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NATIONAL SERVICE BILL

HC Deb 01 April 1947 vol 435 cc1851-965

1851

Order read for resuming Adjourned Debate on Amendment to Question [31st March], "That the Bill be now read a Second time." §

Which Amendment was to leave out the word "now," and at the end of the Question to add "upon this day six months."—[Mr. Rhys Davies.] §

Question again proposed, "That the word 'now' stand part of the Question." §

3.41 p.m. §

Mr. Boyd-Carpenter ([Kingston-upon-Thames](#)) When the Debate was adjourned last night, I was venturing to call the attention of the House, and of the right hon. Gentleman the Minister of Labour in particular, to the question of whether the admirable provisions in this Bill with respect to deferment of service on educational and apprenticeship grounds could not be applied during the interim period before 1st January, 1949. I understood from the demeanour of the right hon. Gentleman that he was not wholly unsympathetic to that idea, and as it is of importance, I would invite the attention of hon. Members to the considerable distinction between the provisions of this Bill and existing enactments. The right hon. Gentleman, as reported in column 1684 of yesterday's OFFICIAL REPORT, said: "The option"—"that is to say the option for deferment— "will be for any person. Any person going through any kind of tuition—university, industry, law, and so on, where there is a genuine contract of training of some sort—has a right to ask for the deferment of his call-up. It is made as wide as possible so as not to interfere with training."—[[OFFICIAL REPORT, 31st March, 1947; Vol 435, c. 1684.](#)] As I understand the position—and the right hon. Gentleman, I am sure, will correct me if I am wrong—deferment is only granted at the moment on apprenticeship grounds, if the apprenticeship can be completely terminated within nine months; and deferment is only given on educational grounds where the university, college or similar institution asks for the student. The provisions of this Bill on this point seem very sound and very helpful, and I am sure it would be quite wrong that their coming into effect should be delayed until 1st January, 1949, and a much more unsatisfactory plan applied in the case of young men called up before 1st January, 1949. I see that the right hon. Gentleman has a document available and I hope he or the Minister of Defence may be able to give us a little encouragement on this point. §

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The Minister of Labour (Mr. Isaacs) I had prepared a note and sent it to the hon. §

Gentleman. I am sorry it did not reach him before he took his place in the House. If I may read the statement, it covers the point which he has raised: "Students and apprentices may have their calling up deferred during 1947 and 1948 in the same way as after the Bill comes into effect in 1949." It goes on to set out the arrangements in that connection, and the only restriction, as far as the student is concerned, is the proviso that there is a place for him in the university.

Mr. Boyd-Carpenter I should like to thank the right hon. Gentleman not only for the § satisfactory reply, but also for the phenomenally prompt acceptance of a suggestion made from this side of the House. I hope I shall not appear to presume too much on his benevolence if I put him a further point. The right hon. Gentleman referred yesterday to the provisions for deferment of service on hardship grounds. As the right hon. Gentleman is aware, these hardship grounds are often financial. There is the case of the young man earning good wages who is supporting, shall we say, an aged or an invalid parent. That difficulty was overcome, during the war, as the right hon. Gentleman knows, by a system of war service grants. The young man was not deferred but financial compensation was given in respect of his liabilities to support his dependants. I do not know whether the right hon. Gentleman would be in a position to answer that question at the moment, but it is felt that there is room under this Bill for some system similar to that of the war service grant, 1853 to deal with the limited number of cases which will arise of acute financial hardship, when a young man with liabilities is taken from good wages, to the relatively restricted remuneration offered him in the Service.

Those are minor points of detail, and if I may I should now like to put one major point to the House. The difficulties which I feel, and which I think hon Members on both sides of the House feel about this Bill, is that we have not yet been told precisely what are the military needs which this Bill is designed to implement. Nor have we been told precisely for what the men when called up, will be used. It is impossible for hon. Members on either side to have that clear view of the position which they should have unless we are given a great deal more enlightenment on this subject from the Government Front Bench. In passing, may I say that the right hon. Gentleman's statement that conscription was not going to be called conscription but was going to be called national service, does not amount to a very substantial justification? The people of this country know it is, in fact, conscription under whatever label it is described, and I hope a more substantial argument will be adduced from the Government Front Bench.

There is one point on which I think the right hon. Gentleman failed to satisfy a good many hon. Members, and that is whether in his search for the necessary military manpower all alternative sources of supply have been properly investigated. The Minister of Defence the other day, brushed aside a suggestion made by several of my hon. Friends in regard to the recruitment of a foreign legion. He must accept I think, the view that the responsibility for brushing aside this constructive suggestion, falls squarely on the shoulders of the Government and adds to the responsibility for justifying the necessity for this Measure. As an

illustration of the lack of clarity in the minds of the Government as to what they are doing, may I give two instances? First of all, Yesterday the right hon. Gentleman the Minister of Labour was challenged by one of his own hon. Friends below the Gangway in regard to manpower under this Bill. The passage appears in column 1686 of the OFFICIAL REPORT. The hon. Member for Widnes (Mr. C. Shawcross) asks: "Can my right hon. Friend give 1854 an estimate of how many, men will be in uniform when this scheme is in full operation, say, in five years time?" —[OFFICIAL REPORT, 31st March, 1947; Vol. 435, c. 1686.]" The right hon. Gentleman the Minister of Labour said, very fairly, that he did not know but that he would find out. I do not want to labour the point, but it seems to indicate a certain lack of clarity in planning these matters, when the responsible Minister does not know when he introduces a Bill, what effect in manpower his own Bill is going to have.

There is a further illustration of perhaps greater importance. In the speech by the Minister we were not told how these men who are to be called up, are going to be employed, but some kind of idea can be gathered from the memorandum submitted by the right hon. Gentleman the Secretary of State for War in support of the Army Estimates. From this it appears that a large proportion of what is still described as the Territorial Army—which, of course, as the House is well aware, is simply the reserves under a new name—will be employed on the anti-aircraft defence of Great Britain. I do not know whether the Government can enlighten us on the implications of this, but perhaps the Minister of Defence will do so, when he replies to the Debate tonight.

In the first place, as the Minister of Defence will be well aware, none of the men called up under this Bill will pass into the reserve or the Territorial Army until July, 1950, at the earliest. Does that mean that until that tolerably distant date, the anti-aircraft defences of this country will not have more than the skeleton provided by the volunteers of the Territorial Army? That is a matter of major importance. Secondly, I did not understand the right hon. Gentleman the Minister of Labour to tell the House yesterday that during their 18 months full-time service, these men would be employed in the anti-aircraft defences. But hon. Members who have any knowledge of anti-aircraft gunnery know that, it is a matter of the utmost complexity and difficulty and I do not know how men who have served their 18 months' full time service in, say, an infantry battalion, can be expected to be very much use after only 60 days' additional training, in operating the infinitely complex mechanism of anti-aircraft artillery and its ancillary apparatus. I do not know if any thought has been 1855 given to this or what the Government's plan is.

Again, have the Government considered the manifest diplomatic disadvantage of the manning of the anti-aircraft defences of this country with territorial reservists? The decision to call out the reserves in a tense diplomatic situation, is a grave one for any Government and one which of itself, may aggravate a difficult situation? Yet the Government will be faced, in such a difficult situation, with the alternative of doing that, or of leaving the major part of the anti-aircraft defences unmanned. I hope that the Minister of Defence when he replies will give some indication at least, that the Government have considered the difficulties which will follow—or which would appear likely to follow—the use of the Territorial reservists, brought into being by this Bill, for a large part of the anti-aircraft defences of this country.

Wing-Commander Millington (Chelmsford) I apologise for interrupting the hon. §

Gentleman, but it seems to me that in the very interesting argument which he is developing, he has taken no account of the fact that by 1950, the date to which he has referred, the probable speed of aircraft against which we might be defending these islands will be over 600 miles an hour at least, and that the most likely role of anti-aircraft defence will not be against aeroplanes as such. In those circumstances, is his argument as valid as it might have been on an earlier occasion?

Mr. Boyd-Carpenter I respect, as I am sure do all hon. Members, the very intimate §

experience which the hon. and gallant Member has had of the effects of anti-aircraft artillery. If one thing is certain in this infinitely difficult technical matter, it is that the whole tendency of modern development is to increase both the complexity of the apparatus involved, and also the speed with which an attack can be launched. Therefore, in response to the hon. and gallant Member's intervention, I would say that although I believe my argument to be wholly valid at the moment, I think that by 1950 it will be even stronger inasmuch as the apparatus will be more complicated and the potential threat even speedier. I cannot anticipate, and I am sure the Government do not anticipate, that in the present tendency for increasing the complexity and elaboration of all these incredible types of apparatus which the 1856 scientists can invent, there will be any diminution in this process but rather an accentuation.

There is only one other matter with which I wish to trouble the House. It is to ask the Minister of Defence a question. How does he dovetail into the scheme under this Bill, the training of future officers? It is obvious that the future officer will be called up in the normal way. But is it intended that he shall spend any of his 18 months full-time service doing specifically officer training, or will that training merely begin at the end of the 18 months? Further, has the right hon. Gentleman considered, and can he tell the House, what is his intention with regard to the provision of new younger officers in the territorial Army? Is it intended that men shall be commissioned at the end of their 18 months full-time service, with a view to becoming officers of the Reserve; or will officers of the Reserve, be confined to those who have been officers during their full-time service? There is nothing in the Bill about that, but presumably the Government have some idea on the provision of efficient officers for our Armed Forces. I hope the right hon. Gentleman will be able to tell us that.

The House is being asked, and I have not the slightest doubt, will accede to the request, to hand over to the Government for 18 months, complete control over the lives of a whole generation. Speaking for myself I would say that is not a thing which one does lightly or happily. It is a thing which can only be justified—as I believe it can be justified—by the grim necessities of the situation. But I hope that the Government, if they are given this immense power, will realise that, in return, they owe to the House the very full responsibility of seeing that those 18 months are used to the full, in the most fruitful manner. I can assure the right hon. Gentleman, that hon. Members on this side of the House will be vigilant and will watch

with the most careful scrutiny, to see that this precious thing which he and the Government are being given is not wasted by departmental apathy or governmental incompetence.

3.57 p.m.

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Mr. Clement Davies (Montgomery) So many great Measures have been introduced in the present House of Commons since it met—Measures which either affect the lives of the people already or will affect them in the future—that I believe we have almost exhausted the adjectives which we can apply to them. But this Measure is unique. It makes such a fundamental change that it deserves all the adjectives applied to it. It is a Measure which impinges upon the personal liberties of the people of this country—there can be no doubt about that. It brings about a constitutional change such as has never yet been effected in time of peace in this country. I agree with the hon. Member for Kingston-upon-Thames (Mr. Boyd-Carpenter) that the change in title from "conscription" to "national service" is not the kind of camouflage which will deceive anybody. This Measure will introduce conscription into the life of this country in time of peace, and will introduce it on a permanent basis. Let us have no mistake about that.

For that reason it is not a Measure which should have been introduced unless there was real necessity for it. There must be an overwhelming case for its introduction. It would be necessary first to prove that there is a real national emergency; second, that the need to cope with that emergency cannot be met by voluntary methods; and, third, that the emergency can be met by conscription. I am sorry I was not here to hear the first part of the Minister of Labour's speech, but I have read it with very great care, and never, in the introduction of a Measure of such major importance, have I known so little attention paid to the principles underlying the need for the proposed change. Scarcely an argument was put forward; there was just a passing reference to the duties that would lie upon this country. There was a very careful analysis and elucidation of the provisions of the Bill, but no attempt to deal with the fundamental principles underlying them. I can only feel that the Minister's heart was not in this Bill, and I hope that is true also of some of his colleagues.

What is the position of the Government and of the parties who support this Bill, and, I should like to ask, of those outside in the country, who have placed their faith in them? It has been a habit of Members on the Government Front Bench, and of those who sit behind them, when challenged from this side of the House on any of the Measures that have been introduced, to reply, "We have a mandate for this." In the case of the nationalisation of the Bank of England, the nationalisation of transport and in all these great Measures, the reply has been, "We asked for the suffrages of the people, and they voted for us. We are in power, and we mean to carry out what they voted for." What would have been the position if, in the middle of their programme, they had put, "The Labour Party as a party demands conscription in time of peace"? This is the party which claimed that they stood alongside my party for peace. This is the party which condemned military preparations and voted even for a reduction of the Estimates for the Armed Forces. That was their attitude. What is more, as

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was said yesterday, attention was drawn on so many platforms, and rightly drawn, to the burden of taxation in this country, and to how much, out of every £ of taxation levied, was due in the past to the preparations for future war. Have the right hon. Gentlemen opposite forgotten the speeches which they made? I hope not.

While I am on this question of a mandate, may I remind right hon. Gentlemen opposite and those who support them in this Measure, of the taunts thrown out by them in 1939, when Mr. Chamberlain introduced the [Conscription Bill](#) for time of war? They accused him of going back upon his word, and on the pledge he had given to the people, the pledge which had been given before the Election, and the pledge which had been repeated exactly four weeks before the Bill was introduced. Although war was looming up at that time, although Czechoslovakia lay under the heel of Germany, and we knew that the terrible moment had to come when we would call a halt, the right hon. Gentleman opposite and every Member of that party voted against conscription. [Interruption.] I am asked what I did. I voted both for the Resolution and for the Second Reading of that Bill, for the reason that we were then face to face with a grim national necessity.

Dr. Haden Guest (Islington, North) I said that not every Member of this party voted against it. §

Mr. Davies I apologise and withdraw, but I am certain that the bulk of the party opposite, and certainly the whole of the Front Bench, voted against it. I have not troubled to go through all the lists of those who belonged to the party at that time to compare the voting. With regard to right hon. and hon. Gentlemen on the Opposition Benches, they, in their heart of hearts, have always been in favour of conscription as a good thing in itself. I agree that they have said from time to time, and have given pledges and adhered to them, that they would not introduce conscription without an appeal to the country. My political memory is a very long one. I remember the taunts thrown out by Members of that party against Lord Haldane and his Territorial Army, and the efforts he was making to restore the Territorial Army. 1859 §

Earl Winterton (Horsham) This is a very interesting piece of personal reminiscence. The only person in the Tory Party in the House of Commons in 1912 who supported conscription was myself; the rest of the party was against it. §

Mr. Davies The noble Lord has never lacked courage, and I am perfectly certain that he was then expressing an opinion which the other members of his party had not the courage to do. There were even songs in the music halls deriding the Territorial Army. §

Mr. Pickthorn (Cambridge University) When did the Tories go to the music halls?

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Mr. Davies I respect the views which have been held by right hon. and hon. Members of the Tory Party. They believed in the need for conscription; it was part and parcel of their idea of the way in which we could keep the Empire. It was an attitude with which I fundamentally disagreed, but they were perfectly entitled to take up that position, and they did. The right hon. Gentleman the Member for Woodford (Mr. Churchill) taunted me and my party yesterday on the ground of our consistency. The only consistency that the right hon. Gentleman has shown throughout the years has been in his inconsistency. He was First Lord of the Admiralty on 4th August, 1914, when this country threw down the challenge to the Germans and the Kaiser. We entered that war on a voluntary system, not only for the Navy and Air Force, but for the Army. There was no threat of resignation from him at that time. He remained in that Government until conscription was introduced in 1916. What happened when the war was over? After 11th November, 1918, not one conscript was called up. It must be remembered that then we were in a much more difficult position militarily than is facing the country today. Nevertheless, not only were no conscripts called up after 11th November, 1918, but by 1920 it had been decided to abolish conscription altogether. Who was the then Secretary of State for War making the proud announcement to this House, on how the Government had been able in that short while to reconstruct the Army and re-man all the garrisons throughout the whole world on a voluntary basis, described it in language of which he and he only is master? It was the right hon. Gentleman the Member for Woodford. He began his speech, on 23rd February, 1920, with these proud words: "On the 31st of next month conscription will be abolished, and within a month from that date the last conscript is entitled to be released from the Army." It is only right that I should quote the memorable words used on that occasion. After speaking of 'what had been accomplished since the end of the war, he went on to say: "It almost merits a word, or at any rate, a nod of recognition for the officers who have worked so indefatigably and so devotedly through all this year and have now achieved their results which I venture to think any one of us here a year ago would certainly have declared to be impossible." He was speaking of the reorganisation on a voluntary basis. "In the absence of any such tribute, I will invite the Committee to consider what sort of language would have been used supposing we had not succeeded, and supposing I had to stand here today, as I might easily have done, and point out, that, owing to the fact that we had not been able to recruit a voluntary Army, I must ask for a prolongation of compulsory military service"—and this is the argument now being brought forward—"keeping at any rate the younger conscripts who took no part in the war for another year to come. The measure of the irritation which would have been excited by such a demand is, I think, the measure of the recognition which should be accorded to the military men who have succeeded in staving off such a demand." Then came the proud words: "We have abolished conscription." There was further tribute to what they had been able to accomplish, and a description of the difficulties which were then confronting us in foreign parts of the world—the Middle East, Palestine, Syria, and Russia, where there

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were certain military forces. Then followed a wonderful description of what this old country had achieved. The House will find it well worth hearing again: "The second consideration was still more arbitrary. The Army was limited by the numbers of men who could be persuaded to enlist in it under the voluntary system. It happened that those two separate and unrelated considerations arrived by their different roads at a very similar conclusion. Over a long period of years the peace and order of the British Empire was, in fact, maintained by about seventy-five battalions abroad and seventy-five at home, with the due proportion of other Arms. Is it not a wonder, and is it not an admirable fact, that the Imperial authority should have been maintained over these vast expanses comprising more than one-fifth, I believe, of the entire population of the world by less than a quarter of a million of white soldiers? "May I remind an hon. Member who seems to want to interrupt me, that the atomic bomb had not then been invented, nor the 600 mile an hour aeroplane? "To find a parallel you have to go back to the greatest period of the Roman Empire, to the age of the Antonines; to find a parallel for so great and so wide a peace being sustained upon so slender an armed force, you have to go back to the Antonines and even then the parallel is greatly in favour of British example. That is in principal what we are striving to reproduce in future years."— [OFFICIAL REPORT, 23rd February, 1920; Vol. 125, C. 1342.]" I have now lived to hear the right hon. Gentleman denounce it. What has really been the guiding principle throughout which made for the greatness of this country and the unity of its Empire, for its ready response from every corner of the globe with help for this old country when it is in difficulties, whether from a military or an economic angle? It is the spirit of freedom which is deeply seated in every one of us. The right hon. Gentleman has taunted the Liberal Party for sticking to its principles. That is the best tribute he could have paid. I am proud, ineffably proud, of the fact that I was fortunate enough to be born in this Empire. I am proud of what it has accomplished, I am proud of its traditions; so far as I know, and I do not think there is anyone who could contradict me, my people have been here since the days when Caesar himself invaded these islands, so it is no wonder I am proud. I know that I am expressing the feelings of everyone when I say that in defence of that tradition and custom, and that spirit of liberty which has been the envy of the rest of the world, we would sacrifice all, if the necessity arose. In time of war, when this country was threatened, I together with 1862 some right hon. Gentlemen opposite was urging that great Measure, passed through this House in about 10 minutes, which laid it down that in that time of grim necessity not only should we call in all the men and even the women, but that all our resources should be flung into the common pool for the defence of everything we held dear. [An HON. MEMBER: "Was it?"] They did not carry it out to the full—

Mr. Beverley Baxter (Wood Green) I am sure the whole House was impressed by the § right hon. Gentleman's claim of long descent, in that his family was here when Caesar came. Since all of us who are of British blood came down from Adam, were not all our families here when Caesar came?

Mr. Davies That is the kind of argument that is worthy of the hon. Gentleman, and of the § kind of stuff he writes and talks. I am glad to see that the right hon. Gentleman the Member for Woodford has returned. There is something extraordinary about people who change either their opinions or their faith. They not only try to outdo those of the new faith which they have embraced, but they get a sort of ecstatic exaltation out of denouncing those whom they have abandoned. That was always the attitude of the right hon. Gentleman when he left those among whom he is now sitting again. Who denounced them, their principles or their motives? He, with that mastery of language to which we have been accustomed, denounced them for something like 20 years. Then he was proud to fight under the flag of Liberalism; he was one of those who were nailing the flag of Liberalism to the mast. Now, when he cannot get us to haul it down, he spends his time trying to shoot it down. He could do better than that, and one is sorry to find that such great powers and attributes are not used to better purpose.

I have said that this Bill interferes with personal liberty and brings about the greatest constitutional change of our times. What is more, if there is danger, this is the moment when we should use all our best endeavours to cement the country and bring us all together. Can there be any doubt that the introduction of this Measure not only divides the party opposite, but divides the country? May I mention another matter that has been much present in the minds of hon. and right hon. Gentlemen? The Government were careful to say that 1863 this would not lead to industrial conscription, but let us consider that. They are going to take these young men, just when they are reaching their adult stage of manhood, and compel them to go into the Armed Forces. Why? The only answer that can be made, is that there is a national emergency, that the whole safety of the State is at stake and, therefore, we must change all the rules of the past. The transition from one emergency to the other is not great, the safety of the State may be threatened from the inside, from the economic position, just as easily as from the outside. They realise that now, when they make a careful distinction between the miners and the rest of the young men. They say to the young men, "You will either go and hew coal, or you will go into the Army in future." Suppose some other difficulty arises. What is there in logic or in any form of argument, to prevent someone standing at that Box and saying, "The country is in danger and we have now got to use our young men to meet the situation?" We are doing it even today. We have just had this tremendous blizzard, and extraordinary occurrences have taken place in the Fen district. The Army has been rushed in to help. [An HON. MEMBER: "Why not? "] Certainly, why not—and certainly that will be said, some day, at that Box for some other reason. At last, it seems to have sunk into the minds of hon. Members. What is there then to prevent industrial conscription from coming along?

Mr. Oliver Stanley (Bristol, West) Would it be all right to order the Army to help in the § floods if it was a volunteer Army, but not right if it was a conscript Army?

Mr. Davies I was not pressing that point, but may I repeat it in an elementary way? §

[Laughter.] I am glad that right hon. and hon. Gentlemen recognise that they are in the elementary class. The Government are conscripting young men today, in time of peace, into the Armed Forces on the ground that there is a national necessity which requires it. I say that that national necessity may not come from the outside, but may be something inherent, and they can use the same argument as the reason for introducing industrial

conscription. That was what I was arguing, and I was illustrating my point by that relatively small incident—small, though it affects the welfare of some thousands of people. In this necessity we can turn to the Army and use it; whether they are conscripts or volunteers, it just points the moral of the danger of introducing conscription in time of peace, namely, that it can then be introduced also for industrial purposes whenever the need is felt.

[Interruption.] The hon. Gentleman has been most helpful with his interruptions; it has just occurred to him that nationalisation will also lead in that way, to an easy transition to industrial conscription.

What is the real emergency facing this country? Is it a danger of any military threat from the outside, or is it not, in truth and in fact, because of a weakness in our economic position, a weakness which is undoubtedly affecting the position even of the Foreign Secretary in any negotiations which he undertakes? If perchance he had 40 million tons of coal for export, his position face to face with his colleagues in the Conference at Moscow, would be far and away stronger than it is today. But does anybody imagine that his position face to face with those who are sitting with him at Moscow will be strengthened by the knowledge that the young men of this country are to be conscripted?

Only two reasons have been put forward for this Bill; one is to obtain, they say, fully trained reserves capable of going into battle without waiting for six months' training, and the second is to fulfil our defence commitments. I do not understand how this 18 months' training can really fit these men so that at all times, with all the rapid changes that are taking place, they could suddenly jump into the breach and be of immediate assistance? Surely, the right hon. Gentleman the Minister of Defence, with his long experience as First Lord of the Admiralty, realises that the training of one man for a particular purpose takes a very much longer time than the training of another man for another purpose. Time and again one finds that the men being used in the Army or Navy are those who can be used immediately because of the training they have had outside. The Forces have, rightly, drawn heavily, for instance, upon those who have been trained at the Post Office. For drivers they have drawn upon

those who were trained on the streets of London. Those are only small illustrations.

I come to the second heading, that it is to fulfil our defence commitments. I was interested to hear the right hon. Gentleman the Minister of Defence say, the other day, that we could not foresee those commitments until 1949. If one cannot see what the commitments will be, how can one possibly say what will be the numbers of men required? Until that is decided, it is futile to argue about the raising of men. Our defence commitments are home security, Commonwealth and overseas communications, and the United Nations. What are the increases required today for home security over and above, not only what we had in 1938-1939, but what we could get under a voluntary system? We have not yet had a reply to that

question. May we have one tonight?

With regard to Commonwealth and overseas communications, what are they compared with what our position was at the end of the 1914-18 war? In 14 months' time, we shall be withdrawing from India. We are already withdrawing from Egypt. We shall be withdrawing from Burma. [Interruption.] I assume so, because we have said to the Burmese that they can have self-government, and they are proceeding on that; therefore, I presume that defence will be, as in the case of India, a matter for the Burmese. Our commitments, therefore, in respect of these countries, rightly, are getting less and less. Why should there be more men?

Mr. Thomas Reid (Swindon) Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman seriously ask us §
to believe that when we withdraw from India and Burma, there will not be any arrangement made for the defence of those countries?

