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NATIONAL SERVICE BILL

HC Deb 22 May 1947 vol 437 cc2535-619

2535

Order for Third Reading read.

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3.45 P.m.

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Mr. Sydney Silverman (Nelson and Colne) I wish to obtain your guidance, Mr. Deputy-Speaker, on a point of Order. I say at once, I do not raise it in order to make any kind of complaint; indeed, there can be none. Two days ago, when we were all under the impression—the Leader of the House having so announced—that the Report stage of the Bill would take two days, and that the Third Reading would take place immediately after, and on the same day as the conclusion of the Report stage, I, in the names of myself, my hon. Friend the Member for Penistone (Mr. McGhee) and my hon. Friend the Member for West Ealing (Mr. J. Hudson), sought to hand in to the Table a Motion for the rejection of the Bill. 2536

I was informed—I make no complaint of it; the Table was, as is usual, quite right—that the Motion could not be accepted because the prior stage had not been concluded; that as that prior stage would not be concluded until the same day as the Third Reading there would be no opportunity to put it on the Order Paper, and that, in those circumstances, the proper thing to do was to move the Motion when the Third Reading was moved, without notice, except, as a matter of courtesy, to let Mr. Speaker know our intention. I, therefore, wrote to Mr. Speaker at that stage and notified him that that was our intention. It happens—and no one could have foreseen it—that the Report stage concluded last night, so there was only a very short opportunity to put down the Motion. The point I am raising is that I did have actual priority, and that only a technicality which nobody could have foreseen 2537 prevented the Motion appearing on the Order Paper. In those circumstances, I ask what I am to do.

Mr. Deputy-Speaker (Major Milner) It does not seem to me that the hon. Member is prejudiced, except that he has not put his name on the Order Paper. If it is necessary, I give him that assurance. §

3.47 p.m.

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The Minister of Defence (Mr. A. V. Alexander) I beg to move, "That the Bill be now §

read the Third time."

We have had a very long and interesting, and at times late, Debate during the passage of this important Bill through the Committee and Report stages. I do not think the Opposition would say that any Bill in previous history had been subjected to more searching scrutiny and helpful comment, if I may put it in that way, than this Bill during the Committee and Report stages. I am bound to say, that as a result of the use of the usual Parliamentary procedure a great many changes of an administrative character have been made in the Bill which undoubtedly improve it and will, I think, help not only to assist in its administrative working, but also, in the long run, in the efficiency of our progress towards the attainment of our general object. For that I am obliged to the House.

It is true that there have been a few Amendments which were very much desired by some hon. Members, but which we felt we could not accept. That was not always because we were of an entirely different opinion with regard to the desirability of the objective of particular Amendments. It was largely because—in respect of a Bill which will not commence operation until 1st January, 1949, and having regard to the work that has to be done by the Services between now and then, and the different conditions they will have to meet—we desired some latitude. I think, perhaps not in every case, but in most of the cases where Amendments were rejected, they referred to matters in respect of which we shall be required to lay regulations before the House in due course, when hon. Members will have an opportunity to make what comments they wish to make upon them.

Of course, I recognise that there is one major change in the substance of the Bill, 2538 made during Committee, on which there was a very hot Debate, namely, the reduction of the full-time period for which the National Service men can be called up from 18 months to 12 months. We were subjected to considerable criticism on this change from two main points of view. One was that we had come to a most hasty decision, and that, therefore, the timing of the announcement was altogether wrong. The second was that it would seriously interfere with what is desirable and what had been intended in regard to the efficiency attained during the training period. Another comment made, was that we had been subjected to undue political pressure by a minority. On that, let me say, without wishing in any way to give offence, that we have been, in the course of the Committee and Report stages, also subjected to a good deal of Parliamentary pressure. We have seen no reason at all why we should not meet that pressure from all parts of the House—very often for concessions, as we have done. And if, in fact, there had been no other reason for our changing the period from 18 months to 12 months except what was said in the House, we still should have had a measure of justification. Or else what is Parliament for? However, I do not want to make this particular case tonight; I tried to make it in dealing with the Amendment itself in Committee.

I feel that the great majority of the people of this country are behind us in supporting the objective of a Bill for national service in the circumstances in which we have submitted the case to the House. It is highly desirable in that connection that we should have the fullest possible co-operation and support from all quarters of the country in making the Measure really and truly successful. With regard to the reduction from 18 months to 12 months there

were other views besides those expressed in the House of Commons with regard to the change in the period. I have refreshed my memory I did not use this point the other day at the time of our heated discussion, because I did not think it would help the situation then, but I put this now as an indication of other views. Take a newspaper with a very wide circulation in the Conservative sphere, the "Daily Express." In its leader of 2nd April, whilst drawing our attention to the need wherever possible to save manpower, it said: "The nation is unconvinced that its young men's careers must be interrupted for as long as 18 months, if Britain is to maintain efficient fighting forces. The break is too long. It is bad for the boy, and bad for the nation." And when we did, following the usual Parliamentary procedure, put the Amendment down on the Order Paper, they said, on Saturday, 5th April: "Now, is this decision on conscription in the good list or the bad? Definitely the good. Praise the Government for its Easter gift. Man-starved industry will welcome it. So will the lads who are carving out careers, and the parents who nurture and advise them." Moreover, I think if we look at the columns of a paper of a quite different character we shall see that the change is also approved in a paper like the "Economist."

I had opportunities also of taking soundings with industrial leaders as to the position. I found them all very willing to help in any manner required of them—I want to make that clear—in regard to national service. But they expressed the view to me that it would be very much better for industry if it could be on the basis of a 12 months' period. I shall, therefore, now confine myself to saying that the reduced period is in the Bill which is submitted to the House for Third Reading and that as I have already promised, we shall do our best to make the training provided in 12 months as intensive and efficient as possible. It means, of course, as I said when moving the Amendment, that we shall have to rely upon regular troops for manning the more remote stations that we have to garrison. We shall be able to use only part of the time of those called up under the [National Service Bill](#) at home, or in the very near stations like those in the German theatre. Therefore, we must do everything in our power in the meantime to improve and to speed up recruitment for the Regular Army in order to meet those commitments. I can also say, because it was mentioned several times in Committee, that it is incumbent upon us to make the best use of the machinery of the manpower committees set up for each of the three Services to avoid all possible waste in the Forces as they are at present constituted.

I do not wish in moving the Third Reading of the Bill to seek to hide from the House or the nation the great importance of the effect of this Bill upon our national life. We are bound to recognise how important that is. After all, the Bill imposes national service, not as in 1939 on the eve of war, but for a substantial period after the end of the war. It will mean that we shall call up regularly about 200,000 men from their normal life for 12 months training in each year of the operation of the Bill. We will train these men for 12 months, not for a shorter period of six months as under the Act of 1939. The Bill imposes a further liability upon those who are called up, for reserve training for a further period of six years. It must involve, therefore, substantial adjustments in the life of the individual and of the family, and necessary adjustments in industry. Apart from the whole-time training for which it provides, it provides also for a large scale reserve to be maintained.

We have always indicated to the House that one of the main reasons for the introduction of the Measure is that it will indicate to all concerned, and all who observe, that we intend to defend ourselves at all times, against aggression and to be ready to support the United Nations organisation in the collective measures which it takes in the same direction in the interests of peace. As I said on the Second Reading our main objective is to prevent war. That remains, and must remain the objective for this party for which I speak, and this Government for which I speak. We shall bend ourselves unceasingly to that task. But I ask the House and I ask the country, now that we have come to this stage of the consideration of this Measure, and with the undertakings that I have given, to give us their whole-hearted co-operation, recognising that the objective of the Government at the moment is not to launch the country into a permanent system of conscription. We are meeting the situation in the terms of the Bill for a five years period, but the Act comes to an end at the end of that time unless there is an actual vote—an affirmative vote—of the House of Commons.

Mr. Rhys Davies (Westhoughton) It can be extended, as well.

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Mr. Alexander It will be entirely in the hands of the House of Commons. I want the House to be assured that it is not the idea to place permanently for all time upon this House and upon the country, the principle of conscription, but to meet the situation now; the House can revise it when the time comes.

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Mr. Blackburn (Birmingham, King's Norton) Will the right hon. Gentleman be good enough to go a little further, and say whether, if and when it is possible in the future to find by voluntary recruitment the number of recruits needed, it will be the Government's policy to bring conscription to an end?

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Mr. Alexander We shall have to look at the position as it arises. I do not want to be misunderstood on this matter at all. The thing that counts much more with me in such circumstances is what is to be the state of the world, and how far we can progress, as we all want to do, with the United Nations organisation and general measures for peace. We have to examine any system of service from a number of angles, but one of the most important is what would be the basis of the reserves which could be built up under a voluntary system, in the circumstances through which we might be passing at a particular time.

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4.0 P.m.

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Mr. Clement Davies (Montgomery) I beg to move, to leave out "now," and, at the end of

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the Question, to add "upon this day six months."

I opposed the Second Reading of this Bill; I opposed it on the Committee stage, and I oppose it now, because it introduces into the system of this country during a time of peace, a constitutional change in our mode of living to which we are opposed. We opposed, as I say, on the Second Reading; we are even more strongly opposed to the Third Reading, and, if I wanted any arguments beyond those which I desire to advance myself, I should find them in the speech which the right hon. Gentleman has just made, and in the contradiction between the statement which he made in reply to a question, very rightly put by my hon. Friend opposite, and the statement made by the Chancellor of the Exchequer when this matter was first discussed in this House.

The Bill brings about, as the right hon. Gentleman himself admitted, one of the greatest constitutional changes ever brought about in our life in this country. It is of the very first magnitude. I have never known a constitutional change, of this magnitude, 2542 introduced with such a meagre amount of fact. So few statements have been provided upon which it could be justified. Certainly, no such change has ever been brought into this House, without the public of this country being first consulted. I am certain that the bulk of the supporters of the Government, when they were seeking the suffrages of the people in 1945, never suggested for a moment that they would be parties to this great constitutional step of introducing conscription into our lives in normal times of peace. But the right hon. Gentleman is justifying himself, not by appealing to the public, but by appealing to one who has, hitherto, never been regarded, I should imagine, as one of the supporters of the right hon. Gentleman. He has appealed to Lord Beaverbrook and his papers. As far as the right hon. Gentleman is concerned apparently this is a matter which can be decided by the "Daily Express" or "Sunday Express," and by consultation with a few industrial leaders; and, if they are in favour of it, we can change the whole of our Constitution. We, however, prefer to submit these matters in the usual way to the democracy of this country, to ask them what they think, and to be guided by them.

There are three views about conscription, two of them wrong, in my opinion, and one of them right. There is the view that conscription is right, whatever be the circumstances, whether there is a national emergency or not—the view that it would be a good thing, at all times, to introduce it into our national life, so that all young men should be given a course of training in the Services. That view I consider to be absolutely wrong. Equally wrong, I think are those, whose views I respect, who seem to think that in no circumstances would conscription be right, even if we were in danger and there was a threat of war. My view, and the view of my colleagues, is that, if there is a national emergency, and a threat to all that we hold sacred, our traditions, customs and mode of life, we should all rally to the defence of our country and our ideals. That is why, during the Second Reading Debate, I asked three questions of the right hon. Gentleman, to which I did not get replies. I will ask them again, and I hope that the Minister of Labour, who, I understand, is to reply to the Debate, 2543 will give us definite answers to them.

My first question is: If this Bill is necessary, it must be because there are certain

commitments of which the Government are aware, and which can only be met by a Measure of this kind. That being so, may I ask what are these commitments? We are entitled to know them. This is a democratic country, and the people themselves are responsible for the Government they elect, and for the acts of that Government. They will be called upon to defend their country in time of danger, and, therefore, they are entitled to know what are the facts about our commitments, or what may be the dangers which compelled the Government to bring in such a Measure. I ask again that we should be given that information here and now. It is extraordinary that, after the greatest war in history, when so many sacrifices have been incurred and millions of lives have been lost, this Government, somehow or other, seem to think that there is some danger which compels us to maintain, not merely a voluntary Army, but a conscript Army, in time of peace. What are those reasons?

Secondly, why is it that these commitments cannot be met by the voluntary system? Hitherto, we have met all our commitments. We have been policing the whole world. That burden was being undertaken by us, not merely in the Far East, but in India, Egypt and other places which we are hopeful, today, will be capable of defending themselves and undertaking their own responsibilities without calling upon extra assistance from us. In the past, we were capable of taking care of all those people with our voluntary Army and Navy. America is just realising the great debt that she, and I think, the world, owes to this country for policing the world for the space of at least 150 years. Why cannot the commitments on which we are now entering, be met by the voluntary system?

My third question is this: If our commitments cannot be met by the voluntary system, how can they be met by the conscription of 200,000 young men for a period of 12 months? What is there about that system which makes such a world of difference in enabling us to carry out these commitments? I agree that there are certain arguments in favour of conscription. It is a systematic method of raising our Forces. Those responsible for the Forces will 2544 know where they stand; their task will be easier, and they will not have to make any effort to find recruits. There will be no need for material improvement in wages or amenities, or in conditions of service. All these things will be easier under conscription than under the voluntary system, for there will be no need to compete with industry. In some respects, again, the conscription system is cheaper, because there is no need to compete with industry. There will be no need to pay the men the kind of wage which they would get if they worked in industry instead of joining the Services.

Apart from the question of personal Liberty, however, let us consider the disadvantages—the dislocation to which the right hon. Gentleman referred in his speech in the life of each individual, and the dislocation in the life of a young man of 18. According to the right hon. Gentleman, in a statement on Second Reading or during the Committee stage, many of the men could not be trained in this country and would have to be sent to Germany. Does the right hon. Gentleman realise that parents in this country view with a great deal of alarm the sending of these young men into Germany, with a great deal of free time on their hands and running very considerable risks that may affect their whole lives hereafter? The right hon. Gentleman has consulted great industrialists. Does he realise their position; and does he

know if they are prepared to take these young men from 16 to 18 years of age? Is it not much more likely that among these young men after they leave school and until they are called up, there will be a great deal of unemployment, of that they may go into "dead-end" jobs, which cannot but have a deleterious effect on their mentality and outlook?

Further, how can the present method, under the Bill as it now stands lead to any real economy in manpower? We are going to keep these young men in training for 12 months. Some people take longer to learn a thing than others; it may take 12 months to teach one boy something that another may learn in six. The pace will have to be the pace of the slowest. Much more serious than that is the use we shall be making of our Regular Army. Instead of training themselves to be fit and efficient, a great deal of their time, and a 2545 great number of them, will be required to train these young people, who are only called up for 12 months. I cannot see that there will be much economy in manpower, and certainly it does not seem to be a very strong argument in regard to making efficient the Regular Army on which, after all, we shall have to depend. Although I have said that it is cheaper in certain respects, it seems to me that it is uneconomical. Quite apart from the individual, it will be uneconomical and expensive in other directions, because it will be necessary not only to enrol and clothe, equip and feed, and administer these 200,000 men and to do so every year; it will mean the demobilisation of 200,000 every year, which will be an additional expense. I am amazed at the attitude of H.M. Government. The right hon. Gentleman said that this Bill was for only five years, with powers in this House to renew it from year to year.

Mr. S. Silverman No. §

Mr. Davies With power, then, by Order in Council to renew it from year to year. §

Mr. S. Silverman Not year to year. §

Mr. Davies Well, with power to renew it. Can there be any reason other than that it is the intention of those responsible for the introduction of this Bill to make this a permanent feature? Can there be any doubt that if right hon. and hon. Gentlemen above the Gangway get back into power again they will welcome this power? [HON. MEMBERS: "And they want it."] May I remind the right hon. Gentleman of the words used by the Chancellor of the Exchequer when this subject was first debated in the House. In answer to an interruption by an hon. Lady behind him, he said, "It is the principle for which we stand." It is the principle that we are fighting. What we are fighting for is the principle of individual liberty, but His Majesty's Government today have committed themselves to the principle that they will use direction of these young people. What is more, the Chancellor, when again challenged about §

the use of the word "permanent," said that it was a difficult word to define. He did not reject it; he rode away by saying that it was difficult to define.

I repeat that there is not the slightest doubt in my mind, and I am sure that there is 2546 not the slightest doubt in the minds of many people, that the intention is to render this a permanent feature of our national life, for the first time in our long history. We do not know what are our commitments today. I wonder if the right hon. Gentleman knows what they are. He certainly said he did not know what they were likely to be in 1949; nor does he know now what will be the size of the Army required in 1949. I could have understood it if the Government had contented themselves with saying, "We have conscription to the end of 1048; times are not yet normal, so let us continue on a wartime footing for another 12 months, and see where we are," instead of coming here today and asking that it should be a permanent feature. They have failed completely to prove that the required number cannot be raised by a voluntary system. Time and time again, one has heard this interruption from the other side: "Of course you can get the numbers in the Services. Why do you have large numbers of unemployed?" What did that mean? That the Services were offering better terms than industry; that industry was not absorbing them. Industry was refusing to take them, industry was driving them on to the dole, and the Services were offering them more and offering them a better life. Does any hon. or right hon. Gentleman today challenge it that if every young man were given an opportunity of saying, "This is what industry can offer me in wages, amenities, conditions and pensions; what the Services can offer me will be better," we would get them? We have never failed to get them in the past. We are introducing this proposal today because the Treasury think it cheaper to have this system, rather than compete with what industry will be able to offer.

What is the position? The position, as far as I can make out, is this: The Government propose to reduce the numbers from 1,087,000 in March, 1948, to some 700,000 in March, 1949. Both the right hon. Gentlemen concerned have admitted that the most they can get in any year under the conscript system will be 200,000. That means that if they require in the Services 700,000, they will have to attract 500,000 by the voluntary system. They will be attracting 500,000 by the voluntary system, and they will have to fall back on 2547 conscription to find the other 200,000. That seems to me to be nonsense and a farce. There are only two ways in which we can get our men for the Services.

One is the direction of men, the use of compulsion; the other is by proper wages and conditions. The Minister, and those supporting him, have said publicly that they are in favour of making conditions better for everyone, of bringing about social justice, of seeing that proper wages and amenities are provided. Instead of pursuing that policy, the Government, in this Bill, have said, "We will abandon it with regard to those aged 18, and use compulsion instead." The Government have failed to prove the need for this Bill; they have failed to prove that what they have set out to do, will be done effectively by this Bill; they have failed to provide that, given proper terms, they will not get young men by the voluntary system.

