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PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

THURSDAY, 1st NOVEMBER, 1917.

Vol. 98.—No. 133.

OFFICIAL REPORT.



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HOUSE OF COMMONS.

Thursday, 1st November, 1917.

[OFFICIAL REPORT.]

The House met at a Quarter before Three of the clock, Mr. SPEAKER in the Chair.

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS.

WAR.

SOUTH AMERICAN REPUBLICS
(SPECIAL EMBASSY).

1. Mr. LYNCH asked the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs whether special messages have been sent to each in turn of the South American Republics which have declared themselves on the side of the Allies; and whether he will consider the advisability of sending a special Embassy to each of these Republics in order to express the appreciation of this country and to stimulate by every available means good relations, projected on a permanent basis, between the South American Republics and this country?

The MINISTER of BLOCKADE (Lord Robert Cecil): The answer to the first part of the hon. Member's question is in the affirmative. As regards the second part, I am in full accord with the objects which the hon. Member has in view, and I will consider whether the specific suggestion he makes is practicable.

EX-KING CONSTANTINE.

2. Mr. LYNCH asked the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs whether he will order a Report to be prepared setting forth the main features of the rôle of King Constantine in Greece since the beginning of the War?

Lord R. CECIL: No, Sir; I do not think the matter is of sufficient public interest to require separate treatment of this kind.

Mr. KING: Will Papers be laid on this subject?

Lord R. CECIL: I must have notice of that question.

4. Mr. LYNCH asked whether it is now ascertained that from the beginning of the War ex-King Constantine was influenced by his relationship with the Kaiser to thwart by every means within his power the designs of the Allies; and whether any new guarantees have been provided that will ensure that King Alexander may not be moved by the same reasons to pursue a similar line of conduct?

Lord R. CECIL: The policy of the ex-King of Greece was undoubtedly hostile to the Allied Powers, though whether this was due to affection for his brother-in-law is another question. In view of what has happened, I do not think any such guarantee as is suggested is necessary.

Mr. LYNCH: Is it not a fact that at a vital period of the War in the Balkans the whole chances of the Allies were thrown aside by the presumed necessity of supporting that hostile monarch?

Lord R. CECIL: No, Sir; there is no truth in that suggestion.

Mr. WATT: Is it proposed to establish a Republic in Greece by any of the Allies?

Lord R. CECIL: I should not like to answer that question without notice.

5. Mr. LYNCH asked whether at any time since the beginning of the War the British Minister at Athens warned the Government that King Constantine had overstepped constitutional limits in his desire to aid Germany; and whether, in view of any such information, the Government acted on the theory that the importance of maintaining the dynasty of King Constantine outweighed all other considerations, or, if not, whether a statement will now be published giving reasons for upholding the power of this dangerous enemy?

Lord R. CECIL: The answer to the first part of the question is in the affirmative; that to the second and third parts in the negative.

CHINA (SPECIAL EMBASSY).

3. Mr. LYNCH asked whether any special message has been sent to the Chinese

[Mr. Lynch.]

Government expressing the sentiments of welcome and of appreciation for the noble rôle of China on the occasion of the entry of that country into the War on the side of the Allies; and whether he has considered the advisability of sending a special embassy to China on that account?

Lord R. CECIL: A message of appreciation was addressed by His Majesty the King to the President of the Republic. With regard to the second part of the question, the dispatch of a special Embassy to China is not considered necessary.

Mr. LYNCH: With respect to the first part of the answer, I beg the Noble Lord to consider that this question has been motivated by advice from China. I do hope that it will be made perfectly clear that China has been placed in the same status as other great Powers.

PEACE TERMS.

6. Mr. PONSONBY asked whether, in order that Parliament may have some control over the eventual settlement to be reached at the conclusion of the War, he will undertake to give this House immediate information of the nature, terms, and conditions of any offer he may receive, directly or indirectly, from the Central Powers?

Lord R. CECIL: The Government have every desire to take Parliament into their confidence, but I do not think it would be in the public interest to give the pledge required.

Mr. PONSONBY: May I ask, in view of the fact that the majority of the wars of the past have been unsatisfactorily concluded by treaties for which monarchs, ministers and diplomatists were alone responsible is it not imperative that some democratic sanction should be obtained at the concluding stages of this War in order that the settlement may rest upon the consent of the people and last?

Lord R. CECIL: That is a very large question to tack on to the one that has been put to me, and I am not at all clear what he means by democratic sanction. I suppose he means his own.

Mr. DAVID MASON: Will the Noble Lord be kind enough to say whether the Leader of the House has anything to say

with regard to the undertakings made to lay a White Paper with the exact words of the speeches made by enemy statesmen?

Lord R. CECIL: Obviously that is a question which must be addressed to my right hon. Friend.

Mr. HOGGE: Can my right hon. Friend say definitely whether or not such treaties will be approved before the House of Commons has given its sanction?

Lord R. CECIL: How can I be expected to answer that question?

59. Mr. TREVELYAN asked whether the present Government adheres to the policy announced by the late Prime Minister of taking Parliament into its confidence if proposals for a general peace are put forward by the enemy Governments?

The CHANCELLOR of the EXCHEQUER (Mr. Bonar Law): I do not know to what statement by the late Prime Minister the hon. Member is referring.

Mr. TREVELYAN: May I ask the right hon. Gentleman whether he has seen the answer given in this House on 8th December, 1915?

Mr. BONAR LAW: I cannot recall all the answers given to questions.

60. Mr. RICHARD LAMBERT asked the Prime Minister whether any person or persons left this country with the knowledge of the Government during the months of August or September with the intention of engaging in communications on the subject of terms of peace with other persons or person of enemy association; if so, whether such person or persons did in fact enter into such communications in Switzerland or elsewhere during any period in September or October; and whether the Government has received information as to the result or course of these communications?

Mr. BONAR LAW: The answer is in the negative.

WATER POWER (IRELAND).

7. Mr. BYRNE asked the Chief Secretary for Ireland what steps, if any, the Government propose to take for the utilisation of the water power of Ireland for manufacturing purposes?

The **CHIEF SECRETARY** for IRELAND (Mr. Duke): The Commissioners of Public Works in Ireland will be happy to place at the disposal of persons or bodies seeking to utilise water power in Ireland any information in their possession as to the amount, whether constant or intermittent, available in any particular case of which they have records. They have already done so when applied to. The Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction are doing what they can to encourage the re-working of corn mills for which water power in Ireland is specially suitable. The Department are advised that the prospects of using power generated from water in other than local industries would be comparatively small, except by long distance electric transmission, and even in this way only a very few cases could be worked to advantage. No other steps than those I have mentioned have been resolved upon.

Mr. JOHN O'CONNOR: Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that at the only place where there was a water fall and plant for the purpose of electricity they were obliged to have steam power by coal?

Mr. DUKE: I was not aware of it.

WAGES (IRELAND).

14. **Mr. BYRNE** asked the Chief Secretary if he will take steps to procure the same rate of wages in all its branches in Ireland as is paid for similar work in Great Britain?

Mr. DUKE: Rates of wages vary as between Great Britain and Ireland as well as in different parts of Great Britain and in different parts of Ireland. I do not see any prospect of introducing general uniformity of wages.

Mr. BYRNE: Is he aware of the turmoil and the trouble in Ireland at the present moment amongst the workers there, and is he aware that they are fighting for existence?

FOOD SUPPLIES.

TEA, SUGAR AND MILK (DUBLIN).

15. **Mr. BYRNE** asked the Chief Secretary if he is aware of the difficulty experienced in Dublin by the people in their endeavours to obtain tea, sugar, and milk;

if he will see that an equal portion of the tea and sugar imported will be sent to Ireland; and if he will say whether arrangements are yet made to safeguard a supply of milk for the coming winter months?

Mr. DUKE: As regards tea, I am informed that retailers in Ireland have recently had considerably larger stocks of tea per head of the population than retailers in Great Britain. A maximum price for tea comes into operation to-day.

As regards sugar, I understand arrangements have been made to secure to Ireland as a whole the same proportion of that country's consumption in 1915 as has been made available for other parts of the United Kingdom.

The Irish Food Control Committee have made recommendations to the Ministry of Food with the object of increasing the supply of milk available in Ireland, and several charitable bodies in Dublin are engaged in providing depots for the supply of milk at practically cost price.

The Grant for maternity and child welfare has also been recently extended so as to defray a moiety of the cost of providing milk and dinners for expectant and nursing mothers, and children under five years of age in necessitous cases.

Mr. BYRNE: Arising out of that part of the reply which states that there is an excessive surplus of tea in the country, is he aware that the reason is because the people are not able to buy it at the excessive price?

Mr. DUKE: I did not say there was an excessive surplus of tea. I said that the proportion in Ireland was larger than in this country.

Mr. HOGGE: Will the right hon. Gentleman also see that the people of this country get their fair share of the surplus of bacon and butter from Ireland?

Mr. KILBRIDE: Can the right hon. Gentleman say whether portions of this Grant will be given to aid charitable people who have supplied milk at cost price for so many years in various parts of the country?

Mr. DUKE: I am not quite sure what restrictions there are in the Act of Parliament which regulates that matter.

Mr. KILBRIDE: You know the case I mean.

Mr. DUKE: If the case to which the hon. Member refers comes within the provisions of the Act, I will certainly do what I can.

DEATH OF THOMAS ASHE.

17. Mr. BYRNE asked the Chief Secretary for Ireland on what date he was first informed of the treatment of the late Thomas Ashe; whether he or the Under-Secretary or Lord Lieutenant had power to get the treatment changed; and, if so, what exactly they did in the matter; whether the Prisons Board or officials received any instructions to change the treatment before Ashe died; if so, will he say on what date the instructions were issued?

Mr. DUKE: The first information I had with regard to the case of Thomas Ashe individually reached me in London after his death. At the end of the previous week a statement was made to me by the Lord Mayor of Dublin and Sir John Irwin as to the conditions in Mountjoy Prison affecting the group of prisoners of whom Thomas Ashe was one. The treatment of prisoners is the subject of Regulations made under the Prisons Acts, and, so far as I am aware, there was no interference by the Executive Government in Ireland, and no power to interfere, with the administration of these Regulations.

Mr. BYRNE: Will the right hon. Gentleman answer the latter part of the question, which asks whether the Lord Lieutenant has power to get the treatment changed?

Mr. DUKE: I have answered it.

Mr. BYRNE: Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that Lord Aberdeen in days gone by altered the treatment of prisoners who threatened to go on hunger strike? Has not the present Lord Lieutenant the same power?

Mr. DUKE: I do not know what Lord Aberdeen's acts were in different circumstances. I have sufficient responsibility in answering for my own.

Mr. BYRNE: Is it not a fact that Lord Aberdeen had the courage to alter the treatment of prisoners and that you have not?

MILITARY AUTHORITY (IRELAND).

18. Mr. LYNCH asked the Chief Secretary for Ireland whether he can define the limits of martial law in Ireland; whether he himself can exercise any executive power whatever unless with the consent, expressed or tacit, of the military authorities; and whether it was by his instructions or by the order of the military authorities that young men were arrested in Clare for marching with small bands of unarmed demonstrators?

Mr. DUKE: The only exceptional powers exercised in Ireland are those contained in the Defence of the Realm Act and Regulations. Certain authority is given thereby to the military authorities, including the power to deal with offences against the Regulations which prohibit the unauthorised practice of military exercises. I assume that the arrests in question were made in pursuance of this authority. The military authorities do not, so far as I am aware, exercise any other authority, except in regard to purely military matters.

Mr. LYNCH: In view of the reply, and in view of the speech of the Prime Minister in the Irish Debate, will the right hon. Gentleman advise him to withdraw the speech, seeing that the facts have been proved either futile or dishonest?

EMIGRATION.

21. Major CHAPPLE asked the Secretary of State for the Colonies whether he has any communication from any of the oversea Dominions in response to his appeal for comments on the Report of Lord Tennyson's Committee on Emigration; and whether he has taken any steps to set up the central emigration committee recommended in that Report?

The **UNDER-SECRETARY of STATE for the COLONIES (Mr. Hewins):** The Report of Lord Tennyson's Committee was communicated to the Governments of the oversea Dominions at the end of August. No replies have yet been received. As regards the latter part of the question, I would refer to the answer given by the Chancellor of the Exchequer to the hon. and gallant Member for Ludlow on 18th October.

LONDON COUNTY HALL
BUILDINGS.

22. Mr. P. A. HARRIS asked the First Commissioner of Works whether the Government has taken over the new London County Hall buildings; and, if so, on what terms; whether the building is to be completed and the occupation by the Government permanent; what are the terms of occupation; and what rent will be paid to the owners?

The **FIRST COMMISSIONER of WORKS** (Sir Alfred Mond): Certain portions of the London County Council new County Hall buildings have been acquired under the Defence of the Realm Act and Regulations, and are being temporarily completed for occupation by the Ministry of Food. Any claim for loss which may be sustained by the London County Council in consequence of such occupation will be determined by the Defence of the Realm Losses Commission. There is no intention on the part of the Government that the occupation shall be permanent.

Mr. HARRIS: What arrangements has the Department made for heating? Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that as recently as the end of July he stated that he was not aware that there was any provision for heating this building, and that it would be a very large and complicated and costly undertaking which must be carried out before the building could be used for offices in the winter. What provision is he going to make for heating the building?

Sir A. MOND: It is obvious we shall have to make some provision for heating, and temporary provision which will be quite sufficient for the purpose is going to be made.

Mr. HARRIS: If it can be done now, why could it not have been done six or nine months ago, when it was said to be impossible?

Sir A. MOND: I never said that it was impossible. I only said that it would be very difficult.

Mr. WATT: Are we to understand that the Government are going to pay rent to the London County Council for this building?

Sir A. MOND: My hon. Friends are to understand that it will be left to the Defence of the Realm (Losses) Commission to settle what shall be paid.

NURSES.

23. Major CHAPPLE asked the Pensions Minister whether his attention has been drawn to an invitation for subscriptions to provide endowment for the College of Nursing and a benevolent fund for individual nurses themselves; whether he is aware that this appeal is supported by Sir Douglas Haig on the assumption that the funds so subscribed are to be used for nurses who have lost their health during the War and that Sir Douglas Haig says that this is most necessary; and whether he will state fully what the Government proposes to do for nurses in order that the nursing profession may be relieved from anxiety in the matter and in order that the subscribing public may know whether the immediate financial need is for a college for the training of women not now nurses or for the help of nurses who have served in the War and have suffered in consequence?

The **PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY to the MINISTRY of PENSIONS** (Colonel Sir A. Griffith-Boscawen): I have seen in the newspapers a notice of the fund to which the hon. and gallant Member refers. The provision made by the State for nurses disabled through war service is set out in the Royal Warrant of the 1st August last. This provision is on far more liberal a scale than previously and I do not doubt that the organisers of the fund will take account of the assistance provided by the State in deciding how their funds may best be applied.

DISABLED SOLDIERS AND
SAILORS.
TREATMENT OF RHEUMATISM AND
TUBERCULOSIS.

24. Mr. ANDERSON asked the Pensions Minister whether he is considering how to provide curative treatment on scientific lines for all sailors and soldiers suffering from rheumatism and tuberculosis; and whether he will consider the desirability of making grants, so that, in addition to their pension, they might reside in health institutions under the care of specialists until every effort toward cure is made, seeing that this would, even in the monetary sense, be cheaper than to grant them pensions whilst at the same time allowing them to lapse into chronic invalids?

Sir A. GRIFFITH-BOSCAWEN: Under the instructions of the Ministry, local

[Sir A. Griffith-Boscawen.]

war pension committees have full power to make arrangements with any existing institutions for the treatment of rheumatism, and those powers have been widely used. Should it be found that existing accommodation is insufficient, the Minister is ready to give assistance towards meeting the need.

Treatment for tuberculosis is provided by the National Health Insurance Commissioners in conjunction with the local health authorities. In order that the disabled man may obtain the fullest advantage of their arrangements, grants have been made to assist the funds of Insurance Committees, and, in addition, the Minister has undertaken to provide the whole cost of treatment for advanced cases of this disease. Moreover, the Ministry are at present considering the question of providing after-care colonies where treatment and training may be given in cases of this disease in its early stages. The hon. Member may rest assured that every means possible will be adopted to bring about an effective cure wherever cure is possible.

AIR RAIDS.

COMPENSATION FOR DAMAGE.

25. Mr. DENMAN asked the Joint Financial Secretary to the Treasury what degree of compensation will be given for material damage arising from enemy bombs and British shells, respectively, during air raids; and whether any difference will be made if the sufferer is insured?

Mr. BALDWIN (Joint Financial Secretary to the Treasury): There will be an announcement made almost immediately of the full terms of the new Government scheme of air raid compensation and I would ask the hon. Member to await its issue.

Sir J. D. REES: Is it conceded as a matter of principle that the subject is entitled to compensation for damages from the War?

Mr. BALDWIN: That concession, if any, will be found in the terms that will be announced.

Sir J. D. REES: Will so serious a matter be announced as a settled matter, or will this House have any opportunity of expressing an opinion upon it?

Mr. BALDWIN: As a settled matter.

LIQUID GOLD (IMPORTATION).

26. Commander WEDGWOOD asked the Joint Financial Secretary to the Treasury, with reference to the importation of liquid gold for the pottery trade from America, whether he informed the hon. Member for Newcastle that such importation would now be permitted; whether he now finds that he made a mistake; and what is the explanation of the exceptional delay that has obstructed the consideration of this matter?

The PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY to the BOARD OF TRADE (Mr. Wardle): My hon. Friend has asked me to reply to this question. Arrangements are in progress for admitting a limited quantity of liquid gold. I regret the delay in making the necessary arrangements, which was due to a misunderstanding.

Commander WEDGWOOD: Is it not a fact that the delay in making these arrangements was solely due to the fact that the representative of Johnson, Matthey and Co. was on this Committee, appointed by the Board of Trade, and might wish to make it a monopoly of this firm?

Mr. WARDLE: I cannot say that.

Sir C. HENRY: Will those manufacturers who require liquid gold be able to obtain it from the same sources from which they were accustomed to obtain it?

Mr. WARDLE: I cannot answer that.

Commander WEDGWOOD: Why is the first part of the question not answered? I addressed it to the Financial Secretary to the Treasury because he told me that the matter was settled as the pottery trade desired.

Mr. WARDLE: The matter has been referred to the Board of Trade, because they are making arrangements for the liquid gold.

MILITARY SERVICE.

CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTORS.

28. Mr. SNOWDEN asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether Mr. Albert Taylor, a conscientious objector, now in Shrewsbury Gaol, has persistently refused to do prison tasks; whether, as a consequence, he has been punished by being put on bread and water for nine days and then the ordinary

diet for nine days, and so on alternately; and will he say whether this punishment is in accordance with prison regulations and what the present state of Taylor's health is?