Mr. Davies According to the statement made by the Prime Minister, it is part of the §
communication made to those countries, and for all the hon. Gentleman and I know, those countries may, although we hope they will take the other decision, contract out of the Commonwealth. The greatest hope of all of us, for the sake of their peace and contentment, is that they will remain within the Commonwealth.

Vice-Admiral Taylor (Paddington, South) Can the right hon. and learned Gentleman say §
how the withdrawal of the Army from India and Burma will affect the strength of the 1866
Navy? Will it have to be increased or diminished?

Mr. Davies The hon. and gallant Gentleman is most helpful. As far as I am aware, it was §
the boast of the right hon. Gentleman the Minister of Defence that voluntary recruitment for the Navy is sufficient.

Vice-Admiral Taylor No, certainly not. §

Mr. Davies That was said both of the Air Force and the Navy, or is it now to be that, §
under this Bill, we are to conscript for the Navy and the Air Force as well as for the Army? That is rather news to me. I had thought, I think rightly, that recruitment for the Navy and the Air Force would still be on a voluntary basis, from among those who have been conscribed for military service. With regard to the third heading, we all ought to play our

part with regard to United Nations obligations. It is there that really lies the peace of the world. But what is the position? We already have in this country conscription that will carry us to the end of 1948. Have the Government no hopes of getting the United Nations upon a proper working basis? [Interruption.] From the replies and retorts that are made, one really wonders why one has made such tremendous sacrifices in both great wars if they are to lead only, again and again, to the creation of force to fight force. There is no hope in the world whatever for complete peace if each nation must train its best young men to kill other young men. Do not hon. Members hope that some day there will be general peace on earth?

Mr. Kenneth Lindsay (Combined English Universities) Does not the right hon. and §
learned Gentleman agree that the Foreign Secretary has slaved and toiled to try to get
security and to give some teeth to the Security Council? Is there any other hon. or right hon.
Gentleman who could have done much more?

Mr. Davies That is the point I am making, that the right hon. Gentleman the Foreign §
Secretary is struggling to establish the United Nations organisation, and the next moment
the Government say, "We have no faith in carrying it out, and, therefore, we must have a
conscript Army." I have been suggesting that it would be far and away better if our § 1867
economic position were made stronger rather than that we should have this Bill. Of course,
we believe in collective security—

Dr. Haden Guest rose— §

Mr. Davies I have been very good in giving way, but I cannot give way any more. What §
is really required? I should have thought that what was really needed was to make the
conditions of military service more attractive.

Colonel Wigg (Dudley) Unemployment. §

Mr. Davies Does the hon. and gallant Gentleman mean that it should be sufficiently §
attractive only to attract those who are unemployed? Is that the suggestion? What I ask,
and what I hope the hon. and gallant Gentleman will agree, is that the conditions in the
Armed Forces should be so attractive that they compete with industry—

Colonel Wigg A military aristocracy

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Mr. Davies —that they should be so attractive that they compete with all industries, and not merely provide a sort of refuge to which men go when they have no other employment. The conditions should be made such that they will attract the men required, and then those men will want the best possible training. Above all, scientific people are required today more than men on the barrack square. Those are the conditions which, I should have thought, would have met the situation today far and away better than this tremendous change that is being proposed in this Bill. Since 1914, we have witnessed loss after loss, we hoped temporarily, of rights which we not only cherished but which have made this old country great. On that 4th August, Sir Edward Grey used words which have become memorable about the lights of Europe going out. I have seen the lights of liberty being dimmed one by one, but now the greatest one of all, the free will of British subjects, is being challenged, and challenged in such a way that it will become part and parcel of the supposed democratic government of this country. It is a change which I will, to the end of my time, fight, believing as I do in the free will of every man.

4.42 p.m.

1868

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Mr. Crossman (Coventry, East) I should like to express the gratitude which, I am sure, we all feel for the sincerity of the speech of the right hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. C. Davies). I think he said with equal emotion, although with a good deal less of conciseness, what was said yesterday from this side of the House in opposition to the Bill. I shall not gibe against the right hon. and learned Gentleman's consistency. I rather envy him his position as a member of a gallant minority fighting against overwhelming odds. Times have changed.

Mrs. Nichol (Bradford, North) It is a good position to be in sometimes.

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Mr. Crossman Fifteen years ago there was a small minority in the Labour movement fighting against overwhelming odds; 15 years ago I was one of the small group who stood for rearmament, in order to save the League of Nations. [Interruption.] Perhaps I may be allowed to make my own speech. Fifteen years ago there was in the Labour Party a very small minority which stood for the things that are now accepted by the Government of the day, and I believe that we should extend to the minority who disagree with us on this Bill the same respect as the majority afforded to us at that time. This subject has been a continual problem within the Labour movement [Interruption.] If I was not precise enough, let me say that I advocated rearmament 15 years ago. At least, I have this in common with the right

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hon. and learned Gentleman that both of us have been consistent.

I would like to take up one essential point made by the right hon. and learned Gentleman. I thought there were three cardinal questions which the right hon. and learned Gentleman put to the Government to deserve an answer I think he formulated them as follows: First, is there a national emergency sufficient to justify conscription; secondly, can that national emergency be met by voluntary means, if it exists; and, thirdly, if not, can it better, or adequately, be met by conscription? I entirely agree with the right hon. and learned Gentleman that those three questions have not been answered by any Government statement either in the Press or in the House up to date. I think the Government have put their supporters in an extremely difficult situation by their presentation of this Bill. 1869 They have not given us the basic principles on which they justify it. They have not stated clearly the strategy for which they desire it.

Mr. Cove (Aberavon) Let us have it from the hon. Member. §

Mr. Crossman In addition, the Government have embarrassed their supporters by what I § and many other hon. Members consider to be an appalling extravagance in the Estimates for the Army. We were glad and, indeed we were somewhat proud to find that the right hon. Member for Woodford (Mr. Churchill) was not too proud to borrow from Labour back benchers the arguments which they used on the Army Estimates some few weeks ago, protesting against the secrecy of the Government. I believe the whole atmosphere of this Debate would have been different if the Government had said to us, "We agree about the extravagance in the Army; we agree that demobilisation is absolutely essential in the next two years; we accede to your demands for a speed up." But we have not had one concession to common sense on that subject from the Government and it has made it extremely difficult for those of us here who are worried, and feel our responsibility in casting our votes, to decide what to do on this particular issue.

The Government have made it even more difficult by the 18 months period. That period changes the whole character of the [National Service Bill](#), for it means a decision by the Government in peace time to use conscript soldiers for garrison duties overseas. I can and I do accept—and I will give the reasons for this later—the necessity for a period of one year in order to provide a trained reserve in this country for national defence; I cannot accept the principle, which is not accepted by any European democratic country at all, that conscript soldiers should be used for garrison work overseas. I want to make it perfectly clear in the House, in supporting this Bill, that it is only because I and many of my hon. Friends intend to put down an Amendment in the Committee stage to reduce the period from 18 months to a year. On that basis I feel it is possible conscientiously to support this Bill, particularly in view of the fact that it applies only after 1949, by which time it is essential to have the § 1870 demobilisation for which we have been pressing.

Mr. C. Davies Would the hon. Gentleman add this: that if he does not succeed in getting his Amendment, he will vote against the Third Reading? §

Mr. Crossman I have every hope that we shall get this Amendment, judging from the feeling below and above the Gangway. I realise that in saying that, I have not in the least convinced hon. Members below the Gangway of the case for conscription. I do not propose to try to do that because I believe it would be impossible by rational means. But I do intend to try to persuade them of one thing: that conscience is not a monopoly of the anti-conscriptionists, and I hope they will hear patiently the case of one person who is trying to tell them why. I am willing to argue with them as far as I can point by point, and to show my conscientious support for this Bill. But a conscience should not become self-righteousness, and some of the interruptions remind me of that. §

I want to deal first with the objections on principle to conscription. I have a great belief in the basic common sense of the British people, and I take it seriously that the British people, for hundreds of years, have had the strongest objection and resentment against introducing conscription for the British Army. The right hon. Gentleman the Member for Woodford referred to the irritation which would have been caused in 1920, by maintaining conscription. I fully agree with that. There would have been profound irritation in 1920 at the maintenance of conscription; there would have been a genuine revolt of the common man against it, and I will show a little later why there has been a change since 1920.

I think we ought to note one fact: every country in Europe which can be directly invaded by land has had conscription, and the two major countries which up till now could not be invaded by land, Britain and America, have not had conscription. I do not claim that there is anything final about this argument, but I think it should be noted—[An HON. MEMBER: "And Switzerland."] Switzerland—a country which has a deep pacific tradition, still has conscription today. It is worth noticing that during the last war there was a larger number of men, proportionate to the size of the population, called up into the Swiss Army than 1871 into any other army in the world, and I would remind those who would tell me that conscription for military service is no good for a small country, that on three occasions the Germans had intended to invade Switzerland—

Mr. Cove Is the hon. Member saying that conscription in Switzerland saved them from invasion? Did it? §

Mr. Crossman I am trying to explain to the hon. Member— §

Mr. Cove rose—

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Hon. Members Order.

Mr. Deputy-Speaker (Major Milner) The hon. Member is not entitled to interrupt unless the hon. Member for East Coventry (Mr. Crossman) is prepared to give way. §

Mr. Cove rose—

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Hon. Members Order.

Mr. Deputy-Speaker The hon. Member must restrain himself. Does the hon. Member for East Coventry give way? §

Mr. Crossman I do, Mr. Deputy-Speaker.

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Mr. Cove I would like to know from the hon. Member if conscription saved Switzerland. §

Mr. Crossman The hon. Member has wasted a minute unnecessarily. The answer I was trying to give him was that in the course of the last war there were three occasions on which the invasion of Switzerland had actually been planned. §

Mr. Cove Planned.

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Mr. Crossman It was very convenient for the Germans to get Switzerland, but on certain conditions. One was that the tunnels through Switzerland should be preserved. The second was that the town of Zurich and the whole industrial belt of Switzerland should be intact. The Swiss made a military plan which involved the blowing up of all the tunnels through Switzerland, the devastation of the whole of the town of Zurich and all the industrial belt, §

with a retreat to a mountain hide-out in the centre where the whole army would gather together to resist the Germans. According to military experts—I am not one—a study of the German documents now proves conclusively that the final thing which deterred the 1872 Germans from the actual step of invading Switzerland was what the Swiss Army would do. There was the deterrent element of the Swiss intention to defend their country. That decided it. I have noticed in Palestine with Jew and Arab, it makes a certain difference if you are prepared to defend even quite a small country, against a large Power if need be.

Several Hon. Members rose—

Mr. Crossman I hope to deal with the points one by one. One of the reasons why § Switzerland was not invaded was the admirable and highly efficient militia which the Swiss had organised. I do not assume that anybody below the Gangway will accept that. I am only explaining my reasons, I am not asking hon. Members to accept my reasons.

Mr. Follick (Loughborough) rose— §

Mr. Crossman I want to suggest, therefore, that the reason why, for at least two § generations, the Labour movement has been right in opposing conscription for this country is because we have been a great naval Power whose security did not depend on a land Army. We could afford the luxury of liberty; we could afford not to have a land Army for two reasons. The first reason was because we had the Navy; the second was because the French took it on the chin each time; we relied on other people to take it on the chin while we mobilised at leisure and we relied on our Navy to secure our islands. I assure my hon. Friends that political principles are based to some extent on history and geography. We are a commonsense people, we have understood that we did not require an Army. That was right at the time.

But now I will call the attention of my hon. Friends below the Gangway to a significant thing. In 1939 another Government decided to introduce conscription. I remember that I was on a paper at the time which was not at all in favour of it, and we spent a whole morning discussing what line our paper—a near-Socialist paper—should take on the subject. I tried to persuade my colleagues that we should be in favour of conscription. They said, "The whole Labour movement will be up in arms. There will be a mass demonstration against it. The people are against it." The really striking thing was that, in 1939, the people of this 1873 country had an acuter sense of reality than many hon. Members. The Labour leaders opposed conscription in 1939, and I think they were quite wrong to do so. I think many people on our Front Bench would agree with me that they should have seen the realities in

1939 as clearly as the mass of our people. The mass of our people had seen the change of situation since 1920. In 1939 they accepted the necessity, and there was scarcely a ripple in the country when conscription was actually introduced. There were a number of pacifists— [Interruption.] Am I told there are no pacifists? Well, there were a number of non-pacifists, like the hon. Member for Gateshead (Mr. Zilliacus) who opposed it for non-pacifist reasons. Whatever their motives, they were a small minority compared with the man in the street, who accepted the grim necessity and showed himself a great deal wiser than his political leaders. He often does.

Mr. Zilliacus (Gateshead) rose—

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Mr. Crossman I want to deal with the hon. Member for Gateshead. He does not pretend that conscription is bad in principle; he simply says that between the wars it was our duty as a Labour movement, if we wanted to fight the policy of the Government, to deny it the Armies with which to carry out its policy. He even urged a general strike at the Southport conference of the Labour Party but at that point the present Foreign Secretary intervened, and said he ran the general strikes and not the hon. Member for Gateshead. It was at Southport that I realised for the first time the monolithic character of the present Foreign Secretary. All I can say to the hon. Member for Gateshead is that I believe he was wrong between the wars in the advice which he gave the Labour movement, and I believe he is wrong now, and I shall say why.

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Like him I happened to travel in Europe a great deal between the wars. I remember being in Vienna in 1934 when the defenceless Austrian Socialists were mown down. I did not find a single Austrian Socialist who said, "I pray that the Labour movement in Britain will go on opposing rearmament." On the contrary, I found every Austrian Socialist praying for rearmament, saying "Cannot you realise that we must have a strong Britain? We want you to change your foreign policy, but if you wait until you have changed your foreign policy before starting on the prototype of an aeroplane, where will you be?" I went to France in 1936. I tell the House seriously that, in my view, if we had had a land Army which the French could have felt would have been by their side, the German invasion of the Rhineland might have ended in the death of Hitlerism. Already, the French had a deep inferiority complex, feeling that they would take it on the chin once again, that there was nothing coming from Britain. 1874

I come now to 1938. I happened to be in Czechoslovakia during the period of the May elections, when the Czech Army mobilized—one of the most heroic things I have ever seen, a small nation mobilising. But it was embarrassing to me, as a British Socialist, when Czech Socialists came to me and said, "I notice you are still voting against re-armament." It made no sense to the people. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] If anything could persuade me that I was wrong, it would be Tory applause, but it does not. I say it made no sense to the people in Europe for a Socialist in Britain to say, "I will deny the Government armaments until I

have changed its foreign policy," and it makes even less sense to deny a Labour Government armaments until it changes its foreign policy. That is the basis of my opposition to what my hon. Friend the Member for Gateshead says.

Mr. Zilliacus May I interrupt my hon. Friend? §

Mr. Crossman No. My hon. Friend the Member for Gateshead says that we must stop the Government having a wrong foreign policy by putting pressure on it. Why does he not deny the Government nationalisation of transport, or something of that sort, to bring pressure to bear on them? I want to change foreign policy, and I hope that in a year or two, we shall have changed it, but we shall have to have defence meanwhile as a means of carrying out that foreign policy. If any hon. Member believes that a Labour Foreign Secretary does not require an Army, Navy or Air Force—[Interruption.] I say they will need an Army, Navy and Air Force. It is irresponsible to give as a ground for voting against national defence, that one dislikes the foreign policy of the Government. That is totally irrelevant. We should keep defence and foreign policy separate, and realise that the strength of Great Britain, 1875 even under a Tory Government, may be of value to the liberty of Europe.

Mr. Zilliacus I wish to ask my hon. Friend three questions. The first is, did rearmament between the wars save the peace, or the League of Nations? Secondly, would we create a situation which would make the Government change their foreign policy if half our Members went into the Lobby tonight in favour of the Amendment? Thirdly—well, I will leave the third. §

Mr. Crossman My hon. Friend wants me to diverge from my main theme. He asks me if rearmament between the wars helped to save the League. Rearmament between the wars certainly saved us, and, if it had not done so there would be no United Nations now. What it accomplished made all the difference between defeat and non-defeat. The answer therefore to the first question is "Yes." Rearmament helped us to build at long last collective security against Hitler. Now, I will answer the hon. Member's second question, which is, would the abstention, or the opposition, of a large number of Labour Members force a change of foreign policy? I say it would not. The Government are well aware that the issues of defence and foreign policy are separate issues, and they will pay more heed to responsible people, who separate the two, and do not try to confuse the issue. §

I want to deal with the other major question which my hon. Friend asked. It is, are we to fight the Russians? That is the second objection to conscription—that it is to be used to fight the Russians, and that the British conscript army might be used to defend the outposts of America, while America has no conscript army at all. I think I was the first in this House to

say that there was a grievous danger in any foreign policy which might lead to our defending the advanced outposts of America. I share with my hon. Friend all his apprehensions in regard to that. I want changes in foreign policy to avoid that.

Mr. Stokes (Ipswich) rose—

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Mr. Crossman No, I cannot give way again. I suggest that those of us who stand for an independent British policy, independent of America, had better realise that an independent British policy certainly demands minimum Armed Forces. One cannot have a pacifist policy if one says, "Let us not ask for American protection, let us not do all these things for America so as to have her on our side." If I ask for an independent policy—indipendent of America—I must conscientiously accept the need for armed forces—and possibly more than an Anglo-American alliance would demand. 1876

Now, as to the question of a Russian war. It is being asked, "Who are these troops being trained to fight?" My view is the same as when we discussed the Army Estimates. There is no possible chance of a war with Russia, I think, for seven years, possibly for 15. This army will not be prepared or trained to fight any Power at all. Indeed, if the Foreign Secretary, or the Minister of Defence were so irresponsible as to train this army to fight any particular Power, I believe there would be something in the case of my hon. Friend the Member for Gateshead. But, this army will not in fact be trained for that, not because of the goodness of the British Foreign Secretary, but because neither the Americans nor Russians are going to have a war

Mr. Stubbs (Cambridgeshire) What are they being trained for?

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Mr. Crossman I am glad to get all this anticipation of what I am going to say. My hon. Friend asked what they are being trained for.

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Mr. McGhee (Penistone) To keep the miners in order.

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Mr. Crossman Until we have U.N.O. security, national armaments must exist. We cannot abolish all arms. My hon. Friends merely now say they want a more efficient volunteer army. I could equally ask them, who is it to fight against? That seems as applicable to a non-conscript army, as to a conscript army.

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If we are keen, and I am keen, on European co-operation with this country, we need our arms for a European security system under U.N.O. That should be the function of our Armed Forces. Some time ago, some hon. Member on this side moved an Amendment on foreign policy indicating our desire for a European foreign policy envisaging a United Socialist States of Europe. I ask my hon. Friends to consider, supposing we who moved that 1877 Amendment went into the Lobby opposing conscription, what any French Socialist would say. We stand for co-operation with Europe. This country is part of Europe now, and the Channel does not exist any more—strategically. If we are part of Europe, and want to play our part in leading Europe, we must pass what Europe regards as the acid test of British Socialism—acceptance of national service. How would a Frenchman react to what I have heard one hon. Member say, "All conscript armies are defeated"? He knows that the reason why the French Army was overwhelmed was because we did not come in time.—[An HON. MEMBER: "What about the Navy?"]—I am trying to point out that we have ceased to be a naval Power, and are now a land Power, and must share with European countries responsibility for the collective security of Europe. There is not one European Socialist who will not say if we vote against this Bill, "The British Socialists have learned nothing. They are stewing in their old insularity." Let us share responsibility with other European Socialists so long as it is necessary for us to do so.

My hon. Friend the Member for Rushcliffe (Mrs. Paton) asked why we should not have a voluntary Army. That is a perfectly fair question. Here is my answer. I believe that in five years' time the R.A.F. and Navy could be fully recruited by long-service volunteers. But what about the Army? The problem is that we are not a militarist nation.

Mrs. Paton We are going to be.

Mr. Crossman There is no technical reason against a professional Army. A small § professional Army was allowed to Germany. That was the disastrous mistake made by Mr. Lloyd George, who forbade them more than 100,000 men. Then those 100,000 men became every one, at least on the level of training of a sergeant, or an officer. Out of that was formed the cadre of a great army. Do our anti-conscriptionist friends feel that that is a fine example to follow? It is perfectly true that a professional army may well be more efficient than a conscript army, if one can get it. One could get it easily in Germany, because the Germans like soldiering. The British do not. We are an anti-militarist nation, and do not like being soldiers. I do not believe we can recruit a whole-time professional army 1878 adequate to our needs in this country without raising the prestige of the Army to a position which I do not want to see. I do not want to see the profession of the soldier regarded as the highest profession of the country. I do not think it is. I do not think it is a profession at all, and for that reason I think this job should be shared equally by the people, thanking God that we dislike it so much that we have been compelled to do it.

As I suspected at the beginning of my speech, it is impossible to convince my hon. Friends by

reason. But can they at least admit there is a conscientious case for supporting this Bill? I do not, however, think it proper to support this Bill without the limitation I made at the beginning of my speech. I would limit the use of national service strictly to national defence by reducing the period to one year. Our boys should not be used overseas. Conscription should only be used to produce a trained reserve national defence.

5.15 p.m.

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Mr. Herbert Butler (Hackney, South) After what appears to me a very considerable time, § I now ask for the courtesy of the House in rising to address it for the first time. I have never yet been struck by the brevity of the speeches, but nevertheless I hope to learn by experience, and I myself intend to set a good example. I regret that my first speech in this House should be one of opposition to a Government of whose record I am very proud. I say this after nearly 30 years' experience in the Socialist movement. During the whole of my activities I never expected that I would ever enter this House as a Member. I was very happy indeed to expound the principles and policy of the Socialist movement, and that gave me the satisfaction I desired. I do not intend to get engaged in controversy, but I would say that in this Labour movement of ours at the moment we have so many military experts that I wonder, sometimes, at whose feet they learned their Socialism. Nevertheless, it takes all sorts to make a world, and we are very happy that we have that diverse opinion in our ranks.

I never believed that it would fall to the lot of the Labour Government to introduce compulsory military service, and even if I had, I should still have retained my faith 1879 that a Socialist Government was a natural development out of the awful conditions under which our people were living. But I would have fought the idea, and I would have hoped that I should have been able to defeat it inside our own conferences and within our own ranks. The position, however, was that at all times our party was opposed to the idea of compulsory military service. Therefore, it was not necessary to fight it inside our own party machinery. I went to the electorate upon the basis of "Let us face the future." I have searched it since that time, and I cannot find any reference in it to the subject matter of this Bill. If there had been a direct or an indirect reference to it, it may be that I should have had a fairly clear conscience in my attitude to it, but there was nothing in it.

So far as I am concerned, I am not prepared to support the Government in the imposition of this thing on our people, when we have no authority so to do. All of us on this side of the House were expounding to the electorate in 1945 the necessity for the whole of our people accepting a greater measure of responsibility towards the community. Ours was not only a party policy; ours was not only a party programme; ours was an appeal to the people to accept the view that a Socialist Government would inaugurate a new way of life. We were desirous of instilling in the minds of the people that there was a necessity for an alteration of the relationship of man to man, that we wanted greater freedom of the individual, that we wanted the people to express themselves. Economic conditions under which they were living,

were such that there could be no expression of individuality.

In my view, the Socialist movement secured its greatest support and its most sound allegiance from people who believed that we had something to offer more than a mere political programme. Therefore, I am not one of those who believe that we are here solely because the people desired us to fill their bellies. I believe the support of our movement is based upon something deeper and stronger than that. What are we doing? We are throwing it all to the wind in this proposal, which is now before the House. I hasten to assure the House that there are many of us on this side of the House. who, because we believed 1880 in these things, have suffered great difficulties and have lost our employment, with consequent suffering and misery, over a number of years. But we went on because we believed in it. We went on, not to come into this House and to pass Measures which will decide the conditions of people in the Armed Forces of the Crown. To those of my hon. Friends who are so keen to be participants in the glory of this military machine, I would say that I wonder what they are doing here, telling other people to do it.

If there are any strictures implied, in the remarks I am making, upon the sponsors of the Bill, let me hasten to say that I am in no way questioning the integrity of the right hon. Gentleman the Minister of Labour or his colleagues, for whom I have the greatest respect. I believe that they in their particular spheres believe that they are pursuing the Socialist ideal, an ideal which I also hold. I am not questioning their sincerity, but I believe that they are being seriously misguided and that they are taking an easy path to what they think is an effective course for the Armed Forces of the country. I believe that the reaction of our people will be such that this Measure will defeat its own object. I am aware—and I have listened to the speeches and references by hon. Members regarding this—of the great recruiting agent for the Armed Forces of the Crown, namely, unemployment. The pay of the Armed Forces of the Crown was commensurate with the regard that hon. and right hon. Gentlemen opposite, and their colleagues, who were in control of the Government of this country, had for them. The pay which they received was indicative of the regard that their masters at that particular time had for them.

Therefore, as unemployment was the best recruiting agent, we obviously cannot expect, with an enlightened Government, of which I am proud, to have that recruiting agent in the future. What does that involve? When we are discussing the question of occupations, such as coal mining, where conditions are arduous and dirty, what do we do? We say that it is necessary, because of the arduous nature of the occupation, because of the fact that men will not go into this particular industry, to offer inducements over those prevailing in other particular industries. I believe that this Government and this country will eventually have to 1881 face the fact that the most important people in the country are those who do the dirty work, and that the clean collar brigade will, some time, have to be relegated in relation to the position of people who do the dirty work. These will have to get better recompense in many ways than those who do less arduous and dirty work.