Finally, there is, in the Bill, a very great danger. There is left in it the power to the Executive, the Government of the day, to direct labour. There cannot be any doubt about that. This

matter is not to be decided by this House; the definitions have not been left for the House. It has been left to the Government of the day to decide what sections or classes of labour will be exempted from military service. The Government have sought to exempt miners and agricultural workers. Suppose that between now and 1954, there are enough miners or agricultural workers, but a shortage of workers in other industries. The Government of the day might then say, "We will make an order exempting that particular industry, or class, from military service." That, in effect, means the direction of labour. What then becomes of the statement issued by the Prime Minister, in his preface to a White Paper, that this Government would never stand for the direction of labour? That statement was made solemnly to the public in February. Yet, in this Bill, the Government are going back on their word, and taking power to direct labour wherever they desire to direct it. For those reasons, we would like to see this Bill rejected.

4.22 p.m.

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Mr. Ayles (Southall) I very much regret having to oppose the Third Reading of this Bill. §
 For nearly half a century I, and thousands of others, have been doing a great deal of 2548
 pioneer work, at great personal sacrifice, to establish this Government in power. During the whole of that time our party has been opposed to compulsory military service, and I consider that the best service I can render to my party is to support it when it is right, and faithful to its old principles, and oppose it when it is wrong, and goes back on them. It has been said in previous Debates that our party was opposed to conscription up to 1939. I say, without hesitation, that we were opposed to conscription up to the General Election. In the much-quoted document, "Let us Face the Future," on which we fought the. Election, it will be found that the Labour Party stands for freedom of worship, of speech, and of the Press. It states that the Labour Party will see that those freedoms are kept and enlarged, so that we can enjoy again the personal and civil liberties we sacrificed to win the war—

Mr. Beverley Baxter (Wood Green) Is that why the Government set up an inquiry into §
 the Press?

Mr. Ayles By no stretch of imagination does anyone think that what was said in that §
 pamphlet did not include freedom from industrial and military conscription. My fundamental objection to this Bill is that conscription assumes that the State is God, with power of life and death, not only over the bodies and minds of its citizens, but over their souls as well. That is the Nazi doctrine of the State God. It is not the Christian doctrine, nor is it a democratic doctrine. I believe that man owes loyalty to the State, but I believe that he owes a higher loyalty to God. That is what is meant by freedom of religion and worship, in the Atlantic Charter. Unless we are free to worship God with a clear conscience it is futile to talk of freedom. Very often, loyalty to God and loyalty to the State coincide, but where there is a

clash, the greater loyalty should hold. No one can decide that loyalty for the individual. It is his own responsibility. For the State to do so, is for the State to usurp the prerogative of God. Every day this House sits we acknowledge that. Every Sitting of this House opens with Prayers. Those Prayers are an acknowledgment, not of an inferior, but of a higher authority even than this Parliament, or this Government. 2549

Under this Bill, the State is to be supreme. The State is to determine what is right or wrong in the most fundamental of human relationships. It assumes that if the State says it is right to kill, then it is right, even although we know that that may mean death to innocent women and children in Japan. If the State says that the war is a righteous war, then it is a righteous war, whether it is in South Africa, Europe, Asia, or elsewhere. The individual has no say in the matter at all, although God holds him, and not the State, responsible for his conduct. I affirm my belief in the sanctity of the human personality. Some of my hon. Friends believe that they are justified in taking human life in certain circumstances. They divide wars into two kinds—right and wrong. But the conscript has no choice.

Mr. Deputy-Speaker The hon. Gentleman should confine himself to what is in the Bill. §

Mr. Ayles With due respect, Mr. Deputy-Speaker, this Bill seeks to conscript men, to train them for war, and to take part in war. It destroys their powers of choice on whether they will take part in a war. The gravamen of our charge against the Government is that this Bill destroys a choice which members of the Government have claimed in the past, in regard to wars that have been waged during our own life time. I suggest, in all seriousness, that the State takes our freedom of choice away from us as soon as this Bill becomes law. It is the State that says what is right and what is wrong, what a man shall do and what he shall not do. It is not only the State, but the Government which happens to be in power at the time which assumes to itself the prerogatives of the State, and not necessarily of the people. We condemn that principle as applied to Germany and Russia, but capitulate to it in Great Britain. It is because conscription is the fundamental denial of our religious freedoms, based on the freedoms for which our forefathers went to the stake, that I wish to put forward, against it, my strongest opposition. §

There are other reasons why I am opposed to this Bill. There is the reason that it is a thoroughly undemocratic Bill; there is the reason that it would mean economic disaster; there is the reason that it would mean the weakening of our trade unions. There are dozens of other reasons for opposing this Bill. But above all is the reason that it is a denial that God is the paramount factor in the life of the individual, that God comes before the State and where the State and God clash, it is our duty to God which must prevail. 2550

4.31 p.m. §

Lieut.-Colonel Sir Cuthbert Headlam (Newcastle-upon-Tyne, North) ; We have heard §
 an eloquent and conscientious speech from the hon. Member for Southall (Mr. Ayles), and I
 for one do not intend to quarrel with him in what he said. He is perfectly entitled to his
 opinions, which, no doubt, he sincerely holds, but I would venture to suggest to him that it is
 not the Government which decides peace and war in this country; it is Parliament, and
 Parliament represents the country. If Parliament decides we ought to go to war for reasons
 which justify us doing so Parliament speaks for the country, and I am one of those who hold
 that it is the duty of the country to follow Parliament.

We have had long Debates on this Bill and those who have listened to them throughout its
 stages will agree that they show that all parties in the House dislike the idea of conscription
 in times of peace. That is perfectly consistent with the tradition of this country. We have
 always been opposed to conscription, because conscription is supposed to be an
 infringement of the right of the individual, but the real reason why the people of this country
 have been opposed in the past to military service is not because it infringes the right of the
 individual but because the maintenance of a standing Army in time of peace was considered
 to be a threat to the civil liberties of the country. The Army was a weapon in the hands of
 the King to be used against Parliament, though, oddly enough, this fear of military rule really
 dated from the days of Oliver Cromwell.

I was rather surprised, therefore, to hear the right hon. and learned Gentleman who leads
 one section of the Liberal Party make a speech in favour of a regular standing Army rather
 than the kind of Army that we get under conscription. It is perfectly clear that the liberties of
 the subject are far less likely to be at- tacked by any would-be dictator of this 2551
 country, if that Army is a national Army and not a regular Army paid for its services. I for
 one personally have always believed in a system of national service, that is to say, a national
 Army, and I believe that a conscript Army would be more careful of the liberties of the
 country than a standing Army, which would be a force entirely under the charge and control
 of the Government of the day.

Mr. Emrys Roberts (Merioneth) Subject to the Army Acts. §

Sir C. Headlam I quite agree, but it Parliament is controlled by a Government that is in §
 complete power I do not suppose the Army Acts or any other Acts would stand in the way of
 a dictatorship. I think that this should be clear to anyone who thinks about this matter
 seriously. A large majority of this House were in favour of this Bill as originally introduced by
 the Government. There can be no doubt about that judging by the figures in the Division on
 the Second Reading. There was only a small minority, including one section of the Liberal
 Party and certain people who are opposed to militarism of any kind, namely, the pacifists,
 who were opposed to the Government's proposals. The House accepted the assurances that
 were made by the Government, and, after all, the Government are best qualified to make

those assurances.

Mr. S. Silverman Which assurances?

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Sir C. Headlam If the hon. Gentleman will wait perhaps he will hear. The Government §
 assured us that it was impossible to raise adequate forces by other means than by
 conscription, and that conditions throughout the world were such that they were not
 prepared to be responsible for the defence of this country unless they had sufficient forces
 behind them. In view of those commitments and the dangers which prevail throughout the
 world at the present time, it was necessary therefore in their opinion to adopt conscription in
 order to provide for our national defence until such time as we could depend upon the United
 Nations organisation for the preservation of peace throughout the globe. The object of this
 Bill and of those of us who support it, is not to make war; it is to prevent war. The House
 understood most assuredly when the Bill was introduced that it was for the purpose of 2552
 maintaining peace that the Government presented it.

Of course there was a minority in the House who opposed the Bill. I have already alluded to
 them, and we have had two speeches from them this afternoon, which indicated the reasons
 for their objection. There is the pacifist who looks upon any form of war from the moral point
 of view; no one can argue with people who base their objections on morality alone. How the
 public as a whole is viewing this Bill it is difficult to say. I do not know what has been the
 experience of other hon. Members. but I have had fewer letters of protest against this Bill
 than I have had against any other Bill of similar importance. The charges which are levelled
 against this Bill in whatever correspondence I have had on it are three in number. The first is
 that conscription is a symbol of totalitarianism and against the whole moral traditions of the
 Labour Party. I do not know what the tradition of the Labour Party about military service is.
 All I do remember is that when the Labour Party was in opposition, and utterly irresponsible,
 it took very little interest whatever with regard to military preparedness. I notice with great
 satisfaction that the Prime Minister in a public speech not so very long ago, advised his
 followers that as they were now in office, and were in charge of the country, those
 irresponsible gestures against defence organisation which he and they delighted in in the
 past, could not now be indulged in. My correspondents objections also refer to conscription
 as "a symbol of totalitarianism." What exactly does that mean? Conscription and national
 armies, the levée en masse, date from the French Revolution, which can scarcely be
 described as a totalitarian movement in the sense in which the word is used now.

Mr. W. J. Brown (Rugby) It dates from the days of the French reaction.

§

Sir C. Headlam It dates from the early days of the French Revolution, the days of Danton, Carnot and the battle of Valmy. Another of the arguments against the Bill which I have received is that immense conscript armies provoke fears between nations and can only lead to insecurity and war. That may be, but we are faced with the fact that we have had to fight two wars with a small regular army and untrained reserves against vast armies in other countries—

Mr. Stephen (Glasgow, Camlachie) And we won.

Sir C. Headlam I will come to that in a moment. As a result of not having national service we have had to fight two long wars, beginning them at a great disadvantage. Those who served in that 1914–18 war are not likely to forget the unpreparedness with which we started that war and what it cost us. I have always been a supporter of conscription because I believe it to be the only fair and democratic way to proceed with regard to defence, and my views were intensely strengthened when I saw for the first time what it meant to send unprepared troops into battle.

No one who was at the battle of Loos is ever likely to forget what he saw there or to take the view that it is right and proper that men should be called to the Colours in a great burst of patriotic enthusiasm and then sent into battle unprepared or only partially prepared for war. That is why it is perfectly absurd for us in this House or for any body of persons to try to differentiate between conscription after war has been declared and conscription in time of peace. It is, in my opinion, wholly wrong to send gallant untrained volunteers to meet the enemy and take the consequences; it is the duty of the country to see that the Armed Forces are trained for war.

Mr. Gallacher (Fife, West) Is it not the case that if we had had conscription before 1914, with the men trained as they were being trained then, they would have been quite unprepared for the type of war that developed in 1914?

Sir C. Headlam No. I should have thought that it might be obvious even to the hon. Member that a man who has been trained and prepared for any form of work is more likely to be successful in that work than a man who has not been trained. That was most clearly demonstrated at the beginning of the 1914–18 war, and again at the beginning of the recent war. If training was necessary in those wars, when the work of the ordinary soldier was comparatively simple, how much more necessary must it be now that his duties have become so much more difficult? Another objection to conscription that has been urged is that it will mean a waste of manpower and would prevent economic recovery. That

argument has been advanced during the course of these discussions, but it amounts to very little because it is perfectly clear that once you have settled on a system of military service, however short or long the period, the country will adapt itself to that system. It must do so. Everybody will be in the same position and the difficulties envisaged by those who put forward the objection have been faced in the past by other countries and have been surmounted. I have, therefore, come to the conclusion that the feelings of the people of this country are rather like this. Nobody wants conscription; everybody would rather be without it. I have never discussed the subject of conscription with any Frenchman without his telling me that he disliked the idea of it intensely before he began his service, that it was not so bad as he expected, and that he was very glad he had done it. I believe that when it comes to the point that will be the view of nine out of ten young men in this country who are asked to do national service

To come to the particular point which I wish to urge now—the change which the Government made in the Bill during the Committee stage—I think that reducing the period of training from 18 months to 12 months, was one of the greatest mistakes that could possibly have been made. I should myself, if I had been in charge of this Bill, have fixed a period of two years' military service, because I do not believe it is possible to train a good soldier, and certainly not a sailor, in a shorter period. I believe that two years is the right length of time. Eighteen months was a compromise. When the period is reduced to 12 months it becomes almost a farce so far as training is concerned. I have had an interesting experience, which I expect has been shared by other hon. Members, in that I have had several letters from soldiers abroad begging me to vote for the 18 months period rather than, for 12 months for the simple reason that, as they say, "For the first four or five months in the Army we do not know what we are doing at all. When the period is reduced to 12 months it leaves us with only six or seven months at the most in which to learn our trade, and that is 2555 impossible." However, that remains for the Government to look into when the time comes, and if this Bill becomes law I shall be agreeably surprised if the period of 12 months is found sufficient.

It must be giving those in authority at the War Office an immense amount of trouble trying to change suddenly from 18 months to 12 months. No wonder the Minister in charge of the Bill could give us no assurances in the Debate last night as to the length of the period of tapering off of service. The chaos at the War Office must be almost unbelievable, and I cannot understand how any Minister can have had the face to come down to this House and make so important a change in the Bill without a feeling of shame and humiliation. In fact, I cannot imagine how he could continue to remain in office. He assured us on the Second Reading, that the period of service had been settled by the Cabinet and the military authorities after the most careful consideration of all the problems that had to be faced, and a few hours afterwards—because of a revolt in his own Party and because, as he told us this afternoon, the "Daily Express" held a contrary opinion—he comes back to the House and absolutely eats his own words. I cannot imagine how such a Minister can be tolerated any longer.

Mr. McGovern (Glasgow, Shettleston) Does not the hon. and gallant Member remember another revolt which took place in this House, when Parliament declared for equal pay for men and women, and the then Prime Minister came down and compelled the majority to eat their words, and go back into the Lobbies and vote the other way? §

Sir C. Headlam I was not in the House at that time but I do not think the cases were similar. [AN HON. MEMBER: "That was the other way round."] In any case, the hon. Member's intervention did not seem to me to be relevant. It is seldom that I express my opinions of Ministers very strongly in this House, but I could not refrain from saying what I thought about the action of the right hon. Gentleman the Minister of Defence in this case. §

4.39 P.m. §

Mr. Sydney Silverman (Nelson and Collie) I think that for many Members of this House this is a melancholy occasion, and I regret very much to notice that at such a momentous time, there is not a representative of any of the Services on the Government Front Bench. It is true that there is a Cabinet Minister present who, let me say, has been almost invariably present throughout these discussions, and I regard it as symbolical that it should be my right hon. Friend the Minister of Labour. I think that the House was entitled to expect that the Minister of Defence, who moved the Third Reading, might at least have stayed with us for a little time, to hear what the House thought; also that the representatives of the Services who had been clamouring for this reversal of Socialist policy should also be here in order to hear what the House thinks of it. § 2556

Before coming to the particular view which leads me to speak and vote against the Government on this occasion, I think we are entitled to ask that the Government shall clear up certain ambiguities. I can understand the argument in favour of compulsion as a principle, and I can understand the argument against the principle of compulsion as such. I want to know from the Government—and I think the country is entitled to know and the Labour Party are entitled to know—whether they have now come down in favour of the principle of compulsion for military service. I ask that because they speak with different voices. My hon. Friend the Member for East Coventry (Mr. Crossman), in a speech remarkable as it was unexpected and unconvincing, contended for the principle. I concede the point at once, that there has always been a section of Socialist opinion in favour of the principle of relative conscription. They have been quite consistent and rational, and there is a case to be made out for their point of view. They point to Socialist parties on the Continent; they point to France and to other countries. They say that since this is an onerous, an unpleasant but a necessary job, the fairest way for a Socialist Government to deal with it is to let everyone come in—let everyone be trained, and let everyone do his share. They have never seen anything wrong with that; they thought it the true Socialist view. They have pleaded for a citizen Army, and for the democratisation of the Army. They contend it is in

every way right, that we should be able to call upon everyone to share the burden of national defence. But they have been a minority. 2557

The great majority of the Labour movement has always held that that view, however plausible, however rational, and however convincing to some, is mistaken. They have said it is mistaken for a variety of reasons, many of which have already been given from both sides of the House. They have said it most insistently, because they have never been able to see—and I confess I cannot see it at this moment—how, logically, you can distinguish between compulsion for military service, and compulsion for any other national service. There is no rational ground on which you can distinguish the principle of the one from the principle of the other. Distinctions are suggested, and they are real distinctions; they are not, however, distinctions of principle but of degree of emphasis. There can be no distinction between compelling people to go into the Army because national defence is necessary, and because the Army is a distasteful occupation, and compelling people to go into the mines, because coal is necessary, and mining is a distasteful occupation. The majority of the Labour movement have always felt that, since these two principles cannot be divided in that way, and since the logical implication of compelling people to serve in the Army is the right of the State to direct people in other directions—certainly in their industrial life—in so far as the nation depends upon it, then we must oppose the principle.

Sir Arthur Salter (Oxford University) Is there not sometimes a difference of degree so great that it becomes a difference in kind? Is there not such a difference between compulsion for a period of 12 months, and the kind of compulsion which would last throughout a man's working life? §

Mr. Silverman That may be so, but the obligation imposed upon a man under this Bill is an obligation which lasts throughout his working life. The right hon. Gentleman does not suppose that this is an obligation which ends at the end of the 12 months' service, or when a man has done his 60 days over the five years. The obligation lasts so long as the man is fit, and provided there is a necessity for his service by declaration of war, or if invasion takes place. It is a lifelong obligation just as much as anything else. 2558

Sir A. Salter Then the hon. Member is against conscription not only in peace but in war? §

Mr. Silverman I have not said so. §

Sir A. Salter Why not? §

Mr. Silverman I am perfectly ready to deal with questions and to give way as often as § Members like, but at the moment I was not presuming to defend the principle. I was merely saying that whereas there has always been a minority of Socialists in favour of military conscription, the great majority have rejected it for the reasons which I gave and which I for my part share. I cannot see at this moment, when the whole fate of the great creative industrial revolution upon which we are engaged is in jeopardy for the want of 600,000 men, how my right hon. Friends on the Front Bench or any member of the party in favour of military conscription can possibly be against industrial conscription. I know that we are all against it, but how can you argue that there is no logical or rational right to impose direction of labour in industry when the whole economic system is in danger of crashing for the want of it, if you commit yourself to military conscription in order to meet commitments which are not our commitments now, and an eventuality which may never arise, in order to satisfy some speculative demand, in some remote and distant future, under conditions we cannot foresee? Let me warn my right hon. Friends that that is the case right hon. Gentlemen opposite will put against us, if ever they get the opportunity, if ever the sides are reversed, and if ever they feel it is necessary because of the national interest; and the national interest in peace is just as important in the minds of most people as the national interest in war. If ever they are in power, and they feel that their purposes cannot be served without industrial direction of labour, they will bring in industrial direction of labour, and my right hon. Friends will not be able to resist them because they have sold the pass today by this Bill.