The **SECRETARY OF STATE** for the **HOME DEPARTMENT** (Sir George Cave): The prisoner in question has been punished for refusal to work. His punishment has been in accordance with the prison regulations, which prescribe that no prisoner who has been upon punishment diet shall be again placed upon it until an interval has elapsed equal to his last period of dietary punishment. He is reported by the medical officer to be mentally and physically fit.

WESTMINSTER APPEAL TRIBUNAL.

70. Major **NEWMAN** asked the Minister of Munitions whether he will give the reasons that led the Ministry of Munitions to override the decision of the Appeal Tribunal at Westminster on 2nd April, 1917, in the case of E. W. Tedder, age thirty-three, Class A, general manager of Elliott-Fisher, an American company carrying on the business of business organisers and manufacturing parts of book-keeping machines in America, at a salary of £1,200 a year; and will he say whether the Appeal Tribunal was informed, and on what date, that the Ministry of Munitions intended to override its decision, and did it acquiesce in the course taken?

Mr. KELLAWAY (Joint Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Munitions): The application made to the Ministry of Munitions on 12th April, 1917, for the exemption of Mr. Tedder contained a statement that the tribunal offered no objection to the application. The Ministry had then, and have now, no doubt as to the good faith of this statement, and in recommending the War Office to give temporary exemption to Mr. Tedder had no reason to believe that they were overriding the tribunal. From subsequent correspondence which has passed between the tribunal and the Department it is clear that there was a misunderstanding. In view of this misunderstanding, the Department have informed the National Service Department that they are prepared to withdraw the request for the retention of Mr. Tedder in civil employment.

GOATS (GAS EXPERIMENTS).

29. Sir **GEORGE GREENWOOD** asked the Home Secretary whether a number of goats have been and now are from time to time being experimented upon with poisonous gases and liquids at the Stock Farm, Porton; how many of such goats have been used for these experiments up to the present time, and whether such experiments generally result in the death of the animals subjected to them either immediately or after a prolonged period of suffering; how long it is intended that such experiments should be continued; and whether they have received his sanction?

Sir G. CAVE: Goats have been used under my sanction for these experiments, which are essential for preserving the lives of our soldiers exposed to the enemy's gas attacks. I do not think it desirable to give further details.

Sir G. GREENWOOD: Am I right in thinking that it is impossible to make use of anæsthetics in these experiments?

Sir G. CAVE: I am quite sure that every possible step is taken to avoid inflicting unnecessary pain.

Sir G. GREENWOOD: I only ask whether, as a fact, anæsthetics are used for these animals?

Sir G. CAVE: I have no doubt that they are, but I will make inquiry.

Mr. CHANCELLOR: When the poisonous nature of the gas has been demonstrated by this process, are the same experiments repeated?

Sir G. CAVE: I should certainly think not.

MR. PHILIP LASZLO (INTERNMENT).

30. **Mr. BUTCHER** asked the Home Secretary whether he has any information to show that Mr. Laszlo at or about the time of his naturalisation or thereafter made any statements, oral or in writing, to indicate the real reason why he was seeking to get or had got naturalised in this country; and whether such statements indicated a desire on his part to abandon his allegiance to Hungary, the country of his origin, and to become a loyal subject of the British Crown?

Sir G. CAVE: Mr. Laszlo, when applying for naturalisation, stated that he did

[Sir G. Cave.] so from a desire to continue and improve his business as an artist. At a later date he stated that his desire was that his son should become a British subject, and avoid liability to military service under Hungarian law. He added that he was much attached to this country, and was anxious to become a subject of the country to which his wife belonged, and in which he had made his home. On the grant of the certificate of naturalisation he took the oath of allegiance to the British Crown.

Mr. BUTCHER: Are we to understand that the then Home Secretary was satisfied from the statements of Mr. Laszlo that he desired and intended to become a loyal subject of the British Crown?

Sir G. CAVE: No doubt from his statements and the other information obtained. If the hon. and learned Gentleman will ask his next question, I will answer it.

Sir J. D. REES: Is it the case in Hungary, as in Germany, that a subject cannot abandon his allegiance?

Sir G. CAVE: That is the next question.

Mr. MACMASTER: Is there any renunciation of foreign allegiance?

31. **Mr. BUTCHER** asked the Home Secretary what independent inquiries were made, and of whom, by the Secretary of State for Home Affairs between the date of the application for naturalisation by Mr. Laszlo on 28th July, 1914, and the granting of his certificate of naturalisation on 29th August, 1914, as to the loyalty of Mr. Laszlo to the British Crown; and whether Mr. Laszlo has before or since his naturalisation obtained or taken any steps to obtain denaturalisation in Hungary?

Sir G. CAVE: Inquiry was made of the Police, as is usual before an application for a certificate of naturalisation is granted. As regards the second part of the question, though I cannot speak with certainty as to Hungarian law, it appears probable that Mr. Laszlo, by his naturalisation in this country, has lost his Hungarian nationality.

Mr. REDDY: Has Lord Milner gone through this formula?

Mr. BUTCHER: Has the attention of my right hon. Friend been called to the instructions issued by the Home Office in

relation to naturalisation, which require that independent inquiries as to the loyalty of the applicant should be made, and is he satisfied that adequate inquiries were made in this case for that purpose?

Sir G. CAVE: I was not Home Secretary at the time, as my hon. Friend knows. I am very familiar with the instructions given, and I assume that they were followed in this case.

Mr. G. FABER: Was the only guarantee of Mr. Laszlo's loyalty the perfunctory guarantee of the four sponsors referred to the other day, aided by such information as the police had?

Sir G. CAVE: In substance, that was so. The statements of the four sponsors, who were very well known, together with the information given by the police, were accepted as sufficient.

Mr. FABER: Is it not a fact that the right hon. Gentleman stated in almost so many words the other day, in answer to a question put by me, that these sponsors were merely formal?

Mr. PEMBERTON BILLING: Have these particular gentlemen become sponsors for any other Germans, and, if so, will their cases be inquired into?

Sir G. CAVE: I do not know, but I think it highly improbable. [HON. MEMBERS: "Why?"] Because only a very few Germans have been naturalised at all during the War, and those only during the first few weeks.

Mr. BILLING: Have these gentlemen been sponsors for any Germans who have not been naturalised?

Mr. SPEAKER: We are getting a very long way from the question on the Paper.

PUBLICITY CAMPAIGN.

Mr. KING: In asking the first Question of the Minister of National Service, may I say I am most glad to welcome him?

Mr. SPEAKER: This is not the occasion for the complimentary statements.

Mr. KING: I have great pleasure in asking the Minister of National Service whether he will publish the names of the newspapers, with amounts given to each, to which was paid £54,041 9s. in connection with the Publicity Campaign?

The MINISTER of NATIONAL SERVICE (Sir Auckland Geddes): The following sums were paid to the principal newspapers:

	£	s.	d.
"Daily Mail"	2,680	15	9
"Daily News"	1,434	7	6
"Daily Chronicle"	1,082	1	0
"The Times"	1,050	10	8
"Daily Telegraph"	1,007	1	10
"Morning Post"	737	8	11
"Yorkshire Post"	655	10	11
"Glasgow Herald"	636	4	11
"Scotsman"	536	18	6
"Manchester Guardian"	410	8	0

As there are over 2,000 newspapers in Great Britain, the clerical labour involved in tabulating the smaller sums paid to other newspapers cannot be supplied at such short notice, and it is hoped that the information now given will suffice.

Mr. KING: Did the papers fix their own prices or were these settled by the advertising experts?

Sir A. GEDDES: I shall require notice of that question.

42. Mr. KING asked the Minister of National Service whether he will give the names of the experts on advertising on whose advice £33,838 14s. 7d. was spent on printing, posters, leaflets, etc.?

Sir A. GEDDES: The printing and distribution of National Service posters was carried out by the Publicity Controller employed by the National Service Department, Mr. Paul E. Derrick, and the quantities ordered were largely governed by the demands of the local committees. The sum mentioned includes the cost of all leaflets, etc., issued by the National Service Department, consequently the responsibility of the Publicity Controller for these was limited to the actual production. The styles and quantities were fixed by the heads of the various branches of the Department.

Mr. HOGGE: Why was this expert chosen for this work, seeing that his work consisted principally in advertising whisky and that he was an American, while there were plenty of British experts whose services were tendered but were never asked?

AGRICULTURE (VOLUNTEERS).

43. Mr. KING asked the Minister of National Service whether Mr. Harling

Turner advised that 40,000 volunteers could be obtained for agriculture; how many of these volunteers are now engaged in agriculture; and whether Mr. Harling Turner remains in the service of the Ministry of National Service?

Sir A. GEDDES: In reply to the first part of the question, it was estimated that from 25,000 to 40,000 persons would volunteer for service on the land. To the second, no information is available except in regard to those in receipt of subsistence allowance, of whom there are still remaining, approximately, 330. In reply to the last part of the question, Mr. Harling Turner ceased to be a salaried official of the Department on the 9th September. Mr. Harling Turner did, however, most excellent work in connection with food production.

DISTURBANCES AT PUBLIC MEETINGS.

33. Mr. STANTON asked the Home Secretary if his attention has been called to the fact that organised bands of independent labour persons, syndicalists, pro-Hun, and anti-British peace advocates make it a point to invade and disturb the meetings of loyalist speakers who endeavour to support the Government and war aims; and if he will see that loyal British speakers have the same protection in their public meetings as is given to those whose disloyal vapourings are poisoning the minds of the workers and seriously retarding the successful progress of the War?

Mr. CHANCELLOR: May I ask whether the policy of excluding unnecessary adjectives in questions is abandoned in this case in order to allow the introduction of the offensive terms "pro-Huns" and "anti-British," and whether it is extended to the hon. Member because of his success in breaking up meetings of persons with whom he disagrees?

Mr. SPEAKER: You must call things by their names.

Mr. CHANCELLOR: Will a similar licence be extended to persons who have not the same distinction as the hon. Member who happen not to agree?

Mr. SPEAKER: I will try to hold the balance as equally as I can.

Sir G. CAVE: No complaints of this nature have reached me, and I have no

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reason to think that loyal speakers stand in need of police protection in any part of the country. If protection were required, I am certain that it would be readily given.

Mr. STANTON: Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that recently in Wales every loyal speaker who has been there has been hustled and shouted down by organised bands of these hooligans?

Sir G. CAVE: No, I am not aware of that, but I am aware that a loyal welcome was extended to General Smuts, and they heard every word he said.

SPECIAL CONSTABULARY (METAL HELMETS).

34. **Lord CLAUD HAMILTON** asked the Home Secretary why such an insufficient number of metal helmets have been issued to the members of the Metropolitan Special Constabulary, who are on duty in the open during hostile air-raids; and if he will take immediate steps to make good this deficiency?

Sir G. CAVE: I have no reason to think there is any insufficiency of metal helmets. The metal helmets are intended for the use of the constabulary employed on any duty necessitating their presence in the streets at a time when the guns are firing or may be expected to fire, and not as part of the general equipment.

Lord C. HAMILTON: Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that on the occasion of a recent raid 300 special constables of the detachment of which I am the head, paraded for outdoor duty, and there were only 100 metal helmets available?

Sir G. CAVE: I will inquire into it. A very large number of helmets have been provided.

CENSORSHIP (PRIVATE CORRESPONDENCE).

35 and 36. **Mr. PONSONBY** asked the Home Secretary (1) whether orders signed by him authorising the breaking of inland correspondence are made for letters and postcards only or also affect newspapers, circulars, parcels, telegrams, telephone messages, and all matters carried or transmitted by the Post Office; whether letters

so-opened are subject to delay or to the risk of non-delivery; (2) whether warrants signed by him for the opening of inland correspondence are made for definite periods in each individual case or are of permanent effect; and, if made for indefinite periods, whether these warrants are periodically reconsidered with a view to their possible withdrawal?

Sir GEORGE CAVE: The extent of these warrants depends on circumstances. In most cases they apply to "all postal packets and telegrams." Every effort is made to avoid any serious delay in delivery, and only in very special cases—for instance, when stoppage is necessary in order to stop the commission of some serious crime—would delivery be stopped. The warrants are reconsidered at frequent intervals and withdrawn if they are no longer required.

ROYAL NAVY (INCREASED PAY).

40. **Mr. GILBERT** asked the Secretary to the Admiralty from what date the increased pay for men in the Navy comes into force, also when the first payment of the same will be made to the Navy; and if any back amounts due to the men will be paid with the first payment?

The **PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY to the ADMIRALTY** (Dr. Macnamara): The increased pay recently granted to certain classes of seamen and Marines comes into force as from the 1st October, 1917. Orders to this effect were issued to the Fleet on the 5th October, and payment should in ordinary course be made as from the earlier date at the monthly or weekly issue of pay next following the receipt of the Admiralty Order. Effect will be given to the other concessions to the men of the Navy and Marines in respect of relief from allotment, hospital stoppages, etc., as from the same date. Of course, any arrears to which a man may be entitled under the conditions attaching to the concessions will be paid, though it may very well be that this will not be possible with the first payment.

Mr. GILBERT: Have any of the men yet received the increased rate?

Dr. MACNAMARA: If the Order of 5th October has already reached the depot or the ship they have got the money. If it has not, they will get it, and they will be paid as from 1st October in every case.

NATIONAL SERVICE.

DIRECTORS OF RECRUITING.

44. Major NEWMAN asked the Minister for National Service whether he will give the salaries of the Director-General of Recruiting and of the Deputy-Director-General; and will he say whether the latter is a whole-time official or not?

Sir A. GEDDES: The salary of the Director-General of Recruiting is £1,200 per annum. This is the same amount as has been paid in the past by the War Office to their Military Director of Recruiting. The salary of the Deputy-Director-General has been fixed at £1,000 per annum, and he will be a whole time official. As compared with the old organisation this official replaces in part the Inspector of Registration and Recruiting and the Deputy-Inspector of Registration and Recruiting as well as the Deputy-Director of Recruiting.

Major NEWMAN: Does that salary of £1,000 a year include his pay as a minister or clergyman?

Sir A. GEDDES: There is nothing else paid out of public funds.

Mr. HOGGE: Will the right hon. Gentleman say whether these gentlemen have simply been transferred from the War Office into civilian clothes?

Sir A. GEDDES: The Director-General of Recruiting is Mr. Seymour Lloyd, who was employed under the War Office for some time as the legal adviser of the Recruiting Department. He is a member of the Parliamentary bar. The Deputy-Director-General of Recruiting is the Rev. J. R. McLean, who has been working with the Recruiting Department for some time.

Mr. HOGGE: Is it the case that the men are the same, only they are differently dressed?

BLIND PEOPLE (COMMITTEE'S REPORT).

45. Mr. DENMAN asked the Prime Minister whether a Bill will shortly be introduced to give effect to the recent Report of the Committee on the Blind?

The PRESIDENT of the LOCAL GOVERNMENT BOARD (Mr. Hayes Fisher): My right hon. Friend has asked me to answer this question. I would

refer my hon. Friend to the answer given to the hon. Member for York on Tuesday last.

PETROLEUM (PRODUCTION) BILL.

46. Mr. KING asked the Government's intentions as to the Petroleum (Production) Bill; and whether the provision to create a petroleum royalties fund will be dropped?

Mr. BONAR LAW: In consequence of the pressure of more urgent questions arising out of the War, the Government have not yet had time to give consideration to this subject. I hope to be able to give a reply before the end of next week.

Mr. KING: Before a decision is arrived at will the right hon. Gentleman consult what the Prime Minister said about the royalties at Limehouse on the 30th July, 1909?

Mr. BONAR LAW: I have had an opportunity of reading it and I have no need to consult it.

ENEMY AIR RAIDS.

DEFENCES.

47. Mr. LYNCH asked whether it is intended to leave the air defences of London in the same hands as heretofore?

Mr. BONAR LAW: The answer is in the affirmative.

Mr. BILLING: Has the right hon. Gentleman any information to give to the House as to the defence of London last night, and whether any enemy machines were brought down?

Mr. SPEAKER: That does not arise out of the question.

57. Mr. BILLING asked the Prime Minister whether he will state the day on which it is proposed to introduce a Bill for the creation of an Air Ministry?

Mr. BONAR LAW: I cannot add anything to what I said upon this subject yesterday.

Colonel CLAUDE LOWTHER: Do not these nightly air raids point to a flagrant lack of cohesion between the coast and land air defences?

Mr. BONAR LAW: If the hon. Member thinks so I fancy he is the only Member of the House who thinks so.

Colonel LOWTHER: If I am the only Member of the House who thinks so—which I very much doubt—is it not a fact that millions of people in the country think so? Will the right hon. Gentleman inquire?

Mr. BILLING: Can the right hon. Gentleman say whether it is proposed that the new Air Ministry Bill should be read for the first time and then disposed of, or are the stages to be taken with all dispatch?

Mr. BONAR LAW: Taken with all the dispatch that the extent of time required for other business makes possible.

Mr. BILLING: In view of that fact, will the right hon. Gentleman refrain from adjourning the House at eight o'clock on moonlight nights, such as Monday and Tuesday?

Mr. BONAR LAW: It is not I who adjourns the House, but the absence of speakers who wish to take part in the Debate.

INJURY AND DAMAGE (COMPENSATION).

53. **Mr. BILLING** asked whether persons who have experienced personal injury or damage to property by anti-aircraft fire are entitled to the same compensation as those injured by enemy bombs; and whether the dependants of persons killed from shock, whether same is caused by explosive warnings, or our own defences, or enemy bombs, are entitled to compensation?

Mr. BONAR LAW: Damage to property or personal injury is treated in the same way whether caused by enemy attack or our defence.

Mr. BILLING: Will the right hon. Gentleman say when we may expect a clear statement from the Government as to the position of the people injured in air raids?

Mr. BONAR LAW: A very clear statement was given by me in answer to the hon. Member for East Edinburgh some time ago.

Mr. HOGGE: Can the right hon. Gentleman say whether in that respect the Government has yet made up its mind that

when separate allowance is paid it will not be less than the amount paid in pension to the soldiers?

Mr. SPEAKER: That does not arise out of the question.

IRISH CONVENTION.

48 and 49. **Major NEWMAN** asked the Prime Minister (1) whether the Government is pledged to give immediate legislative effect to any recommendations arrived at by a substantial majority of the selected Irishmen now sitting in Convention in Dublin; or whether the electorate of the United Kingdom will be first consulted with regard to Constitutional changes in the relations between Ireland and Great Britain; (2) whether he is aware that a substantial majority of the Members supporting the Government were returned to this House with a mandate to maintain the legislative union between Great Britain and Ireland; and does the Government intend to break the union between the two countries without directly obtaining an authority from the electorates returning these Members?