I return to my argument about the Armed Forces. I am no pacifist. I was in the 1914–18 war as a member of the Royal Navy, and I experienced the comradeship of that association.

Since that time I have been a member of a war pensions committee and have seen some of the results of what is done by the people who manipulated the situation in 1914. I have never subscribed to the pacifist school of thought. I would say that in considering that we cannot get recruits into the Armed Forces of the Crown, one has to appreciate the fact that to war and the war machine, we cannot apply logic. If we want people trained in the art of killing, although we say that it is purely defensive work and that it is designed to prevent the other fellow killing the man who is being trained, if we want people to go into that particular profession, we shall have to pay them something which is commensurate with the task they are being asked to undertake.

My constituents in South Hackney—and we have had some famous men in South Hackney, and some who probably could not make that claim—are typical ordinary, common or garden workpeople. I am continually getting letters from my constituents complaining of a feeling of inertia, boredom and frustration. They are from constituents who are in the Forces, and who want to get out. They are in the Forces, with nothing to do, and, they want to get out, and take their place in the various branches of industrial life. I have been told that in one depot of the Royal Navy, there are thousands of men doing nothing—with no duties to perform. One man, in particular, wants to get out, and he is told that he must pay £24 to get out of the Service where he is doing nothing. He wants to get back into industry, and at the same time industry is crying out for his capacity to produce.

On these grounds, I am opposed to this Measure. I happen to be chairman of a juvenile employment committee, and for some considerable time it has been our task to attempt to get these lads to enter employment, where they can be apprenticed to a job, instead 1882 of taking blind-alley occupations which might give them higher wages at a particular time. In the course of the work of this Committee we interview the lads and their parents. We endeavour to impress upon both the lads and the parents the necessity to have the boys fitted as craftsmen and technicians. Ever since the Gracious Speech there has been a falling off in the usefulness of this work. We are inevitably met by parents saying, "Why should we bother? They have to go into the Army very shortly." I listened very carefully to the speech of the right hon. Gentleman the Minister of Labour and I realise that certain measures of protection are given to the apprentices.

Here let me say that probably I have an interest. I have three sons, but I am not speaking in this matter because I have any fear of them going into the Services. As a matter of fact, I believe that, politically, they are Tory. That is their business and not mine. It may be that as they grow older they may get some sense and I may get some more supporters—but that is by the way. I know that, so far as this employment committee is concerned, it is very difficult for us to do our job in the proper manner and to persuade these lads to go into proper industry and trade. We are now faced with an absolute lack of belief that proper skilled occupation can be made available to these young people because of this Measure.

I conclude by saying that the matters which the Minister has indicated are purely expedients. It is the principle to which I am opposed. I do not believe that any Government, without a mandate from the people to do so, should impose this shackle of totalitarianism upon the

country. I say, quite definitely, that when we were asking for the support of the electorate we urged that a Socialist Government would deal with the political, economic and social conditions of the people. In the economic and political fields this Government are fulfilling their promises and doing the job well. In this matter of the [National Service Bill](#) there is retrogression. I appeal to the Government to think again about the whole matter. I shall, with a very sore heart, go into the Lobby against the Government tonight.

5.33 p.m.

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Sir Hugh O'Neill (Antrim) It is always a pleasure for a Member who has been in this Assembly for some time to congratulate a newcomer. I most heartily congratulate the hon. Member for South Hackney (Mr. H. Butler) on his most admirable speech. He has shown a knowledge of his subject, a sincerity, and a conviction which we all admire. I thought I detected once or twice in the course of his speech a slight breath of sea air, which, no doubt, is due to his past association with the Royal Navy. I am sure that we shall always welcome his future interventions in our Debates, and we look forward to them. 1883

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My object in intervening in this Debate is to express on behalf of the Ulster Unionist Parliamentary Party their strong dissent from the omission of Northern Ireland from the scope of this Measure. We feel that it ought to apply to the whole of the United Kingdom and it is our intention to move an Amendment to the Bill in Committee in order to bring this to pass. I hope that when the Minister of Defence replies to this Debate, he will be able to give the reasons why Northern Ireland is not included.

Mr. Sydney Silverman (Nelson and Colne) Would the right hon. Gentleman forgive me? §

Sir H. O'Neill What, so soon? §

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Mr. Silverman I thought the right hon. Gentleman might tell the House why he thinks it necessary to move such an Amendment, now that the war is over, though he did not move it in 1939 or 1940. §

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Sir H. O'Neill If the hon. Member will be so good as to wait until I develop my argument, he will find that his question will be answered. The question of the application of compulsory military service to Ireland has a long history which I must bring to the recollection of the House in order that our attitude may be fully understood and appreciated. In the first world war the matter was raised several times. It was considered. Mr. Lloyd George wanted to §

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bring it about but owing to the hostility of the anti-British elements in Ireland who were then in a majority, conscription was never applied. In the second world war the first Military Service Bill was introduced in May, 1939, and that applied to the whole of the United Kingdom.

In Northern Ireland, this decision was accepted by the majority as perfectly natural and proper. It is my strong belief that if there had been no interference from outside, it would have been accepted by the minority, and applied without serious difficulty. Unfortunately, outside influences were brought into play and the Southern Irish leaders began to agitate. The Parliament in Dublin was specially summoned and Mr. de Valera, in the course of a speech, said that the proposal was an attempt by a foreign Government to conscript Irishmen to the British arms. Conferences took place between Mr. Neville Chamberlain, the then Prime Minister, and the Prime Minister of Northern Ireland. The latter made it quite clear where he stood in this matter. At the same time, a statement was issued by the Ulster Members of this House to the effect that it was their unanimous opinion that no distinction should be made in the Bill between Northern Ireland and the rest of the United Kingdom. 1884

The Government, however, capitulated to the Southern Irish clamour. In his speech on the Second Reading of the Bill, Mr. Neville Chamberlain announced that the Government would move an Amendment in Committee to exclude Northern Ireland from the Bill. That Amendment was duly moved. The Ulster Members challenged a Division and on 10th May, 1939, the Amendment was carried by 261 votes to 20, two Ulster Members acting as tellers for the minority. Perhaps that answers the point raised a short time ago by the hon. Member for Nelson and Colne (Mr. S. Silverman). That, therefore, ended the matter so far as the first application of compulsory military service was concerned in the last war.

Nothing happened for two years but in May, 1941, the matter was raised again. That was the time when the air bombing of our cities was at its peak. The whole of the country was subjected to attack, including the people of Ulster of all parties, sections and classes. They were all being mercilessly bombed. At that time, too, we were standing alone against our enemies. The manpower question was very acute and the Government were again considering the application of conscription to Northern Ireland. Discussions again took place. In reply to a Question in this House on 10th May, 1941, the then Prime Minister, the present Leader of the Opposition, said: "This question has for some time past engaged the attention of His Majesty's Govern- ment, and I hope to be in a position to make a statement about it on the first Sitting Day after this week."—[OFFICIAL REPORT, 20th May, 1941; Vol. 371, C. 1390.]" It is well known that a Bill was then actually drafted and that after discussion with the Northern Ireland Government it had been, decided to apply conscription there. But something happened after that statement by the then Prime Minister. I have no doubt that the Southern Irish leaders got busy again. I have never heard what happened. I have heard it suggested that all kinds of pressure were brought to bear upon the Government from these outside sources, including pressure via the United States. Whether or not that is true, I do not know, but the fact is that the Government again capitulated. When the Prime Minister made his statement to the House of Commons on 27th May, 1941, 1885

it was in the following terms: "I said a week ago that this matter had been engaging our attention. We have made a number of inquiries in various directions, with the result that we have come to the conclusion that at the present time, although there can be no dispute about our rights or about the merits, it would be more trouble than it is worth to enforce such a policy." When asked, in a supplementary question, whether it was not the opinion of the Government of Northern Ireland that conscription could, and should, be applied, the Prime Minister replied: "Yes, Sir. That was the view of the Government of Northern Ireland for whose loyal aid and continued and constant support of our cause no words of praise can be too high."—[OFFICIAL REPORT, 27th May, 1941; Vol. 371, c. 1718.] That was said by the present Leader of the Opposition when he was leading this country at one of the most critical phases of the war. So much for the past history of this matter.

We have now reached a stage where compulsory national service has to be adopted in peacetime. Why, in these circumstances, do we maintain that it should be applied to the whole of the United Kingdom? First, because if we must get men for the Fighting Services, it is the only fair way in which to get them. In his speech yesterday, the right hon. Gentleman the Member for Woodford (Mr. Churchill) made the point that if conscription was to be fair it must also be universal throughout the whole country.

Mr. McGhee Throughout the Empire.

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1886

Sir H. O'Neill Throughout the whole country. If it is universal it must be applied to the whole country. That is my argument. Why is it that the only objectors to conscription who have been allowed to have their way have been the Southern Irishmen? There are plenty of people in this House who do not like conscription—we have heard them express their views today—but if this Bill passes they have to lump it. Yet the people who make trouble from outside the United Kingdom are the only section of the population—

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Mr. Mulvey (Fermanagh and Tyrone) If the Northern Ireland people are so loyal, why do they need conscription?

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Sir H. O'Neill The people to whom I refer are, I say, the only section of the population whose wishes are to be carried out. A lot of nonsense is talked about voluntary service. People have said to me, "You Ulster men boast of your loyalty, so surely you can supply all the men required by voluntary enlistment?" My answer is that we cannot. It is true that our part of the United Kingdom was formerly the best recruiting area—

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Mr. Mulvey May I put a question to the right hon. Gentleman? §

Mr. Deputy-Speaker Is it a point of Order? §

Mr. Mulvey It is a question. Can the right hon. Gentleman give any indication to the House as to how conscription can be effectively enforced in Southern Ireland? Can he further explain to the House what measures would be necessary to keep the followers of his own party from absconding across the Border to avoid conscription? [Laughter.] §

Sir H. O'Neill I am afraid I take this matter too seriously to feel inclined to allow it to develop into a laughing matter. §

Mr. Mulvey Answer the point. §

Sir H. O'Neill There always comes a time in voluntary service when the eager volunteers have all gone forward, and the others hold back for fear of losing their jobs to the men who stay at home. §

Mr. Mulvey When conscription was threatened before— §

Hon. Members Order.

1887

Sir H. O'Neill If this were not so, conscription would never be necessary in any country. There is another reason which certainly affects my consideration of this question. However much some of us may oppose conscription in principle, it will be admitted almost on all sides that the training which these young men are to receive may prove in many respects advantageous to them. For example, they will learn discipline. Their outlook generally will certainly be broadened. Their physique will certainly be improved. It will promote comradeship and manliness among them. The Minister of Labour stated in introducing this Bill that he looked upon this calling-up for national service as a privilege, and I agree with him. Our people in Northern Ireland will be at a disadvantage as compared with their compatriots in the rest of the United Kingdom who will have these opportunities which they §

will not get. For the reasons I have given, I urge the Government to reconsider this matter. Their hesitation is of course due to the fact that they fear that conscription would be violently resisted by the anti-British minority in Ulster. Possibly they think that there would be passive resistance and that men might have to be sent to gaol—

Mr. Mulvey Your own members would resist it. §

Sir H. O'Neill —or they may think that there might be riots. All the paraphernalia of rebellious opposition might be used. That is undoubtedly what the Government fear, but I do not believe that anything of the sort would take place. I have the authority of the Government of Northern Ireland to say that they are perfectly prepared to shoulder the burden and to play their part in applying national service within the territory over which they have control. §

Mr. Mulvey Your arguments will deceive nobody. §

5.50 p.m. §

Mr. Cocks (Broxtowe) The right hon. Baronet the Member for Antrim (Sir H. O'Neill) stated that he wants conscription extended to Northern Ireland. I should prefer to limit it to Northern Ireland and not to extend it to Britain. The right hon. Gentleman considered it a privilege, but it is a privilege we prefer not to have. The Labour Party has always been opposed to conscription in peacetime, and it is with some surprise that, after all these 1888 years, we find some Members of our Party suddenly coming to the conclusion that conscription is the most democratic way of raising an Army. I have never heard of such a sudden conversion since the days of Saul of Tarsus, and on that occasion only one man was converted and here is a change of heart on the part of a good many. I can only hope profoundly that the final result will be less painful to them than it was to him. §

We who oppose conscription accepted rather reluctantly its continuance to 1st January, 1949. It was a great shock to some of us when we heard that the Government proposed to continue it for another five years after that time, especially at a time when all our enemies have been scattered and Germany and Japan lie prostrate in the dust, when no country is in a position to fight us except our gallant and glorious allies, America and Russia, and when we need all our manpower to build up our industrial strength, to finance our social reforms and to save ourselves from bankruptcy in 1949 or 1950, if not before. We are short of manpower in every industry. The Minister of Labour stated the other day that we have not sufficient people to do all the things that need to be done and to produce all the goods required to be produced. I will give minimum figures. We need another 100,000 men in our

mines; we need another 500,000 in our basic industries; presently we shall be losing from agriculture about 100,000 or more prisoners of war. This very day we have raised the school leaving age, and thousands of young people have been withdrawn from the labour market. We have been told that unless we can expand our exports by 75 per cent over the prewar volume before the loan runs out—and it is running out very rapidly—our standard of living will be drastically reduced. We shall have to cut down our imports of raw materials and food and we shall be faced by a financial crisis of the first order, and the more awful prospect still of another National Government.

For some years now our birthrate has been falling. Just before the war there were 417,000 young people of 18 in this country. In 1950 that will have fallen to 295,000, and this Bill takes 210,000 of those out of industry. In the circumstances of this crisis, the idea of 1889 still having in a years' time over one million men in the Forces—there are far more now, of course—supplied by 350,000 men—[An HON. MEMBER: "Four hundred and fifty thousand."] I take the moderate figure of 350,000 given by the Minister of Defence—is absolutely folly and madness. It cannot be justified by any arguments at all, even if the Services are to fall automatically, as we were told last night, to 750,000 by 1st January, 1949. Even that is a burden far too heavy for us to bear.

What are the reasons for the introduction of this Bill? We have been given three reasons—support of U.N.O.; our commitment, in various parts of the world; and the fact that we are no longer an island and shall have no breathing space in future to build up an Army if war breaks out, and must, therefore, have millions of trained reserves instantly ready to repel the long—range rockets and be dissolved in the frantic fury of the atomic bomb. I will take those three points in order. I do not like suggesting that any hon. Member talks humbug, but I find distinct traces of humbug in this talk about conscription under this Bill being necessary for the support of U.N.O. I have always understood that the system of collective security meant that national forces would be reduced and not expanded. When I am told to refer to Article 43, this is what I find. I am just quoting the essential words, though I have the full text here. This is what it says: "Members of the United Nations ... undertake to make available to the Security Council, ... in accordance with a special agreement or agreements, Armed Forces ... necessary for the purpose of maintaining international peace and security.... Such agreements shall govern the numbers and types of forces ... "No such agreement has yet been negotiated. It will be a very long time, I fear, before any of these agreements are negotiated. When such agreements are negotiated, then will be the time to decide what contribution we shall give to the Forces in defence of U.N.O., but not before then.

Vice-Admiral Taylor Is the hon. Gentleman now suggesting that until agreements have §
been come to between the nations as regards security under U.N.O. we should do nothing?

1890

Mr. Cocks I am answering the argument that this Bill is necessary to carry out our §
obligations to U.N.O., and that only. I am not talking about the rest of the world or the

ordinary process of self-defence, but about the suggestion that we are committed to carry out our obligations to U.N.O. The agreements have not been negotiated, and the time to decide our contribution is when they are negotiated. In any case, that is not an argument for conscription either now or then.

As to our commitments, we do not know what they are. It is absolutely monstrous that this House should be asked to vote Estimates without being told where our troops or ships are stationed and in what numbers they are in different parts of the world. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] I believe that if the public knew the size of the Forces we are keeping at the present moment in various parts of the world, there would be an instant demand for their reduction. That is possibly the real reason for this secrecy and the official reason that we have been given is not the real reason. That is the reason perhaps for the iron curtain which the Minister of Defence has dropped to conceal his proceedings.

In any case, whatever the number is, it is far too large. I do not believe that we can afford, in 1949, to keep a highly equipped Army of more than 250,000 men, which is 30,000 more than we had before the war. That Army would, of course, be supported in this island by territorial forces and reserves. To bring the Regular Army up to a total of 250,000 would mean recruitment, at the present time, of 4,000 per month, but after we had reached the 250,000 it would mean a monthly recruitment of only 2,800. I do not believe that we could not raise, voluntarily, 2,800 per month, especially when the general calling up, which is now going on, ceases, and our present huge Army is reduced. In my view, an Army of a quarter of a million, well equipped, is all we can afford, and all we can provide.

My hon. Friend the Member for Aston (Mr. Wyatt) makes many valuable contributions to our Debates. He is an industrious Member, and he speaks with authority on Service matters, although he sometimes reminds me of a new curate adopting the pontifical attitude of an archbishop. My hon. Friend was good enough to say, last night, that the supporters of 1891 the Amendment knew nothing about military warfare, and that we were misguided. Naturally, then, we turn to him for guidance. He disclosed to us a profound mystery which has been concealed even from the Minister of Defence, who has said that even he does not know the shape of things to come. But my hon. Friend the Member for Aston knew. He told us why we need millions of trained reserves in this country, in these days of long-range warfare. He visualised the scene, in the next war, when the heavens would be filled with shouting, and there would descend on this fair island, not a ghastly dew, but thousands of ferocious paratroopers. He said that we should have to have a large Army, armed with bombs and bayonets, to kill these paratroopers as they fell. My hon. Friend so delighted the hon. Member for Kingston-upon-Thames (Mr. Boyd-Carpenter) that the latter said that my hon. Friend's speech ought to have been delivered from the Government Front Bench, whereupon I noticed that the Secretary of State for War seemed rather uneasy. When I asked my hon. and gallant Friend the Member for Chelmsford (Wing-Commander Millington) what he thought of this apocalyptic vision of descending furies and paratroopers, he said, "Give me a few squadrons of fighter planes, and I would drown the whole lot in the sea long before they got to this country." My hon. and gallant Friend explained that in the last war a few squadrons of Whirlwinds destroyed, in a few minutes, two divisions of Germans in the

air. [An HON. MEMBER: "What about Crete?"] The Secretary of State for War will now feel easier but I hope that the readers of a certain Sunday newspaper will not lose faith in their military critic.

Then we come to the argument that we are no longer an island. Of course, we are not, but I ask the question which has been asked so many times during this Debate—whom are we going to fight? I am sure that Russia has no intention of attacking us, and I do not believe that she is in a position to do so if she wished. The Foreign Secretary has said that there is no conceivable reason why there should be any war between Britain and Russia. If it is suggested that we might have to support America in an attack on Russia, then I say, quite clearly, that the workers of this country would never support such an attack. I 1892 represent a mining constituency, and I am quite sure that the miners in my area would refuse to wind one ton of coal if such a situation occurred, and that the wives and daughters of the workers would refuse to make munitions. Any Government, Labour, Conservative or Coalition, which attempted such a project, would be swept from office within a week. If we want to be strong in the diplomatic field we must build up our industrial and economic power. Not by swollen Armies, but by productive pits and flourishing industries can our influence abroad be extended. The Foreign Secretary has said, "If only I had coal to offer to the world how much stronger my bargaining power would be." If we could export 20 million tons of coal to France today, it would be more welcome there than "an Army with banners," even although that Army were accompanied by my hon. Friend the Member for Aston and my hon. Friend the Member for East Coventry (Mr. Crossman).

The White Paper has stated that "those things which are fundamental to our national life must come first." Well, the thing which is fundamental to our national life is our industrial prosperity. If we fail to produce we fail in everything and our Armies will be utterly useless. In this crisis we can only save ourselves by limiting our commitments to those which can be sustained by voluntary service, and by concentrating the whole of our remaining manpower on productive work. Otherwise we shall only be "ruining down the infinite inane." The Conservative Party are voting for this Bill tonight. We are voting against the Conservative Party. It is true that the Leader of the Opposition may be accompanied into the Division Lobby by certain Members of the Government, and certain of their supporters, but we shall take no notice of that. We shall not ask them where they have been and we shall welcome them wholeheartedly when they return. I do not take such a tragic view of this Bill as some of my hon. Friends, because it is possible that it will never be operated at all. It is possible that when 1949 comes the pressure of public opinion, and the pressure of economic crisis, may render the idea of compulsory service utterly unthinkable. In any case, I say that the great Labour majority we were given at the last Election was given us so that we 1893 could build up in this land a prosperous Socialist State, not to produce a nation of bankrupt conscripts, or, in peacetime, to rivet upon a free people the shackles of military conscription.

6.10 p.m.

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Mr. Stamford (Leeds, West) I very much welcome the opportunity of participating in this Debate, and as I know that there are still quite a number of Members who wish to speak, I propose to cut out all unnecessary preliminaries and come at once to the few points I want to make. That, I think, is a good rule to adopt in this House, and I would like to see it more generally followed, especially by those who sit on the Front Benches. Tonight, we are to be asked to make a very grave decision, perhaps the gravest decision of this Parliament. I confess that for my own part I have had a good deal of uneasiness of mind about this Bill since it was first mooted. That uneasiness has not been at all reduced by the fact that supporters of the Bill include the right hon. Gentleman the Member for Woodford (Mr. Churchill), and others who support him on the opposite benches. I think that it is just as well to remember that it was the right hon. Gentleman who— §

Vice-Admiral Taylor Won the war. §

Mr. Stamford —in the early days, when these restrictions on liberty were being imposed, gave a pledge in this House that at the end of the war all those restrictions would be removed. Today, he is supporting the Bill. §

I listened with great interest, as I am sure did every other hon. Member, to the speech made yesterday by my right hon. Friend the Minister of Labour. I hoped to get from it some guidance towards assisting me to make a decision tonight, but I completely failed to do so; in fact, the disturbance of mind which I had before was increased by his speech. Speaking of the proposal to adopt conscription, my right hon. Friend declared that this was the most democratic way of raising the forces required. That has been said before, but it seemed strange to me, coming from the Minister of Labour. If that is true now it is true for the future. If it is true it only confirms the fear that was expressed by the right hon. and learned Gentleman the Member for Montgomery (Mr. C. Davies) earlier today, that this Bill means the permanent institution of conscription in this country. That is exactly what I fear; I believe that we are now being asked to give up the voluntary system, to give it up for good, and that this Bill represents a complete victory for the national service view. All my instincts are against conscription, but in this matter I have tried not to be guided by my instincts alone. I want to be fair to the Government. If the Government had been able to make a case that was convincing to my own reason on this matter, I would have been willing to support the Measure now before the House. I am not a pacifist. I have heard some talk here today, as I did yesterday, about the alleged absence of a mandate upon which the Government would be enabled to proceed with this Bill. I confess that does not influence me very much, because, in some matters, the Government have a permanent mandate. 1894

Surely, the first obligation of any Government, irrespective of their political complexion, is to ensure the security of this Realm. I believe that for that no new mandate need ever be sought. It is a fundamental duty of any Government, and the Government would fail in their first duty if they did not have regard to that necessity. So, personally, I am not much

influenced by the fact that this issue has never been submitted to the country at a General Election. We cannot afford to gamble with the safety of the nation, and if it can be shown that—and the Government have had plenty of opportunity of doing so—this Measure is necessary in order to ensure the safety of these Islands, some of us, who have hesitated so far, would be prepared to support the Measure now before the House. This Bill is put forward on grounds of national security, but I think that it will be generally recognised that, at this stage of events, after the last great war, there is not a single nation anywhere today that is in a position to threaten the security of this country, nor—and I do not pretend to be a prophet—is there likely to be within any foreseeable time to come. Therefore, it seems to me that this Bill is advanced upon grounds on which it is not possible to state a convincing case on behalf of this Bill.

There are two contentions, which have already been referred to in other speeches, which, I think, the Government ought to establish before we take a vote tonight. First of all, 1895 there is the contention that we need the large forces indicated in order to ensure our safety. I listened to the speech of the Minister of Labour yesterday. He set out by declaring that it was his intention to state the reasons why the Government sought the passage of this Bill. I thought that it was a singularly unconvincing speech. The Minister of Defence still has an opportunity to speak tonight. He will have the opportunity to persuade me to his point of view, but he will have to make a much more convincing speech than he made on the last occasion when he spoke to us on national defence. In this matter, I think that we all recognise that we are compelled to take a risk. In my view, the military risk is a small one, because, so far as one can see, there is no existing threat to the security of the people of these Islands. The military risk is a small risk; but the economic risk is a very great risk indeed. The country is being asked, under this Bill, to bear burdens far too heavy to be borne under conditions existing at the moment. So much for the first contention.

The second contention which the Government have to seek to establish is that we cannot raise the necessary Forces without some measure of compulsion. I resist that contention. I do not accept it; I believe that the case for it is bad, and, personally, I reject it. There are two ways of getting men to serve. One is by compulsion, and the other is by attracting them by suitable inducements to serve. We have to make the choice. For some reason or other—for reasons which I think are generally understood by hon. Members in this House—the Army is not today a very popular form of service. I am not discussing thereasons for that, because I think that the reasons are pretty well known. But I am quite sure that what has been done up to now in the way of reform of Army conditions has been so little, and applied to such a small extent, that we cannot fairly say that we have established conditions good enough to attract a sufficient number into our military Forces. I think that the inducements have still to be raised. We have to remember the fact—we cannot escape it—that the Army today is in competition with highly-paid forms of labour outside. We cannot ignore that fact. I believe, myself, that if, as the argument runs, the Army is the most essential of all forms of 1896 service, that it ought to be the best paid, and have the best conditions, of all forms of service in this country.