Therefore, we are entitled to know whether the Chancellor of the Exchequer was right when he declared that we are in favour of military conscription because the principle is 2559 right, quite apart from the local accidental circumstances, or whether the Minister of Defence was right when he said this afternoon that we are not imposing military conscription permanently but only to meet an immediate urgency. Surely the Cabinet ought to speak with one voice in a matter of this kind? We heard them on the Committee stage speaking with about six voices, but that was understandable, that was when they were dealing, in the early hours of the morning, with the detailed machinery of this important constitutional Measure, in circumstances when they ought not to have been called upon to deal with it, and in a rushed and hasty procedure the necessity for which I have never been able to understand. I can understand that Ministers taken unawares about the interpretation of a detail of machinery may differ among themselves and then resolve their differences when different circumstances enable them to consult, investigate and inquire. But I cannot understand why two leading Members of the inner Cabinet should speak with different voices about the principle of a Measure of this kind.

Let us suppose that he who speaks last speaks with the greater authority, and since the Minister of Defence spoke last, let us suppose that he represents the true mind of the Government on this matter. If we are to accept that, it means that this is not a permanent Measure. It is not going to be renewed if—but, Mr. Deputy-Speaker, if what?

Mr. Blackburn If they can get them by voluntary recruitment.

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Mr. S. Silverman If they can get them in by voluntary recruitment? My hon. Friend, who always speaks with the voice of the Cabinet in these matters, probably knows, so let me accept it from him that what the Defence Minister meant to say was, "if we can get them by voluntary recruitment." But how do you get people by voluntary recruitment when you have a conscription Bill in force? You get all you want by compulsion, do you not? There is no scope for voluntary recruitment. How are you to test your voluntary machinery under a conscription law? Therefore it follows that that condition, which my hon. Friend said is the real thing the Government have in mind—I am prepared to take it from him—can never be satisfied while you have a conscription Act on the Statute Book, because nobody will ever know. 2560

Mr. Blackburn If my hon. Friend will forgive me—it is always necessary for anybody, in business or in politics, to take a reasonable estimate, and the Government would be perfectly capable, at a certain stage when our troops can be reduced to a particular figure, of saying that on a reasonable estimate they could get that figure by voluntary recruitment.

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Mr. Silverman My hon. Friend is now changing his ground. He is no longer saying that it depends on whether you can get them by voluntary enlistment; he is now saying that it depends on how many you want. That is quite another matter, and when it comes to a Government estimate of what they are going to need, how long they are going to need it, and whether they can get it by voluntary enlistment, well, we have had a lot of estimates during the last few weeks, and they have not always stood by them. Why should we have any more confidence in a Government statement that it needs a period of 12 months when they told us only a day or two before that it inevitably needed 18, and it turned out that it did not at all? §

What change of circumstances was it which the Defence Minister himself said might induce the Government not to ask the House to extend the principle of this Bill beyond 1954? He said: "if the world was in a more settled state." That is a very exact and precise yardstick, is it not? When, in our lifetime, is the world likely to be in so settled a state that we shall not need armies? What is the cause, what is the nature of the unsettled state as it now exists, which compels us to have this Measure temporarily? Is there going to be a war between now and 1954, and if so, with whom? With Germany? Or are we to take sides and say as the American State Department says that the task of our foreign policy is to checkmate Communism? So far as we are concerned in this country and in this party, and the Government and the Foreign Secretary have said so, our commitments in international affairs are limited by the United Nations Charter and by nothing else.

Mr. Beverley Baxter Rubbish.

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2561

Mr. Silverman The hon. Gentleman is perfectly entitled to say that the United Nations Charter is rubbish if he so believes, but it happens to be the only hope of the world. In the opinion of almost everybody in the world, it is the only hope of the world—it may be a forlorn hope, I do not know, but forlorn hope or not, there is no other. So far as this side is concerned, apart from the absolute pacifists who will take no violent action of any kind in any circumstances, the rest of us are prepared to take all the violent action that our obligations under the United Nations Charter involve. I am certain of that, but I have read the United Nations Charter and most of the publications about it, and I can find nothing in it about combating Communism, nothing at all. I am no Communist—I suppose there is not a Member of this House who would be unhappier under a Communist regime than I should be—I think I may claim that—but it seems to me that if we are planning either our foreign commitments or our defence policy on the notion that some time or other we may get ourselves involved in some kind of conflict of that kind, there is not a man or woman in this country who voted for the Labour Government in 1945 who would not vote against it next time.

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Mr. Baxter The interjection I made had to compete against some incoherent muttering by the leaders of the Liberal Party. I only want to say that nearly all my friends and myself believe profoundly in the necessity of the United Nations organisation, but we believe that in its early days we must not lay too much stress upon it and we must bring to it the strength that we did not bring to the League of Nations.

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Mr. Silverman I am aware of that; it is an understandable' and defensible view. It is exactly the view that the hon. Gentleman's party took about the League of Nations—"It will do all right some other time, but do not let us lay too much stress upon it." That is how they killed the League of Nations. and that is how they will kill the United Nations if they have their way.

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Mr. Baxter It was you who killed it.

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Mr. Silverman Our view here is that the United Nations Charter offers us our only hope, and we will do everything that the United Nations Charter demands and nothing else

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Mr. Nigel Birch (Flint) On a point of Order. Is the United Nations Charter in this Bill? §

Mr. Deputy-Speaker (Mr. Hubert Beaumont) The United Nations Charter is certainly §
not in the Bill, but I gathered that the hon. Member was using it as an illustration.

Mr. Silverman I do not want to be too long about it, but I hoped I was dealing quite §
strictly and quite closely with the argument put forward in defence of the Third Reading by
the Minister of Defence, when he was saying that he would not continue this principle of
conscription if conditions changed, if the world became more settled, and when he said
"settled" he was referring to our policy in international affairs. I cannot agree with my hon.
Friend the Member for East Coventry, who said on the Second Reading, that those were
entirely separate things—the defence policy, and policy in international affairs. It seems to
me that he was talking—I apologise for saying it in his absence, and I apologise in any case
for using harsh language—quite patent and utter nonsense, and indefensible nonsense,
particularly coming from him. Of course, it is incompatible with our defence policy. We know
—or at least, we can find out—what the obligations under the United Nations are. They
provide that there shall be an investigation into the question of what each nation shall
provide towards the Forces that are necessary. No inquiry or attempt has yet been made to
limit our obligations in that way. When we look at each of the limiting conditions which the
Minister of Defence put forward as laying down what would render unnecessary the
continuation of the principle of conscription, we find something which goes on for ever.
Therefore, whether he likes it or not, and whether he accepts the principle, or whether he
defends it, not on the merits of the case but because of circumstances which are undefined,
what we are faced with here is permanent conscription being fastened on to the life of our
country.

I come to my last point. I believe that this country, under the present Government, is called
upon at this moment of history to do one all-important task, which the logic of history has
placed upon our shoulders. We on this side of the House do not believe that the world 2563
can endure without communal control and planning of our economic affairs. We do not
believe that the old economic anarchy can produce anything but poverty and war, such as it
has always produced. We believe that if there is to be any hope of salvation for the world it
can be only along the lines of complete planning and control of our economic resources.
There are others who believe that, but we believe something else to be equally essential. We
believe that we must learn to fashion and create, somehow, a new social and economic
technique which will enable us to have our economic control and planning without sacrifice of
our political and civil liberties. If we can make that idea work, if we can forge adequate
instruments for it in our own country and make it succeed here, we believe there is no limit
to the importance of that achievement and that it will expand beyond these shores. What we
can do, others will try to do, and if we can do it, others can do it too.

I say that the whole world is looking to this country under this Government with an anxiety which must be almost unbearable, to see whether we can make it work or not. We spent three days discussing a White Paper on economics which said that we might still be able to do it and that the thing which endangered our position was the want of 600,000 men. We spent another day discussing the manpower allocation and how we could make the best use of our limited and inadequate labour power. What are we proposing to do, after that? We propose to take out of industry every year 200,000 men for 12 months and to take them away for 21 days in any one year for a period of five years. The historical task which we are called upon to do is put in very great danger in order that we shall provide a few hundred thousand boys at the age of 18 to do 12 months' training. What kind of training will they get in 12 months? What are we to get in return for that sacrifice of manpower?

I say that the Government are embarking upon this vast undertaking in a thoroughly irrelevant and irresponsible way. Conscription at this time is an irrelevance, and the Government have embarked upon it only because they have allowed themselves to be intimidated by some kind of force from outside. They cannot believe in it in their 2564 hearts. They cannot believe that it is right. I know that the Third Reading will be carried, that the Bill will go through in another place and will be put on the Statute Book. I can only hope that between now and 1949, there will be plenty of time for second thoughts, and that this Measure, if it becomes an Act, will be a dead letter.

5.18 p.m. §

Brigadier Prior - Palmer (Worthing) We have listened to several emotional speeches § from both sides of the House. I have been 27 years in His Majesty's service and I am not going to be emotional when I speak. Therefore, I shall be unable to follow the oratorical flights of the hon. Member for Nelson and Colne (Mr. S. Silverman). I propose to get down a little nearer the earth, and I hope I shall be able to keep in Order in doing so. I believe there is still an opportunity in another place of improving the Bill, and I trust that it will not be overlooked.

When I consider the results that the Bill will have upon the Service to which I belong I can speak of them quite genuinely, and purely from the point of view of that Service, and for the good of the country as a whole. I say it straight away—and it is the only matter upon which I have ever found myself in agreement with the Leader of the Liberal Party—that I disagree with almost every word he has said. In the Army, the numbers could be obtained on a voluntary basis if the pay and conditions were adequate. That statement can be proved by figures of the Ministry of Labour which are now in the Library. Under the conditions of today, and in the state of the world, it is due to every man, woman and child in this country that we should never repeat what we saw in the two previous wars. I could ask hon. Members to go with me and I would show them graveyards which were the result of unpreparedness, and of nothing else. We do not wish a recurrence of those mistakes.

Mr. James Hudson (Ealing, West) It was the result of the policy that was followed. §

Brigadier Prior-Palmer That brings me to the main point I want to raise, which is the question of training these men in 12 months. I know, from practical experience of working 12 or 14 hours a day, seven days a week, that one cannot train a soldier for modern warfare in under 18 months. During the Debates on the Bill, there have been brought to light some further alarming aspects of the 12 months' training, and I think we ought to have a little more elucidation on some of these points. We have heard a great deal about the education of soldiers, higher education, further education, and so on, with which I am in full agreement and sympathy, but I implore hon. Members to look at this matter in a reasonable way. The object of the 12 months' training is to train the men as soldiers. They should have their education, but it must not swamp everything else, and the whole of their time should not be devoted to it. I heard it suggested that it should take four hours a day. If men are to be trained for only 12 months, if they are to get five or six hours' training a day, and if four of those hours are to be devoted to education, there might as well be no training at all. § 2565

After the 12 months' training, the men are to have only 10 days a year for six years to keep them up-to-date with modern equipment. They will then be expected immediately, at a moment's notice, to become members of formations, divisions and corps, and go to war. That is absolutely fantastic. It cannot and will not happen, and any hon. Member who pretends that it can is deluding the public and himself. We were told by the Minister of Defence, in Committee and again today, that large numbers of Regular soldiers will now have to serve further afield, and that the garrison in Germany will comprise a number of conscripts. I asked a question concerning this in Committee, and I received no answer; I put the question again. Are these men to carry out the duties of the Army of the Rhine, to guard dumps, factories, schools and D.P. camps. If so, they will do no training. Moreover, there will be nobody there to train them, because most of the Regular soldiers will be somewhere else. On top of all this, the Secretary of State for War, replying to one of the Amendments which I moved in Committee, said that the Regular Army are to be given over for two months in the year for the training of the Territorial Army. In that case, who will train the conscripts during those two months? It means that the training of the conscripts is now to be reduced to 10 months. The whole thing seems to make complete nonsense. We ought to have an explanation of it, and to know more about the details. § 2566

I cannot help feeling that the Minister of Defence will not understand what I am saying, because he has not been at the job long enough. He does not understand the Army. I believe, however, that some of my words may sink in, that some of the backroom boys may get "ticking" on these matters, and it is to the House, and to those men who have responsibility in these matters, that I address my remarks. There appears to be no plan whatever. The broad outline has been envisaged, but nobody has gone into the details to see how it will affect the individual in each case. Everybody to, whom I have spoken who knows

anything about the subject is completely in the dark. Nobody knows how this Bill will work, and nobody can see how it will be made to work. I implore the Minister of Defence to go into the matter more deeply, to use his own commonsense, to ask a few pertinent questions of his Chiefs of Staff, and make them trace one aspect of it to its logical conclusion, right down to the man-in-the-street. I would like the men to enjoy their 12 months' training. I know that many hon. Members opposite will not believe me when I say that one can enjoy Service training. The hon. Member for Nelson and Colne made a comparison between the pits and the Army. He used an adjective which has escaped my memory for the moment. I have never worked in a pit, but I would hardly suggest that work in a dark pit is comparable with serving in one of the finer regiments of His Majesty's Forces.

Mr. S. Silverman I did not draw any comparison. I was not comparing work in industry § or in the Services. I was comparing ideas, and I was saying that if one does not object to the principle of compelling people to do one onerous thing because the nation requires it, one cannot resist compelling people to do another onerous thing. The only adjective was "onerous."

Brigadier Prior-Palmer I think the hon. Member will see from HANSARD tomorrow that § the adjective was not "onerous," but was "disagreeable," which has an entirely different implication and meaning. If the training is to be telescoped, as the Minister of 2567 Defence said this afternoon, if the men are to be rushed through their training, they will get a sense of frustration, because there is nothing that a human being likes to do more than to do a thing well. These men will get the feeling, which I have seen men get when there are bad instructors and inadequate equipment, that they are not being given a square deal. They want to know how to work a wireless set and how to drive a tank at 25 miles an hour across country. There is a great deal of fun in that. These men are just like schoolboys, as we all are. They like playing with toys, and get a lot of fun out of it. But if they are to have their leave curtailed, if they are to be driven as hard as men were driven during the war to get their training, they will hate every minute of the 12 months' service. This matter is a very serious one which affects the youth of the whole of this nation.

I have some pretty horrifying details with regard to the work of the part-time service in the present set-up of the Territorial Army. That is a matter that needs looking into very carefully. Instructors are now being sent home. The finest instructors are coming out of the regiments, and coming home. What do they find? There is no accommodation. They cannot be put into Territorial accommodation because to do so would be against the regulations in the Army. They are staying at various clubs in London. They are away from their wives. I said to one of them the other day, "It is, at any rate, a little better than being abroad." He said, "Not at all. I could have my wife there, but I cannot have her here. I have not seen her for six months." Another formation that I know of happens to have the area not far from the House. It cannot train its armour in the the streets of London. There must be somewhere

else. A place was discovered which was perfect—an empty barracks, which nobody was using. It came to the point of being decided that they were to be given only four tanks for the unit, and there were no hard standings for them. An old riding school is found, which already had tarmac on it. A letter came six weeks later saying that they could not afford the concrete and therefore could not have the barracks. That went on before the war, and it will go on now, unless somebody's tail is twisted, and unless the details of this Bill are 2568
gone into a little more thoroughly.

I dislike this Bill because it is a half-hearted Measure. As it stands, I do not think it will do the Army or the country any good. It wants looking at again. I believe there is a chance for that in another place, and I hope the Government will take note of what has been said in this House and in our various discussions on the Committee and Report stages. At the moment, from the point of view of the conscript, the Bill is absolutely unworkable and impracticable.

5.31 p.m. §

Mr. Beverley Baxter On a point of Order, Mr. Deputy-Speaker. For over two hours this §
Debate has gone on without one Service Minister being on the Front Bench. In 12 years in this House I have never seen anything like this. I understand there is a reason for the Minister of Defence not being here, but I ask you, Mr. Deputy-Speaker, as a protest to accept a Motion for the Adjournment of the House, until such time as a Service Minister can appear on the Front Bench.

Mr. Deputy-Speaker I cannot accept that as a point of Order, nor accept a Motion for §
the Adjournment of the House. The question whether a Minister should be present or not is not one for the Chair.

Mr. W. J. Brown (Rugby) On a point of Order, Mr. Deputy-Speaker. Is it not an §
immemorial right of hon. Members of this House to move the Adjournment to draw attention to the fact that Ministers who ought to be present are not; and is it in Order to reject that Motion?

Mr. Deputy-Speaker It is quite correct and right for an hon. Member to move the §
Motion, but it is equally correct and right that the Chair should exercise its discretion.

Mr. Brown But is there any precedent for not accepting that Motion when not one of four §
Ministers who could be here is present?

Mr. Deputy-Speaker The hon. Member must not argue or question a decision of the Chair. I cannot accept the Motion. §

Mr. Baxter Further to my point of Order, Mr. Deputy-Speaker. Since you will not accept my Motion for the Adjournment of the House, is there any other method by which we can secure the presence of a Minister? Can you advise us on any other method to secure the attendance of a Minister of one Service on the Front Bench? 2569 §

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. William Whiteley) The Ministers will be here as soon as they are free from meetings in which they are engaged at present. There are two Ministers here who took a big part in this Bill. The Minister of Defence is at a very important meeting; the Secretary of State for War and the Secretary of State for Air are also in important meeting; at the moment. They have been told, and they will be here as soon as it is possible for them to do so. §

Mr. Baxter Would it not be possible— §

Mr. Deputy-Speaker We cannot have a Debate upon it. §

Mr. Baxter May I ask a question? §

Mr. Deputy-Speaker The hon. Member wishes to put another point of Order? §

Mr. Baxter Further to my point of Order. Since the Patronage Secretary has intervened, and made what is, no doubt, a very plausible explanation, can the House adjourn until the Ministers are available? §

Mr. Whiteley My statement was correct, not plausible. §

Mr. Deputy-Speaker We are now entering upon a Debate on a subject which is not debatable.

