. Member for Kidderminster (Sir J. Wardlaw-Milne), who opened the Debate to-day, that the situation in the Far East is positively calamitous. Nevertheless, this should not cause any of us to lose our sense of proportion. We must realise that our present inferiority in the Pacific is due in the main to two factors. First of all, the major disaster at Pearl Harbour, possibly the greatest naval disaster ever recorded in history, and the lesser but no less important disaster, the loss of "Repulse" and "Prince of Wales." The loss of those two great capital ships was mainly due to misplaced confidence in favourable weather conditions, which are only too liable to alter at very short notice at sea, and again to a lack of land-based fighter-aircraft which could and should have been provided as an escort to those capital ships. A great feeling of chagrin has swept the country at the loss of those ships, and the sense of frustration is increased on the part of the people of this country generally, because the Government have not seen fit to take the people in their confidence and revealed all the facts. On two occasions recently I have personally given my right hon. Friend the Lord Privy Seal at Question Time an opportunity of making a statement. On each occasion he has elected to remain silent, and so in my submission has shown himself a very poor judge of the English character, because adverse news to an Englishman merely spurs him to greater effort. I suggest that the motto of the Government should be, "Trust the people in foul weather as well as in fair." The timid attitude of the Government in this instance has been in strange contrast to that of the American adminis-

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tration, which set up a Commission of Inquiry to investigate the events of 7th December at Pearl Harbour and has admitted in the findings that the American commanders were taken by surprise. As a recent leader in the "Times" shrewdly observed:

"The commendable frankness of the verdict is not only a tribute to the vigour and vitality of the country's democratic principles, but the surest guarantee of vigilance in the future."

His Majesty's Government should take note of this and do in like manner. All I would ask is an assurance from the Prime Minister that such hazards will never be taken again in naval warfare in any sphere.

I want to make one or two very brief remarks concerning the home front. To my way of thinking, the greatest handicap to the proper conduct of this war is the limitation in the field of choice by the Prime Minister of colleagues for the Cabinet and all Government offices because of the precise mathematical basis of calculation in proportion to numerical party representation in this House. In my opinion, the sole criterion of appointment of any member of His Majesty's Government should be merit and efficiency, irrespective of party allegiance. Such are the standards set up in the Fighting Services, and I cannot see any reason why we should expect to conduct the war as it should be conducted unless we are prepared to adopt these same standards in the Government appointments as in the Fighting Services. Herein, to my mind, lies the weakness of our democratic system, particularly so when it is borne in mind that in the persons of Adolf Hitler, Goebbels, Himmler and Goering we are up against a gang of the ablest and most intelligent men ever enlisted by the forces of evil to overcome good. Therefore, I say that the Prime Minister should be given a free hand in the choice of his colleagues, and then we could look forward to seeing the conduct of the war carried out on more vigorous lines. The subject under discussion is often ventilated in the smoking room and the Lobbies, never on the Floor of the House. I therefore hope the Prime Minister may see his way to make some comment on this important matter when he comes to wind up the Debate.

Because of the lateness of the hour I will not make the rest of the speech I intended to make, but before I sit down I would like to pay my tribute to the Prime Minister, whom I would describe as a great Englishman and one who is at once in the most enviable and unenviable position among the world's statesmen at the present time; enviable because he has the honour of holding his great office in England's darkest hour; unenviable because of the tremendous weight of responsibility which he bears on his shoulders. England can count herself fortunate at this time of crisis, as so often in her past, that the hour has found the man.

Motion made, and Question, "That the Debate be now adjourned," put, and agreed to.—[*Mr. Grimston.*]

Debate to be resumed upon the next Sitting Day.

ORDERS OF THE DAY.

HOUSE OF COMMONS MEMBERS' FUND ACT, 1939.

Resolved,

"That Mr. Gordon Macdonald be a Managing Trustee in pursuance of Section 2 of the House of Commons Members' Fund Act, 1939."—[*Mr. Grimston.*]

The remaining Orders were read, and postponed.

ADJOURNMENT.

Resolved, "That this House do now adjourn."—[*Mr. Grimston.*]

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