We have to have regard to the tact that standards are changing and rising, and we cannot

expect to attract into the Armed Forces of the Crown a sufficient number of men, unless we not only recognise that fact, but frame our policy in accordance with it. Allusion has already been made in this Debate to the very acute shortage of manpower in every basic industry in this country. It is not only the Army who are short of men. Textiles are short of men; the mines are short of men; every basic industry is short of men—but, mark this, we do not propose to apply compulsion to any other service, outside the service of the Armed Forces. Why not? There is as good a case, in my view, in the present circumstances; but I guard myself by saying that I am not at all in favour of industrial compulsion. Today, in existing circumstances, there is as good a case for industrial compulsion as for military conscription. I am not at all sure that there is not an even better case. The right hon. Member for Woodford yesterday affected to see a great gulf fixed between military and industrial conscription. I believe that distinction is completely unreal. What is the logic of conscription? It is that every man should serve where the needs of the country require him, in any capacity, whatever it may be, provided the national interests require it. Any of my trade union colleagues on this side of the House who tonight intend to vote for this Bill, or any of them who are contemplating doing so, should, I think, do so with their eyes wide open to the industrial implications of their action, and recognise clearly where the logic of conscription must inevitably lead.

There are a good many other things which I should like to say about this Bill, but time forbids. I conclude by saying that I have listened very earnestly so far to the case put for this Bill in this Debate. I have not been convinced by that case. I think that the case of the Government is a weak one. It is not a case that will induce me, at any rate, to vote for this Bill tonight. I am not voting against the Government. I do not propose to vote for the Amendment, but because my reason is not convinced of the necessity for this Measure, I shall certainly refrain from going into the Division Lobby on the Second Reading.

1897

6.26 p.m.

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Mr. Oliver Stanley (Bristol, West) The House has listened with great interest to the speech of the hon. Member for West Leeds (Mr. Stamford) who has explained to us with great clarity the reasons why he is unable to take a stand either for or against the Bill. I think that probably most people in this House approach the decision to be taken tonight, with a certain amount of difficulty and hesitation. I exempt from that, of course, the right hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. C. Davies) and his followers. He has told us that the whole of his band in this House are united in the stand they are taking, and definite in their views. If he has had no difficulty among the Liberal Party in the House of Commons, he cannot say there is the same unity of belief in the Liberal Party throughout the country. If he were to say that, he would show that he had not done, what every good Liberal ought to do every morning, and that is to read the "News Chronicle." If he had read the "News Chronicle" this morning, he would have noticed a leader which stated that: "It is apparent, for instance, that within the Liberal Party all do not think alike on this issue. Parliamentary Liberals are to oppose outright the Government's Conscription Bill. Yet the recent draft

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statement of Liberal policy, which is to be submitted to the Party Assembly, while regarding conscription as undesirable as a permanent institution goes on to say that, 'the existing situation clearly makes a continuation of the war-time Measure obligatory'." We, no doubt, on our side of the House, could, if we liked, have also made our decision an easy one. I noticed that my Sunday paper, last Sunday, was full of the events of what was described as the biggest sporting day of the year. The semifinals of the Cup, the Grand National, the Boat Race, and a speech by the Attorney-General. This speech was full of bitter complaint against the Tory Party. [Interruption.] Hon. Members opposite, surely, have learned by now never to applaud any statement by the Attorney-General, without waiting, not only for the end of the speech, but for the apology that comes after it. He accuses us of putting party advantage before national interest, and of being prepared to exploit the country's difficulties in order to inconvenience the Socialist Government. It is fair to say that he did not only deal in 1898 generalities. He cited a grave charge in support of his views. He said that we have encouraged people to grumble against the blessings which that benevolent bunch on the Front Bench opposite are continually bestowing upon us. If that were true, it would be a grave charge, but, of course, like most of the Attorney-General's charges, it is untrue.

If it were true and if, in fact, we thought nothing but of our party advantage and if we were prepared to subordinate the national interests to them, what a glorious opportunity we should be having this evening. If we chose to oppose this Bill tonight we should not be causing the party opposite only some petty annoyance. We should be inflicting upon it a first-class Parliamentary defeat, and as I speak from this Box we would be looking on many of the faces opposite for the last time—an aesthetic loss but one that could be fully compensated for by the political advantages. No doubt the Chancellor of the Exchequer as he goes into the Lobby tonight will do so with a song in his heart, and as he looks on his followers so soon to be reduced the song may well prove to be, "Will ye no' come back again?" But what the Attorney-General said about this party on Saturday is going to be proved wrong on Tuesday. That is unusually quick, even to disprove a statement by the Attorney-General, and I hope, therefore, that tonight when he and I go through the same Lobby—because we shall be tonight what I think is technically called "fellow travelers"—he will favour us with one of those felicitous apologies for which, if for nothing else, he has during the last year gained such reputation.

We are going to take on this occasion what is, politically at any rate, the hard course. We are going to divide on this Bill as we think it to be in the national interest and not to our party advantage, and we or at any rate the great majority of us intend to support the Bill. It is not a very pleasant decision for anyone to have to take. There cannot be anybody in any party on any side of the House who likes conscription in peacetime or the consequences that it entails. At the best, it is as was described by an hon. Member opposite in the Debate yesterday a reluctant necessity.

I was very interested yesterday in the speech of the hon. and gallant Member for 1899 Dudley (Colonel Wigg). I listened to the whole of it, I read it again this morning and I hope I am not doing the hon. Member an injustice if I say he spoke in favour of the Bill, but curiously enough most of his speech was devoted to a condemnation of my hon. Friends on

this side of the House for supporting the Bill, and what remained was a condemnation of the Liberal Party for opposing it. The hon. and gallant Member's chief reason against us was he said that we had been in favour of conscription for 40 years. Even if he is right, I do not see why that would make it wrong for us to vote in favour of it tonight. There is nothing fundamentally wrong in sticking to an opinion for a long time. However, the hon. and gallant Member has only been in the House a short time and he may have been misled by his experiences. I can assure him that only recently has it been considered shameful to maintain after the Election the same themes as one propounded before it. There are many earlier and most respectable precedents in favour of saying the same thing, both before and after appealing to the electors.

As a matter of fact, the hon. and gallant Member was wrong. Conscription has not been a part of the Conservative policy for 40 years. It has never figured in our programme. With regard to the argument of the right hon. and learned Gentleman the Member for Montgomery that if it was not in our programme or speeches or policy it was in our heart of hearts, I would reply: Is not that rather a dangerous argument to put forward? It is, of course, an easy line to take. If one's opponent does not say things to prove one's case it is open to one to say that a certain view is still held by him in his heart of hearts. It is, of course, an argument that several people can use. It would be quite possible, although I would not dream of saying so, to say that "in their heart of hearts" the Liberal Party really believe that conscription is necessary. I should have just as much evidence to give in support of that, as there is in support of the charge which the right hon. and learned Gentleman has brought against us. But it has not been our programme for 40 years. It is not something which we have looked forward to, something we have worked for, or 1900 something that we welcome.

We recognise just as well as anybody in this House the hardship and the losses which a policy of this kind is bound to entail. We see the results upon the individual, and we see the results upon the economy of the State. We wish that we could go back to the days in which the Liberal Party was triumphant—and in which to a large extent they still live—when it was unnecessary to bring forward a Measure of this kind. I certainly do not think that a period of service in the Armed Forces is something that is bound to do irreparable harm to a young man who has to undergo it. I think it is an experience from which, as all Members of the House who served in the Armed Forces would agree, a great amount of good can be drawn by an individual. But it would be equally foolish to argue that there is some full educational recompense to counterbalance the disadvantages to the individual in the Service. Therefore, if we support this Bill tonight it is for no love of the Measure itself. It is because we fully admit that though grave difficulties, loss and injuries will be brought about by it, there are still graver consequences on the other side.

During this Debate the opposition to this Measure has been fully expressed. Hon. Members have supported it from many different angles, but in the end all roads seem to lead to the "No" Lobby. I am not going to deal with some of the more exotic criticisms of this Measure. An hon. Lady who spoke yesterday objected to the Bill because it did not extend to women. She said that it was placing women, most unfairly, amongst the unprivileged. I am

sympathetic with feminism, but I really think there is a point when feminism, merges into folly. But there have been certain broad principles of objection to this Bill on which I wish to say a few words. In the first place, there are those who are genuine objectors to compulsory military service on conscientious grounds. They have opposed conscription in peace and war. They have opposed conscription, whether it has been brought in by a Tory Government or a Labour Government; they have opposed it whether their position was popular or unpopular; and they have been prepared, in some cases, to pay heavily, politically speaking, for their opposition. For those people, I and I think everyone in the House has very sincere 1901 respect even if we cannot agree with their judgment. To them, I only say this that to my mind the only reason why they are still able to urge in this House views of that kind is because on two occasions the majority of the people of this country have taken a different view.

I understand their point of view, but I cannot understand those people who, while prepared to admit that compulsory service may be morally right in wartime, are also prepared to insist that it is morally wrong in peace. I can see the difference between conscription in peace and conscription in war. I can see the difference in the weight of the argument and I can see the argument that the burden is far more onerous in peace while the reasons for it are less obvious and that the alternative course appears more promising and more possible. But I cannot see the difference between the two on the question of ethics. I cannot see that it is right to do it, as long as it may be too late and wrong to do it if it is done in time to avert danger or disaster.

There was another group who did not object to conscription in itself, but as we were told objected to conscription in support of a foreign policy with which they did not agree. The most prominent exponent of that particular theory was the hon. Member for Gateshead (Mr. Zilliacus). I noticed one hon. Member opposite in a speech yesterday tried to dissuade the hon. Member from his course by the threat that, if and when the hon. Member for Gateshead became Foreign Secretary, he might be reminded of the attitude he was now taking. That was ineffective, largely, I think, because the hon. Member for Gateshead realises that under any Government of which he is likely to be a member, the opportunities for reminding Ministers of previous inconvenient statements will be limited and the results will be discouraging—painfully so. I regard the doctrine advanced by the hon. Member as a most dangerous doctrine. If you are to oppose conscription because you disagree with the foreign policy of the Government, why stop there? Why not oppose all armed forces of any kind? Indeed, such a policy would be much more logical and it would be no more dangerous, because to my mind there is only one thing worse than a bad foreign policy which is 1902 strongly supported and that is a bad foreign policy which is weakly supported. The first may possibly lead to war; the second will lead inevitably to defeat. I will say no more upon that particular branch of the objectors because it has been dealt with very effectively by the hon. Gentleman the Member for East Coventry (Mr. Crossman). His reproof must have been felt far more strongly by the hon. Member for Gateshead and his friends than anything I could say. He and the hon. Member for East Coventry were, so recently, in close juxtaposition, both politically and, indeed, in those days, physically. Both literally and figuratively it

appears to us, looking from this side of the House, that during the last few months the hon. Member for East Coventry has made a considerable movement to the Right.

Now I come to that third class of opponents of this Bill who I think have been much the most formidable in this Debate, and for whom I myself have most sympathy. They are the people who, however much they may dislike a measure of conscription, are prepared to accept it, if they are convinced that it is necessary and practicable, and if they are shown, as they are entitled to be shown, that the objects for which this Measure is asked are reasonable, and that this is the only practicable way of obtaining the numbers that are required. That group—which, I think, includes most of us in this House—want and are entitled to have an answer to certain very important questions. We are entitled to know in some detail what are the strategic requirements of this country during the period to be covered by this Bill. We are entitled to know how those requirements are affected in terms of manpower, weapons and tactics by the latest developments in the science of war. We are entitled to know whether all other means of meeting these necessities has been fully exploited, and whether conscription will give us not only the numbers that are required but the type and composition of the forces that are necessary.

Those are formidable questions, and in a Debate of this kind they deserve a detailed answer. It is our complaint that the Debate has been so arranged that no attempt has been made or will be made to answer those questions until the eleventh hour tonight. This Debate 1903 was opened by the Minister of Labour. He gave an admirable exposition of the contents of this Bill. By the way, I disagree with an hon. Friend of mine who charged the Minister of Labour with reading. On several occasions I noticed him lifting his head and taking his eyes off the script, and I must warn him that if he goes on like that, he will run a very great risk of being regarded as a "scab" by his more conventional colleagues.

I am sure the right hon. Gentleman will not pretend that he attempted during his speech to deal with the kind of questions to which I have been referring, and which, incidentally, have entered into nine-tenths of all the speeches delivered up to now. His contribution was clearly one that had to be made, and he explained with great clarity important points in the Bill. He dealt with the position of conscientious objectors, claims for reinstatement, and the machinery for postponement, but it is not on questions of that kind that support of or opposition to the Second reading of this Bill will be built. By and large, I think most people, if they were convinced of the necessity of the Measure at all, are prepared to accept a Bill of this kind, and what the House really needs is some authoritative statement upon the real questions which are agitating it. So far the only contribution we have had on questions of higher strategic importance has been a discussion between the hon. Member for Aston (Mr. Wyatt) and Captain Liddell Hart, appearing by kind permission of the hon. Member for Rushcliffe (Mrs. Paton). It was a plucky bout, in which the hon. Member for Aston fought himself to a standstill, but it is no substitute for the kind of argument to which this House is entitled.

I wish the Minister of Defence had found it possible to open the Debate. Not so long ago, I heard him speaking on the subject of finance. I thought then that he had better stick to

defence. I regret that through illness I was unable to listen to the speech he made last week on defence, but I read it all through and I began to think that I was wrong. But at any rate the right hon. Gentleman could have given us some lead. He could have obtained from the same organisation that on the other occasion, supplied him with his roneoed impromptus about the Tory Party some considered judgment on the military future. To this side, 1904 at any rate, it would have been comparatively new. I realise that he has been making the same speech at gatherings on many occasions, but he must remember that though the reports of those gatherings are as accurate as and much more prompt than the OFFICIAL REPORT, they are not nearly so detailed, and much of what he had to say would have been of novelty and interest to us.

But even if the Minister of Defence was unable to open the Debate—if he feels that, like modern generals, he must lead his troops from the rear—would it not have been possible for one of the Defence Ministers, at any rate, to have taken part earlier? They have from time to time been in the House—at any rate we have seen enough of them to convince us that they are at least in London. Yet not one of those whom, I am afraid, the irreverent describe as "Alexander's Ragtime Band", has spoken. There is one point upon which the Secretary of State for Air could have spoken with great authority. A great deal of genuine apprehension has been expressed in the House as to the compatibility of this Measure with our obligations and objects under the United Nations organisation. The right hon. Gentleman the Secretary of State for Air is a great expert on world organisation. He was an expert on the League of Nations, and he is already a great expert on the United Nations; and it would have been an authoritative pronouncement coming from him had he been able to indicate that support of this Bill was in no way inconsistent with support of the United Nations.

We might have had the Secretary of State for War—a more recent convert to the doctrine of conscription. As such, an account of his process of conversion would have been acceptable to the House. He could have told us—and it would have had a very great effect upon us all—what hard facts and what inescapable arguments changed the Bourbon of Blackpool into the Moltke of Whitehall.

The Secretary of State for War (Mr. Bellenger) The right hon. Gentleman has made § that allegation against me before. I do not know whether he has an official copy of what I said at Blackpool, but if he has, and will do me the honour of reading it, he will find that I have been most consistent in this matter. Indeed, I said at Blackpool that a new 1905 National Service Act would be necessary after the war, and the Foreign Secretary referred to that in his reply at Blackpool.

Mr. Stanley I must accept the right hon. Gentleman's statement and apologise to the § House that I have been misled by what I believed to be a perfect extract from the speech he made. As soon as I get back I will look up the whole speech. This extract reads as follows: "Are we going to have a continuation of compulsory military conscription? I say that if that is

the policy the Labour Party, and especially the trade unions, will never tolerate it. It will result in the lowering of wage standards and labour conditions in industry."

Mr. Bellenger Perhaps the right hon Gentleman will allow me to give a somewhat fuller extract? This is what I said: "Are we going to have a continuation of compulsory military conscription? I hope that Mr. Bevin will give an indication of our long term policy on this issue. Although we recognise that the short term policy will necessitate some continuation of national service for a limited period"—" for which this Bill provides—

Mr. James Hudson (Ealing, West) No.

Mr. Bellenger The quotation continues: "—"are we going to have compulsion in our national affairs ostensibly to achieve a national aim?"

Mr. Stanley I am perfectly prepared to leave that explanation to the House. I certainly thought that the temporary extension was the extension that the Government already had, and prolonging it for the period of this Bill did certainly appear to me to be some change of policy. Apparently, however, I am wrong and this is exactly the policy which was put to the Conference at Blackpool and accepted by the Labour Party. I, therefore, apologise unreservedly to the right hon. Gentleman.

I want to put to the right hon. Gentleman the Minister of Defence certain specific questions, in the hope that he will answer them when he winds up the Debate. The first is in regard to the strategic commitments of this country, and the requirements in personnel which will be necessary to carry them out. In ordinary circumstances, I should have had little doubt that the numbers asked for and the numbers procured by this Measure will be fully justified by the obvious commitments. But there is a doubt which, I think, is in the minds of many hon. Members, and that is about the effect of new weapons upon all that the ordinary man thinks and knows about strategic requirements and the necessities of defence. We are told, in many quarters, that the Services which we have long considered essential are now as inadequate and as useless as the archers, pikemen and charioteers of the past. That is a point on which we are surely entitled to some more definite pronouncement by the Government. My belief is that the effect of new weapons is not to abolish all the old methods and requirements of defence. I remember being told in the old days, before the last war, that the advent of air power had made the Army useless, and that the advent of armoured fighting vehicles had made infantry superfluous. Neither of these statements proved to be correct. I still think that it does not mean the abolition of all their functions, although it does mean their roles are altered and their emphasis changed.

That, surely, is something which Members cannot be asked to decide themselves on the very scanty information which they can obtain. It should be a subject on which the Government are prepared to give the frankest and fullest information. We see, of course, the necessity for some restraint in this matter, but there is a danger of too great an insistence on secrecy, which leaves an impression, not that there is a plan which must not be disclosed, but that all the secrecy conceals is a failure to think out the implications of the new weapons.

I agree with many hon. Members on the other side who have given reasons why they believe it is possible, if we accept these numbers, to attain them by voluntary means. We are told, "Increase the attractions," but those who put forward this policy have never told us to what extent we have to increase them before they have the result we desire. To expect any services, in the order of the magnitude contemplated under the Government's policy to be attained by voluntary recruitment, is wishful thinking. We are very concerned, granted that this policy of conscription will give the numbers that are required, whether it will give us exactly what we want for defence. Mere numbers do not, in themselves, constitute a satisfactory defence.

The main object, I take it, of this conscription policy is to provide us in the future with **1907** adequate reserves. I was at the War Office in the early days of the war, and without any running down of an admirable Service which performed great work, I agree with those who say that under conditions of modern warfare and the difficulty of its technique, the prewar Territorial training is not sufficient and cannot be sufficient to provide fully trained reserves at the outbreak of war. I am not saying it may not be possible in certain directions, but speaking generally, of the Territorial Army as a whole, the amount of time men could afford to take from their ordinary civilian occupations, did not give them a real chance to learn the intricacies of the modern technique. For that reason, I agree that something has to be found to supplement the prewar Territorial Army system.

Wing-Commander Millington Would the right hon. Gentleman say, from his experience, **§** that the conduct of the Territorial soldier in France at the beginning of the war was as good as, or better, or worse than the conduct of the militia, which, I believe, behaved badly?

Mr. Stanley I would not for one moment start to draw comparisons about anyone's **§** behaviour. In any case, it is quite irrelevant, because the militia was started two months before the beginning of the war, and no one considered it was possible by the time the war came, that they could be trained. What I am discussing is whether a force which has been in existence for many years, the members of which have given themselves wholeheartedly to their training, could, in fact, have been fully trained, or could have been capable of acting as a fully trained force when the war started. As I say, some new system has to be found to supplement the Territorial system. The advantage of the system put forward is obvious. If a man has had a year and a half of continuous training, then the ordinary Territorial training

imposed on that, will keep him up to date, and will make him a fully trained reserve. But that depends on one thing. It depends on the basic training of one and a half years and the subsequent training in the Territorial reserve being in the same arm of the Service. Can we be assured that that is going to happen? Take the case of anti-aircraft defence, on 1908 which great importance is placed. Are the people in the reserve as anti-aircraft gunners, who are expected to play an important role on the immediate outbreak of war, the same people who have spent one and a half years of their training in the Army in anti-aircraft gunnery? Unless they are, it is clear that this proposal has little if any advantage over the old Territorial system.

Finally, I would ask the right hon. Gentleman to give us the assurance which has been asked for from all sides, that proper use is now being made of the manpower the Services already have. Unless we are certain of that, we are reluctant to give them more in the future. There cannot be any Member of this House who has not heard, in his constituency or elsewhere, stories which seem to point to a considerable waste of time among those now included in the Services. Rightly or wrongly, these stories have raised general disquiet, and I suggest that that disquiet must be allayed. My right hon. Friend the Member for Woodford (Mr. Churchill), speaking yesterday, suggested one way. He suggested the possibility of some kind of Parliamentary committee. What does the right hon. Gentleman think about that? If, for some reason or other, he thinks that that is not a course which he can accept, what alternative has he to offer, because I am certain that this widespread disquiet has got to be allayed?

During the Committee stage we shall, of course, deal with many details in the Bill—the choice of Services which will be open to the men called up, whether the conscientious objector gets an advantage over the man who is called up, and so on. We shall want to know whether it may not be necessary to have some tapering-off at the end, just as there is a tapering-off of the pre-Bill conscription in order to get fairness all round. Finally, we shall want to know what opportunities will be given during the one and a half years' service for men to qualify for commissions subsequently in the Reserve. These, and other similar questions, have been put by hon. Members on all sides of the House during the whole of this Debate, and we are, I think, entitled to expect answers to them tonight. Perhaps "expect" is the wrong word, because it indicates a certain amount of confidence, but at all events we hope to get answers tonight.

I think we are entitled to have the information. We are prepared to support this Bill, 1909 but we feel that we ought to have the full material upon which the Government which have proposed it have come to their conclusions. These matters are so important that they ought not to be decided merely on Ministerial command, or indeed on personal investigation by private Members. We ought to have the fullest information on which to make up our minds, and I therefore hope that the Minister of Defence this evening will break his usual policy of wordy silence, and give us the whole of the facts, so that we may go into the Lobby tonight not only believing, but knowing, that we are right.

7.11 p.m.

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Mr. Scollan (Renfrew, Western) I am very pleased to have the opportunity of following §
the right hon. Member for West Bristol (Mr. Stanley), whose speech I enjoyed very
thoroughly. With many of his points I agree, but I cannot understand the line of reasoning
he took when he congratulated the hon. Member for East Coventry (Mr. Crossman) on
having gone over to the Right. I do not think the right hon. Gentleman paid very great
attention to the hon. Member for East Coventry, or he would have discovered that he had
gone so far to the Left that he had now arrived at the Right. As a matter of fact the whole of
his speech was one series of cycles and somersaults from beginning to end, until ultimately I
have not the slightest doubt that he befogged not only the whole of the House, but himself
as well.

There were some people who, like myself, opposed this proposal by the Government in the
Debate on the King's Speech. I then said that the Government were being guided by the
military brass hats; not by the knowledge they themselves had of the situation, but by blind
faith, they had to accept something they did not understand. I have watched that process, I
have seen it going on, and this is not the only Government which is in the toils of the
military service chiefs; there is another far stronger and far greater country at the moment
than ours which has also succumbed to the military service chiefs. One of the arguments
used against us was that, at the beginning of this Parliament's life, we voted for the
continuation of the Service Acts. It is perfectly true that we did, but why? It was to 1910
give the Government the ordinary and reasonable time to organise the Services. There is no
objection to that. There is no objection even on the part of the greatest pacifists in the
House today to giving them time to organise the Services. That, however, is not what they
are asking for; they are asking that we should accept the principle of conscript military
service as a permanent institution in this country. I was very pleased to hear the right hon.
Member for Woodford (Mr. Churchill) draw the attention of the House to the fact that he was
leading his party into the Lobby with the Government to vote for the principle; there was no
mistake about it, they were not voting, for an expediency, they were voting for the principle.

With regard to the point made by several hon. Members, including the right hon. Member for
West Bristol, about the wastage of manpower in the Services, many times hon. Members in
the House have listened to charges of wastage of manpower in the Services and denials from
the Front Bench and then, after it had gone on for a considerable time, particularly on the
Debate on the White Paper, the Minister of Defence conceded that an inquiry would be held.
My conception of a Minister who understands his job and has a thorough grasp of the whole
of the Department under his control is that his knowledge will be sufficient to enable him to
know whether he has lost control and the job has got on top of him, or whether he still has
control and is on top of the job. If he has lost control and the job has got on top of him, he
will concede that somebody may inquire into it and find out what is wrong, so I think I am
entitled to assume that the confession by the Minister of Defence would make anyone chary
of supporting a further call for the conscription of the youth of the nation.