Mr. BONAR LAW: I cannot add anything to the answer which I gave to the hon. Member for St. Augustine's on the 24th May last.

Major NEWMAN: Can the right hon. Gentleman tell me when the pledge was given?

Mr. BONAR LAW: The answer which I gave on the 24th ult. may be regarded as a pledge. It was that if the Convention were substantially agreed the Government would carry their decision into effect.

PROLONGATION OF PARLIAMENT.

50. **Major NEWMAN** asked the Prime Minister whether he has fixed the day on which the House will be asked, owing to the continuance of the War, to set aside the Septennial Act; and is it the intention of the Government to confine itself strictly during the remainder of the life of Parliament to placing on the Statute Book measures that have already been introduced or which deal directly with the carrying on of the War?

Mr. BONAR LAW: The answer to the first part of the question is in the negative. As regards the second part, we shall

certainly avoid any controversial legislation which is not necessitated by war conditions.

SPIRITS (AGE LIMIT).

51. Mr. HOGGE asked the Prime Minister whether, in view of the contemplated additional release of spirit from bond over the 50 per cent. allowance, he will give an assurance that the present age limit of spirits will be maintained, so that immature spirit may not be put on the market for consumption?

Mr. PARKER (Lord of the Treasury): I have been asked to reply. No decision has at present been reached in respect of the proposed additional release of spirit from bond. In any case there is an adequate supply of mature spirit in bond on which to draw, and no immature spirit will be put on the market for consumption.

ENEMY ALIENS.

54. Mr. BILLING asked the Prime Minister if he will now establish a central alien office to co-ordinate the work of the various Intelligence Departments attached to the Home Office, the War Office, the Admiralty, and the Ministry of Munitions, respectively?

Sir G. CAVE: My right hon. Friend has asked me to reply to this. The hon. Member's proposal is not a practicable one. The four Departments he mentions are working in close co-operation, and if a new Department such as he suggests were created it would inevitably produce overlapping and dislocation.

56. Mr. BILLING asked the Prime Minister whether it is proposed, in the event of enemy aliens using their freedom for purposes detrimental to the cause of the Allies, to take action against their guarantor under the Defence of the Realm Act?

Sir G. CAVE: My right hon. Friend has asked me to reply to this. The meaning of the question is not clear. Every alien enemy applying for exemption from internment or repatriation is asked to produce references from British subjects who can speak as to his character and loyalty. These references are taken into consideration along with the other facts of the case, but they are not in the nature of

guarantees and no action can be taken upon them if the statements are made in good faith. In certain cases, however, it has been the practice, by way of extra precaution, to require that a bond or bonds for the alien's good behaviour should be entered into by responsible British subjects, and in the event of the alien failing to comply with the conditions of such a bond the amount of it would be forfeited. In neither case does the Defence of the Realm Act apply.

Mr. BILLING: Will the right hon. Gentleman take this opportunity of placing upon the Table of the House a list of Germans and naturalised Germans, and their guarantors in this country?

Sir G. CAVE: As the question is asked, I will look into the matter.

Mr. BUTCHER: Can the right hon. Gentleman say whether any bonds were given for the good behaviour of Mr. Laszlo, and, if so, have they been forfeited?

Sir G. CAVE: I believe they were not given.

NAVAL AND MILITARY SITUATION (OFFICIAL STATEMENTS).

55. Mr. BILLING asked the Prime Minister whether his attention has been called to the conflicting official statement with regard to the naval and military situation of the Allies recently and simultaneously made by members of the War Cabinet; and whether, with a view to retaining the confidence and respect of the people of this country, he will from time to time issue authoritative statements from the War Council?

Mr. BONAR LAW: The answer is in the negative.

Mr. BILLING: In view of the fact that General Smuts is regarded as the gramophone of the Government, will they be more careful?

ARMY SACRIFICES.

58. Mr. STANTON asked the Prime Minister whether, in view of the fact that the people of Scotland and Wales are making equal sacrifices for the State with the peoples of England, the Government will take such measures not further to offend the feelings of these Celtic peoples

[Mr. Stanton.]

by constant references to the sacrifices of the English people and the English troops, but that an order shall be issued compelling newspapers, public speakers, Government Departments, etc., to substitute the names "Britain" and "British" for "England" and "English" when circumstances warrant it henceforth?

Mr. BONAR LAW: I do not think that the course suggested by the hon. Member is necessary.

Mr. WATT: Is it not the case that these regiments are described as English when they are very successful and as Scottish if they are unfortunate?

Mr. BONAR LAW: As my hon. Friend knows, I have a prejudice in the case of Scotland; but in my view it is not Scotland or any other nationality which has suffered most in this respect during the War.

MUNITIONS.

ORDERS IN CANADA.

62. **Major CHAPPLE** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether there has been a contraction of orders sent to Canada for shells and other munitions; whether this is in consequence of the difficulties in the matter of exchange; and whether any attempt is being made to put the exchange between the two countries on a better footing?

Mr. BONAR LAW: It would not be in the public interest to discuss this matter.

PETERBOROUGH GAS COMPANY.

69. **Sir G. GREENWOOD** asked the Minister of Munitions whether, in view of the fact that, owing to the want of a hot coke conveyor the Peterborough Gas Company is unable to supply the munition factories in that city with the gas they require to carry on their operations, and seeing that such coke conveyor has been on order since June, 1916, he will now give permission to the engineers with whom the order has been placed, and who have already received payment for the same, to supply this necessary conveyor without further delay?

Sir WORTHINGTON EVANS (Joint Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Munitions): Permission to supply the hot coke conveyor to the Peterborough

Gas Company was not refused by the Ministry, but owing to more urgent war orders the firm concerned was, for some time, unable to give delivery. I understand that delivery of the various parts will now be completed very shortly.

ENGINEERING TRADE (WAGES).

71. **Sir E. GOULDING** asked the Minister of Munitions whether he can state in a more definite classification the men who are to receive, and who are not to receive, the advance recently made of 12½ per cent. on day work in the engineering trade; and whether he is aware that the interpretation of the Order in some firms includes sections of men not included by others, thus causing much misunderstanding?

Mr. KELLAWAY: A complete classification of the classes of workmen entitled to the 12½ per cent. bonus cannot be given until a decision has been come to on the numerous applications for inclusion now being received. A Committee is sitting day by day at the Ministry dealing with these applications, and every possible effort is being made immediately to issue a complete list of all those entitled to a share in the bonus. A preliminary classification has already been made and issued to the persons concerned.

Mr. G. TERRELL: Will the hon. Gentleman issue the list of those who are not to be paid this increased rate, because probably he is aware that there is great confusion?

Mr. KELLAWAY: There is confusion, but I think that it would only increase it to issue the two lists.

CONTROLLED FIRMS (WAGES).

72. **Mr. STEWART** asked the Minister of Munitions the amount paid out in wages and salaries by firms under control and by national factories under his Department in 1915, in 1916, and in 1917 up to the end of September?

Mr. KELLAWAY: In view of the enormous amount of work which the preparation of such a return would throw on the Department and on the depleted staffs of the firms concerned, my right hon. Friend regrets that he cannot agree to my hon. Friend's request.

Mr. STEWART: Does the hon. Gentleman mean to say that his Department does not know the wages paid to its own employes?

Mr. KELLAWAY: The wages paid to our own employés could easily be given, but this is a question of the wages paid to something like 5,000 firms throughout the country.

EJECTION OF MUNITION WORKERS (COVENTRY).

73. **Mr. T. WILSON** asked the Minister of Munitions whether, in view of the housing problem in Coventry and the frequent cases of ejection of munition workers, he proposes to specify Coventry as a special area under the Defence of the Realm Regulations relating to ejection of munition workers?

Mr. KELLAWAY: A local investigation is now in progress on the question as to whether Coventry should be specified as a special area under Defence of the Realm Regulation 2A. I will inform my hon. Friend of the result.

OFFICE UNDER THE CROWN (MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT).

63. **Mr. LLEWELYN WILLIAMS** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will agree to make the Return as to Members of this House who hold office under the Crown standing in the name of the hon. Member for the Carmarthen Boroughs?

Mr. BONAR LAW: The answer is in the affirmative. The Return will take some time to prepare.

CAPTURED SUBMARINE EXHIBITIONS.

64. **Mr. GILBERT** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether the Government sent to the United States a captured German submarine in order to assist the raising of the Liberty Loan in America; and if he will arrange that some captured German submarines are exhibited in London and other large centres in order to help the purchasing of the new bonds in this country?

Mr. BONAR LAW: I shall consider the hon. Member's suggestion in consultation with my right hon. Friend the First Lord of the Admiralty.

IRISH BOUNDARY COMMISSION.

65. **Sir F. BANBURY** asked when an opportunity will be given to this House to discuss the Instructions given to the Irish Boundary Commissioners?

Mr. BONAR LAW: As I have already said in answer to a previous question, I hope that the House may not consider such a discussion necessary.

Sir F. BANBURY: Does the right hon. Gentleman consider that the Instruction which gives to an Irish vote double the weight, or nearly double the weight, that is given to an English vote ought not to be debated in this House?

Mr. BONAR LAW: The Instructions are only part of the general principle of the Bill. So far as this is concerned, other opportunities have been given and taken advantage of by my right hon. Friend for dealing with it.

Sir F. BANBURY: What opportunities have been given of dealing with this particular question?

Mr. BONAR LAW: I do not know what opportunities have been given, exactly, but I heard a speech from my right hon. Friend on the point the other day.

INCOME TAX (DEPRECIATION OF ASSETS).

67. **Mr. G. TERRELL** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether, in connection with the next Budget, he can see his way to arrange for the allowance of depreciation of assets on the same basis as the allowance of depreciation now made in respect to the Excess Profits Tax?

Mr. BONAR LAW: My hon. Friend's proposal would involve a general revision of the existing Income Tax provisions as regards allowances for depreciation. This must, I think, await the investigations of the Committee which is to be set up as soon as the War is over to inquire into the Income Tax in all its aspects.

ROYAL ARMY MEDICAL SERVICES.

68. **Sir H. GREENWOOD** asked the Minister of National Service what part of the Royal Army Medical Services now under the War Office his Department intends to take over?

Sir A. GEDDES: The Ministry of National Service has taken over from today that part of the functions of the Army Medical Service which is concerned with the medical examination of the physical

[Sir A. Geddes.]

fitness of recruits and potential recruits. The responsibility of the Army Medical Service for the performance of these functions passes completely to the Ministry of National Service. Civilian medical practitioners who have been employed on Recruiting Medical Boards will, however, be eligible for re-employment under National Service.

Old Age Pensions.

8. Mr. O'LEARY asked the Chief Secretary whether he is aware that on February last Michael Driscoll and his wife, resident at Lissagriffen, Goleen, county Cork, were both in receipt of the full old age pension; that during that month the wife died, and that immediately thereafter the Local Government Board deprived the old man of his pension; whether he can state the grounds for this action; and what action he proposes to take in the matter?

Mr. DUKE: I understand the facts are as stated. On his wife's death Michael Driscoll ceased to receive the benefit of Section 2 (2) of the Old Age Pensions Act, 1911, under which the means of one of a married couple are calculated at half the total means of the couple. His means thereby became over £31 10s. a year. The farm consists of 14 acres, of which 9 acres are good land.

11. Mr. O'LEARY asked the Chief Secretary whether he can state the grounds on which Mary O'Brien, Ballybawn, Ballydehob, was refused an old age pension, having regard to the fact that she is possessed of no means whatever; whether he is aware that the local pension officer, before reporting on her application, did not interview the applicant nor make any inquiries as to her means at her home or from any relative who was in a position to know about her circumstances; and whether he proposes to take any action in the matter?

Mr. DUKE: There is an appeal pending. I am making inquiries as to the latter part of the question.

12. Mr. O'LEARY asked the Chief Secretary whether he can state the grounds on which an old age pension has been refused to Frank Goggin, of Barryroe, in the Schull Union; and whether he is aware of the fact that this man is without any income or means of livelihood whatever?

Mr. DUKE: This claim was disallowed on the 23rd November, 1914, on the ground that Frank Goggin had not complied with the statutory condition as to residence in the United Kingdom.

13. Mr. O'LEARY asked the Chief Secretary whether, having regard to the fact that hundreds of applicants for old age pensions have, contrary to the letter and spirit of the Old Age Pensions Acts, been refused pensions and others deprived of their pensions, he will institute an inquiry into the general administration of these Acts?

Mr. DUKE: So far as the Local Government Board are aware the statement contained in the question that hundreds of applicants for old age pensions have, contrary to the letter and spirit of the Old Age Pensions Acts, been refused pensions and others deprived of their pensions is not correct. The Board cannot, of course, answer for the decisions of local pension committees on which there has been no appeal. No case for an inquiry is made out by the facts within my own knowledge. Particular complaints are always carefully considered.

Mr. O'LEARY: Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that practically every local pensions committee in Ireland has protested against the decision of the Local Government Board?

Mr. DUKE: The hon. Member and many other hon. Members have brought particular cases to my notice. I have investigated every one of them, and in the majority of the cases I came to the conclusion that the Local Government Board had discharged the duty which the Statute imposed upon them.

Land Purchase (Ireland).

9. Mr. O'LEARY asked what steps, if any, have been taken by the Estates Commissioners to provide a holding for Patrick Regan, of Rock Island, Goleen, county Cork, evicted tenant?

Mr. DUKE: The Estates Commissioners have received an application from Patrick Regan for reinstatement in a holding on the O'Grady estate, county Cork, formerly occupied by his late father, and they have noted his name for consideration in the allotment of such untenanted land as they may acquire.

10. Mr. O'LEARY asked the Chief Secretary whether he can state the area of

untenanted land in Ireland in the possession or occupation of the Estates Commissioners; whether he can state the number of recognised evicted tenants not yet provided with holdings; and whether he will make representations to the Estates Commissioners as to the necessity of reinstating all evicted tenants forthwith, so as to secure increased cultivation of the land and greater production of food?

Mr. DUKE: Excluding mountain, turlough, and woodlands, the unallotted lands in the hands of the Estates Commissioners comprise some 3,500 acres. In the case of sales of estates and untenanted lands through the Estates Commissioners 3,555 evicted tenants, or their representatives, who came within the provision of the Irish Land Acts were reinstated as purchasers in their former holdings or provided with other holdings, and 196 cases have been provisionally noted for consideration in the allotment of such untenanted land as may be available for the provision of holdings for evicted tenants.

Necessitous School Children (Dublin).

16. **Mr. BYRNE** asked the Chief Secretary for Ireland if he will take steps to obtain a Grant for the feeding of necessitous children in Dublin; and if he will state the Government's proposals in this matter?

Mr. DUKE: There are funds still available, and the question of possible further need is kept in view by the Local Government Board.

Mr. BYRNE: Will the right hon. Gentleman say what is the use of holding up these funds in Ireland when there are appeals in the newspapers every week by people who have undertaken this work?

Mr. DUKE: I hope that such appeals meet with the same sympathetic response from Irishmen as from charitable people generally. If they do, then the funds of the Executive Government, which are limited, will be made better available.

Mr. BYRNE: Will the right hon. Gentleman answer that part of the question which asks why his Department insists on keeping the whole of the funds which have been sent over to Ireland for the feeding of school children, when children are being sent away hungry every morning?

Mr. DUKE: So far as I know, no Department is doing anything of the sort.

National Schools (Ireland).

19. **Mr. DORIS** asked the Chief Secretary for Ireland whether arrangements will be made in the new scheme for the payment and promotion of Irish national teachers for special promotion of those teachers who are doing exceptionally meritorious work in their schools; if so, what are to be the conditions of special promotion from Grade III. to II. and II. to I., respectively; and whether the practice of depriving a principal teacher of increments and promotion owing to inferior work done by his assistant or assistants is to be retained in the new arrangement?

Mr. DUKE: The reply to the first part of the question is in the affirmative. I cannot discuss the conditions for special promotion in reply to a question in the House. No practice of depriving a principal teacher of increments owing to inferior work done by an assistant exists at present, nor will such a practice be introduced under the new scheme.

20. **Mr. DORIS** asked the Chief Secretary for Ireland how many Irish national teachers have received instruction in rural science under the Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction (Ireland); what was the total expense incurred in giving such instruction; whether the managers of the schools in which those teachers work applied to the Congested Districts Board for plots of ground in connection with schools for the teaching of gardening; whether the Board were willing to give such land provided the National Board undertook that the plots should be utilised for the purpose of school gardening; whether the National Board refused in all cases to give such undertaking; and whether facilities will be granted for the teaching of gardening at schools in which the teachers are qualified to give the necessary instruction?

Mr. DUKE: It would not be possible without an exhaustive examination of official records to ascertain the number of national school teachers who have received instruction in rural science and horticulture under the Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction. The number of such teachers (excluding students and ex-students of the training colleges) who have obtained qualification in the subject from the Department is approximately 500. The travelling expenses and subsistence allowances of teachers attending

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courses of instruction under local technical committees are paid by the Commissioners of National Education, and amount to £753 16s. 6d. I am making inquiry from the Department of Agriculture as to the cost of the courses of instruction. A few managers applied individually to the Congested Districts Board for plots as school gardens and the board made it a condition that the Commissioners of National Education should undertake that the land be used as school gardens, but the Commissioners were not able to give this undertaking. The Commissioners have no means of providing plots in connection with the teaching of rural science at national schools. This devolves upon the manager of the school and the local parties.

Mr. DORIS: Will the right hon. Gentleman advise the Congested Districts Board to take the guarantee of the managers?

Mr. DUKE: If the hon. Member will give me a specific case, I will look into it and see whether it would be proper that I should give such advice.

Hull Municipal Charities.

27. **Mr. WING** asked the Paymaster-General, as representing the Charity Commissioners, if a Commissioner has visited the City of Hull municipal charities for the purpose of investigating the alleged diversion of 2s. 6d. from old age pensioners, the sum granted by the Government to persons over seventy years of age; if so, is he satisfied that such action is legal and in harmony with the charities entrusted to their care; has the Commissioner reported; and, if so, can a copy of the same be granted to the hon. Member for Houghton-le-Spring?

The PAYMASTER GENERAL (Sir J. Compton-Rickett): No Commissioner has visited Hull for the purpose suggested in the hon. Member's question. The Commissioners, however, have caused inquiry to be made into the circumstances in which the Trustees of the Hull Municipal Charities have recently made a reduction of 2s. 6d. a week in the weekly stipend previously paid out of the income of the charities to those inmates of Lyster's Almshouses who are in receipt of old age pensions. In the result, the Commissioners are satisfied that the action of the Trustees has been taken with due regard to the

interests of the almspeople as a whole, and that such action, so far as regards almspeople appointed subsequently to the date (27th May, 1913) of the subsisting scheme for the regulation of the charities is legal. So far as regards almspeople appointed prior to that date, the Commissioners are making further inquiry. The Commissioners took advantage of one of their assistant Commissioners being recently in the neighbourhood of Hull on other official business to instruct him to inspect the Municipal Almshouses, and they are prepared to furnish the hon. Member, for his confidential information, with a copy of the assistant Commissioner's Report.

