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23rd Apr., 1942

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

HOUSE OF COMMONS
OFFICIAL REPORT

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HOUSE OF COMMONS.

Thursday, 23rd April, 1942.

OFFICIAL REPORT.

[Mr. SPEAKER *in the Chair.*]

NEW WRIT.

For the Borough of Wandsworth (Putney Division), in the room of Marcus Samuel, Esq., deceased.—[*Major Sir James Edmondson.*]

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS.

NATIONAL WAR EFFORT.

COTTON INDUSTRY (HOURS OF WORK).

2. **Mr. Kenneth Lindsay** asked the Minister of labour whether he is now in a position to revoke the Order which extended the hours of child labour in the cotton industry to 52 hours a week?

The Joint Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Labour (Mr. McCorquodale): My right hon. Friend will continue to watch the position in this industry, but he cannot undertake to revoke the Order at present.

Mr. Lindsay: I thought last week the right hon. Gentleman said it was a matter of time. May I put a question down next week?

Mr. McCorquodale: The Minister is not prepared to revoke the Order until methods of supplying essential output have been so adjusted as to render it no longer necessary.

Mr. Graham White: Am I right in supposing that the examination of the matter from the medical point of view is proceeding all the time?

Mr. McCorquodale: That is borne in mind all the time.

Sir Herbert Williams: Is that the result of the concentration of industry?

WEST INDIAN WORKERS (EMPLOYMENT, GREAT BRITAIN).

3. **Mr. Riley** asked the Minister of Labour how many workers from the West Indian Colonies are now employed in this country on work of national importance in connection with the war; how many of such workers have completed their period of training; how many are now being trained; and whether the experiment has proved satisfactory?

Mr. McCorquodale: A number of workers from the West Indian Colonies are giving valuable service in work of national importance, and a number will enter training before long. I am not in a position to give the numbers for which my hon. Friend asks.

Mr. Riley: What is the number who have been brought to this country for training, and are now training, and has the scheme been expanded?

Mr. McCorquodale: Yes. If the hon. Member will read my answer, he will see that there is a number still in training, and there will be others before long.

EMPLOYMENT AGENCIES.

4. **Sir Waldron Smithers** asked the Minister of Labour why Messrs. Laurie and Company have not been approved as an employment agency under the Statutory Rules and Orders, 1942, No. 100, Employment of Women (Control of Engagement) Order, 1942?

Mr. McCorquodale: This decision was given in accordance with the principles stated in the Replies of 29th January and 10th March to the hon. Member for Stourbridge (Mr. R. Morgan) and the hon. and gallant Member for Kings Norton (Major Peto) respectively.

Sir H. Williams: As this firm is known to be much more competent than any department of the Ministry, will my hon. Friend consider reviewing the decision?

Mr. McCorquodale: No, Sir.

5. **Sir W. Smithers** asked the Minister of Labour whether any direct fee-charging agency has been approved under the Statutory Rules and Orders, No. 100, Employment of Women (Control of Engagement) Order, 1942; and whether he proposes to eliminate all fee-charging and employment agencies?

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Mr. McCorquodale: A list of the agencies so far approved was given by my right hon. Friend in reply to the hon. Member for Bournemouth (Sir L. Lyle) on 19th March. I cannot say without direct inquiry whether any of these agencies are fee-charging. This is not, however, a relevant consideration, and the second part of the question does not therefore arise.

6. **Sir W. Smithers** asked the Minister of Labour whether, in view of the fact that there is no appeal to an impartial tribunal against the decisions of the Ministry, he will arrange a conference with representatives of the London Employment Agents Federation in order to meet their complaints?

Mr. McCorquodale: I assume my hon. Friend is referring to decisions on applications from employment agencies to be approved under the Employment of Women (Control of Engagement) Order, 1942. If the London Employment Agents Federation desire to make representations on this matter in addition to those that they have already made, I will see that they receive full consideration, and, if necessary, that a conference is arranged with the appropriate officer of the Department.

Sir W. Smithers: In view of the grave dissatisfaction in industry, will my hon. Friend ask the Minister to arrange a conference as soon as possible and treat the question with an open mind?

Mr. McCorquodale: I have said that, if necessary, a conference will be arranged.

Sir H. Williams: Can my hon. Friend assure me that these principles will not be applied to party headquarters and so stop the supply of party candidates for the by-elections which are now being arranged?

COLLECTIVE BARGAINING.

7. **Mr. Mander** asked the Minister of Labour to what extent production is being held up through the unwillingness of employers to accord trade union recognition; and how many are still refusing to recognise collective bargaining?

Mr. McCorquodale: I have no data on which to estimate the possible extent to which production might be improved by greater willingness on the part of some employers to discuss questions affecting wages and working conditions with trade unions. It is exceptional for employers to refuse to accept the principles of collective bargaining.

Mr. Mander: Does not the hon. Gentleman think it time that all employers gave up this antediluvian attitude?

ISLE OF MAN (LABOUR).

8. **Mr. Mander** asked the Minister of Labour what steps the Government are taking to make available for war production the labour, both male and female, now resident in the Isle of Man?

Mr. McCorquodale: Consultations are in progress with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Home Affairs on this matter.

Mr. Mander: Is there not a considerable pool of labour in the island which might be made available?

Mr. McCorquodale: I cannot say without notice.

SCOTTISH MOBILE WOMEN WORKERS.

11. **Lieut.-Commander Hutchison** asked the Minister of Labour the approximate number of women in Edinburgh who have to date been classified as mobile; and the number who, under the National Service Acts, have been directed to war industries in other parts of the country, respectively?

Mr. McCorquodale: I am taking steps to see what figures are available and could be properly disclosed.

Lieut.-Commander Hutchison: In the event of fresh industries being established in the Edinburgh area, will my hon. Friend arrange for the transfer back to Edinburgh of women who have been sent to other parts of the country?

Mr. McCorquodale: The moving of mobile women to places where they are most needed is one of the most essential features of the scheme.

Mr. McGovern: Will the Department ascertain the number of available women in each area with a view to their employment in that area instead of crossing them over to various parts of the country?

Mr. McCorquodale: All that has been taken into account.

PART-TIME WOMEN WORKERS.

14. **Mr. Ness Edwards** asked the Minister of Labour what arrangements

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have been made for recruiting part-time women workers; and the wage conditions governing their employment?

Mr. McCorquodale: Local offices of the Ministry of Labour are undertaking the recruitment of part-time workers. They institute local recruiting campaigns where this is necessary and have the assistance of specially appointed sub-committees of the local employment committee. In addition employers are free to recruit direct women who are outside the scope of the Employment of Women (Control of Engagement) Order and the Restriction on Engagement Order. No special conditions of employment for part-time workers have been prescribed.

Mr. Edwards: Do I understand from the answer that the ordinary conditions applying in the industry into which these people are going are not to apply to them?

Mr. McCorquodale: The ordinary conditions should be applied.

Mr. A. C. Reed: Can the hon. Gentleman say whether the Ministry of Labour are setting an example in the use of part-time labour?

Mr. McCorquodale: Yes, Sir; we are making considerable use of it.

WORKERS (PROSECUTION).

15. **Mr. Rhys Davies** asked the Minister of Labour how many of the 773 workpeople prosecuted by his Department and of the 91 who were imprisoned for offences against the several Orders of his Ministry were colliery workers; and whether he can give an estimate of the loss of production caused by the attendance of these workpeople in courts of law on days when they would otherwise be employed and for the period of their imprisonment?

Mr. McCorquodale: I am having inquiries made into the first part of the Question. As regards the later part, it would involve a disproportionate amount of labour to attempt to make any such estimate. I would point out that any such estimate, to be of practical value, would also have to take into account the loss of production likely to be caused by a failure to enforce the law.

Mr. Davies: Will the hon. Gentleman and his chief make inquiries to find out, in view of the shortage of coal and fuel, whether it would not be better for these people to be hewing coal than being in prison, where they cannot produce anything?

Mr. Gallacher: Will the hon. Gentleman give the number of employers who have in prison for impeding production?

BUILDING TRADE OPERATIVES (CONVEYANCE BY MOTOR COACH).

16. **Major Sir Jocelyn Lucas** asked the Minister of Labour whether his attention has been called to the fact that 220 building trade operatives have been conveyed to Portsmouth by motor coach daily for a distance of 100 miles for many months; and, in view of the need for economising petrol and that accommodation is available for them, he will take steps to remedy the situation?

Mr. McCorquodale: Inquiries are already being made into this case, and I will communicate with my hon. and gallant Friend.

Mr. J. J. Davidson: Can the hon. Gentleman say what firm was concerned in this matter?

Mr. McCorquodale: No, Sir.

Sir J. Lucas: Will my hon. Friend give an assurance that this is an isolated case and is not going on all over the country?

EMPLOYMENT EXCHANGES (INFORMATION TO MEMBERS).

9. **Mr. Liddall** asked the Minister of Labour on what date and in what terms managers of Employment Exchanges were instructed to refuse to supply Members of Parliament with statistics as to the number of people on the live register in the districts respectively represented by Members of Parliament?

Mr. McCorquodale: The instruction, which did not relate specifically to Members of Parliament, was issued in October, 1940. It was to the effect that these figures should not be issued to the Press, to public or private bodies, or to other members of the public.

Mr. Shinwell: Is it not perfectly reasonable that Members should be informed of the unemployment position, if any, in their own constituencies? Do we understand that the embargo does not apply to hon. Members?

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Mr. McCorquodale: If the hon. Gentleman reads my reply, he will see that the instruction did not relate specifically to, but of course includes, Members of Parliament.

Mr. Shinwell: Having had that specific reply, can we have an assurance that the embargo will now be removed as far as it affects Members?

Mr. McCorquodale: No, Sir.

Mr. Shinwell: Are we to understand that that is now a definite decision, that Members are not to be furnished with this information, and will the hon. Gentleman supply some cogent reason?

Mr. McCorquodale: In view of what the hon. Gentleman says, I will discuss the matter with my right hon. Friend.