Take the Debate which took place on 18th November on military service, when the Chancellor
was put up—and, by the way, I have noticed that the Chancellor is very conspicuous in this

Debate by his absence; I think the unhappy experience he had on that occasion has frightened him off. On that occasion he told the hon. Member for the Welsh Universities (Professor Gruffydd) very definitely that there would be no favoured classes in this particular Bill, and the hon. Member for the Welsh Universities interrupted him to say that he had not said there would be favoured classes, but that the economic situation of the country 1911 would create a position in which people such as the miners would be favoured. The Chancellor of the Exchequer immediately said that there would be no favoured classes, neither the miners, nor the railwaymen, nor the university teachers. But when the Bill is brought in, it is evident that either the Chancellor who spoke on behalf of the Government did not know his brief, or that the Government did not know the position and have changed their minds. Later, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, when he was corrected by another hon. Member with regard to the long-term policy of conscription, said: "I do not ask to see" "The distant scene, one step enough for me." That is the policy of the Government. The whole of the Debate—the whole of the criticism from the other side and from this side—is justified in showing that not a single constructive proposal has been put forward apart from the bare outline, "Give us conscription." We have not been told why we want conscription. If we look at the commitments in the White Paper on Defence—and this is one of the arguments used by some of the supporters—we find that they are confined to three: first, Western Europe; second, the Middle East and the Mediterranean; and third, other areas. Those are our commitments. Are those the commitments for which we require conscription? This is a most extraordinary document; when we say that those are our commitments, we are told, "Ah, but there are commitments that we do not yet know." I am very concerned about the commitments of which we do not know. Some time ago the military chiefs, with the consent of the Government came to an agreement with the military chiefs of the the United States—we have not had a White Paper on that agreement—according to which the Air Force of the United States and the Air Force of this country would exchange training periods and personnel. We have not been told about that. I wonder if there were any other agreements about which we have not been told? I wonder whether there is any agreement that we will supply the 'necessary men and the necessary strategic positions, and they will supply the dollars? Have we sold the youth of the nation for the dollars of the United States, that we cannot get in any other way, or have we joined the holy alliance that is now being 1912 proclaimed in the war against Communism and Russia? The most disturbing feature of the whole of this matter is that it coincides with the campaign raging in the United States that offence against Communism is the best defence against it. It is very disturbing when one hears important people, like the President, proclaiming a policy which, in ordinary prewar times, would have been tantamount to a declaration of war; it is very disturbing to find that our Government's policy is designed to coincide with that to such an extent that we are charged with being an ally in a secret alliance. I hope that whoever is to reply to the Debate from the Government Front Bench will give us some information on that. Are we a party to this holy alliance? Are we to supply the men and the strategic bases, and they the money? The United States dare not bring in conscription in their own country. Why should they, if they can bring it into being in a debtor nation? [Interruption.] If the hon. Member for Cambridge University (Mr. Pickthorn) wishes to say something, will he rise and not mutter under his breath?

Mr. Pickthorn I am sorry if I spoke a little too loudly or not quite loudly enough. I was wondering whether the hon. Member thought that the United States had also introduced Socialism into this country. §

Mr. Scollan One of the things that is rather amusing, although it is tragic, is that the Americans hate this Socialist Government almost as badly as they hate Russia. People must think about that. Our friends on the Government Front Bench seem to have some kind of idea that they can play with fire between Russia and the United States and come out without being burned. §

Sir William Darling (Edinburgh, South) It is, at any rate, some kind of idea. §

Mr. Scollan I do not think they can. I am not, and never was, pro-Russian. Nor am I pro-American. I am pro-British. I want to see this country build up its industries to such an extent that, with the manpower, we can stand on our own legs and not jump on to anybody's bandwaggon to be on the winning side. Let us make no mistake about it—if a clash comes between America and Russia, we shall be in a very awkward position, because there will be a section of our people, including hon. Members opposite, advocating that we get on to the American wagon, and there will be a section on this side advocating that we get on to the Russian wagon. Therefore, it behoves us not to bring in conscription to divide the country at a time like this and on a question like this. It behoves us to show the people of this country that we are determined to build up the economy of this country so that we can stand on our own legs. 1913

One point that I intended to deal with has already been discussed, but I still want to emphasise it. When there is any emergency, we take it that the Government are justified in conscripting manpower and wealth to meet that emergency. What will be the emergency that will face this country tomorrow? Is it an emergency that calls for military action, or is it an emergency that calls for industrial action? I wonder whether the people on the Government Front Bench are afraid to go to the trade union movement and say, "The only section of the working population of the country that is defenceless against the Government are the youths from 18 to 19½ years, and we will conscript them, because if we were to conscript the members of your unions to do the necessary work where it is wanted, you would fight us, and down would come the Government." Is not that the situation? Why not face the issue? I ask the Front Bench, why not go to the Trades Union Congress and say that it is not military conscription that we need, but that what we need is to enrol the manpower of the country to do the work that has to be done? You cannot shift the pits to the unemployed. You must take the unemployed to the coalpits. You cannot shift the industries

of the nation at a moment's notice to the unemployed.

Sir W. Darling Who is "you"?

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Mr. Scollan The Government. I hope the hon. Gentleman did not think I was referring to him. I always address the Chair, but on this occasion the word "you" meant the Government, just as we were told in Committee once that the word "may" means "shall." I ask the Government, why not face up to the situation? Why accept blindly what the brasshats have told them? They say, "We must have conscription, we must have more men." Every Debate in the House has proved that they could not utilise the services of the men they have already. We receive letter after letter showing that. I had a letter only this morning from a man about the time that was wasted and the stuff that was being disgracefully stolen in one of the navaldepôts. [An HON. MEMBER: "Socialism."] No, private enterprise. Not a single argument has been adduced by the Government in favour of this Bill. I know that on this side of the House they have a phalanx of solidly loyal supporters. There is no question about that. They have unquestioned supporters; but at the same time, in this great Labour movement of ours, there is a solid Socialist section that never takes anything without question, that would not accept anything from any leader without question, and is prepared to examine the whole case on its merits, and on the merits of the case, up to the moment, the Government are cutting a very sorry figure. I am sorry I have to go into the Lobby against them. There is no question about it—this is the beginning of a real crack in the Parliamentary Labour Party. Do not make any mistake about it. [Interruption.] I am not cheering up the Tories; I am facing the facts. It is no use hiding one's head in the sand and saying, "This thing will pass over and blow away like the wind of today or tomorrow." It will not. What the Government are doing now is to place in the minds of their supporters up and down the country a lack of faith in the Government, a lack of faith in the Government's ability to grasp the situation and handle it properly.

1914

Sir W. Darling Do not blame them.

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Mr. Scollan I do not blame them.

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Mr. Tolley (Kidderminster) Why emphasise it?

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Mr. Scollan For the simple reason that it is necessary to do so for people like the hon.

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Member who support the Government blindly. Sops have been thrown out to us. I have received several hints that if we were to ask for the period to be reduced for a year, we might get it reduced. [Interruption.] It was put again today, and it was not denied. Again, if we asked that it should be put into operation for three years, it might be conceded. 1915 But the principle is the same, and on that principle I shall vote against the Government and try to forget about the sorry spectacle they have cut in the whole of this Debate.

7.30 p.m.

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Mr. J. L. Williams (Glasgow, Kelvingrove) I hope to observe the good old rule in this House of not speaking too long, if only for one reason, that most of what I had intended to say has been said already, and said much better, by other hon. Members. I hope my hon. Friend the Member for West Renfrew (Mr. Scollan) will forgive me—in fact he has been forgiving me quite a lot for many years—if I do not follow him closely, especially in regard to his dispute with the Front Bench, because I know the Minister of Defence can deal with that much better. I would like to say why I oppose this Amendment. I quite agree that some of the arguments put forward have a certain amount of weight. I would certainly apply that to the fear that conscription is being introduced as an instrument for bringing to the Armed Forces a much greater number of men than we really need, and a much greater number than we can now afford. At the same time, the traditional arguments against conscription would seem, in this Debate, to have been more futile than ever. We have heard a great deal of concern from hon. Members about democracy, international understanding, human rights and, lastly, Socialism. I do not think that any of those things belong to one side of the Debate, and I cannot see how these principles are always safeguarded by voluntary service and violated by compulsory service. §

Mention has been made in this Debate by several hon. Members of the name of Keir Hardie. It has become quite a fashion to bring the name of Keir Hardie into a discussion to substantiate whatever a speaker wishes to put forward. I knew Keir Hardie as well as any youth of my generation could know him, and even with that advantage I would not enter into a guessing competition as to what Keir Hardie would have done in the circumstances of 1947, facing a situation like the present one. How are we to guess what would be the views of the present situation of a man who died away back in 1915? And when I noted this habit spreading to the Conservative side, I felt like taking sympathy with the Liberal Party, 1916 and saying that what Keir Hardie said in 1910, about compulsory service in 1947, was nearly as useless as what Gladstone said in 1885. These things are not all on one side. When I hear Keir Hardie quoted in this connection I also think of Robert Blatchford, a man who' is equally responsible for having brought a Labour Government into this House. He held views that were quite different. When I hear hon. Members telling us that this Bill violates principles of international Socialism and when it is asserted so dogmatically, I wonder why the Socialist parties on the Continent are not more enthusiastic about voluntary service; indeed many of the European Socialists I have met regard voluntary armies as potentially Fascist armies.

From the Liberal Benches, we have been told in this Debate, as before, that the Bill infringes human freedom and the rights of personalities. This view illustrates to me the one-sided conception of liberty which we have always associated with the Liberal Party. I well remember a Conscription Bill being brought in by a Liberal Prime Minister for the first time in almost 100 years—in time of war I admit, and much against his will I believe. Nevertheless, it is true that Mr. Asquith up to 1914 had built up his Army much in the same way as Liberal and Tory Prime Ministers had done before for nearly 100 years, in a way which was described in this House by several hon. Members, as "with the aid of Colonel Economics." People were driven into the Army, we have been told, by the force of hunger, and if that is all the Liberal Party can offer us, as an example of the liberty of the subject, I must take the same stand as I took many years ago, of keeping quite clear of that point of view.

I know that the Liberal Party today, along with hon. Members on this side, have put forward a more advanced view and I believe that nearly every hon. Member in this House thinks that conditions of pay and service in the Armed Forces should be made equal to those in industry. So far so good. I do not think there is any disagreement on that point, but I would like to go further and say that I do not think it is enough to leave it at that point. What about the man whose pay is twice the average wage in industry? What about the man who has been 1917 lucky enough, educated well enough and trained well enough to get a salary that is twice, three, four or perhaps six times the average wage in industry? Where is the attraction for him? Where is the incentive for him to join the Army if conditions are only being made attractive for the man with the average or good wage in industry? Will there be a privileged class of high-salaried people protected by a voluntary system from military service, while those around a certain level of income only are to do more than their share? I hope this House will condone nothing of the kind.

The real questions with which we are faced in this Debate are: do we need such large numbers of young men under arms as we propose in this Bill? Can we afford such a strain upon our manpower? The first question is difficult for the layman, though quite a number of hon. Members have answered it. There is a great deal being said about the possibilities of the atomic bomb. I may be slightly biased, because I listened so much some years ago to those authorities, military and pacifist, who explained in how many minutes or seconds it would take a great city to be wiped out by bombing from the air. About the drain on manpower, the layman can form a better opinion. We must concentrate, as hon. Members have pointed out, upon the gigantic task of rebuilding the economic life of the nation; we want to re-equip our industries, we want to make more consumer goods available for our people. There are problems of providing more food and more coal. Can we really do this job with more than a million men locked up in these Services? These problems will go on after the passage of this Bill, and I suggest that these points remain for the Government to keep in mind.

I bully appreciate this problem. I still get letters from soldiers and airmen telling me how manpower is wasted in those Services, and how men of training and skill have to perform menial tasks. It is quite true that the people do not trust the generals in this matter. Some of the generals, I agree, possess great qualities of leadership. Others possess nothing of the

kind, as experience has shown. But one thing is common to them all, a strong bias in favour of an excessive number of men. That is not confined to the Army: I believe it is found 1918 in every walk of life. While I do not subscribe to the traditional arguments regarding compulsory versus voluntary service, I emphasise to the Government that the understanding and acquiescence of the people on this Bill will carry with them a tremendous responsibility for our Ministers in regard to the young manhood of the nation.

Concern for the young manhood of the nation is not the monopoly of any pacifist group in this House. While we honestly aim at equality of sacrifice, I do not think we are getting it in this Bill. Although we are going in that direction, I have a strong feeling that even in this Bill there is rather too much equality for the man who thinks the voluntary system is a splendid thing for the other fellow. While we honestly aim at this equality, we must bring the total number of men under arms down to the lowest possible point, and shorten the period of service. The need for these things will go on, and I feel certain that the Government will keep them in mind. I have been asked by parents—parents of volunteers as well as of conscripts—to say something else. We must see, and I am asking the Ministers to see, that the moral and intellectual influences in our Fighting Services will be such that these boys will return to their homes better men, for their families and for the nation.

7.42 p.m.

§

Mr. Pickthorn (Cambridge University) I shall, I hope, although I by no means promise, § be very much shorter than I had intended because so much of what I desired to put on record in this Debate was put by my right hon. Friend from the Front Opposition Bench with a great deal more grace and wit and force than I should even aim at. I venture upon the patience of the House for two reasons. The first is that I was not at all sure when I entered the House—I am not quite sure now—whether I could bring myself to vote for this Bill, and I should not wish to behave differently from my Party without explaining the reasons. My second object in speaking today is to draw, or—more respectfully—to invite the attention of Members and Ministers to a particular point which I think so far has been hardly touched upon. That is the relation between a more or less permanent conscription system and the officering of the Reserve, because I believe that to be the hinge upon which the whole 1919 system turns, the whole question whether we get a better or worse Army by conscript methods, and I believe it to be necessary to consider that portion of the subject with very great care

I will begin with my first point, my general doubts on the Bill. I have no doubt at all about the general right of Government in general to put compulsion on its subjects. I think that any Government is a very bad Government that does not do that only with the very greatest reluctance. But, that Governments have the right to put force, and especially to put force on their subjects to fight, and run the risk of stopping bullets, in the national defence, I have no doubt at all and I do not propose to argue that generally. I think it is generally accepted. I know quite well that there are some hon. Members who take the opposite view, and I would

the more respect them if they carried their dislike of compulsion to refusing to take any part in politics, of which compulsion is an essential factor. I do not wish to go into that question of principle at length any more than to say what I have said. It seems to me right enough that Government in general with a big "G" should conscript for military service when necessary. That does not seem to me to conclude the question before the House this evening. The question here is ought this Government to be given this Bill, and that, I think, is a more difficult question than the general one; not that I would wish to fall into the error which I think it is fair to say has been habitually the error of hon. and right hon. Gentlemen opposite, when they were not conscientious objectors—that has been the error of many of them, of almost all the rest the error has been that they have taken the line that when His Majesty's Government is not of their own party, then they did not wish His Majesty's Government to be strong in relation to other Governments. I believe that to be a fatal error and I believe that so long as there is a great party in the State which takes that view, or has a considerable section which takes that view so long the safety of our country is very much at stake, and so long the permanence of democracy is also very much at stake. So, I would not for the world fall into that error.

But I ask myself this question. Conscription is a form of taxation and has always been 1920 treated so, I think, historically. The German Empire was built up historically on it, on the organisation for collecting conscripts and taxes in Prussia was built up the whole of that machinery of state which has been a dominant factor in Europe for the last 200 years. It is a sort of taxation and in a way it is the most intimate of all taxation, it taxes the flesh and blood of families, and without the consent of the actual persons who are paying; I think that is right and I would not for a moment think of reducing the franchise age. But it is a form of taxation which is the most intimate of all forms of taxation, and this House should never give a Government the right to collect taxes, except after the plainest demonstration from the Treasury Bench why the tax is needed, how it is to be spent, and why not a penny less is needed. The same is true when it is a matter of our flesh and blood, our sons and brothers, cousins and nephews. But the Treasury Bench has made no attempt to show how it is necessary. I do not criticise the Minister of Labour; I was not here—I beg him to believe, unavoidably—to hear him, but I read everything he said and really what he said was an adjective and not a substantive speech. It was not very much more than an explanatory memorandum or preparatory White Paper we might have had. Really there was no reason why it should not have been circulated to us beforehand. We now have four Service Ministers not counting underlings, or one superling or overling and three Service Ministers on the Treasury Bench. One or two of them have dropped in now and then, but that is not enough. It should have been their business to explain how and why this is needed. I regard it as a very dangerous thing indeed that this House should be giving consent in this way without much fuller explanations.

I regard also as dangerous that my party should be supporting it. I think it is right on the whole probably, but I do so very dubiously, very dubiously indeed. What is happening at present is that hon. Members opposite have thought that Government consisted in the fun of passing Bills—especially the fun of passing Bills to take things away from people they do not

like, which was doubly pleasing because it was giving things to someone they did like 1921 and taking them away from people they did not like. That is not what government is. That is a very minor part of government even when it may be necessary. Government consists in maintaining law and order and providing strategic defence.

The truth is that the party opposite, even with its majority of two to one, cannot do these things. Even with a majority of two to one, Socialist Ministers have to get these things done for them by reliance upon the Opposition. They can afford to smile more or less—to smile rather yellow perhaps, but still to smile more or less, at the sort of stuff to which they have had to listen from the benches behind them during the last day and a half, because they know that from in front of them they will not be attacked. I am not sure that it would not have been proper to bring that home to the country by the whole or this side of the House abstaining and letting the divisions opposite appear. I am not quite sure of that and I thought it right to put it on record in case I do not vote tonight. If any hon. Gentleman wishes to ask me any question I shall be willing to give way, but I shall take up another minute's time if I do so.

Mr. Lever (Manchester, Exchange) I wish to know whether anyone on this side of the § House has invited the hon. Member to come into the Lobby in support of the Government.

Mr. Pickthorn No one invited me, nor have I suggested that. I am sorry if I am unusually § slow witted, but I cannot see the relevance of that intervention, or I would try to answer more fully.

I know that tactically speaking I have done this badly. What I have said will seem to hon. Gentlemen opposite highly contentious and even provocative, but I thought it proper to say it. I now wish to come to a point which I think there is no controversy about, and on which I think all hon. Gentlemen will agree. I agree that tactically I ought to have done that first, but I hope that hon. Gentlemen will have sufficient candour in their minds to try to believe that however wicked I am when I am on the sort of subject about which I have been talking, on the subject I now approach I may be stupid or mistaken, but at any rate I am not wicked. This subject is the relation between the conscripting, of youth and the officering both of His Majesty's Forces and of civilian activities, because I think it is going to require very 1922 careful thought. I have no doubt that there are very elaborate plans about it in all the Service Ministries. One of my complaints against this Government, in which I think even their own supporters will join me, is that we do not know what their plans are. It is absurd that we should have got so far through this Debate without our having yet been told what the admirals, the generals and the air marshals have persuaded Ministers to be the right way in which to use conscripts, and particularly to prepare the conscripts to be officers to go as officers on the reserve. If, in the future, we are to have a great war, that is what will matter, if not it will be a pity these men have been conscripted though it may well have been a wise insurance at the time to have gone in for the conscript system.

What matters is whether conscription gets the right conscripts on to the Reserve of Officers, so that when the expansion has to be made it can be made swiftly and competently. I hope that so far I carry hon. Gentlemen opposite with me. In candour, I must say that I am grateful to the Government for the width of the age-spread in this Bill, which enables a young man to serve as young as 18, or even a little younger if he specially asks, or as old as 26, or even a little older if he specially asks. I think that is a very good thing. I wish to ask this question: Has it been clearly arranged with the Service authorities that the element of choice shall be so administered as to be real? About, e.g., university first and service later there are two opinions—perhaps there are twenty for that matter. I take the university example because it is the one I know most about, not because I am asking for any privilege for persons at universities or persons going to universities. No one who has known me in this House or outside would think that I would do that. I have always taken the view that these people should go and stop bullets when necessary, and I think it is fair to say that at least as high a proportion of these as of any section of the community have stopped bullets in the last war and the war before. I have never held with the heresy that some young men are too good to be used for bullet stopping and ought to be pushed into laboratories or other comparatively sheltered places unless they are absolutely needed there. When a chasm opens in the middle of your forum and the enemy is approaching your city, you have to throw the best of your young men into the chasm. I am not asking for any sort of privilege or indulgence. 1923

Some people take the view that young men in that age-group should do their service first; some take the opposite view. No doubt each opinion is right about some boys, and perhaps also about some subjects. Now we are getting, so far as this Bill gets we are getting, the possibility of that option. If it can be, it should be put into the Bill on the Committee stage more specifically and at least we should certainly have full assurance that the option is to be real. The House will observe that the option cannot be real if we go on with the present rule of thumb that colleges must take straight from school only ten per cent. of their entry. If that goes on, it is obvious that the option becomes unreal. I hope that the point is clear and I pass on to the next stage of the argument.

It is this: I have been in the educational machine far too long to think that young men who are academically distinguished are necessarily the best young men either for war or for peace purposes. On the other hand, people who make the opposite assumption are really just idiotic. There is no doubt that on the whole, and in the main, if there is nothing one knows about two people except that A did better academically than B, it is a pretty safe bet that A is better for most purposes. I think that right hon. Gentlemen and hon. Gentlemen opposite always say that they value, and often seem to over-value education and they are estopped from denying this part of my argument, that is, that on the whole, the best young men, educationally speaking, are the ones we want to be officers, if we have a war on our hands more than can be dealt with by a small expeditionary force. They are, similarly, the ones we want to get fairly soon into fairly responsible positions in civilian life. I think everyone will follow that step of the argument.

I ask the House and especially Ministers to consider this: If the conscription system is so worked that the best young men find that by choosing to try for a commission, they thereby put off their return to civil life, if that happens, and it is certainly happening at present, if that continues to happen, it is going to have two very bad effects; one very bad effect 1924 on the Services is that some of the best young men will be persuaded by their families that they are silly to waste the extra six months or year or more in the Army and that it is better not to take a commission. That is already happening. I know young men who would make admirable officers who are spending the whole of their time refusing to try for commissions.

The second bad effect is that in so far as the best young men, on such a hypothesis as I have indicated, do stay in the Army, Navy or Air Force for an extra year, two years, or three years or four years, then they will have put themselves so much behind on their return to civil life. That is a very important consideration indeed. Men of my age know very well what an enormous start people who went back into civil life in 1917 or 1918 had over us who, by reason of wounds or whatever it might be, could not get started until two or three years later. I think that it is very important that this disadvantage should be avoided.

Therefore, I ask the Government this: Can we not—I quite understand that most of what I have been saying is not provided for, either for or against, in the Bill, it is merely covered by the Bill. I should like to see what I regard as the proper glosses written into the Bill. If not, at least let us have assurances on this point; because much the worst of all forms of tyranny, the worst both for the tyrant and the victim, the most intolerable to bear, and what perhaps is worst of all, the most ineffective and incompetent of all sorts of tyrannies is that, "You had better, old boy," type of tyranny—the tyranny not done under Statute or even under delegated legislation, but the tyranny of the Minister, the Minister's official or officer who is known to be in so powerful a position that he is able to indicate what you had better do—and you had better. We all know that all Governments tend to fall into that temptation and we have all seen in connection with fuel, in connection with periodicals, and in connection with banks, that this Government is not immune from the temptation. The worst of all the results of this Bill would be if by mere administrative bullying and bluffing, by any method but especially if by that sort of method, people who ought to become officers, either in civilian life or Service life, are disgruntled and held longer than need be. 1925

These are the questions I wish to put. It seems to me we ought not to part with the Bill, first, without an assurance on my first point, that is to say, the option about age shall be a real option so that people should really feel that they can choose which way round they want to do their military and civilian training. My second question is that it should be made plain and clear that what I call for short the officer type, a disgusting phrase, the sort of young man who is likely to be picked out and is picked out during his first six months as likely to make a good officer—that he shall have every opportunity to fulfil those capabilities without feeling he runs any risk of being forced either by Service or regimental and personal interview with his colonel or in any other way that he will stay on for one year, two years or three years, if he gets his commission. I quite see the temptation of that to the officials and officers. They will say "The King has spent a lot of money on turning this chap into an officer. If we let him go away a week earlier we have wasted all that money." I beg the Treasury bench, whose

business it is to keep the Services and offices in order on this sort of point, to persuade them that it actually is a most short sighted policy and that what matters is to choose the right young man and get him on the list of reserve of officers.

Then I come to my third point, and this is my last sentence, that as an earnest of what I have asked for under number two we ought to have under number three, as soon as possible, plain arrangements that the young men of the present generation, the ones who just missed the real active service but who have already done over 18 months—I do not know the technical name but the Ministers will recognise the class I mean—we ought to have the earliest possible assurance that those who have now obtained commissioned rank should have the option of being released in all honour and without a black mark from the Colours and put on the Reserve after they have done two and a half years or, at the very latest, for university candidates, in the September after they have done two and a half years, because the time of year matters too much to them. That, I think, ought to be done at once, 1926 and very soon it ought to be reduced and brought down to September next after one and a half years. Now you have got 18 months as your permanent calculable conscription period, now I do not think you can decently continue to hold those who, ex-hypothesi, are the better type of chaps, who have chosen to try for commissions and succeeded, you ought not to hold them for more than twice as long as has now become the regular period upon which all parents and advisers have to calculate.