Insurance Agents (Remuneration).

37. **Mr. BYRNE** asked the Minister of Labour if the insurance companies of Great Britain and Ireland have yet agreed to pay their agents a living wage as recommended by the Industrial Unrest Committee six months ago; and, if not, will legislation be introduced to compel them to carry out the recommendations of the Committee?

The PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY to the MINISTRY of LABOUR (Mr. Bridgeman): In answer to the first part of the question, my right hon. Friend understands that the insurance companies have not yet arrived at an agreement with the agents as to their wages. The reply to the second part of the question is in the negative, but my right hon. Friend has met a deputation from the agents and is proposing to request an interview with representatives of certain insurance companies.

Mr. BYRNE: Am I to understand that the reason why the Government refused to put the recommendations of this committee into operation is that so many Members of this House are in receipt of directors' fees from insurance companies?

Mr. BRIDGEMAN: No, Sir.

Islington Election.

32. **Mr. BILLING** asked the Home Secretary whether his attention has been drawn to the irregularities which took place at the counting of votes at the Islington election; and, if so, whether he is prepared to amend the Ballot Act to prevent such a recurrence?

Sir G. CAVE: I have not heard of any irregularities.

Mr. BILLING: If I place facts before the right hon. Gentleman to prove that rules were broken, will he have inquiry made?

Sir G. CAVE: I shall be glad to receive information from the hon. Member.

Mid-Scotland Canal.

38. **Major CHAPPLE** asked the First Lord of the Admiralty whether he can give any information as to the progress made in the investigation of the project of a mid-Scotland canal; whether the commercial value of such a canal is being taken into consideration as well as the strategic; and whether he will consult authorities on coastwise and international shipping before coming to a conclusion in regard to the route?

Dr. MACNAMARA: The question is being considered by the Government from every point of view, and the various interests involved will be taken into account before a decision is reached.

Major CHAPPLE: Has a committee of experts been detailed to specially consider the question, and are they taking evidence on the subject?

Dr. MACNAMARA: I should like to have notice of that question.

Mr. WATT: Will my right hon. Friend see that the scheme known as the direct scheme will have the consideration of his Department?

Major CHAPPLE: Is it not the intention of the Admiralty to take into consideration also any commercial value which may be shown, or is that being ignored altogether?

Dr. MACNAMARA: It is not being ignored, but it is not primarily our work. It is a matter for the Board of Trade and possibly the Minister of Reconstruction.

Income Tax Law.

66. **Mr. G. TERRELL** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether, in connection with the proposed Bill for the consolidation of the Income Tax law, he is now in a position to state the intentions of the Government in regard to the consolidation of the various White Papers and Treasury instructions which have been issued in relation to the administration of the law?

Mr. BONAR LAW: It is not intended to deal in the way suggested in the question with documents issued by the Commissioners of Inland Revenue connected with the interpretation and administration of the Income Tax Acts.

WRITTEN ANSWERS.

WAR.

ITALIAN FRONT (AUSTRO-GERMAN ATTACK).

Major LANE-FOX asked the Under-Secretary of State for War whether, before the present Austro-German attack upon Italy, General Cadorna or the Italian Government expressed any doubt as to their ability to meet the attack; whether any request for help to meet the attack was received from Italy before the attack took place; and, if so, was their request refused?

Mr. MACPHERSON: No doubt was expressed by General Cadorna or by the Italian Government to the British General Staff of their ability to meet the attack which they knew was about to be made on them. No request from Italy for help to meet the attack was made before it took place. The third part of the question does not arise.

LICENSED TRADE (RESTRICTIONS).

Mr. P. WHITE asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether a retailer in spirits who had at the beginning of 1916 sufficient in stock to supply his usual trade till the end of the year and took none out of bond during the course of that year is now entitled to get for the present year a percentage of what he sold in 1916 based on the average taken out of bond during the preceding five years; and, if not, whether he will state what method of supplying his customers and continuing his trade connections is open to a trader who took no spirits out of bond in the year 1916?

Mr. BONAR LAW: The answer to the first part of the question is in the negative. If, however, the hon. Member will give me particulars of any trader who is in the position described I will have inquiry made into the case.

MILITARY SERVICE.

RUSSIAN SUBJECTS.

Mr. SNOWDEN asked the Prime Minister whether a Russian subject who has appealed to the special tribunal dealing with the cases of Russian subjects on the grounds of conscientious objection to military service is refused exemption, and refused to submit to Army restrictions and discipline, will be treated in the same way as British subjects who take up the same position; and whether his imprisonment will be carried out in this country?

Mr. BONAR LAW: It is not possible for me to answer hypothetical questions of this nature.

MEMBERS OF RELIGIOUS ORDERS.

Sir A. SPICER asked the Under-Secretary of State for War whether exemption from military service has been given to any member or members of religious orders in the United Kingdom who are fit for such service; and, if so, on what grounds such exemption has been given; whether the Director-General of Recruiting has issued instructions that the cases of members of religious orders working under definite religious vows, and officially recognised as such by the chief authority of the religious denomination to which they belong, are to be referred to the Department of the Director-General of Recruiting for consideration, and that such men are not to be called up for military service without previous reference to this Department; and whether the Director-General has issued, or proposes to issue, similar instructions in the cases of all clergymen and other ministers of religion who have been ordained since the passing of the Military Service Act?

Sir A. GEDDES: My hon. Friend has asked me to reply. The answer to the first and second parts of the hon. Member's question is in the affirmative. Instructions have been issued in certain cases that men working under definite religious vows are not to be called up for military service on the ground that they have devoted their lives to religious work and are in a similar position to men in Holy orders or regular ministers of a religious denomination. With reference to the third part of the hon. Member's question, I must refer him to the very full answer given to the hon. Member for

East Denbighshire by the Under-Secretary of State for War on the 19th July, 1917, which sets out the present policy of the recruiting authorities with regard to men who have been ordained or admitted to the ministry after the date upon which they became subject to the provisions of the Military Service Acts.

UNDER-AGE SOLDIER.

Mr. R. MACDONALD asked the Under-Secretary of State for War whether his attention has been drawn to the case of Private Reginald Wareham, a youth of seventeen years of age, who was sent to France on the 3rd of August, where he was twice wounded on the 19th; whether he is aware that Wareham's parents sent to the officer commanding at Clipstone Camp, Nottingham, the birth certificate of the youth a fortnight before he was sent to France; that the certificate was returned the day after Wareham had left this country with the information that he had gone the day before; that, on the lad being returned wounded, the parents sent a birth certificate direct to the War Office and applied for an extension of two or three days' furlough, so that the position of their son could be decided; that, having had not even an acknowledgment of their letter, the parents returned the boy's uniform and intimated that they did not intend to let him return until he had reached military age; and that Wareham was immediately arrested, kept in a prison cell for two days, and finally taken under escort to Harrowby Camp, Grantham, where he remained for four days and was sentenced to a stoppage of twenty-eight days' pay; and whether he will state what is now the position of Wareham, and what action the War Office proposes to take against the commanding officer at Clipstone Camp for neglecting to recognise the birth certificate and for sending the lad to France contrary to pledges given in this House?

Mr. MACPHERSON: This case has been under investigation, but the inquiries are not yet complete, more particularly as regards the circumstances under which he proceeded overseas. Meanwhile I may say that the Regulations in force for under-age soldiers, who have overstated their age on enlistment, do not admit of their being discharged if over seventeen years of age; they are, however, retained on home service until they attain the age of nineteen.

CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTORS.

Mr. JOWETT asked the Home Secretary whether he has received a petition from Wyndham Albery, who is a prisoner in Wormwood Scrubs Prison, in regard to the health and cleanliness of the conscientious objectors therein confined; and, if so, whether he will state what action it is proposed to take?

Sir G. CAVE: A petition has been received at the Home Office from this prisoner, but was not found to afford any ground for action. Some of the statements in it were founded on mere misconception of the prison regulations which the prison authorities have now made clear to the prisoner.

Mr. JOWETT asked the Home Secretary if he is aware that conscientious objectors confined in Wormwood Scrubs Prison are now receiving only half the amount of food originally allowed under the war rationing scheme and that some of these men are in a state of semi-starvation; and whether ameliorative measures are likely to be taken?

Sir G. CAVE: There is no foundation for the statements that the rations have been reduced by half and these men are in a state of semi-starvation. Their health, as a body, is well maintained. If, in individual cases, the diet does not appear to be sufficient, the medical officer in the ordinary course orders extra diet.

Mr. JOWETT asked the Home Secretary whether he is aware that, owing to congestion at the work centres, over 150 conscientious objectors, declared genuine by the Central Tribunal over a month ago, are still confined in Wormwood Scrubs Prison; and whether, seeing that many of these men were previously engaged in work of national importance in certified occupations, he will consider the expediency of releasing them to follow their usual avocations?

Sir G. CAVE: Half of these men will be sent to work on or before next Saturday, and it is hoped that it will be possible to send the remainder to work by the following Saturday. The answer to the second part of the question is in the negative.

BEACHLEY DRY DOCK (HOUSING).

Mr. BOWERMAN asked the Secretary to the Admiralty whether housing

accommodation has been provided by the Department concerned for all the tenants evicted in connection with the Beachley dry dock scheme or whether some of them are still dependent upon private assistance for such accommodation?

Dr. MACNAMARA: Fifteen cottages, the only available accommodation in the neighbourhood, have been offered to the families of Beachley tenants who have not yet found other accommodation. These tenants have been informed that the necessary repairs will be carried out. Some of these tenants have not yet left their homes and others are being temporarily accommodated by an adjoining owner, who has been informed that other cottages are available as soon as he desires these tenants to leave, but he has not yet replied.

FOOD SUPPLIES.

MILK.

Mr. ANDERSON asked the Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Food whether he is aware that the food control committee under the Winsford Urban District Council fixed the price of milk for that district at 5½d. per quart for October and 6d. per quart from the 1st November to 31st March, 1918; whether he is further aware that many of the milk-sellers in the district immediately commenced to sell at the stipulated 5½d., but have been deterred from doing so as a result of the decision of the local milk association, which decided to reject the food committee's prices and to go on strike, and that in consequence Winsford is without milk, involving much hardship, especially on children and invalids; and what steps he proposes to take with respect to those who are withholding the necessary milk supplies?

Mr. PARKER: The Winsford local food control committee fixed on 11th October a price of 5d. per quart as from 22nd October until 30th November. On 27th October they amended these prices to 5½d. per quart for October and 6d. per quart from 1st November to 31st March. The Food Controller is taking steps to secure that, as far as the available milk supplies allow, an adequate supply of milk shall be at the disposal of this food control committee for distribution in their district.

Sir GEORGE GREENWOOD asked the Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Food whether he is aware that it has been ascertained by experienced stock owners and by scientific experiment that the temperature of a healthy beast is quite as likely to rise as a result of inoculation with tuberculin as that of a diseased animal; and whether, seeing that the test is so untrustworthy, the Food Controller will reconsider his decision to refuse a licence to charge the best price for milk to owners of herds which are in good health and kept under good hygienic conditions unless the animals have been so inoculated?

Mr. PARKER: As I informed the hon. Member for Haggerston on Tuesday, the Food Controller has not yet reached a decision upon the advisability of granting licences for the sale and purchase of milk of higher hygienic quality than the ordinary supply; nor, if such a course were to be followed, has he decided upon the standards which would be set up in order to determine the required quality of such milk?

DAMAGED GRAIN.

Sir JOHN SPEAR asked the Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Food if it is necessary for farmers to obtain a permit in order for them to use damaged grain for their stock or sell to others requiring it; and, if a permit is necessary, will he say where and at what time such permit can be obtained?

Mr. PARKER: The answer to the first part of the question is in the negative; the second part does not, therefore, arise. I should like, however, to point out that, as has already been stated in the Press, the fact that wheat or barley is out of condition does not necessarily mean that it is unfit for milling. Such grain should not be used for food for animals until it has been freely offered to millers and merchants. It is essential that all wheat which can be used in the manufacture of flour should be reserved for human food.

DISTRIBUTION.

Mr. KING asked the Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Food, whether he has received resolutions from trades councils and others at Chatham, Luton, Darwen, and other places, urging that all supplies should be commandeered forthwith and distributed on the basis of population; and whether, in view of the failure of supplies in certain places of tea,

sugar, butter, bacon, and other foodstuffs, while other districts are fairly supplied, he proposes to take immediate and drastic action?

Mr. PARKER: The answer to the first part of the question is in the affirmative. Action has already been taken to increase the supplies of food stuffs of which there is a temporary shortage, and the question of improved distribution in populous areas is engaging the close attention of the Food Controller.

BEE FOOD.

Mr. T. F. SMYTH asked the Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Food whether he is aware of the danger of the loss of bees through starvation this winter and of the dissatisfaction with the Government's arrangements, which have given a monopoly to one London firm for the supply of sugar for bee-food in Great Britain and Ireland, and the general objection to having such sugar, mixed with a drug, which a number of practical bee-keepers believe to be injurious to bees and useless to them for any purpose; and whether he will make arrangements for the immediate supply of bee-food under conditions similar to that by which sugar has been supplied to growers of fruit for jam-making?

Mr. PARKER: In view of the arrangements made for the provision of bee-candy I see no reason to anticipate any loss of bees through starvation this winter. The preparation of this candy is based on a formula drawn up by experts; its manufacture has been entrusted to a firm which makes no profit out of the transaction; its use has been found to be generally beneficial. As these arrangements appear to be approved by a considerable number of bee-keepers throughout the country I am not prepared to make any change.

SUGAR.

Commander BELLAIRS asked the Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Food whether he can make any statement as to the destruction of sugar which has resulted from the refusal to allow officers and seamen of the mercantile marine to land small parcels; and whether the recent permission to officers of the mercantile marine to land small quantities will be extended to the men of the mercantile marine so that they can land small parcels for their families although they have no licence?

Mr. PARKER: I am not aware of any case in which a refusal to allow officers and seamen of the mercantile marine to land small parcels of sugar has resulted in the destruction of the sugar. Any sugar brought to this country without a licence is seized by the Customs authorities and added to the stocks available for the population as a whole. No permission has been given to either officers or seamen of the mercantile marine to import sugar.

TEA SUBSTITUTE.

Mr. C. WASON asked the Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Food, if he is aware that maté is an excellent substitute for tea; if he will ascertain whether there is any quantity in this country; and, if so, how it can best be used?

Mr. PARKER: There does not appear to be any quantity of maté in this country. Small parcels of it were imported some years ago, but it never passed into general consumption, and its importation was consequently abandoned.

LAND CULTIVATION (ARMY OFFICERS).

Major WHEELER asked the Under-Secretary of State for War whether, in view of the need of increased efforts to bring further land under cultivation, he will consider the desirability of allowing officers who are not fit for general service and who are farming their own land to return to their farms, if they so desire.

Mr. MACPHERSON: Every case receives consideration on its merits in consultation with the Minister of National Service.

TRACTORS.

Mr. G. LAMBERT asked the President of the Board of Agriculture if he will state the number of ploughing tractors in England and Wales for each of the last eight weeks and the number of acres that have been ploughed each week, specifying, if possible, the acreage of grass land and the amount of other land ploughed, together with the average acreage ploughed each week by each tractor in the country?

Mr. PROTHERO: Complete returns have only been received and analysed up to the week ending October 6th, and the following information, therefore, covers the period of eight weeks previous to that date from August 12th. The detailed figures and averages for each week during

that period are given below and cover all the Government tractors in commission, whether they were actually at work or standing idle through bad weather, or being under repair, or travelling on the road from farm to farm. It will also be remembered that abnormally wet weather prevailed during a considerable portion of the period under consideration. If the average per tractor had been computed for actual ploughing hours only a much higher figure would be shown, and in counties where weather and other conditions have been favourable the results have been greatly in excess of the average:

Week ending	Number of Government Tractors in commission in hands of County Committees.	Number of acres ploughed.	Average number of acres ploughed per Tractor.
Aug. 18...	860	7,390	8·6
" 25...	930	9,110	9·8
Sept. 1...	1,040	5,200	5·0
" 8...	1,120	9,520	8·5
" 15...	1,210	13,300	11·0
" 22...	1,300	10,790	8·3†
" 29...	1,370	15,340	11·2
Oct. 6...	1,400	14,560	10·4‡

* The drop in the average acreage per tractor for the week ended 31st August was mainly due to bad weather, the average number of idle hours per tractor from this cause being 18 as against 10 for the previous week.

† The drop in the average acreage per tractor for the week ended 21st September was almost entirely due to bad weather, the idle hours per tractor from this cause being 10·7 as against 1·8 for the previous week.

‡ Bad weather was again mainly responsible for the drop in the average acreage per tractor for the week ended 5th October, there being an increase of 6·8 idle hours per tractor from this cause over the previous week.

§ No separate figures are available showing the different classes of land which have been ploughed.

BONDED SPIRITS.

Mr. G. TERRELL asked the Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Food whether he can now state the policy of the Government in regard to the release of further supplies of whisky from bond; and whether the Government propose to regulate retail prices?

Mr. PARKER: The question of releasing further supplies of spirits from bond is now under consideration. I hope shortly to be able to make a statement thereon, but I am not yet in a position to do so. As at present advised, the Government do not contemplate the regulation of retail prices.

ARMY MEDICAL OFFICERS (DISTRIBUTION).

Major DAVID DAVIES asked the Under-Secretary of State for War when the Report of the Committee for inquiry into the distribution of medical officers with the British forces in France and in this country will be communicated to this House?

Mr. MACPHERSON: I would refer my hon. and gallant Friend to the reply which I gave on the 18th October to the hon. and gallant Member for Rutland, to which I can at present add nothing.

SOLDIERS ON LEAVE (EQUIPMENT, ETC.).

Major D. DAVIES asked the Under-Secretary of State for War whether, in view of the difficulties of travelling, the shortage of accommodation, and the weight of equipment, he will take steps to establish dépôts at the ports of embarkation or disembarkation in France or England for the storage of the arms, equipment, and kits of officers and men returning home on leave?

Mr. MACPHERSON: I would refer my hon. and gallant Friend to the answer given on October 18th to the hon. Member for the St. Patrick's Division of Dublin.

CONVALESCENT SOLDIERS (HOSPITALS).

Mr. WING asked the Under-Secretary of State for War if he will consider the possibility in the cases of convalescent soldiers of transferring them to hospitals near to their homes, rather than at present when soldiers are in hospitals so far away as to render visits from their parents prohibitive owing to the great expense of railway travelling?