Mr. Rhys Davies: It is not a fact that, if a refusal is made locally, a Member of Parliament can get the same information by question in the House of Commons? What sense is there in that?

Mr. Shinwell: If a Question is put down next week, will there be a reply?

UNEMPLOYMENT FUND.

10. **Mr. Windsor** asked the Minister of Labour whether he has yet considered the Reports of the Unemployment Insurance Statutory Committee on the financial condition of the Unemployment Fund for the past year; what recommendations the committee have made; and what action he proposes to take in regard to any such recommendations?

Mr. McCorquodale: My right hon. Friend has received the reports in question. The only substantial recommendation relates to the rate of contributions in respect of workers insured under the Agricultural Scheme. In 1939 this rate was reduced by ½d. a week for a period which, in accordance with the Unemployment Insurance Act, 1940, would end in July, 1942. It was then thought that this reduction would, during the period, absorb a considerable part of the surplus then standing to the credit of the Fund. This has not happened, and the Statutory Committee therefore recommend that the increase of ½d. a week, which was to take effect from 6th July, 1942, shall not operate. Copies of the report and of a draft Order which Parliament will shortly be asked to approve will be available in the Vote Office to-day.

WORKMEN'S COMPENSATION (MINERS).

12. **Mr. Foster** asked the Minister of Labour the number of injured miners whose compensation claims have been redeemed by lump sum settlements under the Workmen's Compensation Act, 1925, Section 13, who have been granted release from the mining industry on application being made by the employer to the National Service officers, under the provisions of the Essential Work (Coal Mining Industry) Order?

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

Mr. Tinker: Will the hon. Gentleman try to get them and have them in the statistics issued every 12 months?

Mr. McCorquodale: I will inquire into it again, but I do not think it is possible.

22. **Mr. Foster** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department the number of injured miners whose compensation claims have been redeemed by lump sum settlements under the Workmen's Compensation Act, 1925, Section 13, for the years 1940 and 1941?

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Herbert Morrison): I regret that the information is not available.

Mr. Foster: Will my right hon. Friend consider the advisability of records being kept so that this information can be available to the House in future?

Mr. Morrison: This information was not kept separately before the war, and I gather that to get it now would involve a great deal of clerical labour in inquiring of the courts concerned. I am afraid that I cannot give such an undertaking as things are, with all the pressure on the administrative staff of the Department.

Mr. Ness Edwards: Are not records kept in the county courts and made readily available?

Mr. Morrison: If hon. Members got them previously from county courts, there is no objection to that continuing. It is

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only a question of our making a special research involving a large amount of labour. Most of these cases are settled by agreement, and the total figure of lump sum settlements of all kinds in disablement cases in 1938 was 7,561.

Mr. Silverman: Do not all these cases have to be recorded in county courts, and are not the figures, therefore, easily available?

Mr. Morrison: I am advised that they are not easily available. To get them would mean circularisation of county courts and a good deal of analysis of the cases settled in the courts. It would involve an amount of labour out of proportion to the value of the results in present circumstances. I know that I shall have the sympathy of the House in seeking all the administrative economy I can at the moment.

HOME GUARD.

13. **Sir H. Williams** asked the Minister of Labour whether he is aware that in an area, the name of which has been given to him, considerable numbers of men in the Home Guard have received notices calling upon them to enrol in the Home Guard; and whether, in future, he will instruct the officers in his Department to consult the nominal rolls of Home Guard battalions before issuing notices?

Mr. McCorquodale: It is not the case, so far as I am aware, that men already in the Home Guard have been called up for that Force. A number of them have received an inquiry form which is sent to persons liable to enrolment. Steps have now been taken to consult the local nominal rolls before this form is issued, but it is not possible to guarantee that the form will in no case be sent to a man already enrolled; if this happens, all he has to do is to return this form, saying so.

Sir H. Williams: My hon. Friend's investigation has not been very complete. Persons of my own acquaintance in some cases have been called up twice, would he look into the matter further?

Mr. McCorquodale: Perhaps my hon. Friend will let me have full details.

Sir H. Williams: I have supplied them already.

CIVIL DEFENCE.

DEEP SHELTERS, SOUTH-EAST LONDON.

18. **Mr. Ammon** asked the Home Secretary the total cost to date of certain deep shelters; when they were pronounced as temporarily out of repair; and when is it contemplated they will be fit for use?

Mr. H. Morrison: I understand that my hon. Friend refers to three groups of trench shelters in South-East London which were originally constructed in September, 1938. They became wet and unfit for dormitory occupation, and although substantially used in the early autumn of 1940, were temporarily closed for reconditioning in October and December of that year. Two of the groups have been drained, waterproofed and strengthened and fitted with bunks, lighting, heating, sanitation and canteen points. They are now dry and fit for immediate use as dormitory shelters should the necessity arise. It is not proposed to reopen them unless raiding recommences. The cost to date in these two cases has been £12,969 and £14,932 respectively. It has been found impossible satisfactorily to waterproof the third group, but automatic pumps have been installed which will enable them to be used for non-dormitory purposes in an emergency. The cost in this instance has been approximately £3,500.

Mr. Ammon: Would it not have been much better to abandon these shelters, because there is something wrong with them, and the engineers have shown that there are under-earth rivers and that the shelters cannot be pumped out effectively?

Mr. Morrison: I understand that the first two to which I referred are all right and will be satisfactory. My hon. Friend may be referring to the third one, and if he will let me have particulars, I will be happy to look into them.

INVASION ARRANGEMENTS.

19. **Petty-Officer Alan Herbert** asked the Home Secretary whether he is aware that, in spite of recent pronouncements by Ministers in both Houses of Parliament, some confusion and ignorance still prevail concerning the duties of civilians and civilian services in the event of invasion of these islands; and whether it is proposed to issue a further pamphlet making clear what are the new instructions, if any?

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Mr. H. Morrison: Such further guidance as may be desirable will be given from time to time, though not necessarily through the medium of a leaflet at the present stage.

Petty-Officer Herbert: Have the instructions on the duties of civilians been changed, because there are few civilians who know whether they have been or not?

Mr. Morrison: Appropriate steps have been taken through the Regional organisation and the invasion committees. The question of the issue of a revised edition of the leaflet was considered, but it was not considered expedient at the present moment. We have that point in mind for the right time.

Colonel Arthur Evans: Will it be the duty of the invasion committees to instruct the population in their areas as to their conduct in the event of enemy occupation of those areas?

Mr. Morrison: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Henderson Stewart: Would not one of the best ways to achieve this end be to regard the whole country as vulnerable and to accept the principle of the setting-up of invasion committees throughout the country?

Mr. Morrison: We are quite willing to set them up wherever they may be required, but it is thought on the whole that the best course is that they should be set up with the military authorities, whose guidance should be taken fully into account. The areas already covered by invasion committees are very extensive.

Mr. Thorne: What would happen in the event of invasion while the House is in Session?

Lieut.-Commander Gurney Braithwaite: Is my right hon. Friend aware that during recent months large numbers of aged civilians have been allowed to enter coastal areas where fighting is expected to take place, thus creating the impression that the Government are no longer in earnest about this matter?

Mr. Morrison: It will be remembered that when the ban was lifted temporarily, warnings were given on that point, and steps are now being taken by the police to remove from those areas people who entered them despite the regulations.

Dr. Edith Summerskill: Do the Government propose to organise women to be of maximum use in the event of an invasion?

Mr. Morrison: Yes, Sir, certainly.

Major-General Sir Alfred Knox: Who issues the instructions to invasion committees? Are they left to the Regional Commissioners or dealt with by headquarters?

Mr. Morrison: It is a matter between the Regional Commissioners and headquarters in co-operation. The channel of communication is quite good. Policy is settled in the Ministry, and the administrative arrangements are made between the Regional Commissioners and headquarters.

Sir A. Knox: Can we have copies of the instructions?

Mr. Morrison: I will consider that.

27. **Sir Percy Hurd** asked the Home Secretary whether it was with his authority that local defence committees are instructing all householders in the terms of the order sent to him to dig slit trenches in their gardens to a depth of 3½ feet and 3 feet in length for each person sheltered as a safeguard against invasion; and whether he is aware that householders are refusing to regard the order seriously or obey it?

Mr. Morrison: No, Sir. It is only contemplated that shelters of an improvised character should normally be provided when invasion appears to be imminent. The Regional Commissioner is communicating with the defence committee responsible for the document which I received from my hon. Friend.

Sir P. Hurd: May I ask whether it was the Civil Defence authorities who authorised this order, or was it done from headquarters?

Mr. Morrison: I am not sure. It may have been done on their own initiative by the local people, but we are taking steps to put matters right.

Sir P. Hurd: Is the instruction being withdrawn?

Mr. Morrison: Further instructions are being given to the authority, and I should think that it will follow that it will be withdrawn and cancelled.

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28. **Sir Stanley Reed** asked the Home Secretary whether steps have been taken to prevent an exodus from London and other large towns in the event of invasion, so as to avoid the congestion of the roads, which would hamper the military authorities, relieve the pressure on the police, who would have other important duties to perform and prevent local authorities from being overwhelmed by refugees, who would overstrain the means for protecting the local population?

Mr. Morrison: Yes, Sir. All necessary steps will be taken to implement the "stand firm" policy.

Sir S. Reed: Will my right hon. Friend ask his Department to get into touch with local authorities, particularly in the Home Counties, who are seriously perturbed at the possibility of such a situation arising?

Mr. Morrison: We are in touch with all the authorities concerned with this matter.

WOMEN'S VOLUNTARY SERVICES (UNIFORMS).

20. **Commander Sir Archibald Southby** asked the Home Secretary why the distribution of uniforms to the Women's Voluntary Services was taken out of the hands of over 200 retail firms and concentrated under his direction at Hinckley in Leicestershire; what was the cost to the public funds of the transfer; and, in view of the fact that Income Tax was payable on such profits as were made by the private firms in connection with the sale of this uniform, what loss to the revenue has resulted by reason of the change?