8.5 p.m.

§

Wing-Commander Millington (Chelmsford) I followed with great interest what the senior Burgess for Cambridge University (Mr. Pickthorn) had to say. May I be permitted to indicate to him why I think his right hon. Friend the Member for West Bristol (Mr. Stanley) shed some crocodile tears at the beginning of his speech, regarding the extraordinary position in which the Conservative Party finds itself, in that it is supporting the Government at a time when it might make considerable political capital and advantage by opposing the Government? It is the reason why the hon. Gentleman himself might, even at this stage, find himself in the same Lobby as the Government. The fundamental reason why Conservatives are supporting this Measure is that they believe that the purpose in the mind of the Government is anti-Soviet. The reason why the Opposition are taking their stand, in spite of the fact that they could have made political advantage from the present situation, is simply because they feel that this Bill is intended, and will be used, as an instrument of anti-Sovietism. The case was made by the hon. and gallant Member for the Isle of Ely (Major Legge-Bourke). It was hinted at by the right hon. Gentleman the Leader of the Opposition and, from a Conservative point of view, it is a very good reason why they should support this Measure. Equally, from a Socialist point of view it is a very good reason why some of us should oppose this Measure.

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Like a lot of other hon. Members in the period up to 1934, I was an absolutist pacifist. With the growth of Fascism, in Germany in particular, I had such a violent revulsion of feeling that

my political friends caused my expulsion from the Labour Party in 1935. I still think that I was right in those days. Even though I had been for the most impressionable years of 1927 my life an absolutist pacifist, in 1938, because all our values had been changed by the prospect, almost the certainty, that we would be, fighting a war against a force which would make it quite impossible for my pacifist friends even to continue, to be pacifists, I joined His Majesty's Army. After Dunkirk I left the Army, in which I held commissioned rank, and joined the R.A.F. I felt that I was not waging the war against Fascism as completely and competently in the Army as I could have done if I had joined the Royal Air Force. It is not illogical that I, who started my political thinking as an absolutist pacifist, found myself, towards the end of the war, fighting in the most ruthless and most vicious methods of warfare that had been invented prior to July 1945. I make this personal explanation at the beginning of what I have to say because I saw the right hon. Gentleman the Member for Woodford (Mr. Churchill) look across the House yesterday, and say: "Below the Gangway we see representatives of these conceptions and ideas which nearly brought us to ruin in the late war and have gone far and are going further to pull us down after our victory."— [OFFICIAL REPORT, 31st March, 1947; Vol. 435, c. 1690.]" I do not boast of what I did in the recent war, but I submit that the charge which was made against those of us who have our names to this Amendment cannot properly be levelled at most of us, and, in particular, cannot be levelled at myself. I view this problem, as it were, from the technical point of view in the first instance. I want to know, What do we want of our Armed Forces? The hon. Member for East Coventry (Mr. Crossman) appears to want a million inefficient conscripts in preference to 100,000 highly skilled volunteers, because the latter may become a military cadre and may ultimately be used to form the basis for a Fascist movement, or something of that sort. I believe that our country is, economically so near to becoming in extremis that it would be better for us to have even a military cadre of 100,000 to do the job of fulfilling our commitments economically, if it would release the 900,000 to do the work of national defence by getting the vital coal from our mines and other goods produced in our factories.

There are instances of the qualitative aspect which ought to be investigated by hon. 1928 Members. I interrupted the right hon. Member for West Bristol when he was saying that the prewar Territorial Army method was not the best method of training troops to bear the onslaught of war. I saw a lot of the British Army when it came back from France in 1940. I believe that the regular Guards battalions behaved in a manner heroic beyond parallel in the whole of the history of warfare; second to them were the county Territorial regiments, because they were volunteers and because they were men who had chosen to serve their country in this way. Albeit the conscript—the militia—had not had the value of a very long period of military training before he was thrust up against the enemy in France, the fact remains that generally speaking the conscript soldier of 1940 put up a deplorable show. The reorganisation of the British Army which started in the summer of 1940 was held up for months because of the demoralised nature of these young conscripts after the beating they had in France.

Here is another word on the qualitative aspect of our Armed Forces. If there is a special job to be done which involves special qualifications and willingness to take special risks, never in

our history have we recruited for these special jobs from conscripts. All aircrew in the Royal Air Force were volunteers for the job. All commandos, all paratroopers and all special task forces were volunteers, and they have achieved their astonishing record of success in action because they were volunteers and because they did not resist their military training as did so many conscripts even during the period of our intense national emergency. One of the lessons of the period of conscription which started just two months before the war, and terminated so quickly with the evacuation from the beaches of Dunkirk, is probably that the period of 18 months is not sufficient time in which to turn 18-year old boys into efficient front line infantry soldiers. With those boys in particular, it is the hard training in discipline which is of the topmost importance.

Much as I want to see better conditions for men in the Army and the other Services, I do not believe that the present tendency, under Field Marshal Montgomery's plan for the present Army, will make the right sort of hard infantry soldiers in 18 months. On the other hand, the technical services, as I would call them, in particular the men who go to sea in ships 1929 or fly in aeroplanes, were got ready for action in much less than 12 months during the war. I think it best to quote from experience because that is unchallengeable. From the first day when I went to an initial training wing to learn to fly with the Royal Air Force, to the day on which I was qualified to go and fight against Germans in the air, there was a period of between seven and eight months. Yet I still maintain that it could not have been done with a conscript force, because every single man who learnt to fly during the war, or to parachute, or those who served in the commandos and so on, had the impetus of the voluntary spirit. Each man had the impetus that he was going to serve because he wanted to serve. There is another attitude which can be held in contrast. I commanded a training unit in the British Army in the summer of 1940—a unit of Army class conscripts—and we had the most incredible difficulty, first to keep the chaps we were trying to train in camp during the training period, and then to make them do any kind of work while they were there.

If the function of this Bill is to create a reserve of trained manpower, which can be mobilised at a moment's notice to support our regular Forces in the field in the event of an emergency, I charge this Government that they have not done a single thing to create efficient reserves. There are the Territorials, or the voluntary or auxiliary organisation, such as we saw before the war. In the county of Essex, in which my constituency lies, an excellent panel of officers was got together to organise recruitment for the Territorial Army in that county. They were an excellent body of men, keen and enthusiastic to get on with the job. They have practically given up, within two or three months of starting, their campaign of recruitment because they have now had instructions from the War Office that they are to train these Territorial soldiers in anti-aircraft work.

I interrupted the hon. Member for Kingston-upon-Thames (Mr. Boyd-Carpenter) on this point earlier in the Debate. I do not believe that the methods which are being taught in the Army today and which were used during the war have any relationship with the problem of anti-aircraft defence in any future war. I do not believe that they can possibly be efficient against man-operated aero planes because of the tremendous speeds at which aeroplanes 1930 will be operated in future. The main problem, however, in anti-aircraft defence will not be

against aeroplanes, but against guided missiles and rockets, possibly with atomic warheads. We require a complete reorientation of our views. To waste all our Territorial services in the Army by using searchlight equipment, detector equipment and anti-aircraft guns and so on which were many years out-dated even before the end of the war, except for a few little gadgets of radar added to them in the war, is a positive waste of manpower which I cannot but think is deliberate.

The Minister of Labour was interrupted at the beginning of his speech yesterday by the hon. and gallant Member for Macclesfield (Air-Commodore Harvey). I think I am quoting the Minister correctly when I say that he did not think that the Territorial method of training, applied generally over the Forces, produced the right pitch of training for men who might be called upon at a moment's notice to go into battle. The hon. and gallant Member for Macclesfield asked whether he was specifically referring to the Battle of Britain pilots who learnt their trade in the Auxiliary Air Force or the Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve. Those reserves are evidence that a volunteer force is a force which can be relied upon and which can do the job of work immediately in the face of any emergency. We cannot rely on a conscript force. Again I charge the Government that long before now they should have got the Auxiliary Air Force or the Volunteer Reserve of the Royal Air Force well under way, because the men are there to start it and to officer it and they are losing the skill they learnt during the war. Two years have elapsed and they have been given no encouragement whatsoever, no directive and no instructions.

What is to happen to the A.T.C. and the Cadet Corps? I believe that without compulsory military service we can put those boys in what are now called "pre-service units," give them the necessary basic training, and give them summer camps to improve their physique. It is a quite logical and natural transition for them to go from their boys' training into the Territorial Forces. But, again, this Government do not seem to have realised quite how powerful an instrument for military recruitment they had in their hands in the A.T.C, and the 1931 Naval and Army Cadet Corps. They have given them no encouragement, and they have wasted a valuable source of training which might have helped them over their present difficulties. But, beyond all this, it would appear to me that we see a mentality which is still preparing for the last war. We cannot afford to spend our resources of men or money in preparing tactical and strategical plans for wax. Although the right hon. Member for West Bristol said that we were always being told by "these wild young men" that a new invention would replace older methods, the reason why the aeroplane did not supersede the infantry soldier in the recent war was simply because we did not have enough aeroplanes to do the job. If, in 1942, we had produced a front line bomber force of 4,000 aeroplanes the job of occupying Germany could have been done by policemen, instead of our armies having the job of fighting all the way from the beaches of Normandy.

Our best defence, in the circumstances that we may have to face, not in the next year or two, but in 10 plus years from now, is to get our industrial machine in proper order. Our best defence is to say that instead of having one million or more men frittering away their time learning—if they are learning anything at all—outmoded arts of war, let them learn a trade. If every conscript called up under this Bill were to be put to 1½ years learning how to use

machine tools, how to make a big contribution to our industrial life, it would result in a far better defence of this island than merely letting 550,000 men play at soldiers in the barracks of the United Kingdom. We have it on the authority of the Foreign Secretary that an exportable surplus of coal is a far better negotiating instrument than all the Armies. We want to look for new friends in the world, and those we want are poor men. They can be obtained if we have an industrial machine that will help them.

There have been two arguments for this Bill which might have persuaded me, had they come from the Government Front Bench. I was considerably interested in the argument of my hon. Friend the Member for East Coventry, that we must look for a reorientation of our political and economical life towards Europe, starting with the Anglo-French Alliance. We must 1932 do something to convince the European countries—22 of them—of our good faith. If the Government had said, "Military conscription, as a method of raising our forces, is essential, in these circumstances, to attest our good faith to the French," then I would give some weight to their case. But, of course, they have not said that. Secondly, if they had said to us, "At a guess, the size of the forces we need, for our contribution to the United Nations organisation security force, is x, and to achieve x we must have military conscription," then I would have listened with more interest. But I have heard only the vaguest possible generalisations about our commitments in the international field. I have had the conviction that when the Conservative Party was with them, supporting the Government, they might have had fellow minds on the Government Front Bench. Why did not the Cabinet have the courage to wait for the presentation of this Bill until after Whitsuntide? Why did they not have the courage to go to the Conference of their own party, who will raise this question, and have already indicated that they will do so? Is it because, for some reason which they refuse to reveal to the House and the country, they were frightened to have this policy rejected by that Conference before it was scheduled to come before the House? If, now or later, the Government could convince me that conscription was the only way to raise the force needed in order to get Europe organised, on a basis of mutual confidence, then I would support this Bill, but I am desperately afraid that its purpose is to put an iron glove on the fist of the Foreign Secretary, which he is so fond of shaking at the leaders of the U.S.S.R.

8.24 p.m.

§

Mr. Shackleton (Preston) It is with some trepidation that I have caught your eye, Sir, § because although I sit on these benches I propose to support the Government. I would ask my hon. Friends, who are opposed to us in this issue, to believe that just as we trust their sincerity in this matter we who are supporting the Bill, and who have given a great deal of anxious thought to it, are just as sincere, and no less genuine. We, as they, have been placed in a very difficult position by the failure of the Government to give a proper explanation as to the need for conscription. That is a fundamental diffi- culty in which 1933 we are all placed. Up to a point, we are all having to follow a "hunch," or work out the figures in the best way we can.

There are certain points which have been made in opposition to this Bill which I feel should be taken up. Some were made by my hon. and gallant Friend the Member for Chelmsford (Wing-Commander Millington). I will not deal with the whole question of the strategy of war, but when he suggests, as others have suggested, that Members such as my hon. Friend the Member for Aston (Mr. Wyatt), and others who are supporting conscription, are doing so in order that we may have a force of one million men or more in 1949 or 1950, I suggest that they have not even considered the problem. They have not realised that what we are debating is what will be the strength of our Armed Forces in 1949, or 1950. If their accusation against this Bill is that we cannot spare the men from industry, then I say that they should have come to the House and opposed the Army Estimates during the last two or three weeks—

Wing-Commander Millington If my hon. and gallant Friend will read the OFFICIAL REPORT tomorrow he will see that he has made a completely false accusation against me. I did not suggest that conscription meant an Army of one million men, or more, by 1950. §

Mr. Shackleton Perhaps my hon. and gallant Friend has misunderstood me. He certainly used the figure of one million, but the point is that there will be nothing like one million men in the Armed Forces in 1949, or 1950, even if we pass this Bill. My hon. Friend the Member for Broxtowe (Mr. Cocks), who made a rather unfair attack on my hon. Friend the Member for Aston in the same respect, must realise that what we are considering now is whether we shall have an Army at all in 1949. At the present rate of recruitment, we shall not have an Army anything like as big as our prewar Army. We are in difficulty over this Bill, but those who do not have conscientious scruples against national service—and I respect those who have—are none the less as good Socialists as my hon. Friends "who are opposing this Measure. It must be a source of great satisfaction to the Opposition to see this internecine struggle, but we believe that our ideas will be best served by the sort of Army we are trying to build up. We are more concerned, at the moment, in ensuring that the British Army is a properly democratic Army; and when the Bill comes to the Committee stage, I hope that we shall have the opportunity of wringing some concessions and undertakings from the Government, which hitherto we have failed to do, on the matter of the democratisation of the Army. 1934 §

As to the point made by the hon. Member for East Coventry (Mr. Crossman), there are many States in Europe, particularly in Scandinavia, to which we have pointed in the past as models of social democracy, where freedom and socialism have gone hand in hand. These countries have had conscription, although, perhaps, for not so long a period, as an integral part of the State, and it has had, in my opinion some value in increasing democratisation and lifting up the general standard of equality among the people. Conscription has many disadvantages, but there are a few advantages, and I hope that, as soon as we adopt this Bill, we shall concentrate on getting some of the benefits that may be obtained from conscription.

8.31 p.m.

§

Mr. Henderson Stewart (Fife, East) At the end, or nearly the end, of this long Debate, when so many speeches have been delivered and so much ground has been covered, it is perhaps wise to confine myself to one or two issues which seem to me, and to most of my hon. Friends, as of supreme importance. As time is limited, and I would not wish to prevent other hon. Members from taking part in the Debate, I propose to confine myself to the examination of two matters. The first is the commitments which this House has already, by deliberate and unanimous action, assumed, and the consequences of those commitments. Secondly, I should like to say a word or two about the issue of personal freedom, to which some not very well informed reference has been made by two hon. Members on the bench in front of me, earlier in the Debate. §

As regards the commitments which this House has already accepted, I think that the House—and I am talking now only about this House—must stand up to the logic of its own previous decisions. What are those decisions?

The first one, obviously, is the Charter of the United Nations. The hon. Member for 1935 Broxtowe (Mr. Cocks) reminded the House that under that Charter we are committed, as one of the nations, to providing armed forces for the service of the United Nations organisation. It is quite true, as the hon. Member said, that the complete commitment is dependent upon certain agreements that shall be made. The hon. Member said that we cannot do anything until the agreements are made, but I think that he is seeking to escape in a way which is not quite up to his standard, because he knows quite well that, also under the Charter of the United Nations, there was to be set up a military staff committee. What is one of the chief complaints of every Foreign Secretary, including our own, at the present time? It is that the Military Staff Committee has not yet reached a decision, and every effort is being made by our Foreign Secretary, and every other Foreign Secretary, I assume, to expedite these decisions; and if this Government can get what they want decision should be reached in the course of the next few months. Therefore, we cannot escape the direct responsibility which we have accepted for the provision of adequate military forces under that Charter.

There is a more recent commitment which the House has assumed. There is the commitment under the Defence White Paper, which was discussed in this House not more than 10 days ago, and accepted by the House without a single vote in opposition to it. It was accepted unanimously. There was not an Amendment to it, and there was not one word of criticism from any of the hon. Members who have today been so vigorous in their attack on the Government and the present proposals. Perhaps I should amend that sentence. Although there may have been some criticism, not one of them voted against it. That was a statement unanimously accepted by the House. Hon. Members opposite must accept the democratic principle that the House, having committed itself to that statement, must face up to its logical conclusions. Those conclusions are, I think, in-escapable. From the moment the House accepted these commitments, it accepted also the duty to ensure that sufficient

numbers of men shall be available to support those obligations and this armed service.

1936

Mr. Benn Levy (Eton and Slough) What is sufficient?

§

Mr. Stewart The Defence Paper shows the figures and the numbers required, and if there was any doubt about the meaning of the Defence Paper, the Minister of Defence explained it. His figures are on record. Those figures were plainly stated in the House, and they exceeded one million. The House accepted those figures and the scheme behind them, so how can it refuse now—10 days later—the means to provide those numbers? There is only one good reason for refusing to accept the means offered, and that is if better means are stated.

Mr. H. D. Hughes (Wolverhampton, West) There are no figures in the White Paper later than December, 1946. This Bill does not take effect until January, 1949.

§

Mr. Stewart That is quite true; but it shows what are our general commitments, and it is all in the greatest detail in the speech delivered by the Minister of Defence.

§

Mr. Levy Will the hon. Gentleman explain how exactly this Conscription Bill in peace time is to add to the number of men available for those commitments, because it has been said, as a point of fact, that the period of 18 months' training has been chosen as a period which is minimum training, and if they are to be under training for 18 months and then released, where are the additional men to come from?

§

Mr. Stewart I will try to deal with that point as I go along, or, if the hon. Member prefers it, I will deal with it now. What is the purpose of this Bill? It is to have either in active service or just out of active service but fully trained, an adequate number of men to meet our commitments.

§

Mr. Levy In reserve?

§

Mr. Stewart In service, in training or in reserve.

§

Mr. S. Silverman That has nothing to do with the White Paper.

§

1937

Mr. Stewart The White Paper, 10 days ago, set the general stage for this whole business. It set clearly before the country a very great programme of armed force, in order to carry through certain obligations. Does the hon. Gentleman deny that?

§

Mr. S. Silverman I do not think that the hon. Gentleman has seen the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Eton and Slough (Mr. Levy). Under the scheme explained by the Minister of Labour, the men provided by this Bill will not be available for any of the commitments defined in the White Paper.

§

Mr. Stewart I have some other points I want to refer to and I think it would be rather unfair if we continued this personal argument any further. I would remind hon. Members of the speech made by the Minister of Labour yesterday and from it I will take one sentence: "The position which confronts the Government is, that unless we can continue the present arrangements for the call-up of men, the regular element in the Services is likely to be insufficient to meet even a fraction of our minimum defence requirements. —[OFFICIAL REPORT, 31st March, 1947; Vol. 435, c. 1675.]" That is the essence of this matter. I hope we shall get from the Government some facts in implementation of the situation which is presented by that statement. We need that, but I for one cannot do anything but accept the statement of the right hon. Gentleman, because he has all the expert advice that is available in this country and until I am able to prove he is wrong I must accept it. In view of that statement I feel that the action the Government is taking deserves the sympathetic consideration of the House.

§

Are the numbers mentioned here necessary? Can they be obtained by voluntary methods? If they cannot, is conscription or is it not the right method of providing them? I should have thought that the Minister of Labour provided the answer to the first two of these questions. I agree that the information we have is not entirely satisfactory and I want far more facts from the Government, but on the assumption that the statement by the Minister is correct it does seem to me that the answer to the question is that the necessary numbers cannot be obtained by the voluntary efforts. I think the Minister has given an effective answer when he told us what was happening about voluntary enlistment, especially during last year, and that it has not succeeded in providing anything like the numbers required.

1938

The second main point that I have in mind is the issue of personal freedom. According to the right hon. and learned Gentleman the Member for Montgomery (Mr. C. Davies) conscription in peacetime infringes the liberty of the British subject, and there must be an overwhelming

case for its introduction. He said there was no precedent for this conscription in time of peace and he suggested, I think, that this proposal was contrary to all the practices of Liberal philosophy. With great respect, I think the right hon. and learned Gentleman is wrong on both counts. It is not a fact that compulsory service in this country in times of peace is without precedent. Surely, from the very earliest times, and we can go back to the days of King Arthur, up to the time of Napoleon—[Laughter]—hon. Members are laughing, but is it not true that in that long period in every moment of stress it was a part of the British Constitution that a militia be formed by compulsory measures, and its formation in such circumstances was accepted by the nation? It was a piece of compulsory military service accepted by all.

Mr. Emrys Roberts (Merioneth) The point made by the right hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. C. Davies) was that this was the first permanent conscription introduced in peacetime. §

Mr. Stewart With great respect, it is not. I am talking about times of peace when danger threatened or when there was an emergency. §

Mr. Emrys Roberts There is no threat of danger now. §

Mr. Stewart I am asserting an historical fact that in all those hundreds of years of British history it was an accepted part of the British Constitution that in times of trial, stress and emergency military compulsion was accepted, and, in fact, took place. It is within the recollection of some hon. Members that it is only as late as 1921 that the right to ballot for the militia was, in fact, taken from the Statute Book. I can give another example. The 1939 Military Training Act was an Act of compulsory military service in time of peace. It is true that war was threatening, but it was a moment of peace, and while Sir Archibald Sinclair and some of his friends spoke against that Measure they took care, as usual, not to vote one way or the other, but the right hon. and learned Gentleman the Member for Montgomery voted for it. 1939 §

Mr. Emrys Roberts And he said so today. §

Mr. Stewart I am only repeating what he said. Personally, I am not in the least bit surprised by his change of front today. His speech was given a great welcome by the left §

wing of the Labour Party, to which the right hon. and learned Gentleman has been steadily moving for such a considerable time with such obvious satisfaction to himself. We have observed it. He used to sit on our Benches, then he moved in front of us and before very long he will be over on the other side of the House. I assert—and I have some right to speak for the Liberal point of view—[Laughter.] I do not know why hon. Members laugh. I represent, as I told the House before, and as I repeat now, as a Liberal—

Mrs. Leah Manning (Epping) A National Liberal. §

Mr. Stewart I always support a National Government. §

Mrs. Nichol In Tory colours. §

Mr. Stewart I represent, and am supported by, men who supported Mr. Asquith for 34 years. §

Mr. Deputy-Speaker (Mr. Hubert Beaumont) I fail to see what these remarks have to do with the Bill under consideration. §

Mr. Stewart I have been challenged and I am answering the challenge. §

Mr. Deputy-Speaker The hon. Member may have been challenged but I cannot allow him to continue that line of argument. §

Mr. Stewart I do not want to continue it, but I want to assert my right to speak for, and to explain to the House, the Liberal principles upon this matter. §

Mr. Emrys Roberts On a point of Order. Is it in Order for the hon. Member to continue that line of argument designed to show to the House why he had always voted with the Conservative Party and never against the Conservative Party? Is it in Order to attack my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Montgomery as the Leader of the Liberal § 1940

Party?

Mr. Deputy-Speaker If I had thought the hon. Member was out of Order I should have §
stopped him.

Mr. Stewart To support the contention I made that compulsory military service in times §
of emergency is not contrary to the traditions of those for whom I speak, may I remind the
House that in this famous Debate in 1939, in addition to the right hon. and learned
Gentleman the Member for Montgomery, who voted for the Bill, Mr. Lloyd George also voted
and spoke with a view to putting the Liberal point of view. I wish to remind the House of
what he said, that he and the Liberal leaders in 1911 thought along similar lines in the
matter of conscription. Let me read what the great Liberal Leader said: "It is worth while
considering whether, if the world is to remain in the threatened condition that it is in now"
not unlike our present condition— "we ought not to reconsider altogether the policy of
training for war"—" or, as one might say today, for defence— "I put forward certain
proposals in 1911." I think he was Chancellor of the Exchequer then. "They were more or
less on the lines of this Bill." He was referring to the Bill of 1939 which is not very different
in principle from the Bill we are considering tonight. "They had the acceptance of the late Mr.
Asquith, who was my chief then, and of the principal leaders of the Liberal Party."—
[OFFICIAL REPORT. 8th May. 1939: Vol. 347. c. 68.]" In view of that statement, who is more
correctly representing the Liberal view tonight, I or the right hon. and learned Gentleman
the Member for Montgomery? I claim that I am speaking tonight in the direct line of Liberal
succession in support of this Bill.

Mr. Rankin (Glasgow, Tradeston) In view of the quotation which he has just made, would §
the hon. Gentleman say whether there is any reference to the secret treaties which were
then in existence and which made the arrangement necessary, and also if there is any such
situation today?

1941

Mr. Stewart The hon. Member must not lead the House away on to these matters. I am §
talking on a matter of principle and asserting that the principle that in times of emergency
and danger it is right for the British people to accept compulsory military service—although
unwillingly—is one which is in direct line with Liberal philosophy.