§

5.35 P.m.

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Mr. Cocks (Broxtowe) The hon. and gallant Member for Worthing (Brigadier Prior-Palmer) seems to dislike this Bill even more than I do, but, if he will forgive me for saying so, his speech, although very interesting, seemed to be rather more appropriate to the Committee stage of the Bill than to the Third Reading. I only say that in order to ask him to forgive me if I do not follow him on his points, which I would call points of Committee detail. I can assure him that I am always interested when hon. Members speak on a subject they know. When a Conscription Bill was first introduced into this House in May, 1939, the leaders of the Labour Party at that time complained that the Government of that day had given no facts or figures to show the need for that Measure, or to show that adequate forces would not be provided by the voluntary system. As a result of that complaint, 25 Members of the present Government voted against the **Conscription Bill** including the Prime Minister, the Leader of the House and, most important of all, the Chief Whip: Even after war was declared and the Labour Party accepted the **Conscription Bill**, two Members of the present Government voted against that Bill and the right hon. Member for Wakefield (Mr. A. Greenwood) said: "I am still an anti-conscriptionist at heart and I do not suppose that my attitude will ever change."—[OFFICIAL REPORT, 2nd September, 1939; Vol. 351, c. 224.]" But times do change. The clear mind becomes dim. Care corrupts the soul— "Change and decay in all around I see." and I have to turn for consolation to the honest face of my hon. Friend the Member for Westhoughton (Mr. Rhys Davies) and say to him: "Oh, thou who changest not, abide with me" It seems to me, however, rather ironic that people who opposed conscription when war threatened civilisation are now supporting it when all our enemies are scattered and no embattled host threatens the Channel ports or the fair fields of France—[Interruption.] I join in that applause. Still, a small band of people, holding fast to well-tried principles, are still raising the same question. Where are the figures; what are the facts in support of this change? What is the reason for this great departure from old-established British traditions in order to bring in this pale, watery imitation of the principles of Prussia which have engulfed the whole world in ruin? 2570

I listened carefully to the Minister of Defence in the various essays he has read to this House. I have a great affection for him, but it seems to me that his long association with the Silent Service has brought him to the conclusion that he must never, in any circumstances, give any information whatever in any of his speeches. In fact, he sometimes reminds me of an old mid-Victorian admiral of about 1850 who insisted on firing on every ship which flew either the French or the Spanish flag on the ground that they fought against us at Trafalgar. Or of Lord Raglan, our commander-in-chief in the Crimea, an old Waterloo veteran, who always called the enemy "the French" which was somewhat embarrassing to our gallant French allies. 2571

He and his military advisers seem to be thinking of the war before the last, when huge citizen armies were sent to their death on the banks of the Somme, or in the marshes of Passchendael. That is the view taken by the War Office to day, and by many distinguished people there. Some of their leaders are like someone who must be kept out of political discussion, they are on the side of the big battalions. They are never content with one man when ten will do. They want four volunteers for every potato. That is the reason why this Bill has been brought in.

All through history, the military mind has looked backwards. Generals prefer the kind of wars they fought themselves in their youth. Just after the first world war I remember old gentlemen who used to write letters to "The Times" extolling the virtues of cavalry, of l'arme blanche, the bright unsullied sword. The Polish Government took that view in the last war and in 24 hours they were defeated. It seems to me that this Bill, in these days of radar and rockets and atomic warfare, instead of producing the highly-trained and equipped scientific forces which the nation requires will simply produce an army of half-trained conscripts to fight the kind of war which will never occur. Of course, the usual spokesmen which the Government have put up have not put any case at all. But the Government are not relying for their defence upon the pieces of obsolescent artillery arrayed on the Treasury Bench, Ministers from the War Office and the Air Force and the Admiralty who sit by the side of the Minister of Defence and volley and blunder all the time. New weapons have been thrust into their hands by some of our bright intellectuals from the Forces and elsewhere who, I trust, will never deserve Kipling's description of "brittle intellectuals who break beneath the strain." They are rushing to the Government's defence, upholding the palsied arms of their purblind leaders in order to win a great victory for Jehovah with two badges on his biretta.

I am opposing this Bill because it is unwanted and unnecessary. I have always held 2572 the view that if we democratised the Forces, we would get all the volunteers the country needs. In the Army they are against democratisation because there are too many generals of the type represented by the general who walked into the War Office a short time ago and thought that because a certain Member of Parliament was not dressed in corduroys he must be a Conservative Member, and said to him "Do you think that any Member of this Government is able to read or write?" If I had been there I should have replied that I was not quite sure about our old Etonians but I was sure that any who had had a decent elementary education were quite literate. These are the people who want to maintain the services with the old officer class in control because very few conscripts after only 12 months' training will ever rise to commissioned rank or beyond the potato-peeling stage. This Bill is a surrender to the officer class and to obsolete ideas. In two years' time, it is going to create defence forces which will be out-moded, practically useless and class-controlled, and for those reasons I have no hesitation in voting against the Third Reading.

5.45 P.m.

§

Colonel Ponsonby (Sevenoaks) It is hard to follow the light-hearted ribaldry, redolent of midnight oil, of the hon. Member for Broxtowe (Mr. Cocks), who has brought laughter to the ranks of the conscientious objectors. §

Mr. S. Silverman The whole of this Bill is the result of burning midnight oil. §

Colonel Ponsonby I want to say a word or two as one of the old guard who is looking into the future. I am surrounded on this side of the House by a number of fighting brigadiers and colonels—[An HON. MEMBER: "Where are they?"]—They may have gone out temporarily. I wish to say a few words as an honorary colonel of cadets, and honorary colonel of a Territorial regiment. The cadets, as hon. Members are aware, are the best training material that we have. Any hon. Member who has had to do with cadets during the war must have been proud of the way they worked, the discipline they displayed, and the enthusiasm they showed. §

I am glad to see that the Secretary of State for War has come back at last. He did not accept a new Clause proposed by my hon. and gallant Friend the Member for Worthing (Brigadier Prior-Palmer) but I would like to remind hon. Members that the object of that Clause was that cadets should get some recognition when they have done their pre-service training, and are called up. I was very sorry that the only concession that the right hon. Gentleman made was that they should be let off two weeks of their primary training. Any hon. Member who has seen these boys, and known how well they work, will realise that it is very hard on them that they should only have this very small concession. I ask the right hon. Gentleman if he will consider remitting at least four weeks of their primary training, so that they can get on with their job, which they must know better than those who have received no training at all. Matters which were raised on the new Clause included questions of uniform and instructors. I hope these questions will be looked into. Nothing was said about grants to cadets. I know that many of the units have been supported by voluntary contributions, especially by contributions from officers. If this Force is going to be recognised, and is to be a really useful adjunct to the Territorial Army, it is absolutely essential that the grant should be increased, and I hope the right hon. Gentleman will say something about that if he replies to the Debate. The cadets are a corps d' élite, and I hope everything will be done to assist them. 2573

I wish now to say a word about the Territorial Army. I am honorary colonel of a unit which has not only served all over the world during the war, but has also shown its keenness in the future of the Territorial Army by already—before recruitment started—supplying 12 officers, including the colonel and second in command, to start the new unit. In order to encourage other counties. I would say that that is what was the 97th Kent Yeomanry Regiment, R.A. What is interesting is that they are doing this, notwithstanding the fact that instead of being field artillery they are to be a light anti-aircraft regiment in the future. I mention this because I want to encourage all other Territorial units to try to emulate my Kent unit.

But now, what is to happen? Let us, for a moment, look into the future. It was admitted, on Second Reading, that there will be two years of probation, two years while the Territorial Army was waiting to receive the National Service men when they come along. That 2574 will be a difficult task. The regiments will be cadres, which will not have a great deal to do, but I am perfectly certain that the spirit of good fellowship and friendship which has actuated them during the war, which exists in the Territorials, will enable them to keep going and to receive, I would almost say with open arms, the National Service men of their counties when they have done their year's training. What is the training to be? I have listened with dismay, but with perfect understanding, to what fighting brigadiers and colonels have said in this Debate about the 12 months' period. I do not wish to go back over all that discussion; I do not want to pile Pelion upon Ossa, or to heap coals of fire any more on the head of the right hon. Gentleman the Minister of Defence, and I will say nothing about commitments.

It will be a tremendous task for the Army, in one year, to train men sufficiently to take their place in the Territorial Army units. So far as I can see, it depends entirely on the Regular Army having the best possible officers and a perfect organisation. Up to the moment, we have heard nothing about how this 12 months' training is to be organised, or about how the Territorial Army is to function in the future. If this scheme is to work at all, I would impress upon the Secretary of State that all his plans must be carefully worked out so that, after the year's training, the young men are physically fit, are keen, enthusiastic and disciplined. If he can bring that to pass through his organisation, and if it is possible for those officers of the Regular Army to infuse into those young men the spirit and traditions of the Army, which have enabled it to win the last two wars, then there is hope for this country in the future.

5.54 P.m.

§

Colonel Wigg (Dudley) I hope the hon. and gallant Member for Sevenoaks Colonel Ponsonby) will forgive me if I do not follow him. I wish to say a word or two in reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Broxtowe (Mr. Cocks) who, with his usual charm and humorous irrelevance, has entertained the House for quite a while. I enjoy his speeches much more when he is talking upon a subject about which he knows more than he does about the 2575 Army. It is perfectly clear that whilst what he says about the Army may perhaps have been true at Waterloo or the Crimea, it is certainly not true of the modern Army. On the other hand, it is equally true that there is still a great deal to criticise about this Bill. Let me be frank. There is a great deal to criticise about the way in which this Bill has been handled in this House, although one must bear in mind that that is not necessarily a criticism of the Ministers responsible.

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This very important Measure, which affects every household in this country, has been subjected to rather more scrutiny than is given to most Bills which come before us. My hon. Friend the Member for Broxtowe was not only irrelevant but just a little illogical when he charged the Service Ministers and the right hon. Gentleman the Minister of Defence with

being wedded to a policy of no change, and then took to himself and to those who think like him a considerable measure of virtue in saying that what they said in 1939 is equally valid today, and that they can stand pat on that. The Minister of Defence and the other Service Ministers, indeed the Government as a whole, are faced with a completely changed situation. The Bill was not introduced, as was the Bill in 1939, as an emergency Measure, with a view to giving very short training for manning the anti-aircraft defences of London. The Government are faced with the problem that the Army is running down, and the country has to get sufficient Armed Forces to meet the current commitments. The only possible way to do that is by imposing a measure of conscription. The alternative is to give such conditions of pay and service to volunteers as would lead to the establishment of a military aristocracy. That would be the negation of democracy, and I am sure it is something which would repel my hon. Friend the Member for Broxtowe, and his friends.

A word must be said in defence of the Minister of Defence, and in doing so I also want to direct the attention of the House to what is a major criticism of the way in which this Bill has been handled. The Ministry of Defence is a very recent creation. Moreover, the Minister relies on the other three Service Departments for his information, and it is perfectly clear 2576 that, if there is a responsibility for lack of information to the House, and for a failure to adumbrate the scheme on which the Bill is based, it comes from the failure of the War Office to appreciate the rightful demands which the House would make before passing such an important Measure. That is not intended as a criticism of the Secretary of State for War. After all, he has held office for a very short time, and one has to recognise, in order to make comparisons, the War Office now, and as it was before the war. It must have cost the right hon. Gentleman the Member for Woodford (Mr. Churchill) a great deal of anxious concern several times during the war.

The House should remember that at one stage of the war the right hon. Gentleman the Member for Woodford took the unprecedented step of making the Permanent Secretary into a figure on the Front Bench in order to grapple with this extremely cumbersome administrative machine. If this scheme is to work, if we are to get the kind of Army we want, if we are to make use of our limited manpower resources, there must be major schemes of reconstruction inside the War Office. It is quite unfair to exploit the difficulties which which the Minister of Defence had to grapple. It diverts attention from what is in fact the major problem, the reconstruction of the War Office. A major difficulty in the shaping of this Bill arises—I am speaking of the days before this Government came into power—because the War Office were using conscription as an easy way out. I make that concession to those who do not agree with me in my support of the major principle contained in the Bill.

The result is that the War Office failed to appreciate the public relations point, that those who oppose and those who support conscription may require to be satisfied that the conscription is necessary. The failure to appreciate the need for information has persisted all through our deliberations, and has led many hon. Members to be less than fair to the right hon. Gentleman responsible for piloting the Bill through the House.

I am not at all happy about the Bill in its present state. I still do not understand what the

scheme of training will be and I am extremely unhappy about the state of the Army and its training capacity. Indeed, I would say that the Army today is anything but an effective force. I do not think that it would be overstraining the facts to say that it is little more at present than a number of men on the ration strength. It is very doubtful whether it can effectively train the young men it will receive, as the result of passing this Bill. One realises that at the end of a great war there must be a period during which re-organisation is being thought out, before it can be put into effect. There has been a longer gap at the end of this war than there was at the end of the 1914–18 war. I hope that the Secretary of State for War will not allow this Bill to be used as an excuse for the failure to introduce a great number of overdue reforms, particularly in the War Office. I think the Bill is a great deal better now than it was when first introduced and to those who still oppose it, I say they have not faced up to the major fact, that if we do not have conscription, then it means that we shall have no Army at all. 2577

6.2 p.m.

Mr. Kenneth Lindsay (Combined English Universities) Having listened to all the speeches this afternoon, I must say that from the intellectual point of view the Opposition have made a very much better case than the case made for the Government. In fact, with great respect of the hon. and gallant Member for Dudley (Colonel Wigg), I think perhaps it is better if those who are in favour of this Bill keep quiet. For that reason, I intend only to ask a few questions instead of going over the ground again. I would also remind my hon. and gallant Friend the Member for Dudley that he said that this Bill had received unusual scrutiny. I have only been in this House for 12 years but I can say that this Bill had the ordinary, normal scrutiny of an alert House of Commons. There is nothing abnormal about it at all. §

Colonel Wigg It was abnormal with the present Opposition. §

Mr. Lindsay It must be said in defence of the Government and the various Ministers—and I think this is the root of the matter—that it is about the most difficult thing in the world to introduce into this House, which is almost universally against conscription, a Bill, with a new Minister of Defence, when the whole tradition of this country is against the principle embodied in the Measure. Therefore, it has been extremely difficult for the Government spokesmen to put up, not only a case, but a united case. I have great respect for my right hon. Friend the Minister of Labour who sat here solemnly during our deliberations. From the industrial point of view, at any rate, he has tried to explain these very difficult questions. 2578

If the Bill is going to work it will need the most careful and human approach. Between now and 1949, when many things may happen, there must be very great changes in the three Services. As I understand it, a young man in 1949, will be able to go to the university at

varying ages between 17½ and 19½. He will go into the Service either at 17½, at 18 or 22. In other words, we shall have people entering the universities and the Services at very different ages. The hon. Member for Broxtowe (Mr. Cocks), in an enlivening speech, reminded us that probably modern wars would have more to do with radar and rockets. I beg the Minister of Labour to remember that already we are losing scientists, who are going into the Services after three or four years at the universities. We cannot afford to do it. The manpower needs of the country depend not only on the 600,000 men about whom the hon. Member for Nelson and Colne (Mr. S. Silverman) spoke. Heaven knows, they are important enough. Those needs also depend on professional and skilled men coming from the technical colleges and universities.

A very careful balance will have to be kept between the ages and needs of the Service and of industry if we are to achieve the right result. I rose to ask my right hon. Friend to keep this matter under very careful review during the next 18 months. The hon. Member for Cambridge University (Mr. Pickthorn) spoke yesterday about 90 per cent. from the Forces and 10 per cent. from the schools going to the universities. That is not so everywhere. The universities in the North, those at Birmingham, Manchester and Liverpool, have 20 and 30 per cent. according to faculties going into the universities straight from school now, and only 80 or 70 per cent. from the Services. Before long there will be 60 and possibly 50 per cent. It is extremely important that we should not think that the conditions of 1947 and 1948 are going to be reproduced when this Bill comes into force. 2579

I listened to the speech of the hon. and gallant Member for Worthing (Brigadier Prior-Palmer) and I have never heard a more damning indictment of a Bill. He practically condemned the training which it would be possible to do in 12 months. He said that it was impossible to give adequate training. I appreciate his angle of approach. From his point of view there was very little enthusiasm. In fact, only at the end of his speech did he say that there is something to be said for 12 months' training. Are we going into this year of National Service regarding it merely as a regrettable necessity? Are we going to make a revolution in the life of the youth of this country and end up this Debate on the Third Reading by saying either that this is a very regrettable thing or that there is not going to be enough training? Every single speech from both sides of the House has been on that note.

Brigadier Prior-Palmer I feel it would be far more hypocritical to get up and say that I thought 12 months was adequate, if I did not think so, but I think that it is better than nothing. §

Mr. Lindsay I should be the last to accuse the hon. and gallant Member of anything but a sincere desire to face the facts of the situation. That is what I am trying to reproduce from his speech. If this Bill leaves the House tonight with hon. Members in the mood and temper which so far has been shown, I do not think that we are asking the youth of this country in 18 months' time to face their commitments with any sense of unity. During the war it was a §

different thing. If there are no essential unities, but merely a two-party approach, as we have seen from this Debate, I think it will be a very poor advertisement for one of the most gigantic reforms ever introduced in this country.

6.10 p.m.

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Mr. Rankin (Glasgow, Tradeston) It has been my pleasure on many occasions to speed on a Measure to another place, after Third Reading, with the hope that it would have a smooth and speedy passage. I am sorry that on this occasion I can offer no such wish. I must join my voice to the general chorus of condemnation of the Bill which has come from this side of the House. It is rather remarkable that only one speech from this side has been delivered so far in support of this Bill on Third Reading, and I would say with all respect to the hon. Member who delivered it, that if this Measure can sustain the defence which he offered, it will certainly survive any-thing. I do not wish to repeat the general argument which has been launched against the Bill, but I suggest that in this Measure the Government is betraying fundamentally the pledge which it gave to the electorate in 1945. As a result of the war, human ways of living have divided themselves sharply into two big compartments. One way of living has been termed with fair accuracy the American way of life; the other, the totalitarian way of life.

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I think it was the hope of large masses of people in the world that this Government of ours, pledged as it was to a planned economy and believing, as most of its adherents do still, in a free society, would be able as a result of the power which it had been given to develop within a planned economy a free society. That was the problem which our Government was returned to solve. In introducing conscription, which involves not merely the military aspect of life but, as has been pointed out, our industrial way of life, it is evading the problem which it was set to solve; because conscription runs the danger of creating a potential which may result in a Fascist way of living. In compelling, as it will compel, large sections of our youth to enter into the Army, it is going to inculcate into them the Fascist way of life because the Army is basically Fascist in its structure. It embodies the principle of responsibility from the top downwards and obedience from the bottom upwards, and that is a dynamic principle in the Fascist system. No individual I have ever met believes that organisation within the Army is not as the poet described it: "Their's not to reason why," "Their's but to do and die." That is the problem which we are evading and in evading it or in failing to approach its solution, we are betraying the purpose for which we were returned.

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Mr. Baxter May I ask the hon. Gentleman a question?

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Mr. Rankin I am sorry but I cannot give way.

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Mr. Baxter rose—

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Mr. Deputy-Speaker If the hon. Gentleman who is speaking does not give way, another hon. Gentleman may not rise and speak.

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Mr. Rankin I have not the slightest desire to refuse to give way for the sake of the question, but I know that there are many hon. Members of both sides who are desirous of taking part in the Debate and I do not want to consume any more time than necessary. However, in view of the fact that I am being pressed, I will give way.