Mr. H. Morrison: Direct sale of W.V.S. uniforms to members has been undertaken by my Department with the concurrence of the trade associations most concerned, because it became clear that production could not be maintained unless planned and ordered by the Government. Since the selling prices include an appropriate sum for Departmental expenses, no cost to public funds will be involved. With regard to the last part of the Question, I understand that no figure can be given.

Sir A. Southby: What justification was there for the Government entering into competition with private traders in the supply of an article which is not the subject of free issue and as regards the sale of which there has never been any question of irregularity?

Mr. Morrison: I have already said that the step was taken in consultation with the trade associations most concerned, and we came to the conclusion that the public interest would best be served by the Government planning and organising the production of these articles. I hope that my hon. and gallant Friend will not apprehend that anything in the nature of a violent or irremediable revolution has taken place.

Sir A. Southby: Is it proposed to extend this system to the sale of uniforms which are now available from private traders?

Mr. Morrison: That would be a matter for the Departments concerned, and I hope that they would determine it on the ground of public interest as I have done in this case.

Captain Strickland: Does any profit arise to the State on the sale of these articles?

Mr. Morrison: Not so far as I know, but a profit would always be welcome. We do this on the basis of meeting expenses.

HEATHER BURNING.

21. **Mr. Henderson Stewart** asked the Home Secretary whether he is aware that heather burning is causing large fires to burn day and night at the present time and, in some cases, illuminating a wide area of the country, including towns and villages during the black-out hours, though the inhabitants of these places are still required strictly to maintain black-out conditions; that this anomaly is causing uneasiness in country districts; and whether he will alter the present regulations?

Mr. H. Morrison: Heather burning is permitted by night as well as day in Scotland, as this has been found essential if hill farms are to be maintained in productive condition. It is not allowed at night in the vicinity of towns and villages, and I am not aware that the practice has caused any uneasiness.

Mr. Stewart: If I supply cases showing that heather burning is taking place on a considerable scale near towns, will my right hon. Friend consider them?

Mr. Morrison: We will certainly consider them.

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APPROVED SCHOOLS AND REMAND HOMES.

23. **Mr. Edmund Harvey** asked the Home Secretary whether he will state the estimated deficiency of places in approved schools and in remand homes, respectively, to the latest convenient date; and whether, in view of the urgency of the need, he will use his powers of requisition to enable local authorities to acquire, by rent or purchase, suitable accommodation for these institutions and, in particular for additional remand homes?

Mr. H. Morrison: At the end of March about 1,100 boys and girls were awaiting vacancies in approved schools; but I hope that before long this waiting list will be reduced to more normal proportions, when the 16 new schools now in progress are completed. Requisitioning powers would be used if found necessary. It is difficult to estimate precisely the deficiency in remand home accommodation, but new accommodation is to be provided at 20 places, and this, with the improvement in approved school accommodation, will bring about a more satisfactory position.

Mr. Harvey: Will my right hon. Friend notify the authorities that where there is need for additional accommodation he is prepared to help them with powers of requisitioning?

Mr. Morrison: They are aware of that, and this answer will, of course, make them further aware of it, but requisitioning does not always help. As my hon. Friend appreciates, there is a good deal of competition—not unpleasant competition, but nevertheless competition—between the various State Departments for buildings of all sorts.

Sir Joseph Lamb: Will the right hon. Gentleman remember that the greatest need is to bring about a reduction in crime?

Mr. Morrison: Yes, Sir.

BORSTAL INSTITUTIONS.

24. **Mr. Harvey** asked the Home Secretary whether his attention has been called to the large number of boys waiting in prison until they can be sent to the Borstal institutions for the training to which they have been sentenced by the courts; and as such detention in mixed prisons is an additional sentence and at variance with the aim of Borstal training, what steps are being taken to remedy the position?

Mr. H. Morrison: Yes, Sir. Although the Borstal accommodation has been increased, the increase in the numbers has been such that difficulty is still being experienced in transferring youths to Borstal institutions at an early date after they have been sentenced. I fully share my hon. Friend's anxiety that everything possible shall be done to remedy the position, and measures for still further extensions of Borstal accommodation are being pushed on.

Mr. Harvey: In the meantime, will my right hon. Friend see that boys waiting to go to Borstal are not confined in general prisons along with adults and men convicted of serious crimes?

Mr. Morrison: I will certainly do all I can in that direction.

CHIEF CONSTABLES.

25. **Mr. Dobbie** asked the Home Secretary whether, in his new powers in relation to the continuity of the employment of chief constables, he will take into consultation the representatives of the local watch committee when any change is contemplated?

Mr. H. Morrison: If, as I assume, the hon. Member is referring to the amendment of Defence Regulation 39 made by the Order in Council of 22nd January last, I am certainly prepared to consult the police authority concerned before exercising the powers conferred upon me by the amending Regulation.

ALCOHOLIC LIQUOR (TREATING).

26. **Major Milner** asked the Home Secretary whether he has considered the desirability of bringing a no-treating order into force as was done in the last war; and with what result?

Mr. H. Morrison: The matter has been carefully considered, but, as pointed out in replies to previous Questions on this subject, conditions to-day are very different from those obtaining in the last war, and I know of no present circumstances calling for such a measure as my hon. and gallant Friend suggests.

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Major Milner: While I appreciate what my right hon. Friend has said, is he aware that there is a large body of evidence and of opinion that the imposition of such an order would be helpful to the war effort, particularly having regard to the large number of women now in the Forces; and will he further consider the matter and ask for evidence?

Mr. Morrison: I shall be pleased to consider any evidence which is available, but I think the House will agree that it is undesirable to interfere with the liberty of persons merely for the sake of doing so.

Sir A. Knox: Will the right hon. Gentleman consider the issue of a ration of free beer as an alternative?

Mr. Davidson: Is the Minister aware that " no-treating " is practised considerably in England at the present time?

Mr. George Griffiths: And to a greater extent in Scotland.

EDUCATION.

PUBLIC BOARDING SCHOOLS (GRANTS).

30. **Mr. Lindsay** asked the President of the Board of Education, what is the total sum paid in direct grants to public boarding schools; whether amounts paid to individual schools are ear-marked for specific purposes; and whether the State, either directly or indirectly, through local authorities, in any cases contributes to the boarding expenses of English or Welsh children?

The President of the Board of Education (Mr. Butler): The allowance paid by the Board in 1940-41 in direct grants to secondary schools with a substantial proportion of boarders was £65,352. Generally speaking, the grants so paid are not earmarked for specific purposes, but are in aid of the cost of tuition. The Board pay no direct grant on boarding expenses, but, in cases where a local education authority makes a boarding allowance to a pupil living outside the reach of a secondary school, the usual grant of 50 per cent. is paid on the authority's expenditure.

Mr. Lindsay: Would it be true to say that the State does not recognise boarding as an essential element in education although it does so in the case of the 31 new camp schools?

Mr. Butler: I think the State is very much interested in boarding as a possible form of education, and, it does recognise this in the case of camp schools to the extent of paying the billeting allowances.

TEACHERS IN ARMED FORCES (CIVIL REMUNERATION).

31. **Mr. Harvey** asked the President of the Board of Education whether his attention has been called to the disparity in the financial position of teachers in the employment of local education authorities who are now serving in the armed forces in consequence of the varying ways in which different authorities have made use of their optional powers to supplement military pay, and whether he has been able to give any guidance in the matter to the authorities concerned?

Mr. Butler: Yes, Sir. The position of teachers in this matter is governed by the Local Government Staffs (War Service) Act, 1939, which empowers local education authorities to make up the civil remuneration of their employees who are engaged in war service. The exercise of this power is a matter for the discretion of the local authorities concerned; they are well aware that expenditure so incurred will rank for grant from my Department.

Mr. Harvey: Have the Board made it clear that they would welcome a full use of these powers?

Mr. Butler: As I have said, I must leave it to the local authorities, but I think it is obviously a good thing to do.

Mr. Rhys Davies: Is the Minister aware that it is possible to have two adjoining education authorities, one of which makes up the pay of a soldier to the full amount while the other is paying nothing, and in view of the fact that there is a State subsidy in this connection will he remedy that position?

Sir J. Lamb: Is it not a fact that employees of all industrial concerns are in exactly the same position?

Mr. Rhys Davies: But those concerned are not State subsidised.

Mr. Butler: I cannot alter the terms of my original answer, but I am watching the situation, which I realise is important.

NATIONAL HEALTH INSURANCE.

32. **Mr. Culverwell** asked the Minister of Health whether, in view of the fact

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[Mr. Culverwell.]
that some approved societies have no surplus funds available to provide additional benefits such as ophthalmic or dental treatment, he will issue instructions that prospective members shall be informed of the extent of the benefits which the society is in a position to provide?

The Minister of Health (Mr. E. Brown): I have no power to require an approved society to inform a prospective member of the additional benefits, if any, which it is for the time being able to provide. I would point out that a person cannot become entitled to such benefits until he has been a member of his society for the minimum periods laid down in the Regulations and that in the meantime a quinquennial valuation of the society's funds may have led to a material enlargement or contraction of the additional benefit rights conferred on its members. Information as to a society's current scheme of additional benefits or as to its present inability to provide such benefits may, therefore, prove misleading as a guide to probable future rights.

Mr. Culverwell: Is my right hon. Friend aware that prospective members generally assume that additional benefits will be available, and that therefore societies which are not in a position to pay such additional benefits are in effect, if not in intention, accepting members under false pretences? Cannot he do anything to make the position clear to prospective members?

Mr. Brown: In view of the fact that there must be 2½ years' membership to qualify for additional benefit and 4½ years for additional cash benefits, there must be plenty of time for members to get to know the position.

Mr. Culverwell: But then it is too late.

Mr. Lindsay: Does my right hon. Friend realise that this means that boys between 14 and 18 cannot get any dental benefit to supplement the regular attention which has been paid to their teeth in school for the previous three or four years?

Mr. Brown: This is a matter of the Act and the Regulations under the Act.

OLD AGE PENSIONS.