Mr. S. Silverman rose— §

Mr. Stewart I cannot give way again. I refuse only because I do not want to take up § further time but wish to conclude my remarks. The right hon. Gentleman who spoke so eloquently from the Opposition Front Bench said something which I felt was very much in accord with my own view. He said first that no one particularly likes to have conscription at any time. I share that belief entirely. I was a volunteer in the first world war and in the second, but nobody likes conscription. It tears young men away from their proper work, takes students from their studies either at the beginning or the end of their training, and upsets young men's apprenticeships. All that is true, and, as I say, nobody likes it. We have to accept it only as an unavoidably expedient, but I agree with the right hon. Gentleman the Member for West Bristol (Mr. Stanley) that it has its merits. In the last war the fact that conscription was universal and started from the beginning led to the mixing of the classes and destroyed that silly class distinction which does this country so much harm. That is all to the good, but in the end this remains a matter of regret, and I am sure that when I say this I speak the minds of all my hon. Friends who should be on this bench. We greatly regret having to support this at all. As my final point, I would say this. Facing the world as it is today with all its difficulties, dangers and doubts, and recognising that if we are to remain a great people supporting 45 million souls, we have to remain a great world Power with world connections; recognising our imperialistic responsibilities—if you like—we must maintain troops in many parts of the world. To do that we need a great Army and large Services generally. I believe that our country has yet a very noble part to play in the world which it can play only if we remain a great international Power. If it be true—and it is for the § 1942 Government tonight to confirm the views that we hold—that voluntary recruitment cannot provide the numbers referred to by the right hon. Gentleman as essential, then I am prepared, with most of my hon. Friends, to go with them into the Lobby in support of the Bill.

8.55 p.m.

Mr. Mikardo (Reading) I want to speak in support of the Amendment moved by my hon. § Friend the Member for Westhoughton (Mr. Rhys Davies). I do so for reasons some of which have not so far been advanced in this Debate. I am not a pacifist, but I believe that it is just as possible to be conscientiously convinced that this Bill is bad on economic grounds, as it is to be conscientiously convinced that it is bad on moral grounds. Let me say at once—like the right hon. Gentleman the Member for West Bristol (Mr. Stanley), and unlike the Leader of the Opposition—that whilst I think the pacifists are wrong, I do honour them for the sincerity of their convictions.

It used to be a tradition in this House to respect the other man's convictions even when they were different from one's own, and I think it is altogether a pity that yesterday the Leader of the Opposition dived into the bottom drawer of his store of verbal venom in order to find epithets for people who hold sincere convictions, merely because those convictions are different from his own. The Leader of the Opposition, as we all know, is very good at finding epithets, and, as we also, know, he enjoys it very much. Sometimes I think that he has an

occasional very small regret—only a very small one—for the deaths of his nearest and dearest enemies, Hitler and Mussolini, because he must have had a lot of fun in thinking up epithets with which to castigate them and then declaiming those epithets with a pretended spontaneity and a lip-smacking relish. I am always sorry for a man who cannot live out his days without having something to hate, and for my part I think so much of the Leader of the Opposition—I wish he were here to hear me say this—and I am so conscious of the debt I owe him, that I am glad to claim my share as one of those who give him an opportunity for demonstrating his unparalleled, if sometimes rather flamboyant, mastery of the English language.

As I have said, I honour the conscientious anti-conscriptionists, but I do not share 1943 their views. I think conscription is a sensible way of sharing out a burden, and certainly a much better way than the old one of the dole queue, I do not think that this Bill is objectionable because of the method it proposes, but I think it is open to question with regard both to its purpose and its cost in economic terms. The point has been made by several of my hon. and gallant Friends—by the hon. and gallant Member for Preston (Wing-Commander Shackleton) this evening and the hon. and gallant Member for Dudley (Colonel Wigg) and the hon. Member for Aston (Mr. Wyatt) yesterday—that the question of how many people we have in our Services is irrelevant to the subject of conscription. I want to suggest that that is not so, and that in point of fact numbers are very relevant to the question of conscription for two reasons. One with regard to our commitments—so-called—and one with regard to the extent to which labour in the Armed Forces was utilised economically.

The main point is that if the generals had to go out and scratch for every man, as industrial employers have to, they would take jolly good care, first, to get no larger number than was justified, and secondly, to see that none of the men they had to go out and scratch for was wasted. As it is, with men being shovelled into them with a priority which, in these days of desperate economic conditions, is given to no other occupation except coalmining, can we blame them if they not only cease to cut their coat according to the cloth, but get all the cloth they can and then cut all the coats they want to get out of that cloth? I have not the least doubt that however many men you give the generals, they will find commitments to occupy them.

I do love that blessed word "commitments." It is one of those lovely, round, omnibus words that people throw around without stopping to define them and without giving any explanation whatever. "Commitments" is just like "circumstances over which we have no control," and "your representations will be taken into active consideration." The only definition I ever heard of the word "commitments" that makes any sense was given by a man who was once sued for failure to maintain his wife and children and pleaded 1944 that he could not afford to do so because of his other commitments. I sometimes think that we are doing exactly the same thing. The game we are playing in this country, in economic terms at the moment, is that suburban game of keeping up with the Smiths next door.

Mr. E. P. Smith (Ashford) The Jones's.

§

Mr. Mikardo I beg the hon. Gentleman's pardon—the Jones's. We have made a music-hall joke of the woman who simply has to get new curtains, because the woman next door has new curtains, even if she goes without her Sunday dinner to get them. That is just what we have been doing for the last few years. We have been building up forces, and we now propose to have a large Army until 1954, to enable our Foreign Secretary to keep up with the Marshalls and the Molotovs next door. Some of us are beginning to think that it is not worth going without our Sunday dinners to have these new curtains like those of the Marshalls and the Molotovs next door, although they are very nice and pleasant, and please our vanity, and give the Opposition something to cheer about. We have had to take down some of our curtains covering Greece and Turkey.

§

My hon. Friend the Member for Broxtowe (Mr. Cocks) thought there was no need to have conscription to fulfil our U.N.O. commitments. I would point out that there is no conscription in Canada or Australia, and that both these countries are no less keen about U.N.O. than we are. Incidentally, there is no conscription in the United States, and the question is being asked throughout the country, whether this Bill is not the result of an overt or covert understanding with the United States, that they will supply the dollars and we will supply the men. We know it has been said by Members of the Government, that there is no secret understanding, but today 1st April, is the very day on which this arrangement actually comes into operation in Greece, because today in Greece the Americans start pumping in the dollars, and we start pumping in the men, or at least keeping the men there while they supply the dollars.

At this moment, the nations of the world are beginning to grope tentatively towards the first moves after the war for disarmament, and it seems that no worse moment could have been chosen for the introduction of this Measure. At this time, when the first disarmament moves are being tentatively examined, nothing could have been done by the Government which would have more effect in breathing a cold blast on this tender little bud of disarmament discussion. That is one way in regard to commitments in which numbers are irrelevant. The other way is this. So long as there is conscription and so long as the generals get their men fed to them, instead of having to sell the idea of service in the Army, they cannot be expected to be so careful in the utilisation of their manpower. We saw this during the war when, in factories which had labour shovelled into them, there was not the same care to make every man do a job as there was in those factories which had to scratch about for their labour.

1945

We have heard from the Minister of Defence and from the Secretary of State for War that committees have been set up to tighten up the use of manpower in the Forces. The Minister of Defence described this arrangement a fortnight ago in a long answer he gave to a Question which I put. Any hon. Member can see that the mechanism to check the utilisation of manpower is totally inadequate. The totally inadequate mechanism is not made adequate

by the invitation I have received from the Secretary of State for War to give evidence before that committee, just as anybody else can give evidence. In connection with the utilisation of manpower, I wish to refer to the length of the training period. The Minister of Defence is to sum up this Debate, and perhaps he will answer this question. As the Minister of Labour said quite clearly yesterday, the 18 months is not required entirely for training, but partly for training and partly for service. The Minister of Defence, said last Friday in a written answer to a Question that the time required for training in all three Services was 18 months. I get letters from my constituents, as every other hon. Member of this House does, and I had one yesterday morning from a new man in the Royal Air Force. He has been in seven months, and is supposed to be starting any minute a 12 months' course of training as a radio mechanic. So far, after seven months he has not had one single day of training, and does not look like starting for a very long time.

The final point I want to make is this. A number of hon. Members on both sides of the House have referred to the cost of conscription in economic terms, none with more effect than the right hon. Gentleman the Member for West Bristol. The Government have been challenged by a number of hon. Members to give details of the commitments for which these services are required, but I challenge them to give details of the total cost to the nation in economic terms, because in addition to the obvious costs there are ever so many hidden costs. Let us not forget that at this moment we are breaking our necks to "export, export, export," in order to cover the deficit in our balance of trade. Our military expenditure last year, in 1946, in two commands alone, reached a total greater than the total deficit of our balance of trade, and the policy of "export, export, export," while it is worth while when it is bringing in food and raw materials, is not worth much when it is only paying for the invisible import which is represented by every single soldier we have stationed abroad. 1946

The Forces are great consumers of man power, and not only directly in the Forces. Under this Bill there is the equivalent of the labour of 60,000 men, full time, taken up with the fortnight's training per year. That is another 60,000 added to the roll. At present 41 workers are engaged in manufacturing supplies for the Armed Forces for every 100 soldiers, and that figure will go up as soon as we start to reduce the surplus war stores. Moreover, that figure takes into account only the main contractors, not the subcontractors and the sub-sub-contractors. It takes into account the men who make the tanks, but not the men who make the machine tools which make the tanks, it does not take into account the man who drives the lorry that carries the machine tools, or the man who makes the lorry. There is a large multiplying factor, and an enormous hidden consumption of labour. Every telephone call that goes through a civilian exchange from an Army unit is one less telephone call for industry. Every truck that goes along the railway carrying Army supplies is one less truck carrying timber. Every ton of coal that goes to a barracks is one ton less for industry, and the miner who hewed the coal is lost to industry just as much as if he were out of the mines and stuck in the Army.

What is the total cost? Unless the Government are prepared to say what is the total cost in economic terms, they have no right to ask the House to give them an economic blank cheque. Because there has been no such statement of total cost, and in my view no 1947

beginning on the part of the Government of an appreciation of that total cost in economic terms, I, for one, will find myself in the Lobby in support of the Amendment.

9.9 p.m.

§

Mr. H. D. Hughes (Wolverhampton, West) The hon. Member for Reading (Mr. Mikardo) § will know that I and many other hon. Members who have spoken in support of this Bill have been during the recent Debates just as critical as he is of bates have been just as critical as he is of the number of men in the Armed Forces, of the misuse of manpower in the Services, and in particular of the lack of information that has been given to this House. In spite of these things, we still feel, for causes which I shall show, that we have to support the Bill. On the point about lack of information, the hon. Member for Reading referred to more cards to be kept face upwards. The trouble at the moment of course is that the Minister of Defence has been remarkably successful in keeping all the cards face downwards, so that nobody in this house really knows what the figures are going to be. In spite of this I feel it is necessary, if we are to be realists at this time, to support the Bill.

Even if one takes the figures that have been given by the hon. Member for Aston (Mr. Wyatt), and other hon. Members, as to the numbers likely to be needed to fulfil commitments after 1949, there are only three possible ways in which we can hope to raise the number of men required. We could do it, as we did before the war, by the threat of unemployment and poverty. This Government are not going to follow that course. We could possibly do it, as hon. Members who are opposing the Bill have indicated, by setting up a kind of Praetorian Guard, spoiled darlings who would be given much better conditions than anybody else in industry. We have attempted to put the Forces in this country on a level somewhat comparable with industry, and the result is that, in spite of all that, the Regular Forces today total some 275,000, and the Regular Army is less than half the size of that which we had in 1939. My hon. Friends have got to choose. Are they really prepared to go on improving conditions in the Forces to such an extent that the Forces will be so attractive that 1948 they will overcome the relative disadvantages of men being called away from their homes, from their civilian surroundings, and from their careers? We can give preferential conditions to attract men into the mines, we can do it to attract them into the key civilian industries, but I submit that we cannot do it for the Armed Forces without setting up what I have described as a Praetorian Guard. The third way in which we could get the number of men we need is by a system of conscription, which is much the most democratic of those three methods. Those are the main reasons for which we support the Bill.

Having said that, I want to criticise one or two of the measures in the Bill. I am very worried by the period of 18 months. What are the reason for which we need men in the Forces for 18 months? I hope the Minister of Defence, when he replies, will be a little specific. We have been given two reasons. The Minister of Labour pointed out that we need men for general occupation duties in the transitional period and we also need them for a trained reserve. As long as both those commitments exist, there is some case for 18 months, but the trouble is

that when one gives the Defence Ministries something, it is very difficult to get it back from them. Their motto is, "What we have we hold." One can see that already the Defence Departments are getting down to the job of proving that 18 months will for all time be the necessary minimum period. The Minister of Defence, in a written reply last Friday, produced a theory about 18 months being the absolutely minimum period in which one could train a man in the Royal Navy or the Army. If that is held to be true, the logic is immediately that the 18 months period will not be reduced when our commitments shrink, because the Defence Departments will say that 18 months are necessary for basic training.

I submit that, from the experience we had in the war, that is completely inaccurate. During the war we could train an artillery signaller in basic training in six months and artillery officers in five months. It is admitted already that the basic training in the Army is from 14 to 33 weeks, and in the reply which he gave, the Minister of Defence said, with an air of pride, that the Royal Air Force are extending their general recruit training from eight 1949 to 13 weeks, and that procedure is going on elsewhere. I submit that the case for 18 months training is purely special pleading. Has nobody told the people responsible for training in the Service Departments that there is a peace on, and that they have got to use the period of conscription for training in the most efficient possible way? We should, on the Committee stage, I hope we will, succeed in getting the period down to one year.

One further point on which I myself feel distinctly perturbed is that this Bill goes on until 1954. I believe that is far too long a period on which we should commit ourselves now. The year 1954 is nearly the end of the next Parliament from this, and I would much prefer a Bill which would give our successors in the next Parliament a chance to make up their minds on the principle at an early stage.

For those reasons, and with very many reservations, certainly not with the kind of song in my heart which I am sure many of the Tory Party will have as they vote for this Bill tonight, we feel, on balance, that we should support this Bill, but in the Committee stage we shall need many more assurances than we have had so far that the Services will be made really democratic. We have fought a kind of guerrilla campaign with the Service Departments for a period of months to get real measures of democratisation in the Forces. Slowly and painfully, the Service Departments are beginning to give way. We do not believe that process has gone anything like far enough and, until it has, we shall feel doubtful about giving the Defence Minister and his Service colleagues the right to control the lives of the young men of this country for a period as long as 18 months.

9.17 p.m.

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The Minister of Defence (Mr. A. V. Alexander) rose—

§

Hon. Members Hear, hear.

Mr. Alexander I am very much obliged for the supporting cheers. I take it that it is § because there is a recognition, even on the opposite benches, that whoever replies for the Government to the kind of Debate we have had for the last two days, has certainly no easy task. I have listened very carefully for the whole of the two days without having once 1950 interrupted any one of the hon. Members of the House on any single occasion and I want if possible—my hon. Friends on all sides of the House know that I am likely to be a little volatile in temperament sometimes, and I do not wish to be tempted tonight—to have the opportunity of examining the position that we have to defend, with calmness and, I hope, with satisfaction if not to all hon. Members, to the majority of the hon. Members in the House.

This is one of the most important Debates which has ever taken place in the House, and one of the most important certainly in the lifetime of this Parliament. I recognise from what has been said in different parts of the House that we are dealing with a matter which appears in every home as a great human issue. The whole question as it was put by the hon. and learned Member for Carmarthen (Mr. Hopkin Morris) and repeated in somewhat similar fashion by the Leader of the Liberal Party this afternoon; the question of principle, the freedom of the individual, the liberty of the spirit, are matters, are human issues, which I through all my political and Nonconformist life have been thoroughly interested in and affected by, and there are many hon. Members in my own party with the same kind of origin and the same kind of upbringing that I have had in these matters, who feel just as deeply and just as sincerely about these issues as those who may perhaps differ from the recommendations of the Government to the House tonight. I hope that hon. Members will recognise that as we go on with the Debate.

I regret most deeply that we have not got unanimity on the Government side of the House on this matter, but I recognise it is one of those human issues upon which it is almost impossible to get unanimity. But I hope that we shall find as we go along with the voting tonight, and in the further stages of the Bill, that we shall more or less recognise the need for the steps which the Government have had to take. You will forgive me, Mr. Deputy-Speaker, if in replying to the Debate on this Bill, I remind the House of a little of my own personal background in the matter. It is not an easy matter to be the political head of the Royal Navy for five of the most strenuous war years through which the Royal Navy 1951 has passed in all its history. In the years 1940 and 1941 we faced a situation when we were nearer to total defeat than perhaps at any time in the whole of our history. If we had been subjected then to defeat, we would not any of us have had the opportunity to be debating the issues now before us in this kind of free country and free assembly we have here. Perhaps, therefore, I may be excused if I ask for consideration to be given to the point of view of those who had to bear that kind of responsibility during the last great struggle, if I ask hon. Members to believe that we of that view, and the Members of the Government, approach the whole question of national service for military purposes from the point of view of the ultimate security of our country, and the liberties that we enjoy.

It has been said on three or four occasions during the Debate that if we were to pass this Bill tonight no one would remain free in this country. I beg to rebut that argument altogether. We are meeting together in a free country, in a democratically elected Assembly asking for the passage of a Bill to secure, as far as we can, the liberties of this country for the future. It is a Bill which is limited in period, and any renewal of its terms is subject to an affirmative Resolution by Parliament. The specific approval of Parliament is required for any further period for which we may require this kind of enlistment. I do not regard that as being the end of liberty in this country. I regard it as being a step taken to maintain the liberties which we have enjoyed in the past, and which we are all determined to retain.

So much for the general attitude we adopt towards this great human question. I want to divide what I have to say into two main sections. I should like to say, first, a few things about the several points which have been raised in the Debate. and, at the end, to make, not a new statement, but a restatement of the general case of the Government for the Bill, for it seems to have been assumed over and over again—it was assumed quite recently by my hon. Friend the Member for Reading (Mr. Mikardo)—that the Government have not given any real statement of the reasons for the production of this Bill. Let me turn for a moment or two to the actual Debate. The right hon. Gentleman the Member for Woodford (Mr. 1952 Churchill), who seemed to be in a very jocular mood and very happy yesterday, in his presentation of his views to the House, promised general support to the Bill, but I must say that he attacked the defence policy of the Government, and its control of the Services in language which was very unmeasured and quite—I will not say violent, certainly not in tone—but certainly very drastic.

I remember—I am sorry that he is not here for me to say this in his presence—that on one occasion during the war he was commenting to me on a speech I had made here, and he said "There is one thing on which I would like to give you a little advice"—he was very kind to me—"that is, beware of using too many adjectives." I said, "I understand, but that advice comes very strangely from you, with your great knowledge of adjectives and great perspicacity in placing each one in its right place. Why do you say that?" He said, "It is dangerous," and added, "Never forget the value of the dynamic noun." That is a little advice which I have always remembered. Yesterday, the right hon. Gentleman said of the White Paper which I was responsible for producing to the House on defence policy, that it was barren, dismal, flatulent and platitudinous. I thought to myself "You see when you get let into using so many adjectives, one on top of the other, it all depends on what is the point of view." I remembered at once that in the leading article in "The Times" newspaper, at the time of the publication of the White Paper, their comment was that the White Paper was clear and comprehensive. It apparently took many weeks for the Opposition to discover that they really wanted to criticise the White Paper at all. And the criticism of the right hon. Gentleman himself upon the White Paper has never, I think, been uttered publicly until yesterday, although the White Paper was published somewhere about 14th or 15th February.

Mr. C. Davies This is, as we all know, a most important occasion. Might I ask the right §

hon. Gentleman where are the Prime Minister and other Members of the Cabinet on this grave occasion?

Mr. Alexander I am quite certain that with the weight of public business now, every one of them is doing his duty. §

The right hon, Gentleman the Member for Woodford raised one or two points of very special— 1953

Mr. Stubbs Where is he? §

Mr. Alexander I hope that my hon. Friend will allow me to make my own speech, as far as possible. The right hon. Gentleman raised one or two points which I would like to answer. He asked, for example, with regard to the general question which is raised so often of the misuse of manpower in the Forces, what was the actual proportion of men in the Navy, ashore and afloat? I looked into the matter and I found that the Parliamentary Secretary to the Admiralty had, in the course of the Debate on the Navy Estimates, given that exact information, from which it would appear that 44 per cent. of the present personnel of the Navy are ashore on ordinary shore duties, compared with 42 per cent. in 1921. I give that date— §

Captain Marsden (Chertsey) Those figures relate to some 20 years ago. We are asking for the figures at the present time. §

Mr. Alexander The hon. and gallant Gentleman did not, perhaps, quite catch what I said. I said that the percentage ashore today, performing ordinary shore duties, is 44 per cent, of the present Force, compared with 42 per cent in 1921. That was the figure given by my hon. Friend some days ago, on the Navy Estimates. Forty per cent. of the present strength is afloat. The balance of about 15 per cent. are engaged in three services which were either almost non-existent or did not exist at all in 1921. These are the expanded Fleet Air Arm establishments, combined operations, and the Royal Marine commandos. I hope that the right hon. Gentleman will feel that he has now got the information he needs. §

The right hon. Gentleman also referred to the cost of the Services this year and made another onslaught, in that part of his speech, in regard to mismanagement. He said that if he had got at them with a red pencil he could have saved scores and scores of millions on the Service Estimates. It is only right, therefore, that I should refresh the memory of the

House of Commons. I think they have already been informed by me and the Service Ministers of the true position. It is true that the total cost of the three Services, and the Ministry of Supply services to the Forces, reaches the total of £899 million for the financial year beginning today, but nearly £119 million of that is entirely composed of terminal charges which will not recur. They include payments of bonuses, and leave allowances to men who are demobilised, terminal payments on war contracts, and the like. Of the rest of the charge of £899 million, another £40 million can, quite rightly and properly, be deducted from anything connected with current maintenance of the Forces by the expenditure incurred upon such services as the administration of the Polish Resettlement Corps and upon such charges in research and development as can properly be apportioned to civil uses such as civil aviation, and so on. Therefore, the actual net cost of the Forces for the coming financial year is only about—it is still a very large sum—£740 million. That is, compared with the previous financial year, 1945–46, a reduction of something like 45 per cent. 1954

We are sometimes charged with not having made a sufficient gesture with regard to disarmament. In the course of his remarks, the hon. Member for Gateshead (Mr. Zilliacus) spoke of our not having proved to him that we were willing to act as if our faith was in the future of the United Nations organisation. I do not need to answer a great many points of his speech, which I thought were most capably answered today by my hon. Friend the Member for East Coventry (Mr. Crossman), but I will say to my hon. Friend the Member for Gateshead that it would not be the first time by any means that a Government in office in the last quarter of a century or more has been asked to show its faith in some existing or future international organisation by engaging in unilateral disarmament. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] I am not asking for those cheers. I am merely desiring to establish the facts in fairness to the hon. Member for Gateshead. However much I might differ from his presentation of the case, I know that he has very great experience in connection with international organisations. I must say to him that I have been unable to find evidence in the period between the wars, that unilateral disarmament or disarmament by one country in greater ratio to another, was a real aid to developing collective security accepted by all. 1955

Mr. Zilliacus rose—

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Mr. Alexander I do not think my hon. Friend would want me to give way. I want to assure him that it is my contention that while we need, at all costs, to keep as our central objective the prevention of war, and to assist in that prevention of war by developing in the highest degree collective security backed by all the people who have put their names as signatories for their countries to the Charter of the United Nations, so it is absolutely essential that we shall not go in for unilateral disarmament but for disarmament pro rata right through the whole organisation. §

Mr. Zilliacus May I ask the right hon. Gentleman whether the 10 year rule applied in 1919 was unilateral disarmament, and, if not, whether he can give an assurance tonight that the Government have given instructions to the fighting Services to frame their annual Estimates on the assumption that we will not be involved in a great war within 10 years and that we need not prepare for war against either the Soviet Union or the United States? If he gives me that assurance, I will vote for the Bill. Otherwise I will not. §

Mr. Alexander I would say at once that for my part I am not willing to give such an instruction as that to the Chiefs of Staff until I see more clearly what is the outcome of current negotiations and the development of the United Nations organisation as it now exists. No one could be more anxious than myself—and every Member of the Government will be of the same opinion—to support the United Nations organisation up to the hilt, but I am not—I say it frankly to all my hon. Friends—in favour of unilateral disarmament, because I have had experience of where that led us before. §

I would like to say a word to my hon. Friend the Member for North Hendon (Mrs. Ayrton Gould), who said in the course of the Debate that she was convinced that this Bill ought to cover the call-up of women as well as men. I want to say on that that there is no need for the Government to ask for such powers. If we look at our experience during the war when we had most valuable assistance from women in the Forces, we find that nevertheless 1956 with that great force of women, they were not able to perform for the Forces more than about 10 per cent. of their functions. We had just about 10 per cent of women in the Armed Forces. We see no reason at the present moment for, and no possibility of absorbing, a greater percentage of women in the Forces now than round about that 10 per cent. I would not bind myself to a half or one per cent., but not more than that, and there will be no difficulty in obtaining that number of women by voluntary recruitment. If we were to call up women at the same rate as men, on the lines suggested by the hon. Member for North Hendon, we should have a very large surplus of women not required for the Forces themselves, and that would then be followed by the suggestion ipso facto that they should be directed to some other form of employment. The Government, in spite of what has been suggested on both sides of the House from time to time, have no intention whatsoever of introducing, or supporting, any form of industrial conscription.