Mr. MACPHERSON: I would refer my hon. Friend to the answer which I gave on the 24th October to my Noble Friend the Member for Nottingham South.

COURTS-MARTIAL.

Mr. SNOWDEN asked the Under-Secretary of State for War (1) if

he is aware that appeals are allowed from the sentences of courts-martial in the French, German, and other armies; whether he will take steps to set up a similar procedure in the British Army; (2) if he will take steps to secure the revision and re-investigation of cases where death sentences have been carried out for the offences of alleged cowardice in face of the enemy, desertion, and absence from the first, second, or third line of trenches; (3) if he will take steps to amend the Army Act and the rules of procedure thereunder so as to secure the abolition of the field general court-martial; (4) if he will lay upon the Table of the House of Commons a Return of the sentences of penal servitude imposed on British and Colonial soldiers for offences against military discipline at the fronts in France and elsewhere; and (5) if he will lay upon the Table of the House of Commons a Return giving the number of executions of British and Colonial soldiers for offences against military discipline on the Western front, on the Mesopotamia and Egyptian fronts, and on the Salonika and Dardanelles fronts, respectively?

Mr. MACPHERSON: I will answer these question together. The answer is in each case in the negative.

SOLDIERS' LEAVE.

Mr. WING asked the Under-Secretary of State for War if in transferring men from one regiment to another he will see to it that they do not suffer in case of their leave which was perhaps almost due in their original regiment?

Mr. MACPHERSON: So far as my information goes such cases receive consideration, but I will make inquiries of the military authorities in France on this matter, and will let my hon. Friend know.

Mr. WING asked if the new system of granting leave has secured to all soldiers who have not had leave for that term leave under the new arrangement; and, if not, can soldiers and their dependants rely upon such having first attention?

Mr. MACPHERSON: I would refer my hon. Friend to the statement which I made last night on the Vote of Credit.

Mr. STANTON asked the Under-Secretary of State for War if his Department will consider the desirability of granting

fourteen days' leave to all oversea soldiers who have served twelve months on active service; if he is aware that discontent prevails among our soldiers and their relatives at home at the leave now granted; and if he will see that soldiers on leave from active service shall have at least twelve clear days at home?

Mr. MACPHERSON: From to-day the authorities in France intend that fourteen days shall be given, to include journey to and from France. This privilege will be granted to as many men as it is possible to spare having the military exigencies in view.

POLITICAL MEETINGS (SOLDIERS' SPEECHES).

Mr. RAMSAY MACDONALD asked whether Regulation 451 applies to officers who take part in political meetings; and whether there is any instance of officers who have attended political meetings or signed political manifestoes being punished under it?

Mr. MACPHERSON: Yes, Sir, paragraph 451 of the King's Regulations certainly applies to officers, but as regards the latter part of my hon. Friend's question, I am afraid it is impossible to make a definite statement without instituting elaborate inquiries, which I am loath to do in the present pressure of work.

Mr. R. MACDONALD asked if Private Simmons is still under arrest for speaking at a political meeting?

Mr. MACPHERSON: No, Sir.

ROYAL ENGINEERS (REDUCTION IN RANK).

Mr. HOGGE asked the Under-Secretary of State for War whether he is aware that over 100 warrant and non-commissioned officers have, within the past week or two in the Signal Service training centre, Royal Engineers, been reduced from acting to substantive rank, and that some of those officers have held rank for over two years; whether he is aware that such action in a training centre does not conduce to the best interests of discipline; and whether he can give any explanation of those wholesale reductions?

Mr. MACPHERSON: A new establishment has recently been approved for the Signal Service training centre, which entailed a reduction in the number of warrant officers and non-commissioned officers. The reversions in question were therefore made from acting to substantive rank.

1ST BATTALION GLOUCESTERSHIRE REGIMENT

(SERGEANT HOTCHKISS).

Major H. TERRELL asked the Under-Secretary of State for War whether Acting-Sergeant William Hotchkiss, late No. 7024, 1st Battalion Gloucestershire Regiment, was, on the 20th February, 1915, awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal and was subsequently promoted to the full rank of sergeant, to take effect from the 18th March, 1915; whether, by mistake, the Distinguished Conduct Medal was awarded him as a private; and, if so, will he take the necessary steps to have the mistake rectified?

Mr. MACPHERSON: The question is under investigation, and if at the time of award the ex-soldier is found to have held the acting rank of sergeant the necessary correction will be made.

Major TERRELL asked the Under-Secretary of State for War whether he is aware that Sergeant William Hotchkiss, late No. 7024, 1st Battalion Gloucestershire Regiment, was, on the 20th February, 1915, awarded the D.C.M., and was also mentioned in despatches for exceptional gallantry on an occasion when he was wounded; that he was again severely wounded on the 2nd April, 1915, and remained in hospital suffering from wounds and shell-shock till the 19th August, 1915, when he was ordered to join the special reserve battalion of the Gloucestershire Regiment; that in January, 1916, he was sent to a convalescent camp and remained there till he was ordered to rejoin the special reserve, pending his discharge; that in April, 1916, he was discharged as no longer fit for service; and that on the 3rd May, 1916, he received his discharge, his character thereon being recorded as conduct during his mobilised period of service quite satisfactory; if so, why was this form adopted instead of one of the forms set out in paragraph 419 of the King's Regulations; whether this character was given by the officer commanding the

special reserve, instead of by the officer commanding the 1st battalion, with which he had served throughout his period of service in France: and whether he will take the necessary steps to have the character amended to exemplary.

Mr. MACPHERSON: I have no knowledge of this particular case, but taking the facts as given in the question, no irregularity appears to have been committed. It is laid down in paragraph 419 of the King's Regulations that the assessment of a soldier's military character in one of the forms set out in that paragraph is not to be entered on the man's character certificate. The officer commanding the Special Reserve Battalion was the man's officer commanding at the time of discharge, and, as such, was the proper officer, under paragraphs 417 and 418, to assess his character as a man with a view to his employment in civil life.

AIR SERVICES (PILOTS).

Mr. BILLING asked the Under-Secretary of State for War if he can state how many certified pilots have been relieved of their commissions or otherwise removed from active service flying for personal or service reasons?

Mr. MACPHERSON: The number of graduated pilots who have been removed from active service flying within the past six months on personal grounds is four. All of them at their own request. The number removed for service reasons, including medically unfit, is 224; a large proportion of these are still employed in the Army.

15TH BATTALION DEVON REGIMENT (SERGEANT RICH).

Major TERRELL asked the Under-Secretary of State for War whether he is aware that Sergeant Rich, No. 315,651, 15th Battalion Devon Regiment, had 15 years' service with the Colours before the War; that shortly before the War he had acquired the Fleece Hotel, Gloucester, at a cost of over £9,000, which, on the outbreak of war, he was conducting with the assistance of his two sons and two assistants; that at the outbreak of war Sergeant Rich was forty-two years of age but immediately volunteered for service; that he has since been serving for the greater

part of the time in India; whether he is now in Category C and was, on the ground of ill-health, obliged some six months ago to give up his duties as sergeant-instructor and has since been unable to do any work of importance in the battalion; whether he is aware that his two sons and his two assistants have all joined the Army, and the management of his business in Gloucester has devolved on his wife, who is now seriously ill and is ordered by her doctor to give up all work and leave Gloucester; whether he is aware that Sergeant Rich has made repeated applications for his discharge without success and without any reason being given for such refusal; and if he will take the necessary steps to secure Sergeant Rich's immediate discharge, so as to enable him to save his business from absolute ruin?

Mr. MACPHERSON: I have been in communication with my hon. and gallant Friend about this case, and now that he has furnished me with fuller particulars, I am enabled to make the necessary inquiries and will let him know the result as soon as possible.

TRANSFERRED ARMY OFFICERS.

Mr. KEATING asked if Army officers are being transferred to the Navy for special duties; if these officers are receiving promotion at the same rate as those who are not transferred; and, if not, why these officers are penalised by their promotion being deferred during the period they are engaged upon special work for the naval authorities?

Mr. MACPHERSON: I am afraid that I am not clear as to what my hon. Friend is referring. If he will let me have details of the case which he has in mind, I will cause inquiries to be made.

MEAT FOR TROOPS (TRANSPORT).

Mr. PERKINS asked the Under-Secretary of State for War if steps will be taken to obviate the delivery on railway platforms, and collection at destination, of carcasses and joints of meat intended for consumption by the troops, the meat being unprotected by any sacking or other covering and thus running the risk of becoming contaminated by platform handling and other causes?

Mr. MACPHERSON: Fresh meat is sent by goods train in the usual manner without sacking, and is collected at destination immediately on arrival. Where meat, however, is sent by passenger train instructions have been issued for it to be covered in the usual way. I am not aware of any instances where this is not done, and if my hon. Friend will give me particulars of any cases of meat not so covered I will have the matter inquired into.

TERRITORIAL FORCE (ACTIVE SERVICE).

Mr. PERKINS asked the Under-Secretary of State for War to what extent the Territorial battalions who volunteered for active service at the outbreak of war and who were sent to India, Egypt, Aden, and elsewhere upon the understanding that if any Territorials were to be engaged in hostilities they should have the first opportunity, have, in fact, been so employed; and whether the issue of the new service chevron is to be made to all such battalions?

Mr. MACPHERSON: With the exception of a few battalions which have been retained in India for defence purposes, all the units referred to which volunteered for active service have been employed in theatres of war. In regard to the last part of the question I would refer my hon. Friend to the answer which I gave yesterday to my hon. Friend the Member for Tavistock.

ARMY PAY OFFICE, BLACKHEATH.

Mr. ANDERSON asked the Under-Secretary of State for War whether he will make full investigation into the conditions at the Blackheath Army Pay Office; whether he is aware that the staff of this Department, wholly composed of medically unfit men and wounded men from the front, are kept hard at clerical work for seven days a week, some working in underground cellars with lights on all day; that some of these men, though not clerks but omnibus conductors, travellers, shop assistants, and the like, are expected to audit the most difficult accounts, and when a mistake is made are liable to be taken before the officer commanding and fined ten days' pay; whether he is aware that the allowances of married

men living at home in respect of fares and food are inadequate; and what steps he proposes to take in this matter?

Mr. FORSTER: Yes, Sir; I propose to make full investigation, and will communicate with the hon. Member in due course.

PEAT FUEL.

Mr. ROWLANDS asked when a supply of peat fuel will be obtained from the factory in France; and what are the conditions entered into between the Government and the company?

Mr. MACPHERSON: The difficulties of supply of material, machinery, and labour have rendered it doubtful whether the erection of the proposed peat fuel factory in France can be undertaken at the present time. The arrangement entered into reserves the right to the Government to abandon the project at any time, but should the factory be erected the Government has the call of the whole of the output at a fixed rate representing about 20 per cent. of the price at present paid for charcoal for trench fuel and out of the price fixed a rebate to the Government is allowed to go towards the repayment of any advances which may be made by the Government towards the expense of erecting the factory.

1ST CANADIAN BATTALION (LIEUTENANT-COLONEL HODSON).

Mr. W. RUTHERFORD asked the Under-Secretary of State for War whether he is aware that Lieutenant-Colonel Hodson, of the 1st Canadian Battalion, has been ordered to return to Canada by the first available sailing, notwithstanding the fact that he has been awarded the D.S.O. and has applied for permission to remain in England until he can receive the same, and also notwithstanding that he has asked for a Court of inquiry into his removal from the command of the 1st Canadian Battalion on the 16th August, 1917, and such Court of inquiry has not yet been granted; and whether he proposes to take any action in the matter?

Mr. MACPHERSON: This officer will not be returned to Canada until he has received the Distinguished Service Order. It is not proposed to grant him a Court of inquiry.

Mr. RUTHERFORD asked the Under-Secretary of State for War if every officer removed from a command is entitled to a Court of inquiry under Section 42 of the Army Act; whether, seeing that this is his only remedy in cases where such officer's immediate superiors have formed opinions which are not well founded, and would be disproved at once if the case came before officers of higher rank entitled to form their own judgment and hear the evidence and the explanations of the officer in question, he will state why a Court of inquiry is being withheld from Lieutenant-Colonel G. C. Hodson, D.S.O., of the 1st Canadian Battalion, as applied for by him on the 17th August, 1917, and repeated several times since in respect of his removal from the command of such battalion on the 16th August, 1917, and if he is aware of Lieutenant-Colonel Hodson's record as an officer?

Mr. MACPHERSON: I would refer my hon. Friend to the oral answer which I gave on 25th October to my hon. Friend the Member for the Eifian Division of Carnarvonshire.

ARMY FARRIERS.

Colonel WALKER asked the Under-Secretary of State for War whether his attention has been called to a resolution passed by the National Master Farriers' Association at Leamington on the 25th August, 1917; and whether he has taken, or intends to take, any action in the matter?

Mr. MACPHERSON: I would refer my hon. and gallant Friend to the answer which I gave on the 23rd October to my hon. Friend the Member for Central Edinburgh.

DISCHARGED SOLDIERS (WAR BADGES).

Mr. ROWNTREE asked the Under-Secretary of State for War whether he is aware that there is delay, often extending to months, before silver war badges are issued to men discharged from the Army; and whether he can see his way to expedite their issue?

Mr. MACPHERSON: Instructions have already been sent that these badges should be issued to all men as soon as possible after discharge.

TERRITORIAL OFFICERS (APPOINTMENTS).

Mr. JOYNSON - HICKS asked the Under-Secretary of State for War what percentage of Territorial officers, as compared with Regular and New Army officers, have been appointed to Staff appointments, to command of units other than their own, and as brigadiers, respectively?

Mr. MACPHERSON: I regret that, owing to the great labour involved, I cannot undertake to have this information prepared. I may say, however, that the number of brigadiers remains substantially the same as that given on the 21st February in answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Berwick.

MEDICAL PRACTITIONERS (HOME SERVICE).

Mr. PERKINS asked the Under-Secretary of State for War whether every effort is made to utilise the services of those retired civilian medical men who would be willing to work as civil surgeons or to join the Royal Army Medical Corps provided that they can be employed at home in hospitals within reach of their homes, but who for personal or domestic reasons cannot break up their homes in order to serve in other localities?

Mr. MACPHERSON: The employment of civilian medical men willing to work as civilian medical practitioners in the neighbourhood of their homes is one for General Officers Commanding-in-Chief of the various commands. So far as the War Office is concerned, such offers are welcomed.

NAVAL AND MILITARY PENSIONS AND GRANTS.

General COLVIN asked the Financial Secretary to the War Office whether warrant officers and non-commissioned officers who are invited to be discharged to pension in order that they may accept appointments as temporary quartermasters under War Office Letter, No. 102/Gen. N. of 298/MS 2, find that their pensions are assessed by the Commissioners as if they had only completed eighteen years' service, thus losing a quarter of the pension they would have earned by completing twenty-one years?

service; and, if so, whether the matter will be remedied, especially in the case of those who had only a few months to complete twenty-one years' service on accepting the appointment?

Mr. FORSTER: The question is under consideration.

Mr. JOWETT asked the Financial Secretary to the War Office if he is aware that wives of men married on the strength belonging to the 2nd Lincolnshire Regiment, who along with their children were brought back from Bermuda on the declaration of war, were turned adrift with their children, when the regiment arrived at Plymouth on 14th October, 1914, to reach their homes, near or far, or find lodgings as best they could, with an initial grant of £5 for vacating quarters but with no continuing allowance in addition to separation allowance in lieu of quarters of which they had been deprived; if he is aware that the wives of men of the 1st battalion of the same regiment who were married on the strength but who were at Portsmouth when war was declared are in receipt of regular allowance for vacating quarters; if he will say on what ground this distinction was made against men who were on Foreign service when war was declared; and whether he will take steps to remove the distinction by granting a regular allowance for vacation of quarters to the wives of the men who were brought back from Foreign stations as well as to the wives of men who were garrisoned at Home?

Mr. FORSTER: Compensation allowance was given to families who were actually removed from public quarters for public reasons, at a time when the liberal rates of separation allowance now given were not in existence. It is not proposed to extend it.

Mr. JOWETT asked the Financial Secretary to the War Office if he is aware that dependants of soldiers who have the misfortune to be patients in Poor Law infirmaries are unfairly treated owing to the effect of Section 5 of the Army Regulations, dated 16th September, 1915, as compared with dependants who become patients in public general hospitals, the patients in Poor Law hospitals being deprived of their separation allowance, whereas the patients in public hospitals are not deprived of theirs; and whether, having regard to the fact that in most cases the running expenses of the home

have to be kept on whichever class of hospital the dependant enters as a patient, he will take steps to remove this distinction?

Mr. FORSTER: The question has been under review, and it is intended to make fresh arrangements, which will, I think, meet the hon. Member's point.

Mr. STANTON asked the Under-Secretary of State for War if his Department will consider some scheme of compensation to the relatives of those soldiers who die in the service of their country in all cases where no other pensions are paid; and if he will consider the prospective loss to parents who have spent large sums of money upon the education of their sons lost in the War?

Sir A. GRIFFITH-BOSCAWEN: Where the soldier dies of wounds or injuries attributable to military service or of disease attributable to or aggravated by such service, and not through his own serious negligence or misconduct, his dependants are, as a rule, eligible for pensions; and by a recent concession, of which full notice was published in the Press, parents may be granted pensions, if incapacitated by age or infirmity, even where they were not dependent on the soldier before his service and their loss was prospective only. Cases which fall outside the above conditions have no evident claim on public funds, but it may be possible for deserving cases to receive some assistance from the Special Grants Committee, the Royal Patriotic Fund Corporation, or other funds.

Mr. F. MEEHAN asked the Under-Secretary of State for War whether the Ministry of Pensions have considered the application of Lillie Donohue, of Dromahair, county Leitrim, only dependant of Second-Lieutenant Thomas Donohue, 8th Battalion Borderers, who was killed in action in February last, for a pension to support and educate her; and whether, having regard to the fact that Lillie Donohue is sister of the said Second-Lieutenant Donohue and only dependant and has no means of support, her claim would be favourably considered, and her brother's arrears of pay, admitted by the War Office to amount to £48 13s. 2d., be paid her?

Mr. FORSTER: The first part of the question should be addressed to my right hon. Friend the Minister of Pensions. In

regard to the second part, Miss Donohue is not the only person entitled to share in the officer's estate, which must be distributed according to law. Distribution of the estate will be made as soon as possible, but inquiries are not yet complete.

Sir A. GRIFFITH-BOSCAWEN: No pension could under the former Regulations be given in this case, but it is being considered under the new Royal Warrant, and I will see that the hon. Member is informed of the result. The question of arrears of pay is, of course, a matter for the War Office.

BILLETING RATES.