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Mr. Baxter Thank you very much. The hon. Gentleman is very gracious. I merely wanted to say—not so much for contradiction—in reference to the hon. Member's remarks about the Nazi tendency in Army life, is it not a fact that all of us in our contact with normal life find that men who come out of the Army are more civil, more broadminded and set an altogether better example than any of the men who have not served?

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Mr. Rankin That is a great tribute to the democratic upbringing those men had before they went into the Army, and the hon. Gentleman, in seeking to disrupt and destroy that democratic way of living, is creating the very danger he wants to evade.

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I wish now to look at two broad aspects of the Bill. It can be said by and large that the Bill takes charge of two aspects of life so far as our young people are concerned. First of all, it will take charge of the bodies of a large group of people, those who are going into the Army. I hope the Government will see that when they come under the scope of the Bill these young lads will be retained within this country during their training period. In view of their immaturity they should not be sent abroad in order to undergo the necessary training. I hope also that the difficulties of our shipping position in this respect will weigh with the Government. Further, I hope that the Minister of Labour will recollect the pledge he gave on Second Reading that the primary purpose of this Bill was as a measure of defence, and as that is its primary purpose these lads should be retained in this country, for they cannot defend the country if they are somewhere else.

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The second aspect is that of those who will not go into the Army, those who on conscience grounds will refuse their services. I hope that the tribunals as they function under this Measure will be the guardians of conscience and not the agents of the Government. I admit that conscience is a difficult thing to define and difficult to determine, but its existence is real. The history of the Christian Church proves that; the growth of the Labour Party proves

that also; and the Government Front Bench demonstrates the fact, because time and again it is so overflowing with conscience that there is little room for anything else on those seats.

These are three reasons why I hope that those in charge of this Bill will see that when it becomes an Act the guardianship of conscience will be a real and living thing. I say that because as things are at the moment that is not so. Men are still being prosecuted, and as my right hon. Friend knows, in spite of what we were assured at earlier stages of the Bill, we have men in prison today for conscience sake. We have two in Barlinnie Prison at this moment in Glasgow doing 12 months simply because they refuse to conform to the conscription Act at present in existence. That is wastage. I hope that that sort of thing is not to be continued under this present Measure, and that the tribunals will become places where the atmosphere will be changed, and where the hard legalistic outlook of some of their present members will be softened. There are members of tribunals today adjudicating on conscience, who, as a result of their long service in that capacity, are now due for complete exemption from any further service under this Bill. Their attitude to objectors in some cases is fundamentally wrong to begin with, and I hope that these things will be kept in mind when dealing with the future constitution of tribunals. But, whether or not these things are kept in mind, I want to say in conclusion, as I said at the beginning, that I shall go into the Division Lobby today to vote against the Third Reading of this Bill.

6.22 p.m.

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Mr. Manningham-Buller (Daventry) The hon. Member for Tradeston (Mr. Rankin) made it quite clear in the course of his speech that under no circumstances whatsoever was he prepared to pay any tribute at all to the Army I must say that I was surprised to hear him condemn the Army as a Fascist way of life. I should not have thought that he would have made that sort of observation with regard to an Army which contains so many from all walks of life who have been engaged so long in defeating Fascism. 2583

Mr. Rankin I do not think that the hon. and learned Gentleman has fairly interpreted what I said, I made no charge against the Army, but I said that its structure, based as it was on responsibility from the top downwards and obedience from the bottom upwards, was essentially a Fascist structure. §

Mr. Manningham-Buller It is true that the hon. Gentleman talked about the structure, but he also said other things which I think he will find when he looks at HANSARD tomorrow. I made a note of them at the time. I am glad to hear that what he said did not correctly express the thoughts in his mind, because he clearly represented that the going of these young men into the Army would mean that they would be trained in the Fascist way of life, and that they would be inculcated with Fascist doctrines. I consider that that is a monstrous §

reflection upon the Army.

However, I agreed with one thing which the hon. Gentleman said, and that was his observations on the speech made by the hon. and gallant Member for Dudley (Colonel Wigg) in defence of the Minister of Defence. If I was a Minister in His Majesty's present Government, which God forbid, I should indeed be nervous of my position if I suddenly found that the hon. and gallant Member for Dudley was leaping to my defence with the vigour he displayed this afternoon. Of course, I sympathise with the hon. and gallant Member for Dudley; it was only right that some hon. Member of the party opposite should seek to answer the amusing, but wholly mischievous, speech of the hon. Member for Broxtowe (Mr. Cocks), who said that generals looked back to the wars they had fought in when they were young, and whose observations with regard to the officer class made me think that he was more familiar with Roman history than with that of modern times.

Perhaps in a few hours' time—I do not know how long—we shall be drawing to the end 2584 of the long discussions which we have had upon this Bill. I hope it will not be thought out of place, and that I shall not be out of Order, if I begin by paying a tribute to the Minister of Labour and to his Parliamentary Secretary for their skill and courtesy, and for the reasonableness they have shown throughout the Debates. I am sorry that the Parliamentary Secretary—no doubt for good reason—is not present with us at this moment. I am also sorry that, during so much of the Debate, the Secretary of State for War and representatives of other Service Ministries have been absent, again, probably, for all I know, for good reason. But I wish that some representative of the War Office had been present to hear the extremely well reasoned and interesting speech made by my hon. and gallant Friend the Member for Worthing (Brigadier Prior-Palmer) a speech which, in my view, requires an answer, an answer that can only be given by the Secretary of State for War, or another Minister in the War Office.

Without qualifying for a seat on the Coal Board, I think, also, that I can, perhaps, pay one other tribute, and can congratulate the Government upon one thing. Contrary to their recent practice, they have not subjected this Measure to the Guillotine. I suppose that that, in some part, may be due to the fact that, although throughout the discussions on this Bill we have seen dissension among the party opposite, it still comes within the definition of "organised labour." But the result of our discussions has been, of course, that this House, though sitting long hours due to the Government, has given proper consideration to this Measure, to all its Clauses and their implications, and to the manner in which they will affect those coming within its scope. In that respect, this is a singular Bill. It is the only Measure so far taken this Session which has been given proper time for discussion, and that fact has lightened my task in speaking from this side of the House.

In moving the Third Reading, the right hon. Gentleman said, very properly, that a great many changes of an administrative character had been made in the course of our discussions which had improved the Bill. I think I am right in saying that nearly all those changes were made as a result of suggestions from this side of the House. I cannot compliment the right hon. Gentleman upon the major change introduced by himself. However, I can say 2585

with confidence and conviction that this is a far better Bill than it was on Second Reading, save in that one most important respect. No one, no matter on what Bench he may sit, or in what part of the House, can enjoy the placing of this burden on the youth of our country, and least of all, perhaps, those of us with sons whose lives are bound to be affected by it. We all wish that this Measure were not necessary. I am sorry that the right hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. C. Davies), who prides himself upon his consistency, should today have shown himself consistent in his misrepresentations and should again have accused the Conservative Party of being in favour of, and always advocating as part of their policy, conscription. I thought that he had been told on the Second Reading that it had never during the last 40 years formed part of our policy, and that he would have accepted that assurance.

Mr. C. Davies I would remind the hon. and learned Gentleman that, the right hon. and § gallant Member for North Newcastle-upon-Tyne (Sir C. Headlam) assured the House today that that was so.

Mr. Manningham-Buller I heard the speech made by my right hon. and gallant Friend, § who was only expressing his own view. I was saying, and I repeat it, that it has never in the last 40 years been part of the Conservative policy to advocate conscription. I am sorry that the right hon. and learned Gentleman should have persisted in that unnecessary representation, although, I agree, he was again consistent with what he said on Second Reading. As I say, we all wish that this Measure were not necessary. But those of us who regard it as necessary would be failing not only in our duty to the country, to our constituents, and to those who follow after us if, recognising the necessity, we fail to shoulder the responsibility. I believe, in spite of the voices we have heard in the House this afternoon, that there are few in the House or in the country who doubt the necessity for a Measure of this sort at this time. Those who accept the principle of National Service now, then have to go on to consider the next question, the period of service. It is in this most important respect that this Bill has not been improved in Committee, and, in view of 2586 the arguments so ably and convincingly presented by the Minister of Labour and the Minister of Defence on the Second Reading, we feel no confidence that 12 months is now the correct period.

I would like to remind the House of what was said by the Minister of Labour and the Minister of Defence on the Second Reading. The Minister of Labour said: "Whilst the period of 18 months may not be required for complete training it is required for service."—[OFFICIAL REPORT, 31st March, 1947; Vol. 435. c. 1679.] On the next day, the right hon. Gentleman the Minister of Defence, in a speech delivered with the utmost appearance of conviction, said: "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."—[OFFICIAL REPORT, 1st April, 1947: Vol. 435, c.

1964.]" Forty-eight hours later, he announced the Government's somersault. I do not want to go into the arguments that the right hon. Gentleman brought up during the Committee stage to justify that astonishing change of attitude. Today he has said that he consulted some leaders of industry. Was that during the 48 hours? Were the leaders of industry confined to leaders of the Co-operative societies? Was there a sudden change of view among leaders of industry?. I dare say that if he had put it to them, they would have said that so far as industry was concerned, conscription for six months would have been more beneficial than whole-time service for 12 months. Then he fell back upon leading articles in the "Daily Express." I am sure it is very interesting to know that the right hon. Gentleman attaches such weight to those articles, and hope he may gain considerable benefit from reading them in future. But I would ask him, in view of what has taken place, whether he did not perhaps read during those 48 hours the draft of that most interesting document, "Cards on the Table" which will, or may, have so much to do with our international commitments in the future.

One thing is clear, and that is, as I interpret his statements—and they are not so easy to interpret—that National Service men, though needed to help in meeting our overseas commitments, will not now be available for that purpose. The hon. Member for East 2587
Coventry (Mr. Crossman), maybe partly in view of what the right hon. Gentleman himself has said, assumed this change from 18 months to 12 months to be an indication of a reduction in our overseas commitments. The right hon. Gentleman told us: "We are not throwing overboard any overseas commitments. There is certainly no change in foreign policy. I said that the military changes which will be brought about by the change in period will certainly not be operative until 1950." Then he went on to add these significant words: "And ... we hope in that period that there will be an improvement in the position with regard to the overseas commitments we have had to undertake. We have taken a risk on that."—
[OFFICIAL REPORT, 7th May, 1947; Vol. 437. c. 550.]" There is one thing that no Minister of Defence and no Government of this country are entitled to do, in my opinion, and that is to take an unnecessary and unwarranted risk with regard to the safety and security of this country and its vital interests. However optimistic the right hon. Gentleman may be, he has no right to run that risk. He has shown his optimism as to the progress of this Bill to be misplaced. I fear that his optimism as to what may be done in 12 months' training may also be equally misplaced. We have experienced the result of the Minister of Fuel and Power taking a risk with regard to our coal supplies, but the present position of that Minister will appear enviable compared with that of the Minister of Defence if the risk that he is taking does not come off. With that large majority that supported him upon the Second Reading, the right hon. Gentleman had no right to take that risk.

Supposing there is no improvement in our overseas commitments, what then? Can we not be told, even now, what those commitments are, and what numbers they are likely to absorb? We have really no information on that point in the course of this Debate. Supposing our present overseas commitments, as far as they can be seen, are not reduced, what then? How is the gap to be filled? It is quite obvious from what the right hon. Gentleman has said that this Bill will not fill it. The recent speeches of the Secretary of State for Foreign 2588
Affairs do not give us any confidence that the risk will come off. I would remind the House

that he said that the issues which would have to be considered at the London Conference in November would have to come to a much more successful conclusion, and, if they did not, no one could prophecy the course the world would take. He described that conference as the most vital in the world's history, and, in ignorance of its outcome, in my view the Government cannot justify taking the risks involved in reducing the 18 months maximum ceiling to a ceiling of 12 months for whole-time service. I feel the right hon. Gentleman, in relation to his own Bill, has been guilty of some degree of sabotage. In consequence of that guilt, I am inclined to doubt whether this Bill will entirely fulfil its object. The aim of the Government is that we should obtain a regular force of minimum numbers and maximum efficiency, backed up by an efficient, well trained reserve and auxiliary forces. Will this Bill secure that?

Let me consider the position of the Regular Forces and, in particular, the Army. We are told that the more distant stations will now have to be manned by Regular troops. Those in this country and in Germany will obviously have to be engaged largely in training conscripts and, in addition, according to the Secretary of State for War, for two months in every year, the Regular Army is to drop its own particular training and turn all its efforts on to the territorial Army. We may achieve the minimum numbers, but, in view of what the Regular Army has got to do, I am inclined to doubt whether it will be possible for those minimum numbers to achieve the maximum efficiency. On that matter, too, this House is entitled to have much fuller information from the Secretary of State for War.

My hon. and gallant Friend the Member for Worthing has raised the question whether one will have even efficient, well-trained reserve and auxiliary forces. If National Service men are going to do two camps of three weeks each, say, in the third and in the sixth years, it means that all they will have to do in the way of part-time training in the other four years will be two week-ends and two hours. Will that be enough? We ought to have information upon that. The right hon. Gentleman, though he has reduced the whole-time service, and 2589 though he has retained the same period of service—that is to say, seven years—has made no increase in the amount of part-time training to correspond to the decrease in the whole-time service. He has given no satisfactory explanation of that omission today at all.

One other point upon which I should like to touch in passing is the power in the Clause dealing with the transfer of blocks of men from one auxiliary force to another, upon which we had some discussion in Committee, which I am sure the right hon. Gentleman will remember. He said he would consider it before the Report stage. As yet, we have had nothing from him as a result of that consideration. I hope that before this Debate concludes we shall receive an assurance that that Clause will be limited in accordance with the expressions of intention that he himself gave.

I do not want to say anything more about the Services aspect of this Measure. So far as the industrial and educational side of it is concerned, we have not had much discussion on the provisions for the safeguarding of employment. I must say, I think those provisions, for which the Ministry of Labour are largely responsible, are good. I have only this suggestion to put forward. It will avoid a lot of unnecessary grievance, friction and, it may be, litigation if

the right hon. Gentleman could take all possible steps to ensure that young men being called up and their employers are informed, at the time of call-up, of their rights and liabilities with regard to reinstatement. I suggest that a booklet, or something of that sort, written in simple English—because this Bill is not easy to understand—might serve a useful purpose. Again, with regard to deferment or postponement, we do not want to see any avoidance of the obligation to perform National Service. At the same time, I hope the right hon. Gentleman will adopt, administratively, the policy that where a boy and his parents consider it to be in the interests of that youth that there should be some postponement of his service, wherever possible that will be granted.

I have spoken perhaps too often, and perhaps too long on this Measure. I should like to conclude by saying that we have, throughout, welcomed it in principle because we recognise the necessity at this time for a Measure of this sort. We hope it will work well, and we shall look forward to the day when this Measure will no longer be required. During its passage we have done our utmost to improve it and to polish it, and the opposition to its principles has not come from us. We have supported it in the past, and we shall do so again tonight. We should do so with much greater confidence if the hon. Gentleman had, in fact, retained just that little extra elbow room which he would have kept for himself had he kept the 18 months' minimum ceiling and not listened to the siren voices of certain Socialists, and had we not had as a Minister of Defence one who has now changed his master's voice, and has apparently adopted, as shown by his conduct, the motto and precept of that well known wartime song, "Run. rabbit, run."

6.44 P.m.

§

Mr. Rhys Davies (Westhoughton) The House will perhaps forgive me for taking part once again in a Debate on this very important Measure imposing military conscription. The group to which I belong did not table an Amendment to the Bill on the Report stage because, to be frank, of the shabby treatment meted out by the Government to us at that stage. Perhaps the Minister himself will go through the previous proceedings of this Bill and see how much more he has been prepared to give away to the Tory Party, his political opponents, than to his hon. Friends on this side of the House. I am sorry to repeat a personal note, but this is a very sad day for those of us who have been Socialists all our lives. The Government are this day digging the grave to bury all the principles I personally have advocated on behalf of the Labour movement for the last half century, and I regret that more than I can tell. A British statesman once said, what was so true, and very appropriate to this occasion: "There must be something radically wrong in normal times when the Government agree with the Opposition." That is what I feel about this Bill today.

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The Tory Party, of course, are delighted with the Measure. The amazing thing to me in this Debate—it is something quite new—is that practically all those who have spoken have declared they they do not like the Bill. Now, will anybody get up and tell me, if hon. Members on all sides of the House do not like it, who it is that wants it? We have yet

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to find that out. My colleagues on the Front Bench thought they were very smart to get this Bill passed into law before the Margate Labour Party Conference. They may feel satisfied that they can carry the Margate Conference with them; but that is not by any means the highest tribunal in the land, as I know only too well. I have seen many changes in this House, and when I hear hon. Members talking about what will happen next year or the year after, I have no illusions about what can happen here. In my imagination, I can see hon. Members at present sitting on this side of the House, in years to come, from the other side of the House, protesting maybe against a Tory Government using this piece of legislation to smash strikes and break the trade union movement.

We always hear talk from the Government Front Bench about "the aggressor." They say: "We must prepare against the aggressor." I have travelled a little in my lifetime, and as one who always speaks well of his country, who thinks well of his country, and who believes that we have built institutions which ought to be a pattern for other nations, I have been sorry to find that we are not loved very much in foreign parts for what we have done there. Therefore, we must not talk about preparing against the aggressor, because in the long history of mankind—and let us be frank about it—we have been the greatest aggressors. [HON. MEMBERS: "No."] Of course we have; we conquered one-fifth of the globe by aggression and taught our children that all that was just discovery; what we term aggression by other nations has been called pioneering by our forefathers. Therefore, I say to hon. Members on all sides of the House—

Mr. Deputy-Speaker The hon. Member must confine himself to the Bill.

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Mr. Davies I was just coming back to the Minister of Defence, when he said that we must prepare against the aggressor. I have been trying to discover who the aggressor is of whom we are afraid now. Who is the enemy at the gate? Hon. Members opposite say: "We must be prepared." Strangely enough, the man who created the mightiest military machine for preparedness in the world was Hitler, and he was defeated, in spite of all his preparedness. In my view, we may conscript our lads, but Britain will never gain its proper place in this world except by doing what some of us have argued about on many occasions; namely, using the moral qualities of this nation and the genius of this people to govern without, for instance, shooting each other in Parliament. Those are the qualities we ought to enunciate to the world, and not building big armies, navies, and increasing armaments all round. 2592

I would like to say a word about the administration of the Measure. Let me tell my miner friends—and I have been a collier myself—that though they may be satisfied with the word of the Minister about the exemption of underground miners there is nothing in the Bill to exempt or defer them—nothing at all. When the manpower boards come to consider deferring those engaged in mining, agriculture, and textiles, whom are they going to defer? Let us take, for instance, the case of the Lancashire textile industry. If the manpower boards

in Lancashire do their duty under this Bill the fighting services will not get a man for the Forces, because they are all needed in that industry. I was very intrigued with some of the speeches made on the other side about deferring students. Hon. Members among the Tories are very concerned about students, and we are naturally concerned about apprentices. If all these deferments are going to be granted as promised by the Minister of Defence, I wonder what the size of the Army will be. All this talk about 200,000 and 500,000 volunteers in that case will prove illusory. I know nothing about Army affairs or strategy, either. But I know one thing—that that bomb that was dropped on Hiroshima makes nonsense of all the talk about strategy and 12 months' training for a soldier. Indeed the next war may well be all over in 48 hours. What is the use of talking about armies in that case? I am told that there are 14 million men under arms in the world now.