A number of references have been made, from different parts of the House, about a subject we have heard a great deal of before, namely, waste of manpower in the Forces. The difficulty, in a time of rapid rundown and changing functions in what was a great wartime force, in preventing waste of manpower, is fairly well recognised by all those who have had connection with this matter. This has been said before by the Prime Minister. Nevertheless, I would have the House observe, first of all, that the running down of the Forces, in this case, has been much more smoothly done, with far less disturbance, and far less general unemployment than was the case before. While it may be true that in different places,

pockets, or centres, there is still some misuse of manpower, I consider that we are already taking the proper and requisite steps to deal with this question. A great many suggestions have been made, among them a suggestion which has been followed up, perhaps not in the way some of my hon. Friends desire, but which has resulted in all three Service Ministers undertaking to appoint an inquiry committee in each Department, which will include an industrialist and a trade unionist. I do not recognise the reason' for the suggestion 1957 made by the right hon. Gentleman the Member for Woodford yesterday, that some form of Parliamentary Committee should be set up on the lines of the Select Committee on National Expenditure during the war. My recollection is—and I hope that I am not misrepresenting him—that he himself was always very much opposed to that particular form of Committee during the war, and that on many occasions he found himself very much at variance with their operations.

Mr. Churchill (Woodford) Naturally, as a Member of the Government I resented criticism, § especially when it was well informed, but I was very glad that the Committee were in action during the war, and I must say that on the whole the services that they rendered are worthy of record.

Mr. Alexander I expect that a good many members of that Committee, who remember § the strictures upon them from time to time by the right hon. Gentleman—of which I am not complaining—

Mr. Churchill I was defending the right hon. Gentleman. §

Mr. Alexander —would have been quite surprised yesterday to have heard the right hon. § Gentleman's tribute to their work. I may add that there is always an opportunity on the Estimates Debates to take up these matters, and that there exist the Public Accounts Committee and the Estimates Committee, in which further steps to protect the interests of the House can be taken.

I have been asked, on several occasions, on this question of manpower, how we can justify the demand for this Bill in relation to the large forces that are still in existence. I have been asked whether I can give any assurance at all that those forces will continue to be decreased. I must remind the House that compared with the figure, in December, 1946, of about 1,427,000, the figure will be reduced, by 31st March, 1948, to 1,087,000—a saving of 340,000. I can assure the House further that these forces will continue to be reduced; it must not be assumed by my hon. Friends that this is a sort of static figure of forces which must be maintained indefinitely in future.

Therefore, I would like to add to that, what is the general aim of the Government in this matter of forces. It is that we should obtain a regular force of minimum numbers and maximum efficiency. [HON. MEMBERS: "What numbers?"] If hon. Members will allow me to finish—a, small regular force of minimum numbers, trained to the highest point of efficiency, to be supplemented by a large reserve. We consider that, in the light of the changing world circumstances, and of the great possibility of new projectiles, weapons and scientific development, it is not necessary to aim at and budget for large permanent regular forces. What is essential, when it comes, if it ever should unfortunately come, to a major war breaking out again, and coming with all the suddenness with which major wars will come in the future, is that we should have adequate forces available which will not require long training.

Mr. C. Davies Will the right hon. Gentleman be more specific? Surely, this must have been considered by the Cabinet. What does he mean by a small force of well-trained men, and what does he mean by a large force of reserves? Cannot he give us figures? §

Mr. Alexander I was coming to that, in answer to another question upon that point, and if the right hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. C. Davies) will allow me to develop my case in my own way, he will get his information more quickly. I have been asked by Members on the Conservative Benches, as well as on these Benches, whether I could give some kind of figures for, say, 1954. That is the ultimate year quoted, and I think that an hon. Member opposite asked what, under this plan, would then be the number of men in uniform. §

I can say that, by 1954, the number of national service men in uniform under training during that call-up period would not exceed 300,000 on their way to the reserve, and the number of men trailed by that date, who would be in the reserve for their five and a half years period, would be 700,000, but what the actual size of the regular force at that time will be, I cannot possibly say, because I do not know what will be the actual recruitment of Regulars in the intervening period.

Mr. S. O. Davies (Merthyr) Cannot the right hon. Gentleman give some indication of what is the maximum figure which the Government, on the advice of the Service chiefs, are aiming at? Cannot he give some kind of ceiling on this matter. § 1959

Mr. Alexander I think that it would be quite impossible to give what would be the actual ceiling of regular forces, and I will tell the House why. I have already explained to the House, in dealing with the White Paper on Defence, that the year 1947–48 had to be treated §

by myself, in the few weeks before presenting the Defence White Paper, as a transitional period. I also indicated to the House that it was vital and urgent to get a longterm policy examined by the responsible officials and staff officers. I have given them a directive under a ceiling—not a ceiling which I was committed to, but a ceiling under which they were to plan for a long-term policy. I have not yet had the report under that directive which I gave, and, therefore, it would be quite impossible, in any case, to give an answer in the terms desired by the hon. Member for Merthyr (Mr. S. O. Davies).

Mr. Frank Byers (Dorset, Northern) Is it a fact that the Government do not know what the commitments are to be, or what the size of the voluntary Army is to be, and therefore, are basing their future policy upon an intake of conscripts? §

Mr. Alexander As regards the commitments, I am rather surprised that Members of the House who have now listened to Debates on manpower on two or three occasions do not know what our commitments are. Our commitments are set out in paragraph 9 of the White Paper on Defence, and they were explained again in some detail by me on 20th March in this House. Those commitments remain. The hon. Member for North Dorset (Mr. Byers) said that we do not know what is to be the size of our regular Forces, and that brings me to the particular point which provides the most important argument for the Bill. I think it must stand out quite clearly to all hon. Members who have listened to these Debates that the Government have shown that they cannot obtain by voluntary methods the number of men which would be required to fulfil those commitments. I have already referred to voluntary enlistment, along with our present experience of recruitment. §

We have been asked from time to time during the Debate to deal with the matter by making conditions of service in the Armed Forces more attractive. Certainly as regards pay there has never been such an attractive peace time pay code for the Forces as that which was adopted about 12 months ago. That has failed to get a sufficient response. As has already been said with regard to the Army, there will be, in the course of the next two years or rather less than two years now, a total run out of nearly 700,000 men. I add this, that the regular components in the three Services today are, roughly, about 110,000 in the Army, rather less than 70,000 in the Air Force, and in the Navy—where they have had the advantage of some recruitment for regular service right through the war through their junior entries—there are rather less than 90,000. 1960

Mr. Churchill Is the right hon. Gentleman going to answer my question? §

Mr. Alexander I have answered the number of questions. §

Mr. Churchill How many men sleep ashore and how many afloat in the Navy? §

Mr. Alexander The information has already been given on the Navy Estimates and I §
repeated the information tonight. Between now and 1949 quite a proportion of those existing
regular forces will be in course of demobilization.

I come now to deal with our need for the Bill and partly to answer some of my hon. Friends
who have raised questions as to the period of training. The number of men that we have had
in our regular forces, knowing we shall have to maintain certain commitments such as the
occupation of Germany for some time to come in addition to the ordinary duties of the forces
abroad, will be such that we may have to call upon certain sections of those who are called
up for training, after they have done 12 months, to do the remainder of their Service
overseas. I heard great objection taken to that, particularly this afternoon by my hon. Friend
the Member for East Coventry (Mr. Crossman), but I would say that it will be done only for a
period, to tide over this particular stage when there is such a run down of the regular forces,
and when we cannot meet the position unless we can stimulate still further recruitment of
volunteers for the regular services.

Before I go further I should like to mention one two other points raised in the Debate. 1961

I had a particularly interesting question put to me as to the manning of the anti-aircraft
defences of the United Kingdom. I gather it was the hon. Member for Kingston-upon-Thames
(Mr. Boyd-Carpenter) who put this question. He asked whether the men of the anti-aircraft
defences—which by the way will be vital in the future defence of our country and will require
now a normal allocation of seven times as many men as we had in 1930—will be manned by
men called up under this Act. It is our intention that those who are called up for training and
who have been during their training in the anti-aircraft units will also be posted as far as
possible to the anti-aircraft reserve and they will continue in that. There will also be in the
reserve voluntary recruits to the Territorial Army, in which we hope to recruit many of those
who have seen anti-aircraft service during the war, and who will be there to help to stiffen
and generally to help with the training of those forces. I hope that meets the point that has
been raised.

The right hon. Gentleman the Member for West Bristol (Mr. Stanley) asked me to say what
are the strategical requirements to be met by the Bill. I think I have already indicated that
the defence commitments of this country are set out in paragraph 9

of the White Paper which contains a list of the strategic requirements to be met. I 1962
repeat that the regular forces in the foreseeable future will be insufficiently sustained §
by voluntary recruitment to carry out those commitments. National service men will be
needed to help out the regulars in meeting the overseas commitments unless the
international situation improves beyond what we should be justified in assuming as a
safe basis for planning. We must have this Bill in time to enable us to plan ahead, but it

is the primary strategic requirement of the safety of the United Kingdom base, which in my opinion justifies this Bill. For that requirement we need trained reserves to man our defences at short notice in emergency. Regular engagements of the prewar type can only build up trained reserves very slowly and in small numbers. I ask the House to believe with me that the Government desire, above all, to prevent war. We are looking only for the security of our country and our ultimate power to support the general development of the United Nations organisation. For those purposes I ask the House to give a Second Reading to the Bill.

Question put, "That the word now stand part of the Question." §

The House divided: Ayes, 386; Noes, 85. §

1965

Division No. 117.]	AYES.	[10.0 p.m.
Adams, Richard (Balham)	Blyton, W. R.	Corbet, Mrs. F. K. (Camb'well, N.W.)
Adams, W. T. (Hammersmith, South)	Boardman, H.	Corvedale, Viscount
Agnew, Cmdr. P. G.	Bottomley, A. G.	Crawley, A.
Alexander, Rt. Hon. A. V	Bowden, Flg.-Offr. H. W	Cripps, Rt. Hon. Sir S.
Allen, A. C. (Bosworth)	Bower, N.	Crookshank, Capt. Rt. Hon. H. F. C.
Allen, Scholefield (Crewe)	Bowles, F. G. (Nuneaton)	Crossman, R. H. S.
Allen, Lt.-Col. Sir W. (Armagh)	Boyd-Carpenter, J. A.	Crosthwaite-Eyre, Col. O. E
Amory, D. Heathcoat	Bracken, Rt. Hon. Brendan	Crowder, Capt. John E.
Anderson, F. (Whitehaven)	Braithwaite, Lt.-Comdr. J. G	Cuthbert, W. N.
Assheton, Rt. Hon. R.	Brown, George (Belper)	Dairies, P.
Attewell, H. C.	Bruce, Maj. D. W. T.	Dalton, Rt. Hon. H.
Attlee, Rt. Hon. C. R.	Bullock, Capt M.	Davies, Ernest (Enfield)
Austin, H. Lewis	Burke, W. A.	Davies, Harold (Leek)
Awbery, S. S.	Butcher, H. W.	de Freitas, Geoffrey
Ayrton Gould, Mrs. B	Butler, Rt. Hon. R. A. (S'ffr'n W'ld'n)	De la Bère, R.
Bacon, Miss A.	Callaghan, James	Delargy, H. J
Baldwin, A. E.	Carson, E.	Diamond, J
Balfour, A.	Castle, Mrs. B. A.	Digby, S. W.
Barnes, Rt. Hon. A. J.	Challen, C.	Dobbie, W.
Barton, C.	Champion, A. J.	Dodds-Parker, A. D.
Baxter A. B.	Channon, H.	Donovan, T.
Beamish, Maj. T. V H	Chater, D.	Dower, Lt.-Col. A. V. G. (Penrith)
Bechervaise, A. E.	Chetwynd, G. R.	Drewe, C.
Belcher, J. W.	Churchill, Rt. Hon. W. S.	Driberg, T. E. N.
Bellenger, Rt. Hon. F J	Clifton-Brown, Lt.-Col. G.	Dugdale, J. (W. Bromwich)
Bennett, Sir P	Clitherow, Dr. R.	Dugdale, Maj. Sir T. (Richmond)
Berry, H.	Cobb, F. A.	Dumpleton, C. W.
Beswick, F,	Collick, P.	Durbin, E. F. M
Bevan, Rt. Hon. A (Ebbw Vale)	Collindridge, F.	Dye, S.
Bing, G. H. C.	Colman, Miss G. M.	Eccles, D. M.
Binns, J.	Comyns, Dr. L.	Ede, Rt. Hon. J. C.
Blackburn, A. R	Conant, Maj. R. J. E.	Edwards, A. (Middlesbrough, E.)

Blenkinsop, A.	Cooper-Key, E. M.	Edwards, John (Blackburn)
Edwards, N. (Caerphilly)	Joynson-Hicks, Hon. L. W.	Pearart, Capt. T. F.
Edwards, W. J. (Whitechapel)	Keeling, E. H.	Polo, Brig. G. H. M.
Elliot, Rt. Hon. Waller	Keenan, W.	Pickthorn, K.
Evans, E. (Lowestoft)	Kerr, Sir J. Graham	Pitman, I. J.
Evans, John (Ogmore)	Key, C. W.	Ponsonby, Col. C. E.
Evans, S. N. (Wednesbury)	King, E. M.	Pool., Major Cecil (Lichfield)
Ewart, R.	Kinghorn, Sqn.-Ldr. E.	Poole, O. B. S. (Oswestry)
Farthing, W. J.	Kingsmill, Lt.-Col. W. H.	Popplewell, E.
Field, Capt. W. J.	Kinley, J.	Porter, E. (Warrington)
Fletcher, E. G. M. (Islington, E.)	Kirby, B. V.	Porter, G. (Leeds)
Fletcher, W. (Bury)	Lambert, Hon. G.	Price, M. Philips
Foot, M. M.	Lancaster, Col. C. G.	Prior-Palmer, Brig. O
Fox, Sir G.	Lawson, Rt. Hon. J. J.	Procter, W. T
Fraser, Sir I. (Lonsdale)	Lee, F. (Hulme)	Purseley, Cmdr. H
Fraser, T (Hamilton)	Lee, Miss J. (Cannock)	Raikes H. V.
Freeman, Maj. J. (Watford).	Legge-Bourke, Maj. E. A. H.	Ramsay, Maj. S
Freeman, Peter (Newport)	Lennox-Boyd, A. T.	Ranger, J.
Fyfe, Rt. Han. Sir D. P. M.	Leonard, W.	Rayner, Brig. R.
Gage, C	Leslie, J. R.	Reed, Sir S. (Aylesbury)
Gaitskell, H. T. N	Levy, B. W.	Reid, T. (Swindon)
Gammans, L. D.	Lewis, T. (Southampton)	Renton, D.
Gibbins, J.	Lindgren, G. S.	Rhodes, H.
Gilzean, A.	Lindsay, K. M. (Comb'd Eng. Univ.	Robens, A.
Glanville, J. E (Consett)	Linstead, H. N.	Robinson, Wing-Comdr. Roland
Glyn, Sir R.	Lipson, D. L.	Rogers, G. H. R
Gomme-Duncan, Col. A. G.	Lipton, Lt.-Col. M.	Ropner, Col. L.
Gooch, E. G.	Lloyd, Maj. Guy (Renfrew, E.)	Ross, Sir R. D. (Londonderry)
Gordon-Walker, P. C.	Logan, D. G.	Ross, William (Kilmarnock)
Graham-Little, Sir E.	Low, Brig. A. R. W	Saltar, Rt. Hon. Sir J. A.
Greenwood, Rt. Hon. A. (Wakefield)	Lucas, Major Sir J.	Sanderson, Sir F.
Greenwood, A W. J. (Heywood)	Lucas-Tooth, Sir H.	Savory, Prof. D. L.
Gridley, Sir A.	Lyne, A. W.	Scott, Lord W.
Griffiths, D. (Rother Valley)	McAllister, G.	Scott-Elliot, W.
Griffiths, Rt. Hon. J. (Llanelly)	MacAndrew, Col. Sir C.	Shackleton, Wing-Cdr. E. A. A.
Grimston, R. V.	Macdonald, Sir P. (I. of Wight)	Sharp, Granville
Guest, Dr. L. Haden	Mack, J. D.	Shawcross, C. N. (Widnes)
Gunter, R. J	McKay, J. (Wallsend)	Shawcross, Rt. Hn. Sir H. (St. Helens)
Guy, W. H.	McKie, J. H. (Galloway)	Shephard, S. (Newark)
Haire, John E. (Wycombe)	Maclay, Hon. J. S.	Shinwell, Rt. Hon. E.
Hale, Leslie	McLeavy, F.	Silkin, Rt. Hon. L.
Hall, W. G	Macmillan, Rt. Hon. Harold (Bromley)	Simmons, C. J.
Hamilton, Lieut.-Col. R.	McNeil, Rt. Hon. H.	Skeffington, A. M.
Hannon, Sir P. (Moseley)	Macpherson, Maj. N. (Dumfries)	Skeffington-Lodge, T. C
Hardman, D. R	Macpherson, T. (Remford)	Smith, E. P. (Ashford)
Hardy, E. A.	Mainwaring, W. H.	Smith, H. N. (Nottingham, S.)
Hare, Hon. J. H. (Woodbridge)	Maitland, Comdr. J. W.	Smithers, Sir W.
Harris, H. Wilson	Mallalieu, J. P. W.	Snow, Capt. J. W.
Harrison, J.	Manning, C. (Camberwell, N.)	Soskice, Maj. Sir F.

Harvey, Air-Comdre. A. V.	Manningham-Buller, R. E.	Sparks, J. A.
Hastings, Dr. Somerville	Marlowe, A. A. H.	Spence, H. R.
Haughton, S. G.	Marquand, H. A.	Stanley, Rt. Hon. O.
Haworth, J.	Marsden, Capt. A.	Steele, T.
Head, Brig. A. H.	Marshall, D. (Bodmin)	Stewart, J. Henderson (Fife, E.)
Headlam, Lieut.-Col. Rt. Hon. Sir C.	Marshall, F. (Brightside)	Stewart, Michael (Fulham, E.)
Henderson, A. (Kingswinford)	Maude, J. C.	Stoddart-Scott, Col. M.
Herbert, Sir A P.	Medland, H. M.	Strachey, J.
Hicks, G.	Medlicott, F.	Strauss, H. G. (English Universities)
Hinchingbrooke, Viscount	Mellish, R. J.	Strauss, G. R. (Lambeth, N.)
Hobson, C R.	Mellor, Sir J.	Stroll, Dr. B.
Hogg, Hon. Q	Mitchison, G. R.	Stuart, Rt. Hon. J. (Moray)
Hollis, M. C.	Molson, A. H. E..	Studholme, H. G.
Holman, P.	Montague, F.	Summerskill, Dr. Edith
Holmes, H E. (Hemsworth)	Moody, A. S.	Sutcliffe, H.
Holmes, Sir J Stanley (Harwich)	Morgan, Dr. H. B.	Swingler, S.
Hope, Lord J	Mott-Radclyffe, Maj. C. E.	Taylor, Vice-Adm. E. A. (Pdd't'n, S.)
Hoy, J.	Moyle, A.	Taylor, Dr. S. (Barnet)
Hubbard, T.	Nayler, T. E	Teeling, William
Hudson, Rt. Hon. R. S. (Southport)	Neal, H. (Claycross)	Thomas, I. O. (Wrekin)
Hughes, Hector (Aberdeen, N.)	Neven-Spence, Sir B.	Thomas, J. P. L. (Hereford)
Hughes, H. D. (W'lverh'pton, W.)	Nicholls, H. R. (Stratford)	Thomson, Rt. Hn. G R. (Ed'b'gh, E)
Hulbert, Wing-Cdr. N J	Nicholson, G.	Thornycroft, G. E, P. (Monmouth)
Hurd, A.	Noble, Comdr. A. H. P.	Thornycroft, Harry (Clayton)
Hutchison, Lt -Cm. Clark (E'b'rgh W.)	Noel-Baker, Rt. Hon. P. J. (Darby)	Thornton-Kemsley, C. N.
Hutchison, Col. J. R. (Glastaw, C.)	Noel-Buxton, Lady	Thorp, Lt.-Col. R. A. F.
Hynd, H. (Hackney, C.)	Nutting, Anthony	Thurtle, E.
Hynd, J. B. (Attercliffe)	O'Brien, T.	Titterington, M. F.
Irving, W. J.	Oldfield, W. H.	Tolley, L.
Isaacs, Rt. Hon. G. A.	Oliver, G. H.	Tomlinson, Rt. Hon. G.
Janner, B.	O'Neill, Rt. Hon. Sir H.	Touche, G. C
Jay, D. P. T.	Paget, R. T.	Turner-Samuels, M.
Jeger, G. (Winchester)	Paling, Rt. Hon. Wilfred (Wentworth)	Ungoed-Thomas, L.
Jones, Rt. Hon. A C. (Shipley)	Palmar, A. M. F.	Vane, W. M. F.
Jones, D. T. (Hartlepoons)	Pargiter, G. A.	Walker-Smith, D.
Jonas, J. H. (Bolton)	Parker, J.	Wallace, G. D. (Chislehurst)
Jones, P. Asterley (Hitchin)	Parkin, B. T.	Warbey, W. N.
Ward, Hon. G. R.	Wigg, Col. G. E.	Wilson, J. H.
Watson, W. M.	Wilcock, Group-Capt. C. A. B	Winterton, Rt. Hon. Earl
Weitzman, D.	Wilkes, L.	Wise, Major F. J.
Wells, W. T. (Walsall)	Willey, F. T. (Sunderland)	Woodburn, A
West, D. G.	Williams, C. (Torquay)	Wyatt, W.
Westwood, Rt. Hon. J.	Williams, J. L. (Kelvingrove)	York, C.
Wheatley, Colonel M. J.	Williams, Rt. Hon. T. (Don Valley)	Young, Sir A. S. L. (Partick)
White, C. F. (Derbyshire, W.)	Williams, Rt. Hon. H. U.	Young, Sir R. (Newton)
While, Sir D. (Fareham)	Willis, E.	Younger, Hon. Kenneth

1964
1965

White, H. (Derbyshire, N.E.)
Whiteley, Rt. Hon. W

Willoughby de Eresby, Lord
Wilmet, Rt. Hon. J.

TELLERS FOR THE AYES.
Mr. R. J. Taylor and Mr. Pearson.

NOES.

Allighan, Garry
Anderson, A. (Motherwell)
Ayles, W. H.
Barstow, P. G.
Batlley, J. R.
Bowen, R.
Braddock, T. (Mitcham)
Brown, T. J. (Ince)
Burden, T. W.
Butler, H. W. (Hackney, S.)
Byers, Frank
Carmichael, James
Cooks, F. S.
Collins, V. J.
Cooper, Wing-Comdr. G.
Corlett, Dr. J.
Cove, W. G.
Dagger, G.
Davies, Clement (Montgomery)
Davies, R. J. (Westhoughton)
Forman, J. C.
Foster, W. (Wigan)
Ganley, Mrs. C. S.
George, Maj. Rt. Hn. G. Lloyd
(P'ke)
George, Lady M. Lloyd (Anglesey)
Goodrich, H. E.
Granville, E. (Eye)
Grenfell, D. R.
Grierson, E.
Gruffydd, Prof. W. J

Herbison, Miss M.
Hudson, J. H. (Eating, W.)
John, W.
Kendall, W. D.
Kenyon, C.
Lang, G.
Longden, F.
McGhee, H. G.
McGovern, J.
Mann, Mrs. J.
Messer, F.
Mikardo, Ian.
Millington, Wing-Comdr. E. R.
Monslow, W.
Morley, R.
Morris, P. (Swansea, W.)
Morris, Hopkin (Carmarthen)
Murray, J. D.
Nally, W.
Nichol, Mrs. M. E. (Bradford, N.)
Paton, Mrs. F. (Rushcliffe)
Paton, J. (Norwich)
Piratin, P.
Platts-Mills, J. F. F.
Price-White, Lt.-Col. D
Randall, H. E.
Rankin, J.
Richards R.
Ridealgh, Mrs. M.
Roberts, Emrys (Merioneth)

Roberts, Goronwy (Caernarvonshire)
Royle, C.
Sargood, R.
Scollan, T.
Silverman, J. (Erdington)
Silverman, S. S. (Nelson)
Smith, C. (Colchester)
Solley, L. J.
Sorensen, R. W.
Stephen, C.
Stokes, R. R.
Thomas, D. E. (Aberdare)
Thomas, George (Cardiff)
Tiffany, S.
Timmons, J.
Usborne, Henry
Vernon, Maj. W. F.
Viant, S. P.
Wadsworth, G.
Watkins, T. E.
Wells, P. L. (Faversham)
Williams, D. J. (Neath)
Williams, W. R (Heston)
Yates, V. F.
Zilliacus, K.

TELLERS FOR THE NOES
Mr. S. O. Davis and
Mrs. Manning.

Question put, and agreed to.

Bill committed to a Committee of the Whole House for Tuesday, 15th April.

§

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