33. **Mr. Ness Edwards** asked the Minister of Health whether he is aware that the Assistance Board is taking into account for the purpose of assessing the needs of old age pensioners amounts which, by Statute, should be ignored and, in particular, voluntary allotments made by sons who are in the Armed Forces; and if he will take steps to put an end to this practice?

Mr. E. Brown: I am informed by the Assistance Board that no part of a resource required by Statute to be disregarded is ever taken into account so as to reduce the normal rate of supplementary pension. Though allotments by serving sons are not protected by Statute, the first 7s. 6d. a week of the allotment is normally treated in the same way.

Mr. Edwards: Is not the Minister aware that voluntary allotments by sons in the Army are taken into account for the purpose of depriving the old age pensioner of winter allowances and the advantage of the high rent provision, and that this has been the practice of the Board for some time?

Mr. Brown: That is another issue. My hon. Friend has now passed from the Statute into the realm of discretionary action. Perhaps he will let me have particular cases, and I will ask the Board about the position.

Mr. Edwards: Is the Minister not aware that the same contention applies to winter allowances and the benefit of the high rent rules?

Mr. Brown: As I have said, the moment my hon. Friend talks about winter allowances he knows that he is in the realm of discretion.

Mr. Davidson: In view of the fact that there have been many meetings of old age pensioners at which evidence has been submitted that deductions have been made in respect of these allotments, will the Minister meet representatives of old age pensioners' associations?

Mr. Brown: I shall be glad to see them at any time.

Mr. Edwards: In view of the unsatisfactory nature of the reply to the original Question, I give notice that I shall raise the matter on the Adjournment.

35. **Mr. Hewlett** asked the Minister of Health the number of person who are at present receiving old age pensions; the number of applications which have been

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received for supplementary pensions; how many of these applications have been granted or refused; whether he can indicate the approximate number of the administrative staff engaged on investigating these applications for supplementary pensions; and the annual cost to his Department?

Mr. E. Brown: As the answer involves a number of figures, I will, with permission, circulate it in the OFFICIAL REPORT.

Following is the reply:

The numbers of persons in Great Britain who are receiving old age pensions are approximately as set out below:

(*a*) Contributory—under 70...	1,246,000
(*b*) Contributory — 70 and over	1,475,000
(*c*) Non-contributory (excluding 29,000 blind pensions)	477,000
Total	3,198,000

Information as to supplementary pensions is not available in the form asked for and could not be obtained without the expenditure of considerable amount of staff time. The latest available information shows that during February, 1942, applications for supplementary pensions were received at the rate of about 5,500 cases a week on which on the average about 4,700 supplementary pensions were granted, the remainder being rejected or withdrawn.

With regard to the fourth and fifth parts of the Question, I would refer my hon. Friend to the information I gave my hon. Friend the Member for Leigh (Mr. Tinker) on 16th December, 1941.

36. **Mr. Liddall** asked the Minister of Health the total number of persons in receipt of old age pensions on the nearest available date?

Mr. Brown: I would refer my hon. Friend to the reply to a similar Question which I have given to my hon. Friend the Member for the Exchange Division of Manchester (Mr. Hewlett) to-day.

37. **Mr. Evelyn Walkden** asked the Minister of Health whether he will take account of the effect of the Budget and the increased costs of tobacco, beer and cinema seats, and the limited means of old age pensioners to pay these higher prices; and whether he will recommend to the Assistance Board an increase in the supplementary pensions allowance that will give to old age pensioners a beneficial adjustment?

Mr. Brown: I regret that I do not feel justified in making a recommendation to the Board as suggested by my hon. Friend.

Mr. Walkden: Is my right hon. Friend aware of the genuine disappointment that will be felt by the mass of old age pensioners throughout the land at the reply which he has just given?

Mr. Brown: No, Sir. I have nothing to add to the statement which was made by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer on that subject.

BIRTH-RATE.

34. **Mr. Ivor Thomas** asked the Minister of Health whether it is the intention of the Government to encourage an increase in the birth-rate at the present time?

Mr. E. Brown: My hon. Friend will be aware that his Question raises issues of profound significance, spiritual and social as well as economic, and it would be impossible within the limits of a Parliamentary Question and answer to deal with all the aspects of this matter. It has been the policy of successive Governments, however, in fields much wider than that of my Department, to influence the national life and economy in favour of families with children. The Income Tax allowances for children, the arrangements for the care of mothers and young children, the provision of free education and of school meals and school medical services, and the preference given to large families in the selection of tenants of municipal houses afford familiar examples. This policy has been extended by many war measures such as increased allowances for children under the Unemployment Insurance and assistance schemes and for children of members of the Forces, Exchequer subventions towards the cost of bread and other staple foods, the extension of the school meals service and the provision on an increasing scale of cheap or free milk and other protective foods for expectant mothers and young children. Moreover,

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[Mr. Brown.]
children's clothing has been excluded from the scope of the Purchase Tax. These measures carry with them a very substantial relief from the financial burden of parentage.

Mr. Thomas: As this is a question which affects many Government Departments, is there any machinery for inter-departmental consultation on the question?

Mr. Brown: If the hon. Member desires to raise this very important national issue, he should do so with those responsible for the Government as a whole.

LOCAL TAXATION.

38. **Mr. Lipson** asked the Minister of Health whether he is aware that the burden of local rates is being borne by shopkeepers and householders, many of whose incomes have fallen since the war, while prosperous industrial concerns pay no rates at all; and will he take steps to see that the burden of local taxation is more equitably shared?

Mr. E. Brown: Occupiers of industrial hereditaments are not exempt from the payment of rates. The Act which provided for the partial de-rating of such premises and the accompanying Exchequer grants was a measure of permanent reform in the system of local taxation, and the Government do not contemplate the introduction of legislation to repeal it.

Mr. Lipson: Is not the right hon. Gentleman aware that the position was entirely different when the legislation was passed? In view of the changed circumstances, cannot the matter be reconsidered?

Mr. Brown: I think not. The information which comes to my hand shows that in many rating areas the rate for 1942-43 is lower than it was in 1941-42.

WAR-TIME NURSERIES, CHESTER.

39. **Mr. Burke** asked the Minister of Health how many war-time nursery centres there are in Chester; and whether any further accommodation is to be provided in the near future?

Mr. E. Brown: A nursery school is already in operation in Chester. Three war-time nurseries, to accommodate 180 children, have been approved, but are not yet in operation.

Mr. Burke: Is the Minister aware that in one school there is accommodation for 40, a waiting list of 53, and 51 on the roll? If a local authority displays indifference, can the Government not take action to speed up the matter, which is retarding the war effort among women?

Mr. Brown: I should not like to interfere with local authorities. It is not the fault of the local authority in the case mentioned by the hon. Gentleman. I think there were some real supply difficulties. We are doing our best to get the matter put right at the earliest moment.

Mr. Burke: Generally speaking, can the Government not take action where an authority is definitely at fault?

Mr. Brown: We are having very little difficulty in securing full co-operation.

ARMED FORCES (PENSIONS AND GRANTS).

40. **Captain Sir Ian Fraser** asked the Minister of Pensions whether he will increase attendant allowances for totally disabled officers and men to at least the figures paid for the past 20 years to veterans of the great war, particularly having regard to the fact that the cost of attendance is now much higher than in peace time?

The Minister of Pensions (Sir Walter Womersley): The maximum rates of attendant allowances for totally disabled officers and men have recently been increased correspondingly with the other improvements made in the rates payable in respect of death or disablement in the present war. I am not prepared to recommend any further increase at the present time.

41. **Sir I. Fraser** asked the Minister of Pensions whether he has asked the Ministry of Health for doctors for pensions appeals tribunals; and, if so, what was their answer?

Sir W. Womersley: Yes, Sir, and I have been informed that the necessary number of doctors could not be supplied at the present time.

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Sir I. Fraser: Has the right hon. Gentleman represented to the Minister that there may be a considerable number of older doctors who served in the last war and who could undertake this work? Does he realise that a severely disabled man or his widow will not be helped by the Ministry of Pensions being both judge and advocate in this matter?

Sir W. Womersley: A thorough investigation into the question of medical personnel available in the country was made by a special committee presided over by my hon. Friend the Member for Norwich, and the report was that the medical men were not available. Regarding the second part of the Supplementary Question, I would refer my hon. and gallant Friend to the answer which I gave on 19th March to my hon. Friend the Member for Deritend (Sir J. Smedley Crooke).

Mr. Silverman: Does the Minister consider it is really necessary to have a doctor sitting as a member of such an appeal tribunal? Would it not be sufficient to have any mind trained in the weighing of evidence, to consider the medical evidence already existing?

Sir W. Womersley: It is not just a question of having a medical man to sit on the tribunal. He has to assist both the Ministry and the appellant.

Sir A. Knox: How many doctors are required?

Sir W. Womersley: I could not say without notice.

42. **Sir I. Fraser** asked the Minister of Pensions whether he will give an undertaking that the rates of pensions and allowances for officers, warrant officers, non-commissioned officers and men disabled in this war will, in due course, be raised to those paid in respect of similar persons similarly disabled in the Great War; and what conditions will have to be fulfilled before such an adjustment takes place?

Sir W. Womersley: As a result of the recent readjustment, the present rates generally bear the same relation to the rates laid down in 1919 for Great War cases as the present cost of living figure does to that prevailing in 1919. The rates would again be reviewed in the event of a further material and continued rise in the cost of living figure, but the amount of any increase must depend on the extent of that rise.

NATIONAL FINANCE.

Post Office Pensioners.

43. **Sir Patrick Hannon** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will consider the position of retired postal servants, and, in view of the increased cost of living and the life-long services of these pensioners to the State, whether improvement can be made in their present pensions scales?

The Chancellor of the Exchequer (Sir Kingsley Wood): I would refer my hon. Friend to the answer which I gave on 15th April to my hon. Friend the Member for Romford (Mr. Parker).

Sir P. Hannon: Does that answer mean that the Chancellor of the Exchequer will not take into account the case of people who are living on pre-war pensions? Will no consideration be extended to them?