I understood in my simplicity that my Labour colleagues with whom I have worked, with whom I have spoken from the same platforms and pulpits in the cause of peace—I expected that they, at any rate, would make a gesture of peace to the world, instead of shaking the clenched fist, which is what this Measure does. The people do not want to fight.

We do not need conscription unless we are going to fight. We do not need armies unless we are going to engage in war. Some of us are opposed to this Bill on several grounds. I warn my trade union friends here. Do they remember, I wonder—are they old enough to remember—the railway strike in France? Do they remember when the Prime Minister of France smashed that railway strike by conscribing all the employees on the railways? If hon. Gentlemen over there ever have the luck to come back on to this side of the House, and if we have a strike of that dimension, they will use the provisions of this Bill to crush it. Of course, they will. They have done it before. I am old enough to remember some of the things they did at Featherstone and Tonypandy. 2593

During the war people were punished for making statements causing alarm and despondency. Let me tell my right hon. Friends on the Front Bench that they have caused alarm and despondency in millions of working class homes by this Bill. Some hon. Gentlemen on the other side say that they have had only a few protests by way of letters against the Bill. Let me tell them that I had 315 letters in support of my attitude—the biggest postbag I have ever received. Hon. Gentlemen opposite ought to know what the widows who lost their husbands and their sons as well in the two world wars, say about this sort of thing. I stand in protest against the tendency of the nations all over the world to increase expenditure on armaments in peace time as we are doing now. I have tried to figure it out myself. I find that, with all the discoveries and inventions that have been made to increase the wealth of the nations the military caste has claimed a bigger proportion of that wealth as the years go by. I say, therefore, that the time has arrived when there should be a few people in every country to say the things we are trying to say tonight in favour of peace and brotherhood. This is my final word. Unless the human race can find means of securing peace in the world the issue next time will not be the old one of war or peace; it will be simplified diabolically: that issue will be, "Either peace or perish."

6.55 p.m.

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Mr. Niall Macpherson (Dumfries) The hon. Gentleman the Member for Westhoughton (Mr. Rhys Davies) has expressed himself as usual with fervour and sincerely. But there is one thing we must immediately say; and I would say it also in reply to the hon. Member for Nelson and Colne (Mr. S. Silverman): surely, it is not possible for this country to stand alone and give an example? Between the last two wars we attempted to do that by unilateral disarmament. § 2594

Mr. S. Silverman I said the exact opposite. I said that I was prepared to support provision of the force necessary to make our contribution to the United Nations. No more. §

Mr. Macpherson The hon. Gentleman will forgive me for saying he was asking for a policy which is no substitute for preparedness. We cannot possibly base a sound policy on a background of weakness. If there was one lesson to be learned between the wars it was that. The hon. Gentleman the Member for the Combined English Universities (Mr. K. Lindsay) and the hon. Member for Westhoughton referred to the lack of enthusiasm for this Bill. There is very little wonder that there should be no enthusiasm for this Bill. It is a compromise Bill. In the first place, obviously, the advice that was received by the Service Ministers was, that we should be able to provide a reasonable period for training, and a period during which men, having been trained, could serve abroad. That time which was demanded by the Service chiefs was whittled down, first of all, to 18 months. Then a further compromise was made, a compromise between those who believed there should be no service whatsoever and those who believed that there should be only 18 months; and they fixed on the time of 12 months, a time which some, it is true, advocated, but advocated on one basis only, and that was that it should be devoted exclusively to training. We listened to a very able defence from the right hon. and learned Gentleman the Member for Montgomery (Mr. C. Davies) of the idea that there should be no conscription at all. Contrary to what he said, I think that all or very nearly all hon. Members in this House are against conscription in principle. §

Mr. George Thomas (Cardiff, Central) But not in practice. §

Mr. Macpherson In theory, and as far as it went, the right hon. and learned Gentleman's argument against conscription was extremely sound. But there was one point on which he fell down. He said that at the last Election most people were not in favour of conscription. I believe that is perfectly true. People at that time were looking forward to the time when they would be demobilised, when there would be no further conscription. I believe they are still doing so. But this is not the moment. In the meantime the situation has § 2595

developed by no means in the way anticipated at the time of the last Election. Our hopes are frustrated. Until the United Nations organisation is itself an organisation of united nations, this country must continue to fend for itself and to build up its own strength on the basis of a citizen army.

It is undeniable that this Bill gives rise to certain very definite dangers. There is the danger, that has been referred to, that we may merely prepare as though to fight a war like the last war over again. There is a very great danger, whenever we have a large body of men we are turning out of a school every six months or every three months, or whatever the period may be, that the tendency may be to get into a rut. The tendency is to use the same weapons, the same tactics, and not to keep up to date. That is one of the greatest tasks that is laid upon the Minister of Defence and the Service Ministers under this Bill. Conscription cannot possibly work unless that difficulty is overcome.

The second danger is this. During war, it is possible to train a citizen Army, because of the immediate urgency and the clarity of the purpose for which the men are being trained, but, during peace time, the situation is very different. It is far more difficult to get the men to accept discipline without such a clear purpose, and it is surely essential that we should convey to the serving man the reason why, for a limited time, he is having to do this whole-time service as a national recruit—the need to make peace secure. One of the great difficulties that gives rise to discontent with this Bill is the vagueness which, unfortunately, the Service Ministers have shown in regard to the regulations which they are proposing to make. The hon. and gallant Member for Worthing (Brigadier Prior-Palmer) dealt with this matter with great clarity, and there are one or two other points to which I would like to refer.

I believe that there is a very great danger in dividing this period of 12 months 2596 between training and service. The effect that men will never get anything like as good training as they ought to have in 12 months, because we are dividing their training so that part of the time may be spent purely on guard and routine duties abroad. Secondly, there is a great danger that we will never have an efficient Regular Army anywhere at all, because a large body of the Regular Army will be engaged in Germany in taking in recruits, turning them over and turning them out again at the end of their national service. There will be no continuity in units, and that is why some of us on these benches thought that it would be far better to confine national service entirely to training and to rely upon such other incentives to get volunteers into the Regular Forces, to which I referred on the Committee stage.

There is one particular subject with which I wish to deal, namely, volunteers for the Reserve Army. Under Clause 3 of this Bill, it is possible for men to volunteer for the Reserve Forces while doing their whole-time training, but, so far as I can see, there is no inducement at all to a man to do so. It seems to me that one of the difficulties in recruiting people for the Territorial Army at present is the difficulty of holidays with pay. The man has to go to camp. Will he, as well, get his paid holiday? That, I think, is one of the great deterrents to joining the Territorial Army, and it seems to me that, under this Bill, the situation becomes very much worse. If I am right in my interpretation of the Bill, a conscript is called up to do his

service, and it is inevitable that the employer will have to give him his paid holiday in addition. But does the same thing apply to the volunteer, who is under no statutory duty to go to camp? Will he get a paid holiday as well? If not, what other inducement can possibly be given to the volunteer? Is it that, in future, volunteers will be the noncommissioned officers of the Reserve Forces, because if so, that will be creating a very grave distinction?

In my view, and I think in the view of many of my hon. Friends, it is essential to have clearly, on the one side, the volunteer Forces, and, on the other those who are not prepared to accept these additional voluntary commitments at present undertaken by the Territorial Army. I do not believe that the two obligations can be mixed up, and I do not believe that we will ever get efficient Reserve Forces by so doing, just as we will get only inefficient Regular Forces if they spend their time turning over conscripts every six months. 2597

On the necessity for some measure of national service, we on this bench are fully agreed. A very grave responsibility is falling upon the Service Ministers to devise a new and clear system whereby we can ensure that, in future, reserves are adequately trained during their whole-time Service, and that they do get sufficient refresher training during their part-time Service. So far, we have had no indication from the opposite benches that the Government fully appreciate the principles involved, and that is why we cannot support this Measure with nearly as much confidence as we would wish to do.

7.10 p.m.

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Mr. Yates (Birmingham, Ladywood) I hope the hon. Member for Dumfries (Mr. N. Macpherson) will forgive me if I do not follow his argument in the short time available to me, except to say that I have never heard a case put up for the Government which lacked more conviction. It is amazing that almost every Member who has spoken so far has been critical of the Government, and has practically apologised for supporting them. The one Member on this side of the House who did support the Government concluded by saying that he felt unhappy. I had hoped that after the arguments we had in Committee we should have had some clear evidence, at the conclusion of this Debate, about the necessity for this Bill. That has been lacking. The hon. and learned Member for Daventry (Mr. Manningham-Buller) suggested that the Conservatives regarded this Bill as necessary, although they doubted whether it would fulfil its purpose. Then he asked the Government to tell the House what were our commitments. I say that those commitments ought to have been known before the necessity for this Bill was admitted. §

My hon. Friends and I on this side of the House, who have opposed this Measure from the beginning, were hopeful that, following the Committee stage, it would emerge as a very different Measure from what it is now. We were hoping that the Government Front Bench would have shown a desire for compromise. Unfortunately, all the compromise has been with the Opposition; we have not been met in any way whatsoever. Our Amendments were designed, not to wreck the Bill, but to make it less harmful to the community. For instance, I do not think that the House has considered sufficiently carefully the proposition to 2598

call up young men at the age of 18. When we were told that such young men were likely to become automatons we were told we were living in the past. I had an interesting letter, a few weeks ago, from a sergeant in the British Army on the Rhine, who is attached to headquarters. He told me about the damaging effect of Army life, and I mention this because I say that 18 is too young an age at which to call up men for the Army. This sergeant wrote: "The worst aspect of Army life is that it nullifies initiative. A man is subjected to a system which tends to reduce him to an automaton. No opportunity is afforded him of expressing himself in a free and natural way. His thinking is done for him. His individuality is met with frustration at every point. I would stress that the years 18 to 22 are all-important in the development of any youth." The hon. Member for Dumfries said that the people of this country were still against conscription, that they were looking forward to the time when there would be no conscription. But what is the position? By Clause 2, a man who is called up on 31st December, 1954, will not be clear from this military machine until 31st December, 1961—16 years after the conclusion of the war. I say that that is going a very long way towards justifying our case that this Bill is really a permanent conscription Bill. Clause 26 limits the duration of the Bill to 1954, but it includes a paragraph which gives power to the Government to extend its provisions by Order in Council. On this issue, there was opposition from both sides of the House, but the Government refused to move at all. In fairness and justice to the Conservative Party, they put forward an objection to granting power to the Government to continue this Bill by Order in Council. That is the worst part of this Bill; it makes all the difference in saying whether the Bill is permanent or temporary. The Minister of Defence said there was no desire to make this Bill permanent. Then why put such a provision into the Bill? Why not take it out? If the Government do not desire conscription to continue beyond 1954, why ask for that power to be put into the Bill? 2599

I object to the name of this Bill. Who has any right to say that military service is the only form of national service? It has nothing to do with service as a national service? It is a military conscription Bill. Call it, if you like, a "military service Bill", but do not call it a national service Bill. There are those in America who are trying to use the word "universal," instead of "national," in order to mislead the people. I say that this Bill, far from being a national service Bill, is an international surrender Bill. It is a surrender to all that we in the Socialist movement have believed in internationally. It is a surrender of moral leadership in the world; it is a surrender of the ideals of peace for which we have always stood; it is based, not on sound arguments, statistics, or logic, but on something that will never produce anything great. It is based on suspicion and fear. Therefore, it is wrong and it is bound to end in failure. I regret that this Labour Government should have sought to place this Bill on the Statute Book. I think we shall look back with very great regret to the mistake which is being made. Nevertheless, we must still believe in our international faith, and go on until the people of this country stand firm by a new faith, one that has never really been tried, the international brotherhood of man.

7.17 p.m.

§

Mr. Carmichael (Glasgow, Bridgeton) Since the introduction of this Bill I have been an § opponent of it. Today, opposition has increased in all quarters of the House. The first opponents were regarded as pacifists, and the Government made the mistake of concentrating their forces against the pacifists and failed to recognise other Members. There cannot now be any doubt of the attitude of the House as a whole. No speech has been made today in real justification of this Bill. The Minister of Defence, who has been in the most unfortunate position of apologising regularly for withdrawals here, and retreats there, did not improve the situation today. I say to him, with all respect, that there is something sadly wrong in the ranks of a Socialist Government who make their defence very largely with the "Daily Express," and the leading chief of that organ.

We have had first-class technical arguments for the Bill, and the only defence of it 2600 has been put up by the hon. and gallant Member for Dudley (Colonel Wigg). But his defence was such that it would compel the Government, if they had any sense, to withdraw the Bill even now. What was his defence? It was that opponents had no right to be unfair in their criticism of this Measure because the Minister of Defence was new to his job, that he had not a grip of the machinery he had to handle. It was said that there may be an excuse for the Minister of Defence, but that this Measure was primarily an Army Measure. So, the hon. and gallant Member said: "You must be reasonable. The Secretary of State for War has not been long in his job, and does not know all the things it is necessary to know in handling a situation like this." Surely, the elementary outcome of that should not be to introduce into any assembly a Measure from a body who have not yet got a grip of it.

It has been admitted and stressed strongly by the Minister of Labour and the President of the Board of Trade that we are short of manpower to the extent of 600,000. We are to increase that difficulty by taking 200,000 for the Army when this Bill becomes operative. A further million are to be engaged in part-time service. Is the Minister of Labour satisfied that, as the responsible man for finding the manpower for the industry of this country, he can do without 600,000 men? Can he do without the 200,000 who will be in the Army? Can he permit 1,000,000 people, when this Act is in full operation, to be out of employment at certain times, engaged in carrying out their drills in the Services? From the purely economical point of view, I say quite frankly—I should be glad to be converted from this view—that we cannot see the manpower of this country being denuded to the extent that this Bill will denude it, by taking 200,000 men into the Army and almost a million into part-time military service out of the industries of the country.

Let us look at the military aspect of it. Let us be frank about it. We are no longer a first-class military Power in the old economic and military sense. Let us assume that the next war, if there is to be a war, will be fought on the basis of manpower. I gather from all parts 2601 of the House that everyone is living for peace, and I have never understood the idea that when people are living for peace they arm themselves to the teeth. When a man is walking down the street with the implements of murder see how he gets on when he meets a man from Scotland Yard. Enemy statesmen use the argument that we are arming—for what? Because our main purpose in life is to make peace possible in the world? Let us assume that we want peace. We are entitled to be told where the danger spot is. Once we are told that,

surely we are entitled to be told exactly what quota of manpower we can give to a military conflict. Assuming that a military conflict breaks out, and that it is on the old lines of manpower, the honourable course for this nation to take would be to exercise its influence against engaging in conflict. We cannot put an Army into a field that would last very long. I said that during the Committee stage, and I was challenged because I said that Scotland could not give sufficient men for an armed conflict with any other nation. I say that about Great Britain, and I hope that I shall not be accused of decrying the people of this country when I say that, in a purely military sense, this country cannot again engage in a major conflict with any world Power. We all know that the next military conflict will not be on a par even in the measure of efficiency—

Mr. Deputy-Speaker The hon. Member seems to be discussing foreign policy rather than the Bill. §

Mr. Carmichael I do not want to dispute your Ruling, Mr. Deputy-Speaker, but during the Debate today we were told that we required a stronger and a larger Army because of foreign commitments. I think that the Minister of Defence submitted some kind of evidence of the commitments for which we required our Army in foreign parts. All I say is that we cannot divorce completely foreign policy from our military commitments. §

If we are to make a contribution to peace, then we must create the peace mind in this country. What we are actually doing—hon. Members have protested against +his statement earlier, but I repeat it—is to create a Hitler youth movement again, because we are taking the young men of 18 into the Army They are attached to the Army for part-time and whole-time service for seven years. The younger members of a family are always encouraged to be interested in the military uniforms of the older members of the family, and I say that not only are we taking the young men into the Army, but we are creating in the younger children in the schools, who look up to their older brothers, the spirit of militarism when we should be destroying it. I ask the Government to believe that they would be rendering greater service to the House and to the country if they had further thoughts about this subject. 2602

I have watched the Government submit Measures here with the utmost enthusiasm and with complete opposition from this side, and it was a pleasure to see how the Government handled those Measures. The only enthusiasm for this Bill has come from the Opposition. There is something radically wrong in the Socialist Party when the only enthusiasm they get for the Measure which they are pushing through comes from the Conservative side. The only fault found with it by the Conservative Benches is that the Government have not made the period more than 12 months. If the Conservatives by any unfortunate chance occupy the seats of Government again, it will be an easy job, now that we have established the principle of conscription, to introduce an extending Measure, making it two years, three years or longer, because all the technical arguments are against 12 months. I hope that the

Government will reflect. I do not know if this Measure is being rushed through because of Margate or any other reason, but I regret that after 50 years of hard struggle and building up of the Labour and Socialist movement, we are unable to go out and give a lead to the rest of the world, when we should be discouraging the military machine as rapidly as we can educate the people, and when we should be giving a lead on moral lines. There must be some people in this world who will be different from other nations and who will give a lead on other than military lines. I should have thought that the Socialist Party would have been the pioneers in creating the mind which would have made the United Nations organisation possible. I regret that I shall have to go into the Lobby tonight against the Government, because I think that they should never have introduced a Measure of this kind.

7.29 p.m.