Mr. SNOWDEN asked the Financial Secretary to the War Office why temperance hotel-keepers are compelled to billet soldiers at rates of payment 50 per cent. below the actual cost of the food they have to supply and of the accommodation which has to be provided; and whether, in view of the increased cost of living, some addition to the schedule of payment will be made?

Mr. FORSTER: The temperance hotel-keeper is not treated differently from other licensed billet-owners. No representations that these rates are inadequate have reached me.

SOLDIERS' PAY (DEDUCTIONS, ETC.).

Mr. SNOWDEN asked the Financial Secretary to the War Office whether, in view of the rate of pay given to soldiers compared with other members of the community, he will undertake to set up a series of civil courts in which soldiers who have had deductions made from their pay or have not been paid their arrears can prefer their claims free of cost against the War Office authorities?

Mr. FORSTER: No, Sir. The procedure for obtaining redress of grievances as laid down by the Army Act is considered adequate.

Mr. JOWETT asked the Financial Secretary to the War Office if he is aware that, owing to payments being made to soldiers on active service abroad in irregular amounts and at irregular intervals, and the general obscurity of regimental efforts to inform individual soldiers as to the state of their accounts,

soldiers who are unaccustomed to regimental methods of keeping accounts are unable to ascertain what money is due to them at any given time; if he will try to institute some clearer and simpler system of keeping soldiers' accounts; and if he will say whether, in the meantime, a soldier has the right to claim a statement giving details of his account in writing, fully dated as to the various items, and showing the credit or debit balance, as the case may be, whenever he so desires, or, if not whenever he so desires, then will he say at what intervals a soldier can claim such a statement?

Mr. FORSTER: The hon. Member will appreciate the fact that regular weekly payments to troops in the trenches, even if possible, would not be for the benefit of the men. Every soldier on active service abroad is in possession of a pay-book which shows his daily rate issuable to him in cash and every payment made to him. From that book he can at any time ascertain his approximate balance. Arrangements are in progress for a systematic notification to each soldier in the field of his exact balance, but the clerical work involved is very serious. If the soldier has reason to think his balance is incorrect he can complain through the usual official channel, and if necessary a detailed statement will then be furnished.

ARMY (INCREASED PAY).

Mr. GILBERT asked the Financial Secretary to the War Office from what date the increased pay for men in the Army comes into force, also when the first payment of the same will be made to the Army; and if any back amounts due to the men will be paid with the first payment?

Mr. FORSTER: The concessions will take effect with arrears from the date already announced for the Army, namely, 29th September last.

DELIVERY PILOTS

Commander BELLAIRS asked the Financial Secretary to the War Office whether he is aware that the delivery pilots have understood for a long time past that a revision of the subsistence allowance was to be made; that these delivery pilots have the duty of delivering

new machines from one place to another, and that the allowance of 3s. 6d. for less than ten hours' absence, 6s. for less than twenty-four hours, and 13s. 8d. for over twenty-four hours leaves the pilot very much out of pocket; and, in view of this hardship, whether he will now announce the new scale of allowances?

Mr. FORSTER: These officers draw the same allowances as other officers of the Army for similar periods of absence. Items of unusual expenditure are considered outside the normal allowance, and the officers have been so informed.

SOUTH WOODFORD ORPHANAGE (LEAD PIPING).

Mr. SNOWDEN asked the Minister of Munitions whether an application has been received from the Children's Orphanage, Federation House, South Woodford, Essex, for permission to use lead piping to supply water to the house; and whether, in view of the need for a proper water supply for the premises, the Minister of Munitions will give the necessary permission for the lead piping to be used?

Sir W. EVANS: No trace can be found of any application to this Department under the name given in my hon. Friend's question. If he will supply me with further particulars, I shall be happy to make inquiry into the matter.

TUNGSTEN WIRE (IMPORTS).

Mr. JOYNSON-HICKS asked the President of the Board of Trade why are licences granted to certain British electric-lamp makers for the importation from foreign countries of tungsten wire for electric lamps, when the import of this commodity has been nominally forbidden, when good and sufficient supplies can be readily obtained in this country from British manufacturers at competitive prices, and when it is expressly desired to prevent the sending of money out of the country?

Sir A. STANLEY: Licences are not being given, and have not been given for several months, for the importation of tungsten wire.

RAILWAY TRAIN SERVICES.

Captain BLAIR asked the President of the Board of Trade if his attention has been called to the overcrowding on the London Electric Tube Railway every evening between five and seven from Queen's Park to Harrow; and will he inquire if it is possible for more and larger trains to be run during these hours?

Mr. WARDLE: I am afraid that in existing circumstances overcrowding on suburban lines during busy hours is very difficult to prevent, but I am calling the attention of the railway company to the hon. and gallant Gentleman's suggestion.

Mr. STANTON asked the President of the Board of Trade whether his attention has been called to the dissatisfaction with the workmen's train service upon the Taff Vale Railway between Abercynon and Aberdare, where workmen are put to inconvenience and loss and their health endangered by the want of better accommodation; and if he will take steps to provide a workmen's car or cars on the ordinary trains passing through with a view also to the benefit of the travelling public?

Mr. WARDLE: I am afraid I can only refer the hon. Gentleman to the letter addressed to him from the Board of Trade on this subject on the 11th August last, but I am communicating again with the railway company on the matter.

CEMENT EXPORTS (LICENCES).

Major CHAPPLE asked the President of the Board of Trade what Department issued licences for the export of cement to Holland in 1917; whether any inquiry was made by the issuing department as to the ultimate use and destiny of the cement when the amount rose in 1917 to forty times as much as in 1916; and whether licences are issued for the export of materials to neutral countries bordering on Germany without consultation with the War Department as to the enemy use to which such materials might be put?

Lord R. CECIL: Until 8th October the export of cement from this country to Holland was permitted without licence provided it was consigned to the Netherlands Overseas Trust under stringent guarantees against re-export. Since that date licences have become obligatory

under the Order in Council. The Licensing Authority is the War Trade Department. Most careful inquiries are made by this Department before any licences are issued as to the possibility of such exports finding their way into enemy channels or being used for purposes contrary to the interest of the Allies. I must repeat that there is no ground for thinking that any of the cement exported from this country has been directly or indirectly of service to our enemies.

SHIPPING FREIGHTS.

Mr. P. A. HARRIS asked the Parliamentary Secretary to the Shipping Controller why the rates from Liverpool to China are only from 40s. to 60s. a ton measurement as compared with £10 a ton to the dominion of New Zealand; and why preferential rates are given to China as against part of the British Empire?

Sir L. CHIOZZA MONEY: Any comparison of outward freight rates in different trades is misleading which does not take account of all the factors governing voyage results, including special conditions such as the frequency of occurrence of ballast voyages. There are conditions obtaining in the Australasian trade which do not apply to the Far East, but there would appear to be a *prima facie* case for thinking that the existing outward rates to China are inadequate to meet costs under existing conditions and in order to review the position the Ministry have already requested the owners of the vessels concerned to furnish the necessary information. When the new homeward rates come into operation the figures referred to will come under review. The object of the Ministry is to secure that over the whole field of operations the revenue should be sufficient to meet the increased costs to the Government of all the services rendered.

CORN PRODUCTION ACT (WAGE COMMITTEES).

Mr. RAMSAY MACDONALD asked the Secretary for Scotland whether the Board of Agriculture for Scotland has yet decided what associations of workmen are to be approved by it for the purpose of creating district wages committees under the Corn Production Act?

Mr. MUNRO: I am informed by the Board of Agriculture for Scotland that they have as yet received no application from any association of workmen for approval. The Board have, however, been in consultation with various interests concerned in this matter, and they have intimated that district committees should be formed by the middle of the current month.

WOMEN'S FORESTRY CORPS.

Sir G. GREENWOOD asked the Minister of National Service whether he is aware that much dissatisfaction has been caused among the women serving in the Women's Forestry Corps at Timber Camp, Wendover, on account of the insufficiency of the food supplied to them, owing to which they have to supplement their meals by food purchased out of their own private means; whether he is aware that there is no meal of any sort provided for these women workers, who work out of doors from 9 a.m. and, in the case of house orderlies, from 7.30 a.m. to 7.30 p.m., between the hours of 12 noon and 7 p.m.; and whether he will take steps in order that this state of things may be remedied?

Sir A. STANLEY: My right hon. Friend has asked me to reply to this question. I understand that no meal is provided for the workers referred to between lunch and dinner. My Department have not received any complaints as to insufficiency of the food supplied, but I will have inquiry made as to the desirability of taking any action.

BRITISH PRISONERS OF WAR (EXCHANGE).

Mr. PERKINS asked the hon. Member for Sheffield (Central Division) whether he can state the result of the negotiations between the British and Turkish Governments as to the exchange of prisoners of war?

Mr. JAMES HOPE: I would refer my hon. Friend to my reply yesterday to the question by my hon. and gallant Friend the Member for Christchurch.

Income Tax (Refund Applications).

Mr. T. F. SMYTH asked the Secretary to the Treasury whether he is aware that a claim presented by the Reverend J. G.

Digges, M.A., of Clooncahir, Lough Rynn, county Leitrim, for refund of Income Tax for the year ending 6th April, 1916, is still unsettled; that objections raised by the local Income Tax officials were heard by the Special Commissioners at Sligo on Saturday, 29th September, 1917, and were decided in favour of the applicant on all points; and, as Mr. Digges has since made repeated applications without effect for the sums due to him in respect of the year stated, and as his claim for refund of Income Tax for the year ending 6th April, 1917, although sent in some months ago, has not received any attention, whether instructions will now be given to have those long-outstanding claims settled?

Mr. BALDWIN: Both the claims referred to by my hon. Friend depended for their settlement on the results of the appeal heard by the Special Commissioners of Income Tax on the 29th September, 1917. The claims were paid on the 22nd and 29th of last month respectively.

Poor Law Orders.

Mr. ANDERSON asked the President of the Local Government Board whether there is still a Departmental Committee of that Board engaged in revising the Poor

Law Orders; whether he will refuse his sanction to any proposed Order which would take away or diminish the responsibilities and liabilities of relieving officers for the relief of the poor, especially in regard to such as are in a condition of sudden or urgent necessity?

Mr. HAYES FISHER: I would refer the hon. Member to the answer given to him by my predecessor in reply to a similar question on the 22nd September, 1915. As the hon. Member was then informed, the Committee do not propose to issue any further Report affecting the duties of poor law officers before the end of the War.

York Infirmary (Death).

Mr. ROWNTREE asked the President of the Local Government Board whether he has received a resolution from the York Board of Guardians and also from the Irish National League Working Men's Club at York on the death in the local infirmary of Thomas Raftery; and whether he sees his way to grant the inquiry asked for?

Mr. HAYES FISHER: My attention has been drawn to this case, and I proposed to grant the inquiry asked for.

ORDERS OF THE DAY.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE.

Mr. McKENNA: Can the right hon. Gentleman say what will be the business for next week?

Mr. BONAR LAW: On Monday it is proposed to take the Committee stage of the Consolidated Fund Bill, which is purely formal, and the Representation of the People Bill.

On Tuesday, the Third Reading of the Consolidated Fund Bill.

On Wednesday, the Representation of the People Bill.

On Thursday, the Coal Mines Control Agreement (Confirmation) Bill and some other Bills, on the assumption that the Committee stage of the Representation of the People Bill finishes on Wednesday.

Mr. BILLING: On a point of Order. I wish to ask why, when I put down a question, I was not allowed to ask it? The question which I wished to ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer was whether he was aware of the widespread feeling of uneasiness occasioned by his recent public statement to the effect that only the intervention of America saved the Allies from financial collapse and disaster, and whether he would repeat that statement on the floor of the House of Commons? I would like to ask this, because the Prime Minister, as I would like the House to understand—

Mr. BONAR LAW: I am quite ready to answer it.

Mr. SPEAKER: The reason why the question was not put on the Paper simply was that it was not a genuine question asking for information, but was an invitation to a Minister to make a speech.

Mr. BILLING: On a point of Order. Am I in order in requesting the Chancellor of the Exchequer to take the first opportunity of allaying the feeling of great uneasiness caused in this country by the statement that the conduct of this War has passed out of the hands of the War Council into those of American financiers?

Mr. SPEAKER: The Chancellor of the Exchequer is entitled to take the opportunity he chooses of making such statements as he wishes.

CONSOLIDATED FUND (No. 5) BILL.

Order for Second Reading read.

Motion made, and Question proposed, "That the Bill be now read a Second time."

The FIRST LORD of the ADMIRALTY (Sir Eric Geddes): It is one of the traditions of this House that a private Member who addresses the House for the first time is assured of its consideration and of its sympathy. I have confidence that no less will be accorded to one who now not only addresses the House for the first time, but does so exceedingly ill-equipped for the task, and with a deep sense of the great responsibility attaching to the high office which he holds. Before proceeding to the general statement of Admiralty business, there are one or two matters raised by hon. Members in recent questions which I have undertaken to deal with in my statement.

PRESENT BOARD OF ADMIRALTY.

The first of these relates to the present constitution and organisation of the Board of Admiralty, and to such changes as have been made in it. I will as briefly as possible describe the outline of the new administration. The present Board of Admiralty consists of eight naval officers and three civilians, including myself. I am, however, finding that the administrative work is growing in complexity, difficulty, and detail to such an extent that the appointment of an additional Civil Lord is still necessary, and I expect to revive the post which lapsed quite recently, when Lord Southborough, better known to the House as Sir Francis Hopwood, took up his appointment as Secretary to the Irish Convention, and I hope to make an appointment to that post shortly. The Board will then consist of eight naval officers and four civilians, including myself. A change of some importance has been made in the arrangements for dealing with Admiralty business. The members of the Board, in addition to dealing individually with work allotted to them under the table of distribution of business in the Admiralty, have been grouped into two formal Committees, namely, the Operations Committee and the Maintenance Committee, each of which meets once a week, or more often when necessary.

The First Lord is the *ex-officio* chairman, and personally I make a point of presiding over them as often as is pos-

sible. The Operations Committee consists of myself, as *ex-officio* chairman, the First Sea Lord, the Deputy First Sea Lord, the Deputy Chief of the Naval Staff, and the Assistant Chief of the Naval Staff, with the Fifth Sea Lord attending when necessary. This Committee deals with large questions of naval strategy, with operational plans, and with the scale of provision and equipment of the Navy, as a fighting force, and with its efficiency, organisation, and utilisation. The other Committee, the Maintenance Committee, consists of the six members of the Board concerned with personnel, materiel, supplies, works, production, and finance. It deals with questions affecting these matters, and with the fulfilment of the demands of the Operations Committee and Naval Staff. The Deputy First Sea Lord, representing the Operations Committee, and the Fifth Sea Lord, attending when necessary, form the link between the operations side of the Board and the maintenance side of the Board. The Board itself also meets once a week, or more often if necessary. Matters coming within the administrative spheres of the different members of the Board are, if they fall within certain definite categories of importance, referred for consideration to the appropriate Committee of the Board, which either arrives at a definite conclusion or refers the matters for decision or confirmation to a full meeting of the Board, as the nature of the subject may require. This is, generally, the change or development of the organisation that has taken place in the Board of Admiralty and in its procedure.

A change of some little importance, which I think will be of interest to this House, has been made in the procedure for placing matters on the Board agenda. Upon the formation of the two Committees which I have described, the members of the Board asked that either Committee should have the right — a right which they had not up to then possessed—of giving definite instructions to the Secretary that any question, which either Committee desired, should be placed on the Board agenda, and, with the full concurrence of the War Cabinet, I decided that this right should be given. The House will therefore realise that the theory underlying the reorganisation of Board procedure in the Admiralty has been to decentralise, but, at the same time, to strengthen the control exercised by the Board over the business of the

Admiralty as a whole, and also to expedite, regularise, and ensure system in the methods of submission and procedure. This organisation is working smoothly and well, and, in my opinion, the control exercised by the Board is increasing. In this matter I have, I am glad to think, merely followed and developed a policy initiated by my distinguished predecessor.

APPOINTMENT OF DEPUTY FIRST SEA LORD.

The appointment of the Deputy First Sea Lord, Vice-Admiral Sir Rosslyn Wemyss, whose whole attention, it has now been decided, is to be given to naval staff matters, and the appointment of an Operations Committee of the Board, are designed to increase the power and strengthen the control of the naval staff in the planning of operations and their general staff duties. Certain additions to the constitution of the naval staff have been made, but I fear that time will not permit me now to go into details of these in my present statement. The additions in personnel have taken the form of adding to the operations side of the naval staff a new section consisting of younger officers with recent experience in the Grand Fleet, and under a flag officer who left the Grand Fleet to take up the position. It is hoped that by these means to add to the ripe and valuable experience of those distinguished officers who have served at the Admiralty for considerable periods, and whose experience cannot be dispensed with, the latest and up-to-date knowledge of naval warfare in its ever-changing aspects of to-day. The naval staff will be in increasing personal touch with the Grand Fleet and other naval commands, and I look with confidence to great advantage from this arrangement. I have as briefly as possible dealt with the organisation of the Admiralty, and I do not think I should trespass further on the time of the House in regard to this part of my subject, although there is a great deal more that I could say if time permitted.

PUBLICATION OF TONNAGE LOSSES.

I now wish to deal with a question which is of considerable public interest, namely, the desirability or otherwise of publishing the tonnage of British merchant vessels lost as the result of enemy action. I may say that, personally, I approached this subject with the idea that it was desirable, and ought to be possible, to give figures to the public,

[Sir E. Geddes.]

because it seemed hardly conceivable that the enemy did not know what he was sinking; but after a most careful review of the question, and as the House knows, it is one which has constantly engaged the attention of the Cabinet—I regret very much indeed to say that it has not been found possible to arrive at any form of publication which would not, at the same time, convey most valuable information to the enemy, which I am perfectly sure they do not possess to-day, if the information is to be given in regular sequence, and for specific periods, which would enable the general public to follow the situation in detail. I have studied, from a variety of sources, the statements made from time to time by the enemy as to the tonnage position, and I have come to the definite conclusion that not only does he not know what is being sunk, but that he would like very much indeed to know the tonnage regularly month by month, or week by week, or even if he could get a precise figure for a period. If I am right in this conclusion—and I believe I am—it is in itself, I am sure, sufficient justification to the House for the non-publication of the tonnage figures. I can, however, give, as supplementary to the recent statement of the Prime Minister in the Albert Hall, certain information which I think will show the House and the country that we are making reasonable and satisfactory progress in overcoming the menace of the enemy's submarine activity. The House will realise, however, that, great as is the loss of mercantile tonnage—and the figure is still very formidable—one cannot at this stage of the War pick any one item and deduce therefrom that the War, or even any phase of the War, is going well or badly. It is a truism that it is the unexpected that happens in war, and this I think applies equally to warlike preparations behind the battle fronts. We may make a plan to produce certain tonnage of merchant shipping, but a change may take place in sinkings, previous measures may bear fruit, and, for the time being, sinkings decrease. It may thus be possible to transfer the labour and the material either to anti-submarine appliances, or to appliances for the war on land. Men and material devoted to-day to the building of submarines may to-morrow have to be diverted to the production of aircraft engines. Men and material to-day utilised for the production

of tanks, light railway material, or bomb-proof shelters, may to-morrow have to be transferred to the manufacture of mines. And so the kaleidoscopic change which goes on in actual warfare is continually occurring in the workshop and shipyard. To the uninformed observer it must appear sometimes that there is no method in the madness of those who control these matters. But I would appeal to the country for confidence that there is method in what we do.