Sir K. Wood: Civil Service pensions are of fixed amount, dependent upon length of service at the time of retiring. They do not vary with the cost of living.

Mr. De la Bère: Is the Minister not aware that these postal servants have rendered valuable service to the country? Can they not have a square deal, in view of the rise in the cost of living? I hope that the Minister will give this matter urgent attention.

Increased Taxes (Old Age Pensioners).

44. **Major Peto** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will take steps to enable pensioners from our Fighting Services to obtain their tobacco at pre-Budget rates?

57. **Mr. Kirby** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether, in view of the increased cost of luxuries such as cinema entertainment, smokes and beer, and having in mind the fixed low incomes of old age pensioners, he will consider the urgent desirability of increasing their pensions so that this necessitous section of the community may obtain some measure of enjoyment in addition to bare necessities such as are now within their limited means?

60. **Mr. Wootton-Davies** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he

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[Mr. Wootton-Davies.]
will consider the issue of coupons to old age pensioners, so that they may obtain beer, cigarettes and tobacco at pre-Budget prices?

61. **Mr. Denville** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will provide in the Finance Act for the exclusion from the increase in the new Tobacco and Beer Duties of old age pensioners, or provide increased pensions to cover the cost?

Sir K. Wood: I would refer my hon. Friends to the statement I made in the House yesterday.

Mr. Denman: Is that the final and irrevocable answer of my right hon. Friend?

Sir K. Wood: Yes, Sir, as far as I can see at present.

TREASURY DEPOSIT RECEIPTS.

56. **Dr. Russell Thomas** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether the disclosure of the weekly amounts of Treasury deposit receipts nominally maturing and which have been pre-encashed by the banks, is now forbidden; and, if so, for what reason?

Sir K. Wood: Publication of the weekly amounts of Treasury deposit receipts encashed before maturity has not hitherto been authorised. I am, however, arranging that in future the monthly return of debt transactions shall show the extent to which redemptions of Treasury deposit receipts have taken place before maturity.

OVERSEAS DISINVESTMENT AND CONSUMPTION EXPENDITURE.

58. **Lieut.-Colonel Sir Assheton Pownall** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether, when the results of the more comprehensive inquiries covering overseas disinvestment and expenditure on consumption are available, as mentioned on page 2 of Command Paper 6347, he will cause them to be printed to supplement the information given in the Command Paper?

Sir K. Wood: These statistical investigations are under constant revision, with a view to further accuracy, throughout the year, but I will bear in mind my hon. and gallant Friend's suggestion.

INCOME TAX (PRODUCT).

59. **Sir A. Pownall** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the approximate product in the current financial year of 1d. in the income tax; and what was the corresponding figure immediately before the war?

Sir K. Wood: The approximate produce of a penny of the standard rate of Income Tax in the current financial year would be £7,500,000, and the corresponding figure immediately before the war would be £5,000,000.

STATE PENSIONS.

62. **Dr. Little** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether, in view of the changed conditions now operating throughout the country which have greatly increased the cost of living and made the position of all pensioners difficult, more especially those retired on small pension, he will appoint a Commission to consider and report on the whole matter at issue with a view to the increase of pensions?

Sir K. Wood: No, Sir. I do not think that the Commission proposed would be appropriate. There are a great many pensioners in this country whose income is derived from funds or bodies over which His Majesty's Government have no control, and in respect of which the Government could not assume a special responsibility.

Dr. Little: May I ask my right hon. Friend to go into the whole matter with a view to providing the means of livelihood for these pensioners, who are suffering so heavily?

SAVINGS CAMPAIGN.

64. **Mr. Ridley** asked the Financial Secretary to the Treasury whether, in the organisation of future Savings Campaigns, he will advise the National Savings movement so to arrange area targets that they will indicate the total and average of small regular savers rather than those of large investors?

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Captain Crookshank): I appreciate my hon. Friend's point, and I can assure him that the National Savings Movement is fully alive to the advantage of special targets for small savings, which have, in fact, already been adopted on suitable occasions.

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GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS (MESSRS. WIMPEY).

65. **Mr. J. J. Davidson** asked the Financial Secretary to the Treasury the total number of war contracts in England and Wales placed with the firm of George Wimpey and Company, Limited, during the last 12 months, and the total sum involved?

Captain Crookshank: For good reasons, it is not the practice to publish information about the contracts awarded to particular firms, but in view of the inquiry recently instituted, I am prepared to make an exception in this case. I have not got the precise information for which the hon. Member asks, but the total value of contracts placed with this firm by Government Departments in England and Wales from the outbreak of war to December, 1941, was about £18,250,000.

Mr. Davidson: Is the right hon. and gallant Gentleman aware that I have a reply from another Government Department which indicates quite clearly that one Service Department alone has given more than £25,000,000 of contracts to this firm, will he tell me how he squares that with his reply, and further is he aware that I will produce this Government document from the Ministry of Works and Buildings on any day that he desires?

Captain Crookshank: I shall be very glad to see it to-day, if the hon. Gentleman does not mind.

66. **Mr. Davidson** asked the Financial Secretary to the Treasury whether he intends to institute an inquiry into the question of placing war contracts in England and Wales, with particular reference to the firm of George Wimpey and Company, Limited?

Captain Crookshank: I propose to await the report of the inquiry about Scottish contracts.

Mr. Davidson: May I ask the Minister how he relates the question of the Scottish inquiry to the question of an English and Welsh inquiry, and is he further aware of the deep anxiety of many hon. Members for England and Wales with regard to this particular question?

Captain Crookshank: I think the Members for England and Wales are probably more aware of those aspects of it than the hon. Gentleman who sits opposite, but as a result of the inquiries which he has made in the House himself, this inquiry has been instituted. I think it is much better to see whether anything emerges from that which requires any further attention. I cannot possibly prejudge the results of the inquiry.

Mr. Davidson: Is the right hon. and gallant Gentleman aware that I have the full consent and permission of many English and Welsh Members to raise this question?

Mr. Stokes: May I ask my right hon. and gallant Friend whether it is not a fact that one of the partners of this concern is employed by one of those two Ministries?

AIR-TRAINING CONFERENCE, OTTAWA.

45. **Mr. Simmonds** asked the Prime Minister whether His Majesty's Government have been invited to participate in the Conference announced by President Roosevelt and the Prime Minister of Canada of representatives of the United Nations who have air-training programmes in the United States or Canada, and to be held in Ottawa in May; and, if so, what reply has been given?

The Deputy Prime Minister (Mr. Attlee): Yes, Sir. His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom have warmly welcomed the opportunity to send representatives to this Conference, which, they feel sure, will promote still closer co-operation in air training between the United Nations. The United Kingdom Delegation to the Conference will be led by my right hon. Friend the Joint Under-Secretary of State for Air (Captain Balfour).

Mr. Simmonds: Can my right hon. Friend assure the House that there is no question of any delay in the air-training programme which has necessitated this Conference?

Mr. Attlee: No, Sir, there is no question of delay.

CIVIL SERVICE (CONTROL).

46. **Mr. De la Bère** asked the Prime Minister whether, notwithstanding the recommendation of the Royal Commission on the Civil Service of 1929-31, which recommended that there should be no change in the system of control of civil

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[Mr. De la Bère.]
servants whereby the head of the Treasury is also the head of the Civil Service, he will now consider appointing a director general of civil servants, in view of the changed circumstances created by the war, which has involved the head of the Treasury with increased responsibilities and additional burdens?

Mr. Attlee: I do not consider that the adoption of the suggestion of my hon. Friend is desirable.

Mr. De la Bère: Is my right hon. Friend aware of the widespread feeling among responsible opinion throughout the country that the control of the Civil Service since the war could be improved, and is he further aware that this Royal Commission took place a very long time ago and that conditions have completely changed; and will he really look into the matter, which is not one to be lightly dismissed or even dismissed at all?

Mr. Attlee: There is no question of dismissing the matter lightly; but I do not think my hon. Friend's specific suggestion is very good.

Mr. A. Edwards: Has the Minister any hope of speeding up the work of the Civil Service and of Departments generally?

Mr. Attlee: That is another question.

" DAILY WORKER."

47. **Mr. Gallacher** asked the Prime Minister whether he has considered the resolution sent to him by the Ponders End, 4 Branch, No. 72 P.E., of the Amalgamated Engineering Union, demanding the immediate lifting of the ban on the " Daily Worker "; and what reply he had sent?

Mr. Attlee: The resolution in question has been received by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and has been brought to the notice of my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary.

Mr. Gallacher: Is the right hon. Gentleman not aware that there is a very deep feeling in every factory in the country—— [An HON. MEMBER: " How do you know? "] Perhaps I may be allowed to put my question, Mr. Speaker. Is the Minister aware that there is a feeling in every factory in the country—[HON. MEMBERS: " No."]—that the continued banning of the " Daily Worker " is a shameful piece of political discrimination?

INDIA (CONSTITUTION).

48. **Mr. Gallacher** asked the Prime Minister whether he has considered the resolution of the Cowdenbeath Co-operative Society, Limited, sent to him by the Member for West Fife, calling upon the Government to grant the Indian people the right to set up a provisional government with power to organise the defence of India in full co-operation with Britain and all other Allies to ensure the defeat of Fascism; and whether he is prepared to reconsider the policy of the Government in relation to India along the lines proposed by this resolution?

Mr. Attlee: My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has received the resolution referred to. I must ask the hon. Member to await the statement which will be made shortly on behalf of His Majesty's Government.

Mr. Gallacher: Is the right hon. Gentleman not aware that if Nehru and Gandhi were given an opportunity of forming a national Government, we could win India for the Allies, and was it not an impossible task which the Lord Privy Seal had?

WAR OPERATIONS (RESPONSIBILITY).

49. **Major Milner** asked the Prime Minister who is responsible for taking decisions, on the advice tendered by the Chiefs of Staff Committee in regard to war operations?

Mr. Attlee: Decisions on advice tendered by the Chiefs of Staff are taken by the Prime Minister and Minister of Defence, the Defence Committee, or the War Cabinet, according to the circumstances and nature of the issue involved, the ultimate responsibility for the conduct of the war resting with the War Cabinet.