2603

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Mr. Boyd-Carpenter (Kingston-upon-Thames) This afternoon must have been the crowning humiliation for His Majesty's Government. With the single chivalrous exception of the hon. and gallant Member for Dudley (Colonel Wigg), the speeches have been of two kinds; either speeches from hon. Members who were utterly and sincerely opposed to the whole object of this Bill, or speeches from hon. Members who, while accepting the objects of the Bill, thought the Bill itself a singularly inefficient method of carrying them out. It must, as the hon. Member for Bridgeton (Mr. Carmichael) has said, have been a long time since a whole Parliamentary afternoon has been spent in denouncing either the efficiency or the aims of the occupants of the Treasury Bench. While I disagree with much which was said by the hon. Member for Ladywood (Mr. Yates), I think that he was right in saying that, even now, after all the prolonged discussion of this Bill, we have not yet had from His Majesty's Government any detailed statement as to the commitments which this Bill was designed to meet, nor as to the precise method in which it was intended to fulfil those commitments. §

I must admit that if we were dependent in this Bill on the evidence brought by the Government to justify its necessity, we should find it singularly difficult not to oppose it, and the only reason which to my mind covers that governmental failure is that one has only to look at the state of the world today and one must regard a substantial level of national defence as being a vitally important factor. I may add this. The hon. Member for Ladywood pressed for evidence to show the necessity for this Measure. I hope that he and his colleagues will apply that criterion to other Government Measures and regard it as a proper thing to do when discussing them to be told the necessity for them. If they follow the precedent created this afternoon they will bring new life into this House of Commons though perhaps a degree of embarrassment to His Majesty's Government.

Much as I appreciate the sincerity of the speeches of the hon. Member for Westhoughton (Mr. Rhys Davies) and the hon. Member for Broxtowe (Mr. Cocks), I venture the criticism on their arguments that, while I appreciate the strong moral grounds on which they stand in regard to their pacifism, I hope they will not feel it an impertinence on my part if I say they infinitely weaken that case when they try to support it by a strategic argument. It is one § 2604

thing for a hon. Member to say that he is entirely opposed to military service, but he weakens the effect of that argument when he goes on to say that in the present state of strategy large armies are unnecessary.

Mr. S. Silverman In deference to my hon. Friend the Member for Broxtowe (Mr. Cocks), who is not present at the moment, I do not think that anyone could say that he is in any sense a pacifist. §

Mr. Boyd-Carpenter I am much obliged to the hon. Member for his intervention, and I certainly would not wish to attribute to an hon. Member views which he did not hold, but it is a fact that certainly the hon. Member for Westhoughton and the hon. Member for Bridgeton did try to support their views with strategic argument. §

Mr. Carmichael I want to make it clear that while I am opposed to the Bill I have never at any time given evidence that I am a pacifist. I do not say that in any derogatory sense of the word "pacifist." I argued in favour of military effort on certain occasions and under certain circumstances. §

Mr. Boyd-Carpenter I am much obliged to the hon. Member, but I will put to him one point of view. He made his viewpoint abundantly clear in his speech, but once again he tried to support his general view on the matter with strategic argument which, if I may be allowed to say so, he is not qualified to offer. I am not going to attempt to propound high strategy, because, unlike most of my colleagues in this Debate, I am not a brigadier. That no doubt was due to some slight oversight on the part of the military authorities during the war §

To those hon. Members who have sought to support their views by strategic argument, I would say that if it comes to a question of accepting views on strategy of hon. Members opposite or of the military advisers of His Majesty's Government, the ordinary person is going to accept the views of the military advisers of the Government, because those gentlemen have the highest qualifications for their own trade, qualifications which they have demonstrated to the admiration of the world. I should have thought that their technical qualifications as commanders would certainly not be a matter of argument in this House. Therefore, I hope that we shall not argue the general issue of this Bill on that basis of strategy, because I do not doubt—and I believe that hon. Members opposite will so find it if they argue the matter on those lines—that the ordinary person in this country infinitely prefers to accept the views of men like Lord Montgomery even when they are opposed to the strategic views of the hon. Member for Westhoughton. 2605

I should like to address myself to one part of this Bill which has received very little

consideration tonight, and that is the part which has been so valiantly maintained throughout by the Minister of Labour as affecting his own Department. I should certainly be ungenerous and un-chivalrous if I did not say that his conduct of this part of the Measure has been extraordinarily reasonable and helpful. Perhaps I would be allowed to venture the comment that had he been in sole charge of the Bill, possibly its passage might have been both easier and smoother. The point in the Bill to which I wish to refer is that under it immense powers are being given over an entire generation, not to the House of Commons but to the Ministry of Labour.

One hon. Member opposite was unfair enough to say that hon. Members on this side welcomed the Bill. That, I think, argues an extraordinary ignorance of the views of many of us on these benches; it is extraordinarily insensitive to suggest that any hon. Member likes to hand over the entire life for 12 months of a generation of one's fellow countrymen to the absolute control of the Ministry of Labour. I am perfectly certain that hon. Members who support this Bill will feel a particular sense of responsibility to those young men, whose liberty they are taking away and that they will make it their particular duty to ensure that they, are properly looked after and that their liberties are properly safeguarded. I would remark in parenthesis that most of these young men because of their youth are not yet voters.

From that point of view it will be seen what a peculiar responsibility we in this House are taking towards these young men by supporting this Bill, and I very much resent the fact that the Ministry of Labour is to be given so complete a control over these young men and 2606 such a high degree of freedom from Parliamentary control. After all, there is nothing in the Bill on the whole subject of deferment except to give complete freedom to the Ministry of Labour. There is no statutory right of deferment for miners, students, or apprentices. It is left entirely in the hands of the Ministry of Labour. The provision made in the Bill with respect to doctors makes it clear that it depends on the Ministry of Labour being satisfied of the desirability and the necessity. I suggest that it is not good enough when we hand over completely uncontrolled and unregulated power to the Ministry of Labour.

The House knows that the only control left as a result of the discussions on this Bill has been the procedure by negative Resolution to annul regulations made under this Bill. In this matter at any rate, dealing with the broad issues affecting the whole lives of a generation for whom I feel we have a peculiar responsibility, a negative Resolution is an inadequate safeguard. First of all, discussions on those Resolutions take place, as do the discussions on this Bill always seem to do, in the middle of the night. They are inevitably conducted in a way that is perhaps not appropriate in this case to their importance. Above all, there is the fact that this House has no power to amend such Regulations, but is compelled to accept them totally or reject them absolutely. I say that that is a wholly unsatisfactory aspect of this Bill, and I ask hon. Members in all parts of the House to reflect what their position will be when parents of those young men among their constituents come to them and object to various aspects of the regulations. They will find that they are virtually powerless because all power is handed over by this Bill to the Ministry of Labour.

Speaking for myself, I agree wholeheartedly with what the hon. Gentleman the Member for Ladywood said about Clause 26 and the provision for the extension of this Bill by Order in Council. There might well be a case for making this Bill permanent; there might well be a case for making it for a term of years and no more; but this provision of Clause 26 does neither. It puts a date in the Bill so as to give the impression, as it were, that the Measure is for a term of years only, and then hands over to His Majesty's Government—whoever 2607 His Majesty's Government of the day may be—power to extend the Bill indefinitely by Order in Council, subject only to that Order in Council being approved by this House. If it is suggested that that gives sufficient control there is one aspect to which I would invite the attention of hon. Members. It is true that they will be able to vote for or against such an Order in Council, but they will have no power to amend any detail of the system of military service. They will have to vote either to accept or reject the whole system and, at the same time, to vote "Aye" or "No" as to whether they wish the Government of the day to remain in Office.

It is, therefore, a misrepresentation to suggest that this procedure gives any effective Parliamentary control over the continuance of this Bill, and I say that it would have been intellectually more honest, franker to this House and more in the tradition of Parliamentary democracy if His Majesty's Government had seen fit to insert either the fixed period of years or an indefinite period. This shabby compromise, this attempt to disguise what they are in fact doing, is a blemish on the Bill which I regard as very serious. A good deal has been said on the attitude taken by many hon. Members with regard to this Bill. As I have said, I am convinced of the necessity for a system of compulsory military service. I am equally convinced that this is a fumbling and inept method of achieving it, and that it is an attempt to do the right thing in the wrong way. Throughout its structure and throughout the method with which it has been conducted, it bears the hall-mark of the right hon. Gentleman the Minister of Defence, whose whole conduct of this Bill might well suggest that his title was "Minister of Defiance" rather than Minister of Defence.

7.44 P.m.

§

The Minister of Labour (Mr. Isaacs) ; I have listened to the whole of the Debate this 2608 § afternoon, with the exception of about 60 seconds, and I think that it has been conducted in a very nice tone, but there are one or two observations I should like to make about it. The hon. Member for Kingston-upon-Thames (Mr. Boyd-Carpenter) concluded his speech, as he so often does, with a nasty little dig which was neither funny nor kind, and which I thought was not worthy of him. He opened his speech by saying that the crowning humiliation for the Government was that there was only one Member on this side of the House who had the chivalry to get up and support them. One or two other hon. Gentlemen on that side said the same thing in other words, but I should like to ask whether it is not chivalry that the supporters of the Government in this matter kept out of the field, thereby giving their opponents the opportunity of making several more speeches than might otherwise have been possible.

The hon. Gentleman the senior Member for the Combined English Universities (Mr. K. Lindsay) set what I think is the mood in which I should like to reply to this Debate. He said that the question needs a most careful, human approach, and I think that in dealing with it one ought to ignore many of the things that have been said—some of them based on prejudice and some on very deep feeling indeed—trying to remember that what we are doing is to take over for a year the entire responsibility for a great number of the young men of our nation. Many of the things that have been said in that and other respects were said many times during the Committee stage, and I will not weary the House by repeating the answers to some of them that have already been given. There was one reference by my hon. Friend the Member for Westhoughton (Mr. Rhys Davies) which led me to think that he had mixed up his history. He said that the use of this conscript Army would be to break the trade unions, and that this had already been done at Tonypandy and Featherstone. I remember Tonypandy, and although I cannot say that I remember Featherstone, I know that there was no conscript Army there. It was a voluntary Army.

Mr. Rhys Davies I said that troops had been used there and that the railway strike was broken in France by conscription. §

Mr. Isaacs I know the hon. Gentleman said that, but I challenge him to deny that his imputation was that because they had been used here once before conscript troops would be used again. I have sat for about three hours and have not said a word about any of the remarks that have been made. I now want to try to answer if I can points in the 16 speeches that have been made, and I would ask hon. Members at any rate to let me have a go at it. The hon. Member for Westhoughton, whose feeling we all recognise, asked who was the aggressor against whom we needed to prepare. He went on to say that there were 14 million men under arms in the world today. I would ask him his own question—who are they going to fight? They might want to fight us, and it would ill become a nation upon whom other countries rely to put them on the right lines if, while knowing that the world was filled with armed men, we laid down our arms and said, "Let'em all come." § 2609

I was surprised when the hon. Member for Dumfries (Mr. N. Macpherson) said that this country must fight for itself and build up its strength for defence, because I had a recollection that he had put down an Amendment to reduce the training period from 18 months to 9 months. I wondered how he squared those two things. The hon. Member for Bridgeton (Mr. Carmichael) referred to the manpower position and said that we were 600,000 men short, and were now taking another 200,000 out of industry into the Army. It must be borne in mind, however, that for some time, at any rate, the 200,000 men in question will be replacing the men who are coming out of the Army and going back into industry. Nevertheless, it is a fact that we are still that number short, and I must plead that as part of the Government's reason for reducing the 18 months' period to 12 months so that we should not deplete our manpower more than was absolutely necessary.

The hon. and learned Member for Daventry (Mr. Manningham-Buller) is here, and I should like to deal with one or two things he said. He asked for positive information, and I hope to be able to provide it. He said that the speech of the hon. and gallant Member for Worthing (Brigadier Prior-Palmer) called for an answer. It does, but his questions were so detailed that even if other Ministers, skilled in the job of the Department concerned, were here I am not sure that they could answer. It requires a good deal of examination to give an answer. It concerns periods of training, methods of training and so on, and I promise that these matters will be examined and given due consideration. I, too, have some interest in 2610 the Territorials, and if we are to put these young fellows into the Forces, we want to do it in such a way that it will be to their advantage, to the advantage of the Forces, and to the advantage of the country. As Minister of Labour, I shall certainly want to see that manpower is not wasted in that way if it can be utilised.

Mr. Frank Byers (Dorset, Northern) Is it not a remarkable admission that these matters § have not been previously examined?

Mr. Isaacs I have not made that admission at all. I simply said that they were too § detailed to be answered today.

Mr. Byers They have been raised time and time again. §

Mr. Isaacs I have given my answer that they will be carefully examined, and that a § detailed answer will be given. The hon. and learned Member for Daventry asked that the rights of reinstatement should be properly made known to everyone concerned. He made the interesting suggestion of bringing out a booklet or a leaflet. That course will probably be adopted, although I can give no pledge on that at this moment. It is our intention to see that the rights of reinstatement are well known; after all, they were well known during the war. and, in the main, these rights have been honourably discharged by all concerned. He also asked that it should be possible for occasional deferments. I can assure the House that a rigid line will not be drawn, and that we shall not say to everyone who reaches the age of 18, "In you go." We shall continue to do what we did during the war, and what we have done since I have been at the Ministry of Labour. Many hon. Members have asked whether I cannot give a man four or six months more, and that has been done on many occasions. Whether deferment has been given or not, it has been decided from the angle of giving a square deal and playing the game by all concerned, and that is my answer to the hon. and learned Member. The hon. Member for Tradeston (Mr. Rankin) said that conscription leads to Fascism. I would point out that Belgium, France, Holland and Switzerland have all had conscript armies, and whatever else it has done, it has certainly not led to Fascism in 2611

their cases. I ask him to remove that fear from his mind

I will now deal with the speech of the hon. Member for Southall (Mr. Ayles), who moved what is really the rejection of the Bill. He said that we were engaged upon making a great constitutional change. That is so, but the war has brought about great changes of many kinds. In the opinion of the Government—and it is clear now that it is the opinion of the majority of Members—it is necessary to make this constitutional change. We know that some do not think it should be made, but they are entitled to their opinion the same as we are entitled to ours. He said that if there were a national emergency we would all rally to the country. We know that. I remember listening, on that memorable Sunday night, to the right hon. Member for Warwick and Leamington (Mr. Eden) asking the people to rally to the country, and they rallied in their thousands. We shall always be proud that of our own free will we donned the King's uniform and wore the badge of the Home Guard. But what did we find? We found that one and a half million men rallied to the call, and that we had no equipment or training. I remember being put on guard in those early days. I know that I did my guard duty all right, because I was looking after Hampton Court Bridge and it is still there. I remember that when the two men on guard used to come back and break up our crown and anchor party because it was our turn to go on, we used to swop guns, steel helmets and hand over the five rounds of ammunition which were served out to us. What good would these men have been if the enemy had come? All those who served in the Home Guard knew that they would have been a "darned sight" better off had they had a little more training before they came in.

Mr. Byers What about equipment?

§

Mr. Isaacs I have been speaking about equipment. I am looking to the future, and I am only giving the background of the past to show what we have learned by it. Not only shall we have the men with some degree of training, but at least they will have some ammunition and equipment. We did not have much equipment. I remember carrying around a "Molotov Cocktail" and being scared stiff that I should slip up and drop the bottle. I remember that, in my unit some thought "No. 1" was the fellow who had volunteered first. We discovered then that without some basic training, if there had been an attack, the only thing with which these men had to defend their country was their bodies. That is not what we want in future. If anyone can give me a cast-iron guarantee that this country will never be attacked and we shall never have to defend ourselves at home or abroad, then I am prepared to say that we shall not need conscription. 2612

The right hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. C. Davies) said that we are fighting for the principle of individual liberty, but there can be no individual liberty if national liberty is lost. We believe that this Bill is necessary to retain our national liberty, and that is why we are asking the House to support it. The hon. Member for Nelson and Colne (Mr. S.

Silverman) made a very interesting speech. He said there were certain ambiguities to be cleared up, but before he had finished his speech he had created a lot more, which I have been trying to sort out. He asked whether the Government had come down in support of compulsion. My answer is this Bill. He then asked why there should not be compulsion other than for National Service. He was not arguing for that, but he said that if we believed in compulsion for National Service we could not object to compulsion of labour. That is a long question to go into, but we say there is a difference. The voluntary system has been tried, and it has not given us the forces we consider necessary for our national defence, and therefore we have had to bring in this Bill. He asked when the world would be in settled state so that we should not need armies. In saying that, he admitted the need for armies when the world is unsettled as it now is, and that is the point.

Mr. S. Silverman The ambiguity to which the right hon. Gentleman has referred is not § the one I mentioned. I said that there was an ambiguity between the statement made by the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the statement made by the Minister of Defence. Whereas the Chancellor of the Exchequer said he would support this Bill because he was satisfied that the principle of compulsion was the right one, the Minister of Defence said the opposite; he said it was one that they did not like and they would abandon it when they could. The 2613 ambiguity I want cleared up is this—whether the Government have brought in this Bill because they have now accepted the principle of compulsion for its own sake and on its own merits or whether it is a purely temporary provision and, if so, in what circumstances will they abandon it?

Mr. Isaacs That may have been one of the ambiguities which the hon. Member said he § wanted cleared up, but there is not time to go into that now. [An HON. MEMBER: "What is the answer?"] I think the answer was a certain fruit, but I am not sure. There was another argument which my hon. Friend the Member for Nelson and Colne put. He said that the United Nations was the only hope of the world, there was no other. and he followed it up by saying: "I am prepared to take all the violent action that the United Nations requires." I would remind him that we cannot take the violent action which the United Nations may require unless we have the forces necessary to enable us to take it. I think I understand the hon. Gentleman's point; we must be prepared to take the necessary steps to have those proper forces. I would like to make one reference to the speech of the hon. Member for Broxtowe (Mr. Cocks). We all recognise the painstaking care and the deep research that must have gone into the preparation of a speech of that character. I liked his reference to the obsolete artillery on the Government Front Bench. It was proved up to the hilt by the obsolete contribution he made in support of his case. It was brilliant wit, it amused us, but was it any help in connection with this Bill?

I should like to close my comments on the speeches that have been made by reference to the speech of the hon. Member for Southall, and I should like to close on the note that he

himself introduced. We all know the deep feeling and the sincerity with which he holds his views, and none of us would attempt to stop him that is not what I am going to do. He mentioned the name of the Almighty and mentioned it in a way which showed the utmost reverence and sincerity. He said that under this Bill the State is supreme. Without trying to be irreverent at all, the State must be supreme. After all, though we all close our eyes in prayer, though there is an Almighty to whom all of us pay reverence, the administration of the nation is in the hands of the State, and the State must take the necessary steps. [HON. MEMBERS: "Oh."] Hon. Gentlemen over there are making funny faces about it, but the fact remains, whether we talk about defence or the provision of work or old age pensions, or whatever it is, it is the State that has to do it. and it is the State alone that can do it. Therefore, under his Bill the State is supreme and must be supreme. 2614

Mr. Blackburn (Birmingham, King's Norton) Will my right hon. Friend forgive me— §

Mr. Isaacs I am dealing with the speech of the hon. Member for Southall, and should he want to question me upon it I will give way, but we do not want other people interpreting somebody's speech, except the man at this Box, whose job it is to do so. I want to say to the hon. Member for Southall that it is in the same spirit, strange as it may seem, that we look upon this Bill. The State rightly or wrongly, has a duty to perform. We believe it is our duty to perform it in a spirit of prayer, that we are acting under the Almighty in helping the country. We believe that if we do not do something of this sort there is a greater risk that the forces of danger, reaction, misery and greed will become rampant in the world, unless we take our place— §

Mr. Blackburn rose— §

Mr. Isaacs No, definitely not. We have to have police for our internal defence against crime, we must have some sort of police. It is the responsibility of all citizens to defend the State. At the same time, it is the supreme duty of the State to defend its citizens, and it is because we think that this Bill—I will say that, like everybody else, we wish it were possible to do without it, we wish it were possible to wander along in the world without armed forces, but the world being as it is, we must face the occasion as it is—because we think this Bill will help us to perform that duty. Because of these other reasons, I ask the House to accept from me that it is in the same spirit as that in which the hon. Member for Southall moved his Amendment that we now ask the House to accept this Bill. §

2615

Several Hon. Members rose.