The general situation of submarine warfare may be demonstrated by the following figures: Since 4.0 P.M. the beginning of the War—and these are an entirely new set of figures, which, I think, will be interesting to the House—between 40 and 50 per cent. of the German submarines commissioned and operating in the North Sea, Atlantic, and Arctic Ocean, have been sunk.

Mr. HOLT: Are those figures of sinkings you are sure of?

Sir E. GEDDES: As sure as one can be of anything. During the last quarter the enemy have lost as many submarines as they lost during the whole of last year, 1916. That is a later figure than the one given by the Prime Minister at Albert Hall. He told the country that in this year—he was speaking a few weeks ago—we had already sunk twice as many as in the whole of 1916. The figure I am able to give you is important, because it shows that we are really making progress in this. The figure I give you is that in one quarter, that is, roughly, a third of the time, we have sunk the equivalent of the whole of 1916.

Mr. HOUSTON: Can the right hon. Gentleman give us any information as to the number of submarines the Germans are sending out per week? [Hon. MEMBERS: "No, no!"]

Sir E. GEDDES: As to the sinkings of British merchant tonnage by submarines the German official figures for August are 808,000 tons, those are given out officially by the German Wireless Press, and the figure is all nationalities. German figures are usually given for all nationalities and then they turn from that on to how the British mercantile marine can stand this. They actually sank very little more than a third of that amount of British tonnage and a little more than half for all nation-

alities. For September, next month, their official figures are 672,000 tons, that is, they have gone down from 808,000 to 672,000, and I will tell the House later on how they explain that. They sank far less than a third of that amount of British tonnage and less than half that amount of all nationalities. The Germans claim—and this is how they account for a decrease in their mythical sinkings—that our tonnage is falling so low that there are not enough ships at sea to enable their submarine commanders to maintain their "bag." They say the game is getting very scarce. That is the explanation that is given by both semi-official organs, the "Cologne Gazette" and the "Frankfurt Gazette," on the same day, 23rd October, so obviously it was communicated to them. I would like to give the House the facts on that. They say that there is so little game on the ground that they cannot get the bag. In April last, which was absolutely the heaviest month of sinkings—they were very very bad that month—by the enemy submarines since the War began, we must assume because it was their best month that our trade flowed in satisfactory volume for their submarines. They had no complaint in that month. They did very well; they got a good bag. In September last, which is the month they explain away as unsatisfactory because there is not enough tonnage to sink, which is the lowest month of sinkings, and which he tries to explain to his people, as I have said above, the overseas sailings of all ships 1,600 tons and over were 20 per cent. in numbers and 30 per cent. in tonnage higher than in April. So he has to find another and a better explanation for his lack of success. I can supply that. The Navy has reached down into the depths and the harvest reaped by the submarines is poorer and the number of German submarines that "do not return" is increasing. Since April, the peak month for British losses, the highest month we have ever had, they have steadily decreased, and latterly very markedly decreased. It has been an absolutely steady curve down to September. September was a most satisfactory month, the best we have had since we began the intensive submarine warfare, and, though not quite so good in October, still October is very slightly worse than September, very slightly, and is far better than any other month since the unrestricted submarine

warfare began. I am not juggling with the figures, and I mean far better. It is 30 per cent. lower than any other month, except September, and September was the best month.

I have dwelt on the interchangeability of effort, showing how it is sometimes possible to achieve the same net result by greater efforts in other directions, such as the production of anti-submarine craft and appliances instead of the production of merchant tonnage. The net reduction in tonnage in the last four months is to-day 30 per cent. less than was anticipated in an estimate prepared by me for the Cabinet early in July.

NET REDUCTION IN BRITISH TONNAGE.

The total net reduction since the beginning of the War from all causes in British tonnage on the official register, and applying it only to ships that are ocean going, 1,600 tons and over, is 2,500,000 tons. That is the net reduction; that is the tonnage which we have lost net, and that is 14 per cent. of the ships on that register in that class. That reduction has taken place during a period while our Armies, with their magnificent equipment, were receiving absolute priority, and the great growth of our Navy was simultaneously achieved, and achieved to the detriment of mercantile shipbuilding. Now that the submarine is, for the present at any rate—and I should like to lay emphasis on these words—doing less damage, and the resources of the country are again being devoted to a far greater and increasing extent to the upbuilding of the mercantile marine, I hope and I look to the net results being still more favourable. I have tried to really give a consecutive idea of how I read the submarine situation to be. I have given the figures, all the figures that I feel can safely be made public, because, although I am talking in this House, I am really talking in Germany as well.

To summarise the submarine warfare as clearly as I can, therefore, I would put it thus: In spite of an increased number of ships passing through the danger zone our defensive measures have, during the past seven months, proved so efficacious that there has been a steady and very great reduction in the damage done by the enemy's under-water craft. Meantime we are sinking enemy submarines to an increasing extent. Our offensive measures are improving and becoming

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more effective, and will still more considerably improve and multiply. On the other hand, on the best information before us, I believe that the Germans are building submarines faster than they have hitherto been able to do, and that they have not yet attained their maximum strength. It appears to me, therefore, that in this submarine warfare, as elsewhere, it is becoming a test of determination, grit, and ingenuity between the two contending forces. For the present I come to the conclusion that the submarine warfare is going well for us. The enemy has done far less damage than he hoped. As I have told the House, the net result is better than we estimated four or five months ago. He has succeeded in doing this decreasing amount of damage with serious and heavy losses to himself. At present one may be justified in feeling—I think so—that his attack on our trade is being held and is being mastered, and one is justified in looking to the future with courage and determination, confident that he will fail. There is one point that I would like to make which will, I think, interest the House, and I wish to give publicity to it. It is this: We, of course, analyse in every possible way submarine sinkings, and although we may do and are doing a great deal by the use of science, by various kinds of weapons and appliances, to defeat the submarine, there is one thing which is almost the most potent protection against submarines that exists. It is not an appliance; it is a gift that God has given to men on the ships. It is their eyesight. It is a good look out that is kept. I will give figures to the House which, I think, will interest it, and will tell those outside how they can help the Navy against the submarine. A good look out kept by an experienced man, covering a great many attacks by submarines, has given us the following facts, that if a submarine is sighted by the look out on a vessel, whether the vessel is armed or not, it makes no difference, taking it all over, it is seven to three on the ship in favour of it getting away. Out of every ten attacks when the submarine is sighted by the ship seven of them fail, but of every ten attacks when the submarine is not sighted eight ships go down. It is seven to three on the ship if the submarine is sighted, and four to one against it if it is not.

I have now dealt with the submarine situation, and the situation as regards

the net reduction in our own merchant tonnage. Many Members of the House will recollect and will know for themselves what the German position is, but it is perhaps interesting to give that figure here. At the outbreak of War Germany had about 5,000,000 tons of shipping. To-day nearly half of it is sunk or in the hands of our Allies and of ourselves. He has got a 50 per cent. reduction, and none of his merchant ships go to sea. We have got a 14 per cent. reduction. It is well, however, that the British public should be told what they are up against, and this I think I can do in a few sentences. We must not consider ourselves alone. We must consider the Alliance as a whole. We must not be optimistic and say we can do all we like because submarine warfare is, for the present at any rate, going well with us. Some of our Allies may in some particulars be better off or may be worse off than we are. For example, while we have plenty of coal to be had for the winning, Italy and France have not, and it is essential that the greatest economy in food and in all our imports should be exercised in order that tonnage saved may be diverted to other vital needs of the Alliance.

I think the country has accepted the position that we must lay our plans for a long war. I see no sign of it being a short one. All, by their economy, can help the Royal Navy, and the Navies of our Allies, to defeat the submarine. The fewer times a ship goes through the danger zone, the less are her risks of being sent to the bottom. Every British citizen in his home, every worker in the shipyards and the marine engineering works, has it in his power to help to defeat the submarine menace, and to strengthen and sustain our Allies. It is only by the strictest economy at home, and by the maximum effort of all the workers, that the submarine will be finally defeated. Further, there are great and ever greater calls upon the shipping of the world. The huge Army that our Ally, the United States, is preparing has to be transported and maintained. Our French, Italian, Russian, and other Allies require sea-borne help, and that help can only be given to the full extent which this country would wish if the nation is prepared strictly and rigorously to curtail its needs, to develop home resources, and to conserve its present and potential maritime strength. I am saying this because

one has so often heard the charge made that one speaker is optimistic and says, "Everything is going well," and another speaker says, "You must save tonnage." I have tried to give both sides. I am convinced that at no period of this War has it been more a test of the grit, determination, and endurance of the people of these Islands. The question has often been asked, not only in this House, but outside, as to whether we are building merchant tonnage at a sufficient rate to replace the submarine sinkings? The answer has been given in the negative. But, as I have already endeavoured to point out to the House, it is unsound and inconclusive to take any one factor of output as against submarine losses to be a vital indication of our situation.

Let me give some information upon the position of the merchant ship construction and of the new national shipyards. Our present position in merchant shipping is an interesting phenomenon of the War. If it shows us how quickly our surplus resources are wasted, we can take courage in remembering that at the same time we have grown strong where once we were weak. In the well-grounded confidence that our sea front was strongly held, the nation set itself, three years ago, to become strong where it was weak, and to build up its force on land, and with an effort thought impossible in the early months of the War. The great host holding our line in France, and the other theatres of war, is now equipped on a scale never dreamt of before. This effort was achieved in part at the cost of our mercantile marine, and also, in part, at the cost of our Navy. If we had continued during the War with our merchant shipbuilding on its pre-war level we should to-day have been between 2,000,000 and 3,000,000 tons to the good. Expenditure of effort in one direction calls for restriction in another, and we were fortunate that we started well supplied. Even so, we have had to sacrifice to the needs of our land forces between 2,000,000 and 3,000,000 tons, but we are less than 2,500,000 tons down on the register of big ships. May the country not justly take credit from the fact that in 1917, with our military munitions effort at the maximum, and when the call upon our man-power has reduced our available resources to the minimum, we have produced naval and mercantile tonnage to an extent almost

equal to the best year ever recorded in our history. In 1918 it will certainly be very much greater. The position as to tonnage is that we are now expediting the output of merchant shipbuilding. In order to avoid any clashing between the vital interests of the Navy and the vital interests of the supplies of merchant tonnage, the responsibility for the whole shipbuilding programme—Royal Naval and mercantile marine—is centred in the Admiralty under the Controller. The post of Controller, as the House will remember, was recently revived as a separate position. The Controller is charged with the whole business of the production of naval material, as well as of the designs and production of ships for the Ministry of Shipping, and craft for the War Office—in connection with Mesopotamia, France, etc., and other Government Departments.

NAVAL MATERIEL.

As regards naval materiel, the Controller and the Third Sea Lord work in the closest possible touch, and are, in fact, the complement of each other. The Third Sea Lord, after reference to the naval staff or Board, when necessary, is responsible for deciding the types and quantities of material required for the Fleet, including ships and their machinery, armour, guns, ammunition, torpedoes, mines, etc. He is also responsible for the decision, in consultation with the Controller, of questions relating to the detail and the order of priority of work upon the construction and repair of ships for naval service, and all other matters in which naval considerations affect the business of production. Under the new organisation, the officers responsible for naval design and equipment worked jointly under the Third Sea Lord and the Controller. The Controller's relation to the Shipping Controller is somewhat similar, and he fulfils as nearly as may be the requirements of Sir Joseph Maclay as to design and numbers of ships produced. The staff engaged upon production has been largely augmented, and is organised in three sub-departments, dealing with: (1) dockyards and shipbuilding; (2) armament production; (3) auxiliary and mercantile shipbuilding. Each of these three sub-departments is in charge of a Deputy-Controller. The Admiralty Controller has obtained the very valuable assistance of many gentlemen of eminence and experience in the duties which they have undertaken, and his

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Department may, I think, not inaptly be described as a "Marine Ministry of Munitions." Its relations to the Admiralty correspond in many respects to the relations of the Ministry of Munitions to the War Office. The increasing difficulty brought about by the enormous demand for material of all kinds, coupled with the situation created by the intense submarine warfare adopted by the enemy, demonstrated the necessity for a special Production Department of the Admiralty. In my opinion, the wisdom of the step taken by the late First Lord, my right hon. Friend the Member for Dublin University (Sir E. Carson) is progressively apparent, and I look forward with confidence to the great benefits which will accrue. It is, I think, a high tribute to the broad outlook and liberal-mindedness of the Board of Admiralty, and of the Navy as a whole, that this great change in the organisation of the Admiralty should have been introduced entirely without friction or dislocation of business. I also wish to acknowledge very gratefully the help and co-operation of the Shipping Controller, and his Department, as also of the distinguished shipbuilders forming the Advisory Committee on merchant shipbuilding. It is to their courage and ability that the credit for the construction of the standard ship is due.

In carrying out the policy of the Government of giving priority to shipbuilding our first step is to construct the balance-sheet of shipbuilding facilities available, steel and labour that can be used therein, and of the other factors which go to make the complete ship. This we have done. Our next act is to ensure that all existing yards are filled to the maximum with labour and material, and are extended where extension can conveniently and economically be arranged. This is in process of being done. If it then appears that steel and labour will be available in excess of the capacity of the existing yards and their immediate extensions, we must construct new yards until we have shipbuilding capacity to balance the labour and material as available. Every ship will undoubtedly be required. We have decided that four new national yards at least will be necessary, and in this we are following the precedent so successfully applied and so courageously carried through in the case of the Ministry of Munitions more than two years ago in the national factories. About steel, all I

will say is that extensions are being made to the existing plant, and that we are encouraged by the responsible Department to believe that steel will be forthcoming for the programme required. Labour is the least tangible problem. In this also we do not fear any definite shortage, and with good will and reason on all sides we do not apprehend any great difficulty. We all serve the State in the way that we are called. If shipbuilding becomes the point of danger, I am quite confident the labour will be forthcoming for shipbuilding. In this, as in every other branch of war activity, the good will of the skilled man must help to introduce and educate the unskilled workers. We are not to-day making the great demands for the introduction of unskilled labour which will be necessary; but when the supply of steel turns, as it will turn, as it is now turning, to the shipbuilding yards, I do not doubt that the skilled workers will respond to the call for the absorption and education of unskilled men in the same way as workers in munition works and in the Army have responded. They may rest fully assured that Parliament and the country will not permit any exploitation of the concessions they may under patriotic impulse make—exploitation calculated to lower hereafter the standard of comfort which they have won for their wives, their children, and themselves. Without a united effort we cannot hope to succeed. With unity and good will we need have no fear of the result. I have confidence, based upon our national record in this War, that this unity and good will will be forthcoming as and when required.

In some quarters the national shipyards have been adversely criticised, as is only natural, and to be expected. One is asked the question, "Why build new yards when the existing yards are not working to their full capacity?" The answer to that is very simple and very straight. We will not use the national yards until the existing yards are worked to their full economic capacity. We believe, as far as we can foresee the position—and I lay stress upon these words—that it will be possible to allot steel in the forthcoming year to an extent which will enable us to utilise more capacity than exists even with the extension to the existing yards, and the new yards are being built now so that they may be ready some six months hence when the steel is available. Did we do otherwise we would be "too late," and we will not let "too late" be our motto this time. The output of

merchant tonnage for the first nine months of 1917 is 123 per cent. higher than in the corresponding period of last year, and is very considerably higher than the total output for the whole of 1915. Standard vessels have now been ordered representing very nearly 1,000,000 gross tons of shipping. More than half of these are already under construction, and the remainder will be taken in hand as soon as vessels now in the stocks have been launched. A limited number of standard vessels have been completed and are in commission, but the whole of the yards suitable for building standard ships cannot yet be entirely devoted to this work, because the stocks are already occupied with other craft. But merchant shipbuilding must not be considered apart from merchant ship repairing. The same men and the same material are required for repairing ships as for building ships, and if we have a run of damaged ships brought into port—and the Admiralty is responsible for seeing to the repairs practically of all ships brought into port, and our arrangements for salving damaged ships are continually improving—it would indeed be false economy to devote one's resources to building a ship which might be available in five, six, or eight months' time, when, by devoting the men and material to the damaged vessel, we can have that tonnage afloat in a matter of weeks or in a month or so.

The Controller has been fortunate in obtaining the services and the heartiest co-operation and good will of those who are at the head of our great ship-repairing and dry-docking industry, and I will give the House figures to show the magnitude of this task, which has also now been entrusted to the Admiralty. There are to-day 235 dry docks of considerable size in the British Isles which can be devoted to merchant ship repairs—I exclude docks allotted to the Royal Navy. We have throughout made a revision of the docks both for building and repairs, so that each Department has its own accommodation, and then, if one can help the other, we adjust it that way. These docks, now centrally controlled, have attained a remarkable figure of user—90 per cent. of their possible maximum of time. This is, indeed, a strikingly satisfactory figure, and, I am most authoritatively informed, far better than peace-time commercial experience. Our monthly repair of merchant ships is 1,100 completed—dry docked and afloat—and I am glad to say

that there are practically no arrears of repairs. The need for these repairs is of course by no means caused by enemy action alone, but also by marine damage, due refits, etc. In addition to merchant shipbuilding and merchant ship-repairing, we have the building and repair of warships. It would not be wise—and I think the House will agree with me—to give any details of warship construction, except to say that the programme of warship and auxiliary ship construction now in hand is infinitely larger than has ever been undertaken in the pre-war history of the country. I am sure, however, it will be a source of satisfaction to the House to learn that during the last twelve months the output of Royal Naval and auxiliary craft, measured in displacement as much as the average annual output for the few years preceding the War. I would like in this connection to say that in the dockyards, as in every branch of our war activity, women are bearing their part, and are being to a considerable and an increasing extent employed with great satisfaction to the management.