Major Milner: Would the right hon. Gentleman say who brings the matter before the War Cabinet, who is the individual ultimately responsible, and whether decisions in the War Cabinet are taken by a majority?

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Mr. Attlee: I do not think the points which my hon. and gallant Friend has raised can conveniently be dealt with in an answer across the Floor of the House. They are more a matter for debate.

MINISTER OF STATE (BROADCAST).

50. **Mr. Lipson** asked the Prime Minister whether the broadcast speech on Sunday, 19th April, by the Minister of State, in which, while stressing the need for co-operation in the post-war period with the United States of America, he made no mention of Russia and China, represents the policy of His Majesty's Government?

Mr. Attlee: In his broadcast last Sunday my right hon. Friend the Minister of State dealt particularly with Anglo-American relations in view of his recent experience as the representative of Australia in the United States; but he specifically referred to co-operation with other peoples of good will, which is the declared policy of His Majesty's Government.

Mr. Lipson: Arising out of that answer, may I ask my right hon. Friend whether, in view of the part which Russia and China are playing in the war against the Axis Powers, it is not quite wrong when speaking of co-operation after the war for a Minister to omit to mention those countries?

Mr. Hannah: What about Holland?

RIGHTS OF WAY (WALKERS).

51 and 52. **Mr. Marshall** asked the Minister of Agriculture (1) whether, in view of the restriction of transport facilities and the difficulty of taking other than walking holidays, he will make provision for new rights of way over 68 miles of moorland, mainly in Derbyshire, and thus complete the Pennine Way, a walker's route of 250 miles from the Peak of Derbyshire to the Scottish border; and

(2) whether, in order to encourage people to take walking holidays, he will provide that for the period of the war, the public shall have the right of access for air and exercise to all uncultivated mountains and moorlands, provided that such access does not interfere with military requirements?

The Minister of Agriculture (Mr. R. S. Hudson): I have no power to grant the facilities suggested except under the procedure laid down by the Access to Mountains Act, 1939.

Mr. Marshall: Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that the processes necessary under that Act are difficult and protracted and may be very expensive, and will he look into the matter with the idea of asking for powers of some kind to enable him to grant this privilege?

Mr. Hudson: I have already stated that I have no power except under the Act, and I think it was generally agreed by all the parties concerned in the passage of the Act, which was an agreed Measure, that no steps could or should be taken during the war except in those cases where there was agreement among all the parties.

Sir J. Lamb: Does the right hon. Gentleman not agree that the production of food is more important during the war even than this class of recreation?

AGRICULTURE.

Food Production, London Area.

53. **Mr. Brooke** asked the Minister of Agriculture whether he is aware that there is much space in London which might be put to greater use for food production, as well as many thousands of Civil Defence staffs and others who would be glad to do more to produce food if the right encouragement, advice and facilities were easily obtainable; and whether he has any staff whose direct duty it is to stimulate the keeping of poultry and rabbits, as well as other food production, in the London area?

Mr. Hudson: I presume that my hon. Friend has mainly in mind the many public parks and open spaces, as I am not aware that there are any other substantial areas of vacant land in the Metropolis. Considerable areas in these parks and spaces have already been brought under cultivation as allotments, and the question of opening further areas in this way is constantly under consideration by the local authorities who, in addition to meeting the demands of the Military and Civil Defence Services for land for various purposes, also have to keep in view the requirements of the general public for adequate open spaces for recreation.

Civil Defence workers and other persons who desire to cultivate an allotment should

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[Mr. Hudson.]
apply to their local authority in the first place, and if any difficulty is encountered, I will look into the matter upon being informed. The keeping of poultry and rabbits on a domestic scale is the responsibility of the Domestic Poultry Keepers' Council, whose regional organisation covers the London area as well as other parts of the country. The encouragement of domestic pig keeping is entrusted to the Small Pig Keepers' Council, who are shortly appointing a number of Regional Officers to cover the whole of England and Wales. Numbers of domestic pig, poultry and rabbit clubs have already been formed in the London area under the ægis of these two Councils.

LONG-TERM POLICY.

55. **Mr. De la Bère** asked the Minister of Agriculture whether he can now make some progress statement in connection with the formulation of a long-term policy for agriculture; and, specifically, what steps have been taken to define what portion of our essential food supply should be produced at home?

Mr. Hudson: I am not yet in a position to add to the reply given to my hon. Friend on 11th September, 1941.

Mr. De la Bère: Is my right hon. Friend aware that the problem of the proportion of food to be grown at home will not solve itself, and does he not think that there should be some earnest endeavour before the war terminates to produce some scheme which will make it possible for agriculture to carry on, as the food will be needed even after the termination of the war?

Mr. Hudson: I am fully aware of that, and I am also fully aware that, in view of the shipping position, I have to be most concerned with increasing food production this year and next.

Mr. De la Bère: That is true, but there is no reason why this long-term policy should not be considered as well. This evasion is no good. Nothing further was ever intended.

STAG HUNTING.

54. **Mr. Leach** asked the Minister of Agriculture whether his attention has been drawn to a recent stag hunt in which the stag, with its tail and several inches of spinal cord severed, was finally chased into the sea at Porlock Weir after the trampling of cottagers' gardens by the hunt, and then being caught upon the barbed wire entanglement, torn further by hounds and finally drowned; and whether he will take steps to end such functions?

Mr. Hudson: My information is that the hide of the stag in question was entirely untorn, either by hounds or by barbed wire, and that the tail and spinal cord were undamaged. The chairman of the Devon and Somerset Staghounds has informed me that the sole object of stag hunting in war-time is the killing of deer, preferably by shooting, in order to preserve food crops.

Mr. Leach: Do I understand the right hon. Gentleman to say that he is not prepared to interfere with this sordid and brutal practice?

TRADE AND COMMERCE.

POST-WAR RECONSTRUCTION (INDUSTRIAL FIRMS).

67. **Mr. Culverwell** asked the President of the Board of Trade whether, in planning for post-war reconstruction, he will bear in mind the importance of maintaining and encouraging small industrial firms and, with this end in view, will consider the granting by the Government of financial assistance with appropriate safeguards to such firms?

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Board of Trade (Captain Waterhouse): I can assure my hon. Friend that in working out plans for post-war reconstruction of industry the importance of small firms will be taken into account. The Departments concerned are considering the problems which will arise, including finance, but it is not possible at present to forecast the nature of the measures which will be required.

POTTERY INDUSTRY.

68. **Dr. Russell Thomas** asked the President of the Board of Trade, in view of the fact of the shortage of home pottery and its high price and that an endeavour was made to ensure that the industry should maintain full production by the employment of youthful labour for long hours in place of those withdrawn from the industry, whether the

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maintained output is used for export purposes in order to obtain foreign exchange?

Captain Waterhouse: The object of the Order permitting overtime working in the potteries was to allow the maximum release of labour. The Order is now being withdrawn. Some exports of pottery are still allowed both for essential supplies to countries dependent upon us for such goods, and because they are a valuable source of exchange. These exports are to be substantially reduced in order to increase supplies for the home market.

PRESS TELEGRAM (SOUTH AMERICAN CAPITALS).

69. **Mr. Wilfrid Roberts** asked the Minister of Information whether he has now given further consideration to the question of the contents of a Ministry of Information telegram sent recently to South American capitals, and is now prepared to make a further statement?

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Information (Mr. Thurtle): Yes, Sir. The telegram to which my hon. Friend refers was not written or inspired by any official of the Ministry of Information. But in view of the facilities given by the Ministry to the journalist who sent this telegram, my hon. Friend was, I think, justified in raising the question as to whether my Department had any responsibility for the contents of the telegram.

GREEN VEGETABLES (PRICES).

70. **Mr. Evelyn Walkden** asked the Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Food whether he has considered the resolution passed by the Croydon Food Control Committee urging the need for the control of prices of green vegetables; what similar resolution he has received from other organisations and bodies; and what action he proposes to take with this now urgent demand?

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Food (Major Lloyd George): The resolution referred to by my hon. Friend and other resolutions dealing with the question of green vegetable prices have been received by my Department. My Noble Friend had already ordered an inquiry into the prices of green vegetables and he will make a statement at an early date.

RAILINGS REMOVAL (GATES).

71. **Sir William Davison** asked the Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Works and Buildings whether he is aware of the unnecessary inconvenience caused to the public by the removal of gates fitted with locks and keys at the same time as the railings protecting forecourts and open spaces, which prevents temporary wire or split chestnut fencing from being erected in the place of the iron railings removed; that local authorities have no power given to them in the matter; and will he give the necessary instructions to enable gates to be left where application for their retention is made, regard being had to the small amount of metal involved in the matter?

The Joint Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Works and Buildings (Mr. Hicks): I am aware of the facts as stated by my hon. Friend, but in view of the urgent need for iron and steel for war purposes I regret that I cannot see my way to make the concession asked for.

Sir W. Davison: Is the hon. Gentleman aware that the amount of metal in these gates is such that often even he and I could carry them away with us in one journey, and that the weight is infinitisimal compared with the expense to the State and the individual in putting new locks on the split chestnut gates?

Mr. Hicks: I can only answer the hon. Member by saying that the aggregate weight of the gates is very considerable.

FRENCH MERCHANT SHIPS (JAPANESE SEIZURE).

72. **Mr. Thorne** asked the Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Economic Warfare whether he can give any information about the French ships handed over to Japan; what are the number and nature of the ships and total tonnage involved; and where these ships are situated?

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Economic Warfare (Mr. Dingle Foot): At the time of Japan's

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[Mr. Foot.]

entry into the war, there were nine ocean-going French merchant ships in Far Eastern waters, totalling 85,000 g.r.t. and upwards of 35,000 g.r.t. of coasters and local craft. It is now reported that 50,000 tons of shipping have been taken over by Japan, and these are almost certainly ocean-going vessels. It would not be in the public interest to disclose what information we possess regarding the present situation of these ships.