Mr. R. J. Taylor (Lord of the Treasury) rose in his place, and claimed to move, "That the Question be now put." §

Question put. "That the Question be now put." 2616

The House divided: Ayes, 190; Noes, 70. §

2617

Division No. 225.]	AYES	[8.7 p.m.
Adams, W T (Hammersmith, South)	Greenwood, Rt. Hon. A. (Wakefield)	Pargiter, G. A.
Alexander, Rt. Hon. A. V	Griffiths, D. (Rother Valley)	Pearson, A.
Allen, Scholefield (Crewe)	Gunter, R. J	Platts-Mills, J. F. F.
Alpass, J. H.	Guy, W. H.	Popplewell, E.
Austin, H. Lewis	Haire, John E. (Wycombe)	Porter, E. (Warrington)
Baird J.	Hall, W G.	Porter, G. (Leeds)
Balfour, A	Hamilton, Lieut.-Col. R	Price, M. Philips
Barton, C.	Hannan, W. (Maryhill)	Proctor, W. T.
Bechervaise, A. E	Hobson, C R.	Pursey, Cmdr. H
Belcher, J. W.	Holman, P.	Ranger, J.
Bellenger, Rt Hon. F. J	Holmes, H. E. (Hemsworth)	Rees-Williams, D. R.
Benson, G.	House, G.	Reid, T. (Swindon)
Berry, H.	Hoy, J.	Rhodes, H.
Beswick, F	Hubbard, T	Robens, A.
Binns, J.	Hudson, J. H. (Ealing, W.)	Rogers, G. H. R.
Blenkinsop, A.	Hughes, Hector (Aberdeen, N.)	Roes, William (Kilmarnock)
Blyton, W. R	Hughes, H. D. (W'ilverh'pton, W.)	Sharp, Granville
Boardman, H.	Hutchinson, H. L. (Rusholme)	Shurmer, P.
Bottomley, A. G.	Hynd, H. (Hackney, C.)	Silverman, J (Erdington)
Bowles, F. G. (Nuneaton)	Irving, W. J.	Simmons, C J
Brook, D. (Hallfax)	Isaacs, Rt. Hon. G. A.	Skinnard, F. W.
Brown, T. J (Ince)	Janner, B.	Smith, S. H. (Hull[...], S.W.)
Bruce, Maj. D. W. T	Jager, G. (Winchester)	Snow, Capt J. W
Burden, T. W.	Jones, Rt. Hon. A. C. (Shipley)	Sorensen, R. W
Burke, W. A.	Jones, D. T. (Hartlepoons)	Soskice, Maj. Sir [...]
Castle, Mrs. B. A.	Jones, Elwyn (Plaistow)	Sparks, J. A.
Chamberlain, R. A	Jones, J. H. (Bolton)	Stamford, W
Chater, D.	Jones, P. Asterley (Hitchin)	Steele, T.
Chetwynd, G. R.	Keenan, W.	Stewart, Michael (Fulham, E.)
Clitherow, Dr. R.	Kenyon, C	Strauss, G. R. (Lambeth, N.)
Colman, Miss G. M	Key, C. W.	Summerskill, Dr Edith
Cook, T. F.	Kinghorn, Sqn.-Ldr. E [...]	Swingler, S.
Corbet, Mrs. F. K. (Camberwell, N.W.)	Kinley, J.	Taylor, R. J. (Morpeth)
Corlett, Dr. J.	Kirby, B. V.	Taylor, Dr. S. (Barnet)
Corvedale, Viscount	Lavers, S.	Thomas, Ivor (Keighley)
Cove, W. G.	Lee, F. (Hulme)	Thomas, I. O. (Wrekin)
Cripps, Rt. Hon. Sir S	Leonard, W.	Thurtle, Ernest

Crossman, R. H. S.	Leslie, J. R	Titterington, M. F
Davies, Edward (Burslem)	Levy, B. W	Turner-Samuels, M
Davies, Hadyn (St. Pancras, S.W.)	Longden, F.	Ungoed-Thomas, [...]
Deer, G.	McAdam, W	Walkden, E
de Freitas, Geoffrey	McEntee, V. La T.	Walker, G. H.
Delargy, H. J.	McKay, J. (Wallsend)	Wallace, G. D. (Chislehurst)
Diamond, J.	McKinlay, A. S.	Warbey, W. N.
Dobbie, W.	McLeavy, F	Watson, W. M.
Dodds, N. N	Manning, C. (Camberwell, N.)	Webb, M. (Bradford, C.)
Donovan, T.	Marquand, H. A	Wells, W. T. (Walsall)
Driberg, T. E. N	Mikardo, Ian	Whiteley, Rt. Hon. W
Dugdale, J. (W. Bromwich)	Mitchison, G. [...]	Wigg, Col. G. E.
Ede, Rt. Hon. J. C.	Monslow, W.	Wilkes, L.
Edwards, John (Blackburn)	Montague, F.	Wilkins, W. A.
Edwards, N. (Caerphilly)	Moody, A. S.	Willey, F. T. (Sunderland)
Edwards, W. J. (Whitechapel)	Morgan, Dr. H. B	Williams, J. L. (Kelvingrove)
Evans, S N. (Wednesbury)	Morris, P. (Swansea, W.)	Williams, Rt. Hon. T (Don Valley)
Ewart, R.	Morrison, Rt. Hon. H. (Lewisham, E.)	Williams, W. R (Heston)
Farthing, W. J.	Mort, D. L.	Williamson, T
Fletcher, E. G. M. (Islington, E.)	Nicholls, H. R. (Stratford)	Willis, E.
Follick, M.	Noel-Baker, Capt F. E (Brentford)	Wilson, J. H.
Fraser, T. (Hamilton)	Noel-Baker, Rt. Hon. P J (Derby)	Woodburn, A.
Freeman, Maj. J. (Watford)	Noel-Buxton, Lady	Young, Sir R. (Newton)
Gaitskell, H T. N	Oldfield, W. H	
Gibbins, J.	Oliver, G. H	TELLERS FOR THE AYES
Gilzean, A	Paget, R. T.	Mr. Joseph Henderson and
Glanville, J. E. (Consett)	Paling, Rt. Hon Wilfred (Wentworth)	and Mr. Collindridge.
Goodrich, H. E.	Palmer, A. M. F	
NOES.		
Agnew, Cmdr P. G.	Bromley-Davenport, Lt.-Col. W.	Cuthbert, W. N.
Amory, D. Heathcoat	Butcher, H. W	Darling, Sir W. Y.
Beechman, N. A.	Byers, Frank	Davidson, Viscountess
Bennett, Sir P.	Carson, E.	Davies, Clement (Montgomery)
Boles, Lt.-Col. D. C. (Wells)	Challen, C.	Digby, S. W.
Bower, N.	Clifton-Brown, Lt.-Col. G.	Drewe, C.
Boyd-Carpenter, J. A	Crosthwaite-Eyre, Col. O E	Eden, Rt. Hon. A
Fyfe, Rt. Hon. Sir D. P. M.	Low, Brig. A. R. W.	Scott, Lord W.
George, Lady M, Lloyd (Anglesey)	Maclay, Hon. J. S.	Shepherd, W. S. (Bucklow)
Gridley, Sir A.	Macpherson, Maj. N. (Dumfries)	Smith, E. P (Ashford)
Gruffydd, Prof. W. J	Manningham-Buller, R. E.	Spearman, A. C. M.
Harvey, Air-Comdre. A. V	Marshall, D. (Bodmin)	Stanley, Rt. Hon. O.
Headlam, Lieut.-Col. Rt. Hon Sir C	Medlicott, F.	Stewart, J. Henderson (Fife, E.)
Hogg, Hon. Q.	Moore, Lt.-Col. Sir T.	Strauss, H. G. (English Universities)
Hope, Lord J	Morris, Hopkin (Carmarthen)	Studholme, H. G
Howard, Hon. A	Neven-Spence, Sir B	Thomas, J. P. L. (Hereford)
Hudson, Rt. Hon. R. S. (Southport)	Nield, B (Chester)	Walker-Smith, D.
Hutchison, Lt.-Cm. Clark (E'b'rgh W.)	Nutting, Anthony	
Hutchison, Col. J. R. (Glasgow, C.)	Pitman, I. J.	Wheatley, Colonel M. J
		Williams, C. (Torquay)

Jeffreys, General Sir G	Ponsonby, Col. E.	York, C.
Kendall, W. D.	Prior-Palmer, Brig. O	
Kerr, Sir J. Graham	Ramsay, Maj. S.	TELLERS FOR THE NOES
Lancaster, Col. C G	Reed, Sir S. (Aylesbury)	Major Conant and
Langford-Holt, J.	Renton, D.	Lieut.-Colonel Thorp.
Legge-Bourke, Maj. E. A H	Roberts, Emrys (Merioneth)	

Question put accordingly, "That now' stand part of the Question."

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The House divided: Ayes, '232; Noes, 44.

2618

§

2619

Division No. 226.]	AYES.	[8.16 p.m.
Adams, W. T. (Hammersmith, South)	Ede, Rt. Hon. J. C.	Lancaster, Col. C. G
Agnew, Cmdr. P. G.	Eden, Rt. Hon. A.	Langford-Holt, J.
Alexander, Rt. Hon. A. V.	Edwards, John (Blackburn)	Lavers, S.
Allen, Scholefield (Crewe)	Edwards, N. (Caerphilly)	Lee, F. (Hulme)
Amory, D. Heathcote	Edwards, W. J. (Whitechapel)	Legge-Bourke, Maj. E. A. H
Austin, H. Lewis	Evans, S. N. (Wednesbury)	Leonard, W.
Baird, J.	Ewart, R.	Leslie, J. R.
Balfour, A.	Farthing, W J.	Levy, B. W.
Barton, C.	Fletcher, E. G. M (Islington, E.)	Lindsay, K, M. (Comb'd Eng. Univ.)
Bechervaise, A. E.	Fraser, T. (Hamilton)	Low, Brig. A. R. W.
Beechman, N. A.	Freeman, Maj. J. (Watford)	McAdam, W.
Belcher, J. W.	Fyfe, Rt. Hon. Sir D. P. M	McEntee, V. La T.
Bellenger, Rt. Hon. F. J.	Gaitskell, H. T. N.	McKay, J. (Wallsend)
Bennett, Sir P	Gibbins, J.	McKinlay, A. S.
Berry, H.	Gilzean, A.	Maclay, Hon. J. S.
Beswick, F.	Glanville, J. E. (Consett)	McLeavy, F.
Binns, J.	Greenwood, Rt. Hon. A. (Wakefield)	Macpherson, N. (Dumfries)
Blenkinsop, A	Gridley, Sir A.	Manning, C. Camberwell, N.)
Blyton, W. R.	Griffiths, D. (Rother Valley)	Manningham-Buller, R. E.
Boardman, H.	Grimston, R. V	Marlowe, A. A. H.
Bottomley, A. G.	Gunter, R. J.	Marquand, H. A.
Bower, N.	Guy, W. H.	Marshall, D. (Bodmin)
Bowles, F. G. (Nuneaton)	Haire, John E. (Wycombe)	Medlicott, F.
Boyd-Carpenter, J. A.	Hall, W. G	Mikardo, Ian
Bromley-Davenport, Lt.-Col. W	Hamilton, Lieut.-Col. R.	Mitchison, G. R.
Brook, D (Halifax)	Hannan, W. (Marvhill)	Montague, F.
Bruce, Maj. D. W. T	Harvey, Air-Comdre. A. V.	Moody, A. S.
Burke, W. A.	Headlam, Lieut.-Col. Rt. Hon Sir C	Moore, Lt.-Col. Sir T
Butcher, H. W.	Hobson, C R.	Morgan, Dr H. B.
Carson, E.	Hogg, Hon. Q	Morrison, Rt. Hon H (L'wish'm[...] E.)
Castle, Mrs. B. A	Holman, P.	Mort, D. L.
Chater, D.	Holmes, H. E. (Hemsworth)	Neven-Spence, Sir B.
Chetwynd, G. R.	Hope, Lord J.	Nicholls, H. R. (Stratford)
Clifton-Brown, Lt.-Col- G	House, G.	Nield, B. (Chester)
Clitherow, Dr. R.	Howard, Hon A	Noel-Baker, Capt. F. E. (Brentford)
Colman, Miss G. M.	Hoy, J.	Noel-Baker, Rt. Hon P. J. (Derby)

Conant, Maj. R. J. E	Hubbard, T	Noel-Buxton, Lady
Cook, T. F.	Hudson, Rt. Hon. R. S. (Southport)	Oldfield, W. H.
Corbet, Mrs. F. K. (Camb'well, N.W.)	Hughes, Hector (Aberdeen, N.)	Oliver, G H
Corvedale, Viscount	Hughes, H. D. (W'ilverh'pton, W.)	Paget, R. T.
Cripps, Rt. Hon. Sir S.	Hutchinson, H. L. (Rusholme)	Paling, Rt. Hon. Wilfred (Wentworth)
Crossman, R. H. S.	Hutchison, Lt.-Cm. Clark (E'b'gh, W.)	Palmer, A. M. F.
Crosthwaite-Eyre, Col. O. E	Hutchison, Col. J. R. (Glasgow, C.)	Pargiter, G. A.
Cuthbert, W N.	Hynd, H. (Hackney, C.)	Pearson, A.
Darling, Sir W. Y.	Irving, W J	Pitman, [...]I. J.
Davidson, Viscountess	Isaacs, Rt. Hon. G A	Ponsonby, Col. C. E
Davies, Edward (Burslem)	Janner, B	Popplewell, E.
Davies, Hadyn (St. Pancras, S.W.)	Jeffreys, General Sir G.	Porter, E. (Warrington)
de Fre[...]tas, Geoffrey	Jeger, G. (Winchester)	Porter, G. (Leeds)
Delargy, H. J	Jones, D. T. (Hartlepoons)	Price, M. Philips
Diamond, J.	Jones, Elwyn (Plaistow)	Prior-Palmer, Brig. O
Digby, S. W	Jones, J. H (Bolton)	Proctor, W. T.
Dobbie, W.	Jones, P. Asterley (Hitchin)	Pursey, Cmdr. H.
Dodds, N. N	Keenan, W.	Ramsay, Maj. S.
Donovan, T.	Kerr, Sir J Graham	Ranger, J
Dower, E. L. G. (Caithness)	Key, C. W.	Reed, Sir S. (Aylesbury)
Drewe, C	Kinghorn, Sqn.-Ldr E	Rees-Williams, D. R.
Driberg, T. E. N	Kinley, J	Reid, T. (Swindon)
Dugdale, J. (W. Bromwich)	Kirby, B V	Renton, D.
Rhodes, H	Strauss, G. R. (Lambeth, N.)	Wells, W T. (Walsall)
Robens, A	Studholme, H G.	Wheatley, Colonel M J
Rogers, G. H. R	Summerskill, Dr Edith	Whiteley, Rt. Hon W
Ross, William (Kilmarnock)	Swingler, S	Wigg, Col. G E
Scott, Lord W.	Taylor, R. J. (Morpeth)	Wilkes, L.
Segal, Dr. S	Taylor, Dr. S. (Barnet)	Willey, F T (Sunderland)
Sharp, Granville	Thomas, Ivor (Keighley)	Williams, C (Torquay)
Shepherd, W S (Bucklow)	Thomas, I O (Wrekin)	Williams, J. L (Kelvingrove)
Simmons, C. J	Thomas, J. P. L. (Hereford)	Williams, Rt Hon T. (Don Valley)
Smith, E. P. (Ashford)	Thorp, Lt.-Col. R A F	Williamson, T
Smith, S. H. (Hull, S.W)	Thurtle, Ernest	Willis, E.
Snow, Capt J. W	Titterington, M. F	Wilson, J H
Soskice, Maj. Sir F	Turner-Samuels, M	Woodburn, A
Sparks, J A	Ungoed-Thomas, L	York, C.
Spearman, A. C. M	Walkden, E	Young, Sir R (Newton)
Stanley, Rt Hon. O	Walker-Smith, D.	
Steele, T	Wallace, G. D. (Chislehurst)	TELLERS FOR THE AYES:
Stewart J. Henderson (Fite, E.)	Warbey, W. N	Mr. Joseph Henderson and
Stewart, Michael (Fulham, E)	Watson, W. M	Mr. Collindridge.
Strauss, H G. (English Universities)	Webb, M (Bradford, C.)	
NOES		
Battley J. R	Kenyon, C.	Silverman, J (Erdington)
Blackburn, A. R	Lengden, F	Silverman, S S. (Nelson)
Braddock, T. (Mitcham)	McGhee, H G	Sorensen, R W

Brown, T. J. (Ince)	McGovern, J.	Stephen, C
Carmichael, James	Manning, Mrs L (Epping)	Thomas, D. E. (Aberdare)
Cocks, F. S.	Morley, R.	Thomas, George (Cardiff)
Collins, V. J	Morris, P. (Swansea, W.)	Walker, G. H.
Cove, W. G	Morris, Hopkin (Carmarthen)	Wilkins, W A.
Davies, Clement (Montgomery)	Nichol, Mrs M E. (Bradford. N.)	Williams, D. J. (Neath)
Davies, R. J. (Westhoughton)	Paton, Mrs F. (Rushcliffe)	Williams, W R (Heston)
Forman, J C.	Platts-Mills, J F F	Yates, V F
George, Lady M Lloyd (Anglesey)	Rankin, J.	Zilliacus, K.
Goodrich, H. E.	Roberts, Emrys (Merioneth)	
Gruffydd, Prof. W. J[...]	Roberts, Goronwy (Caernarvonshire)	TELLERS FOR THE NOES:
Hudson, J. H. (Ealing, W.)	Royle, C.	Mr. Ayles and Mr. Byers.
Kendall W D	Shurmer, P	

Bill read the Third time, and passed.

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