MERCANTILE MARINE.

Chinese Seamen (Shore Lodging Accommodation).

73. **Mr. Thorne** asked the Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of War Transport what arrangements are made for the lodging accommodation of Chinese seamen when they are paid off after a voyage; are any inquiries made about the boarding-houses to which they are sent; and what kind of inspectors are engaged to see that the boarding-houses have proper sleeping rooms and washing facilities?

The Joint Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of War Transport (Mr. Noel-Baker): Very few Chinese seamen are, in fact, paid off in this country. Shipowners are responsible for the maintenance in this country of Chinese seamen in their employment who may be temporarily ashore. Such seamen are at present mainly quartered in Liverpool and are usually accommodated in boarding-houses owned by Chinese. These establishments are frequently visited by the local Sanitary Inspectors, whose requirements must be met. If my hon. Friend will send me any specific complaints, I will gladly look into them.

Merchant Seamen, West Indies.

74. **Mr. David Adams** asked the Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of War Transport whether, with a view to aiding in the recruitment of seamen and removing certain difficulties of repatriation, it is intended to establish in the West Indies a merchant seamen's pool?

Mr. Noel-Baker: No, Sir, I do not think it necessary to adopt my hon. Friend's suggestion. No difficulty has been experienced in recruiting in the West Indies the number of seamen to whom employment can be given.

Mr. Adams: Is my hon. Friend aware that in the West Indies there is a strong demand for the course I have suggested, whereby greatly increased numbers may be enabled to engage in seafaring careers?

Mr. Noel-Baker: Pools are required where it is necessary to provide crews at short notice for ships that come in, and where difficulties arise in providing those crews. If the hon. Member will send me evidence, I will look into it.

Lifeboats (Safety Device).

75. **Dr. Little** asked the Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of War Transport whether, for the safety of those travelling by sea, he will issue instructions that all lifeboats must be fitted with the Lowndes safety device, which has passed the tests of the Board of Trade, and is at present on the lifeboats of several of the Cross-Channel steamers?

Mr. Noel-Baker: No, Sir. For the purpose of enabling persons to cling to upturned lifeboats, arrangements have been made for the fitting, in addition to bilge keels or keel rails, of a rope gear appliance which has been specially designed to meet the present conditions at sea and which can readily be constructed on board ship.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE.

Mr. Arthur Greenwood: May I ask the Leader of the House to state the forthcoming Business of the House?

The Lord Privy Seal (Sir Stafford Cripps): The Business will be as follows:

First Sitting Day—The Adjournment of the House will be moved, and I will open a Debate with a statement on my Mission to India. At the end of the Debate we shall ask the House to agree to the continuance in force of Proclamations made under the Government of India Act, and the Governors' Allowances Privileges (Amendment) Order.

Second Sitting Day—Second Reading of the Minister of Works and Planning Bill and Committee stage of the necessary Money Resolution.

Third Sitting Day—Second Reading of the War Damage (Amendment) Bill and Committee stage of the necessary Money Resolution.

Mr. Greenwood: May I ask two Questions: one, whether after the Secret

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Session to-day the Government will still bear in mind that there is a very strong desire on all sides of the House and in the country for a continuation of the War Debate in public; and second, in view of the publication of the Beveridge Report on fuel rationing, and the appearance on the Paper of a Motion on that subject, whether steps will be taken to expedite a full Debate on the question?

Sir S. Cripps: As regards the first Question, the Government will certainly bear in mind the desire that has been expressed. Perhaps after the Debate to-day it will be easier to see how that can be arranged. Secondly, as regards the fuel ration question, it is proposed, at an early date, to give the House an opportunity of discussing the Beveridge Report before any Order is made upon it.

Sir John Wardlaw-Milne: Arising out of what my right hon. Friend has said, is the House to understand that the decision regarding Business for the next Sitting Days is not yet final? I ask that for this reason, that quite apart from the Secret Debate which is to take place to-day, upon the necessity of which only the Prime Minister can give a decision with knowledge, there is undoubtedly a desire to have a Debate in public upon the war, and that at once, as soon as the House can possibly have it. I think that the whole House is anxious to hear my right hon. Friend on India, but I suggest to him that there should be a Debate upon the war on the other two available days in the next series of Sittings. Not only have six weeks elapsed since we debated the war in public, but there have been various unfortunate events since then, on which the House would like to express an opinion. I would remind my right hon. Friend that there is already on the Paper a Motion regarding the setting-up of a Commission to inquire into the disaster of Singapore. It is perfectly true that the Prime Minister has categorically said that he could not agree to such a Commission being set up, but surely the House is entitled to discuss the point and to hear his reasons, and if possible, to convince him that those Members in favour of a Commission have right on their side?

Sir S. Cripps: A number of the matters which the hon. Member has mentioned can, of course, be debated to-day——[*Interruption*]—in Secret Session. I quite appreciate that it is in Secret Session, but so far as the expression of opinion by the House is concerned, that can be made to-day. So far as the forthcoming Business of the House is concerned, the Business I have already announced is decided upon and settled, but if, after to-day's Debate, representations are made through the usual channels, it is possible that some alteration might be made.

Earl Winterton: Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that whatever takes place in to-day's Session will not alter the fact that large numbers of Members in all parts of the House consider that it is in the public interest to have, at the earliest opportunity, a Debate in public on certain aspects of the conduct of the war, using in its widest sense the term " the conduct of the war "?

Sir S. Cripps: I am fully aware of that, and, as I said, that matter will certainly be considered immediately the Debate is finished to-day.

Colonel Gretton: Will the House be furnished with a printed statement of the principal documents and correspondence relating to India, so that Members will be fully informed of the reasoned arguments put forward by His Majesty's Government and by the various leaders in India.

Sir S. Cripps: A White Paper is already available to Members in the Vote office.

Colonel Colville: Can arrangements be made to have a Debate on the preservation and development of Scottish industry, at a reasonably early date? As my right hon. Friend is aware, the Motion put down by my hon. Friend the Member for the Scottish Universities (Sir J. Graham Kerr) on going into Committee of Supply, was not reached. In view of the importance of this subject, both from the point of view of the war effort and of post-war economy, I hope that such arrangements can be made.

Sir S. Cripps: I hope that it will be possible to arrange a discussion on that subject on an early Supply Day.

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WRITTEN ANSWERS.

ROYAL NAVY (OFFICERS, EXPENSES).

Mr. Parker asked the First Lord of the Admiralty whether a decision has been reached regarding naval travelling expenses; and, as the matter has been under consideration for more than a year, whether retrospective effect will be given to improvements?

Mr. Alexander: Subsistence rates for naval officers have been revised with effect from 15th January, 1942.

MILITARY SERVICE (E.N.S.A. DEFERMENTS).

Major Lyons asked the Minister of Labour the number of persons deferred from military service on the recommendation of the Entertainments National Service Committee who, at the time, were under 32 years of age and the number between 32 and 35 years of age, respectively; what is the longest period for which deferment has been given in such cases; whether there is any minimum age limit for such deferment; and the number of cases of female applicants heard and deferred?

Mr. McCorquodale: Five men under the age of 32 and 31 men between 32 and 35 have been granted deferment of calling-up for military service on the recommendation of the Entertainment National Service Committee. Six months is the longest period for which deferment is given at one time and it is not normally granted to men under the age of 30. No applications for deferment of calling-up have yet been heard in respect of females.

GOLF COURSES (UPKEEP, WORKERS).

Major Lyons asked the Minister of Labour whether he has ascertained the number of able-bodied men still working on the upkeep of golf courses; and whether the services of these men, if not required for the Armed Forces, will be deflected to agriculture, or other essential work without delay?

Mr. Bevin: I regret that I am not in a position to give the figures for which my hon. Friend asks in the first part of the Question. As regards the second part no men have had their calling up for the Armed Forces deferred in respect of work on the upkeep of golf courses; wherever practicable men so employed will be transferred to essential war work. I am making inquiries into the case which my hon. Friend has sent me.

CIVIL DEFENCE (NORTH-WESTERN REGION).

Captain Graham asked the Home Secretary whether, in view of the necessity of perfecting plans before an invasion actually occurs, he will instruct the Regional Commissioner for the North-Western area immediately to issue E.L. labels at least to all senior members of the Cheshire Corps of Air-Raid Wardens to enable these officers to perform their duties in a period of invasion?

Mr. H. Morrison: I am looking into the matter and will communicate further with my hon. Friend.

COAL SUPPLIES, NORTHERN IRELAND.

Dr. Little asked the Secretary for Mines whether he has any further statement to make on the arrangements for supplying Northern Ireland with better class coal?

Mr. Grenfell: I am in constant touch with the Minister of Commerce in Belfast regarding supplies for Northern Ireland. Coal is distributed to the best advantage from a national standpoint, and the object of discussions with the Minister of Commerce is to ensure that Northern Ireland receives the same treatment as other parts of the country.

PETROL RATIONING.

Sir J. Mellor asked the Secretary for Petroleum whether, in order that motor-car owners, who so desire, may have longer notice of their position after the discontinuance of the basic ration on 1st July, he will authorise applications for allowances for the subsequent period to be made forthwith and dealt with as soon as possible?

Mr. Lloyd: I am afraid it would be difficult to adopt this suggestion. Arrange-

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ments have been made for the issue early in May of supplementary coupons covering professional and business purposes. Car owners who do not at present qualify for supplementary allowances should apply to the local divisional petroleum officer between 1st and 8th June, when they will be dealt with as speedily as possible. I hope that the statement which I made to the House on 21st April will leave car owners in little doubt as to their position after the discontinuance of the basic ration.

Sir L. Lyle asked the Secretary for Petroleum whether he will take steps to ensure that the abolition of the basic petrol rations will not cause a drift back to the towns from country areas where the ability of many persons to reside and yet reach their work is dependent on the use of a motor-car to reach some point where public transport is available?

Mr. Lloyd: I would refer the hon. Member to the statement which I made in the House on 21st April.

MALAYA (JAPANESE OCCUPATION).

Mr. Creech Jones asked the Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies whether he has received any reports or authenticated accounts of the condition of the peoples in Malaya since the Japanese conquest?

Mr. Harold Macmillan: No, Sir. But every endeavour is being made through the Protecting Power and by the International Red Cross to obtain such information.

COLONIAL LABOUR ADVISORY COMMITTEE.

Mr. Creech Jones asked the Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies whether he can now announce the composition of the Advisory Committee on Labour Questions; and whether he himself will preside at its meetings?

Mr. Harold Macmillan: Yes, Sir. The Committee, which will be called the Colonial Labour Advisory Committee, has now been formed. It will consist of persons with first-hand knowledge of labour questions selected from within and without the Colonial Office. The former will comprise Sir William Battershill, K.C.M.G., Major G. St. J. Orde Browne, C.M.G., O.B.E., and Mr. J. G. Hibbert, M.C. The latter will comprise Sir Frederick Leggett, C.B., Sir John Forbes Watson, Mr. Joseph Hallsworth, Mr. Cecil W. Murray, D.F.C., M.I.Mech.E., and Mr. Andrew Dalgleish. In the event of any particular question necessitating the advice of persons with special knowledge, the Committee will have power to co-opt such persons as members to assist its deliberations.

NIGERIA (FINANCES).

Mr. Creech Jones asked the Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies what was the revenue of the Nigerian Government in 1937-38, its principal items and what sums were expended on account of salaries, allowances, gratuities and pensions of European officials, pensions, leave pay, family allotments, etc., of Europeans, passages of British officials and their dependants, and debt charges, interest, sinking fund, etc.?

Mr. Harold Macmillan: The total revenue of the Nigerian Government in 1937-38 was £7,342,450 7s. 8d.; the principal items being: Customs, £3,504,807 13s. 2d.; interest, £913,192 14s. 11d.; and direct taxes, £854,156 16s. 6d. The annual accounts do not distinguish between payments in respect of European and African officials. The amount expended on pensions and gratuities for all officials was £530,089 16s. 7d. The expenditure on ocean passages was £109,932 2s. 5d. Payments for debt charges, including interest and sinking fund, were £1,748,193 15s.

AGRICULTURE.

Women's Land Army.

Mr. Naylor asked the Minister of Agriculture whether he is aware that members of the Land Army are not permitted to be served at Service canteens or British Restaurants; and whether he will take steps to have them placed in the same position in this respect as women members of the Forces?

Mr. Hudson: I am not aware that members of the Women's Land Army have been refused admission to British Restaurants. As regards Service canteens, I am not at the moment in a position to

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add to the reply which I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for West Birmingham (Mr. Higgs) on 5th March.

County Executive Committees (Constitution).

Mr. Gallacher asked the Minister of Agriculture what methods were adopted in selecting members of war agricultural executive committees; whether the personnel has been systematically reviewed in the light of experience; how many members of these committees throughout the country are, respectively, farmers, landowners, land agents and workers' representatives; whether due care has been taken to ensure that small farmers and agricultural workers are given adequate representation; and how many members are women?

Mr. Hudson: The members of county war agricultural executive committees were originally selected by the Minister as persons suitably qualified to act as his agents in exercising the powers conferred on him by Parliament for increasing food production. The constitution of committees is kept constantly under review and changes of personnel are made from time to time as occasion may require. Each committee in England and Wales comprises a person specially representing agricultural workers' point of view and, with eight exceptions, a Women's Land Army representative, but, apart from these, individual members were selected entirely from the point of view of their suitability and not as representative of any particular class in the agricultural community. Fifty-five members are women.

MOTOR-CAR TYRES (SALVAGE).

Major Kimball asked the Minister of Supply whether he will clarify the position with regard to arrangements for salvage of old worn-out motor-car tyres, and, further, explain his policy with regard to the collection and use of new or part-worn tyres at present fitted to motor-cars which are laid up?

Mr. Peat: There are arrangements for the collection of old tyres by merchants, and, in conjunction with the Ministry of Works and Buildings and local authorities, a series of special county sweeps for scrap rubber begins on 1st May. The tyres collected by either means, as well as tyres handed over on the issue of new or retreaded tyres and tyres from Service vehicles, will be sorted. Those fit for retreading will be sent to retreaders; and those fit only for reclaim will be stored in Government depots, or in storage provided by certified waste rubber merchants, for disposal to reclaiming plants as required. The question of collecting tyres from laid-up cars, which raises practical difficulties, is under consideration.

GAS COMPANIES (STREET LIGHTING CHARGES).

Mr. R. C. Morrison asked the President of the Board of Trade for what reason the Board of Trade has permitted gas companies to increase charges for street lighting?

Mr. Dalton: The Board of Trade have not authorised gas companies generally to increase their charges for street lighting. In the case of some undertakings, however, they have, after investigation, authorised certain increases in the price of gas and these may sometimes, under agreements between the gas undertaking and the local authority, affect street lighting charges.

ARMED FORCES (EDUCATIONAL FACILITIES).

Mr. R. Morgan asked the President of the Board of Education in view of the post-war aspects involved, whether any steps are being taken to co-ordinate the present educational services for the Army, Navy and Air Force?

Mr. Butler: The organisation of the educational work in the Army, Navy and Air Force, respectively, is a matter for the three Service Departments, whose educational needs are not the same. I am advised that the Departments already consult each other as required, especially on adult education and other problems of common interest.

Mr. R. Morgan asked the Secretary of State for War whether the co-operation of universities, the Law Society, and other similar professional bodies, has been sought in connection with the educational services of the Army; and with what results?

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Mr. Sandys: Yes, Sir. Twenty-three regional committees have been set up by the vice-Chancellors of universities and include representatives of local education authorities and a number of voluntary bodies concerned with adult education. These committees are supplying lecturers and teachers and are providing short courses for unit education officers. They arranged over 20,000 lectures and 1,000 classes in the summer months of last year. In addition some 15 professional institutions, including the Law Society, have helped to organise correspondence courses for some 17,000 students from the three Services.

MEXICO (SHELL OIL COMPANY).

Mr. Thorne asked the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs whether there has been a settlement between the Mexican Government and the Shell Oil Company; and what were the terms of settlement?

Mr. Law: No settlement has been reached.

CIVIL SERVICE (INDEPENDENT PANEL).

Major Lyons asked the Financial Secretary to the Treasury the names of the independent panel of business men supervising the work of Departments and recommending improvements; the date of their appointment; the number of occasions they have met; and the date of the last meeting?

Captain Crookshank: The members of the panel referred to in the reply of 17th March to the hon. Member for East Fife (Mr. Henderson Stewart) are Mr. J. Reid Young of Vickers Limited, Mr. W. W. Watt of the British Oxygen Company Limited and Mr. J. Ryan of the Metal Box Company. The panel was formed at the beginning of this year under Mr. Reid Young's chairmanship: six meetings have been held, the last of which was on 22nd April. The members of the panel assist between meetings, in an individual capacity as and when necessary.

BRITISH ARMY (CADETS).

Mr. Lindsay asked the Secretary of State for War how many Army cadets are now enrolled; how many young men under the age of 18 are serving in the Home Guard; and what is the strength of school cadet units?

Sir J. Grigg: On 31st March, 1942, 74,748 Army cadets were reported as enrolled and the number will by now be larger. There are 107 school units and their strength on the same date was 8,052, but there are certainly many cadets in other units who are still attending school. I regret that I do not know the exact number of men under 18 in the Home Guard, but it is probably well over 100,000.

MEDICAL STUDENTS (PERIOD OF TRAINING).

Sir E. Graham-Little asked the Minister of Health whether he is aware that certain officers on the Central Medical War Committee are exercising pressure upon the medical licensing bodies to shorten the period of training of medical students in their final years, in one instance by one-sixth, owing to the scarcity of medical officers in the Fighting Services, and that such measures injure the reputation of licensing bodies; whether any of the proposals for redistribution of medical manpower, detailed in the circular No. 2624, have been operated; and what are the prospects of so redistributing personnel as to meet the immediate demands both of the Services and of the civilian population without curtailing medical training?

Mr. E. Brown: No, Sir. I am not aware of any pressure of this kind having been exercised by officers of the Central Medical War Committee on medical and licensing bodies. As regards the second part of the Question, since the circular to which my hon. Friend refers was issued on the 9th April, it is obvious that sufficient time has not elapsed for the measures recommended to have been fully brought into operation. As regards the third part of the Question, I am informed by the Medical Personnel (Priority) Committee that in their view both redistribution of medical personnel and some curtailment of the period of medical training are necessary.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE.

Ordered,

"That the Proceedings on any Motion for the Adjournment of the House moved by a Minister of the Crown be exempted at this day's Sitting from the provisions of the Standing Order (Sittings of the House)."—[*The Prime Minister.*]

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ORDERS OF THE DAY.

SUPPLY.

[4TH ALLOTTED DAY.]

Considered in Committee.

[Sir DENNIS HERBERT in the Chair.]

CIVIL ESTIMATES, 1942.

CLASS I.

TREASURY AND SUBORDINATE DEPARTMENTS.

Motion made, and Question proposed,

"That a sum, not exceeding £523,545, be granted to His Majesty, to complete the sum necessary to defray the charge which will come in course of payment during the year ending on the 31st day of March, 1943, for the salaries and other expenses in the Department of His Majesty's Treasury and Subordinate Departments, and the salaries and expenses of a Minister without Portfolio and a Minister of State."—[*Note.—£260,000 has been voted on account.*]

Motion made, and Question, "That the Chairman do report Progress, and ask leave to sit again," put, and agreed to.—[*Mr. James Stuart.*]

Committee report Progress; to sit again upon the next Sitting Day.

SECRET SESSION.

Notice taken, that Strangers were present.

Whereupon MR. SPEAKER, *pursuant to Standing Order No.* 89, *put the Question,* "That Strangers be ordered to withdraw."

Question agreed to.

Strangers withdrew accordingly.

[*The remainder of the Sitting was in Secret Session.*]

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not later than

Wednesday, 29th April, 1942

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