The growth of the fleet has put a considerable strain upon the resources of the Royal Dockyards and of the outside repairing establishments, which throughout have given of their best to the maintenance of our sea forces. Three large and one small new dockyards have been opened since the beginning of the War, and the increase in work done at all dockyards has been most marked. During one month, the number of war vessels completed repairs was nearly 1,000—that is, in addition to the 1,100 merchant ships—and that was by no means an abnormal month. Since the beginning of the War, 31,000 war vessels, including patrol craft and mine-sweepers, have been docked or slipped, and these figures do not include repair work done for the vessels of our Allies. The arming of merchant vessels is proceeding, and it is hoped that before long all merchant craft will be effectively armed. But here again this House and the public will, I feel sure, wish to realise that we cannot judge one item by itself. We can only judge with a knowledge of all the factors of the case. Our available resources in all directions do not meet all the demands made upon them. The arming of merchant ships and patrol craft could have been completed earlier had there not been so great a demand for anti-aircraft guns. The armament could have

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been heavier had it not been necessary to devote a portion of the output of guns to other purposes. This again is an illustration of the point which I am venturing to emphasise, namely, that the adjustment of resources is a matter of great difficulty, and can only be done with the utmost care by those who have a comprehensive and full knowledge of the facts. The difficulty exists to-day—we know it does—with all belligerents, but we have every reason to believe that our enemies have a much greater need for these adjustments than have we and our Allies. I am sorry to have detained the House so long, but I have found it impossible to curtail the statement further.

I will now deal with two questions to which reference has recently been made in the Press, and in connection with both of which the Admiralty has been criticised. I believe that criticism to be based upon and caused by incomplete information.

I will deal first with the attack on the Scandinavian convoy. On the 16th of October the two destroyers "Strongbow" and "Mary Rose," with three small but armed vessels, only one of which was fitted with wireless, escorted a convoy of twelve ships bound for the Shetland Islands from Norway. During the night one of the three smaller armed vessels—the one which was fitted with wireless—dropped back to screen a ship of the convoy which had to stop owing to her cargo having shifted. The convoy was then accompanied by the destroyers "Strongbow" and "Mary Rose," both of which had wireless installation, as well as by two other small craft which were not so fitted. About 6 a.m. on the 17th, just as day was breaking, "Strongbow" sighted two ships to the southward, which were closing fast. Visibility was about two miles, and "Strongbow" challenged and received an unsatisfactory answer, and at once gave orders for action. The enemy's first shot wrecked her wireless room and did other damage, and, in spite of the great gallantry with which she was fought by her captain, officers, and crew, she was sunk. The other destroyer, "Mary Rose," was immediately attacked by the two German vessels, and blown up by a shot in her magazine. The two enemy vessels—which later detailed reports show were of a very fast cruiser class—then proceeded to

attack the vessels of the convoy, sinking nine of them. Owing to the fact that the escort vessel, which was fitted with wireless, had been detached to screen the ship whose cargo had shifted, and owing to "Mary Rose" having been blown up before sending out a message, and "Strongbow's" wireless being put out of action by the first shot, no message reached the Admiral Commanding the Orkneys, the Commander-in-Chief of the Grand Fleet, or the Admiralty, that the convoy had been attacked until the surviving ships arrived at Lerwick. The Admiralty did not receive the information until 7 p.m.

Dealing first with how the convoy was attacked without the enemy raiders being intercepted, I would ask the House to recollect a few facts—that the area of the North Sea is 140,000 square nautical miles; that we have a coast here subject to attack by raiders of 566 nautical miles in length, from Cape Wrath to Dover; and that the area of vision for a light cruiser squadron, with its attendant destroyers at night, is well under five square miles. Five square miles in 140,000! It is not desirable that I should state how many of the light cruiser squadrons which we possess could possibly have been in the North Sea at the time; but, at any rate, hon. Members will see that, with these areas, it is practically impossible with the light forces at the disposal of the Navy—even if they were all devoted to this purpose—entirely to prevent sporadic raids of this kind either upon our coasts or upon an isolated convoy like this. The watching Fleet must invariably be at an enormous disadvantage as regards the disposal of its forces compared to the Fleet which lies behind land defences and plays a game of "tip and run." By a concatenation of circumstances which I have described, no wireless information of the raid was received from the escort or the convoy, and between dawn and dark, while the daylight hours passed, the Navy got no wireless message of the attack. There was only one other vessel in the convoy that had wireless, and she had gone ahead earlier.

Sir H. DALZIEL: Was that our total loss?

Sir E. GEDDES: No other naval loss; the rest were all neutral ships. Having regard to the disposition of our forces on the 17th, we are entitled to say that had we received wireless information—and, with three vessels suitably fitted, it is

reasonable to expect that we should have received that information—the British Navy would have asked no better chance than it then had to intercept the raiders on their return journey. In this case the opportunity was denied us.

The Scandinavian convoy system was started in April of this year, and more than 4,500 vessels have been convoyed by the British Navy in that convoy alone. This is the first occasion upon which a single ship has been lost by surface attack in the Scandinavian convoy. I mention this convoy particularly; but there are other convoys continually passing up and down and across the North Sea, and our losses in them have been proportionately less. The enemy cruisers made the passage at night, and, owing to the circumstances I have mentioned, were unmolested during the day, and slipped back again at night. The question who is responsible as to the strength of the convoy has been raised, and I would like to give the answer. The arrangements for escorting this convoy are in the hands of the Commander-in-Chief, Grand Fleet, and, with the forces at his disposal, and, having regard to the other duties and operations which he has to undertake at the time, he makes the best disposition possible. In this case, after the fullest consultation, we are satisfied that the best dispositions possible were made by him. Much as we regret the loss of brave lives and of valuable shipping which the neutrals composing the convoy have suffered, we must, I think, write it down as one of the legitimate risks of war where the enemy has scored and has sunk 8,000 tons of shipping, but that the equivalent of one big ship is insignificant compared to the loss of brave lives.

I cannot leave this subject without paying a tribute—which I am sure the House would wish me to pay—to the gallantry and devotion to duty of His Majesty's vessels escorting the convoy. The conduct of the officers and men of His Majesty's ships upheld in the fullest sense the highest traditions of our Navy. They immediately attacked against what they knew to be superior forces. The "Mary Rose" was blown up at once. "Strongbow" fought until her guns and engines were out of action, and her commanding officer, Lieutenant-Commander Edward Brooke—who, I regret to say, has lost an eye and a leg—after his ship was helpless, and fearing that she might fall into the hands of the enemy, ordered the engineer officers to

stand by to flood the ship in order that she might be sunk rather than captured. After "Strongbow" was helpless the enemy's ships returned and swept the decks with small guns. The armed trawler "Elise" most gallantly came up to "Strongbow" to assist in rescuing the crew, but was driven off by the enemy, who returned twice and swept the upper deck of the "Strongbow" with gunfire each time. By this time she was badly on fire, and eventually sank at 9.30.

I have now given a brief summary of what happened on board the "Strongbow." But it is sufficient to show—if, indeed, it were necessary to show—that history repeats itself in the present day and that the gallantry of the Royal Navy is undiminished. "Strongbow" was sunk in action with vastly superior forces, fighting until her guns were knocked out, and her gallant officers and crew upheld the proudest traditions of His Majesty's Service. As regards the "Mary Rose," we are still dependent upon information received from Norway; but we learn that she was attacked at short range and blown up almost immediately by a shot in her magazine. The officers and crew of the "Mary Rose," no less than the officers and crew of the "Strongbow," deserve a tribute to their gallantry and devotion to duty.

NAVAL ACTION IN BALTIC.

The second subject in connection with which a good deal of criticism has been recently levelled against the Navy is that we have not sent a Fleet into the Baltic to the assistance of our Russian Allies. It is easy to level a criticism of this nature, but I am very doubtful whether many of these critics have studied with care a naval chart of the entrances into the Baltic. I imagine they have based their views after looking at a schoolboy's atlas, in which all the sea is coloured pale blue. It would serve no useful purpose if I were to enter into any detailed explanation of the difficulties confronting an enterprise of this nature; but the matter is best dealt with by a study of the procedure of the German naval operations in the Gulf of Riga, because the measures which would be necessary for us in entering the Baltic would be obviously somewhat similar to those adopted by the Germans in entering the Gulf of Riga. Let us see what occurred in their case. A considerable proportion of the High Seas Fleet, with its large force of attendant cruisers,

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destroyers, submarines, mine-sweepers, and escort vessels, together with a large force of troops in transports, was assembled at some point within easy reach of the Gulf of Riga. The first operation consisted of the seizure of the Island of Oesel by a military force landing to the northward of the island, where there were no fortifications. This force gradually occupied the island, and took the southern and eastern batteries in rear, supported in the case of the former, by the fire of the German fleet in position where they could approach the batteries. The Island of Dago, and, later, Moon Island, were also seized and occupied in a similar manner. These operations extended over a considerable period. It should be remembered in connection with these operations that the southern side of the Gulf of Riga—Courland—was in German occupation all the time.

Let us now transfer our attention to the entrance to the Baltic, where conditions are, in a measure, somewhat similar. Before the Germans attempted operations in the Gulf of Riga, they deemed it necessary to occupy the islands commanding the entrance to that gulf. The islands which command the entrance to the Baltic belong to a neutral Power—Denmark. Would it not be an act of madness for a British fleet to pass through into the Baltic with the certainty that the Germans would occupy and fortify these islands in our rear? Let us now consider the objectives. The German objective is clearly, first, to command the Gulf of Riga, in order to gain facilities for a land attack on Reval and an advance on Petrograd, and also to be in a position to command the entrance to the Gulf of Finland. What would be our objective in the Baltic? Our main objective would be the destruction of the German fleet taking part in these operations, in order to afford assistance to our Russian Ally. If we did pass through into the Baltic, should we find the German fleet there on our arrival? It must be remembered that the operation of passing through is one which would occupy a considerable period of time, as, putting aside for the moment the question of the neutrality of the Danish islands dealt with earlier, there are very extensive minefields to be cleared; and the leading vessels of a fleet debouching from the Great Belt—the only possible passage—in a necessarily deep formation

on a very narrow front, would find the whole German fleet deployed, and concentrating its fire upon them. I have found no responsible naval officer of any school who would support such an enterprise to-day.

I do not touch at length upon such questions as the length of the line of communications to be maintained with the fleet when in the Baltic, and the fact that, as every supply ship passing through would do so within thirty miles of Kiel, it is certain that only a small proportion would succeed, unless heavy forces were detached to protect them. These are obviously matters which bear largely on the subject. But I think I have said enough to show why responsible naval opinion is unanimous that the operation is one which should certainly not be undertaken in existing circumstances. Our fleet in the Baltic, if it got through, would soon wither to impotence with its vital communications cut. Our Russian ally could not supply it with fuel, ammunition, or stores.

ROLE AND ACTIVITIES OF ROYAL NAVY.

I will now proceed, as far as possible and as far as time may permit, to a broad general statement of the rôle and activities of the Navy. The question is often asked whether the Admiralty is not contenting itself with a concentration on the defensive rôle instead of adopting bold offensive measures. Of course, it takes two sides to make a battle, and the problem of coaxing an unwilling enemy to come out into the open and fight has always confronted the stronger naval Power. What was true in the great naval wars of the past is still more true under modern conditions. Mine, submarine, and powerful shore artillery, have all contributed to make the task of the offensive extremely difficult.

The rôle of the British Navy to-day is, as it must be, both offensive and defensive. We defend our trade routes, and the figures which have recently been given by the Prime Minister, but which I venture to give again, show what the Navy has done. The Navy has transported across the sea to Allied Armies:

13,000,000 men.
2,000,000 horses.
25,000,000 tons of explosives.
51,000,000 tons of fuel.
130,000,000 tons of food.

Of the 13,000,000 men who have crossed and recrossed the seas, only 2,700 have

been lost by the action of the enemy. The Navy has also maintained, without serious interruption and with the co-operation and inestimable gallantry of the mercantile marine, the sea-borne food and munition supply not only of these Islands, but of our Allies. The figures I have already given of the reduction of losses against submarine attack and of the destruction of enemy submarines speak for themselves as to the increasing efficiency of those measures, and I can confidently tell the House that we are doing more to-day in the development and output of anti-submarine appliances of all kinds than we were doing six months ago—and, indeed, more than we estimated that we could do.

The decrease in losses caused by submarines, as is common knowledge, has been brought about partly by offensive measures against the submarine, which are yielding increasing results, and largely by the defensive measures causing a great strain upon the light forces of the Royal Navy, but giving at present considerable success. If the published figures of sailings and the area of the danger zone are considered, the House will appreciate to some extent the magnitude of the strain and the task imposed upon it.

In September 90 per cent. of the total vessels sailing in all Atlantic trades were convoyed, and since the convoy system started—and it has been criticised in some quarters—the total percentage of loss per convoyed vessel passed through the danger zone is 0.5 per cent., or 1 in 200.

TRIBUTE TO UNITED STATES NAVY.

In passing, may I ask the leave of the House to digress for a moment. I wish to acknowledge fully the valuable contribution made by the United States Navy in this convoy work since their destroyers joined us, under the command of Vice-Admiral Sims, who has throughout worked in the heartiest co-operation and whose counsel has been of great value to us. The contribution of the United States Navy was given promptly and freely upon their entry into the War, and is gradually being extended in this and other ways. As is known, we have had a most valuable consultation with Admiral Mayo, the Commander-in-Chief of the United States Atlantic Fleet, and on the occasion of his visit took counsel with him as to the rôle which the American Navy is to play. We

also took advantage of his visit to have an International Naval Conference, from which we hope much good may result.

Apart from the convoying of our trade and military and munitions traffic, however, I have sought for some clear way of demonstrating to the House, and through the House to the country, that the rôle of the Navy is in other ways an offensive one. The enemy, as the House knows, is based, and remains, behind powerful land defences, of which Heligoland is merely an outpost. I would give one comparative fact to show how the Grand Fleet differs in its rôle from the defensive part played by the High Seas Fleet. I disclose no secret—or if it is a secret I disclose a fact which I should be glad to tell the enemy—when I say that the British Fleet in its Northern Base lies behind no shore defences, but relies on its own strength alone.

CEASELESS PATROL.

There are those in this country, and possibly in this House, who do not appreciate the activity of His Majesty's Navy in home waters, who think that it lies in its bases like the High Seas Fleet, with the North Sea in between them. I speak from the intimate knowledge I have of the day-to-day situation in the North Sea, and I can state with the fullest confidence to the House, that the North Sea—140,000 square nautical miles—is swept day and night from north to south and east to west by the British Navy. During a recent month the mileage steamed by His Majesty's battleships, cruisers, and destroyers alone amounted to 1,000,000 ship miles in home waters. In addition to this, there is the ceaseless patrol of the Naval auxiliary forces, amounting to well over 6,000,000 ship miles in home waters in the same month. Over and above this, we have the untiring vigilance by warships and all craft of His Majesty's Navy in every ocean of the world. Time will not permit of my making more detailed reference to the work of the Royal Navy and auxiliary craft in the Seven Seas, on the Tigris, and elsewhere. Their arduous duties have been carried out with great gallantry and in a manner beyond reproach, and, as is the pride of His Majesty's Navy, without a stain upon their honour, chivalry, and humanity. As one example only of how thorough that work is, I can state that during a recent month the blockading squadrons performed in the North Atlantic and Arctic Ocean the

[Sir E. Geddes.]

almost incredible feat of intercepting and examining every single merchant ship trading with neutral countries. They missed not one.

The nation's demands made upon the Royal Navy have been great, and have met with such thoroughness, and with so little fuss, that the country has, I feel sure, hardly realised what the Navy has accomplished.

ROYAL NAVAL AIR SERVICE.

The personnel of the Fleet before the outbreak of war was 146,000; to-day it is 390,000. In this is included the Royal Naval Air Service, which has alone increased from 700 to 41,000. The duties of the Royal Naval Air Service are varied, of great value, and of absorbing interest. Its great efficiency and gallantry in France are occasionally brought to public notice by reports of bombing expeditions and otherwise. But any statement on the Navy would be incomplete without a tribute to the Royal Naval Air Service in operations over the sea. They are the terror of the submarine, and during one month the aircraft patrol round the British coast alone is more than five times the circumference of the earth.

BOMBING AND SUBMARINE WORK.

I think it may interest the House and instruct the public if I give some indication of what the Royal Naval Air Service alone has done in bombing behind the enemy lines in France. During September alone sixty-four raids were carried out on dockyards, naval depots, enemy aerodromes, and other objects of naval and military importance in Flanders behind the enemy lines. No less than 2,736 bombs were dropped by the Royal Naval Air Service alone, totalling 85 tons of explosives. The figures for October are not yet completely tabulated, but are still greater. There is no doubt that these raids result in great material and moral damage, and on many occasions their effect is shown in the aerial photographs to be such as to hamper and restrict seriously the enemy naval, aerial, and military undertakings.

The Submarine Service of the Royal Navy would call for more time than I can at present ask the House to give me. Their intrepid patrol of the far waters of the North Sea is invaluable. The romance of one submarine hunting another is enthralling were it permissible

to give details of those exploits. We hear little of their doings, but their ceaseless work contributes largely to the practical immunity of our shores.

Before closing this statement of naval activities, I would wish to mention the work of the mine-sweepers and

5.0 P.M. mine-layers, and of their gallant crews, largely recruited from our hardy fishermen. Both these duties may be offensive as well as defensive. Is it not an offensive measure to lay mines at night in the tortuous channels of the enemy minefields, with the possibility of attack from his patrol craft or discovery and bombardment from his land guns? Similarly, is it not an offensive measure for the mine-sweepers to go into the enemy minefields, which are protected, to sweep a passage—as they have done—to enable their comrades of the submarine or light surface craft to follow in the next night? The late Prime Minister once said, in a speech which he made in the Fleet, that naval operations are of necessity conducted in “the twilight.” It is that very twilight which keeps the public—and, I regret to say, this House—in partial ignorance of their work. In a war such as this, which has continued so long, and which will still continue long, during which the development of modern weapons of war has been so great, it is inevitable that uninformed criticism, however honest of intention, should do scanty justice to those men who day by day are fighting the country's battles or bearing the great responsibility of conducting the campaign by sea. I regret that in certain quarters there should be what I call unfair criticism of distinguished officers in the Navy to-day. I would call it unfair criticism, whether it is based upon inaccurate assumption, which I am unfortunately debarred from correcting, or upon incomplete information, which I am equally debarred from supplying. These attacks are either specific or take the form of ill-concealed innuendo against officers who, in the nature of things, cannot defend themselves. The senior officers throughout the Service are in their posts because they are believed to be the best men available to hold them. Did I or any First Lord retain an officer in a position of high responsibility at the present time for any other reason we would be unworthy to hold office. I appeal, therefore, to the public and to the Press to discountenance such talk and such publication.

There is a common impression, based again upon lack of knowledge—but it is none the less harmful—that the Board of Admiralty is composed of a lot of obsolete old gentlemen, who know little or nothing of war in its modern form, and who resist, on principle, suggestions which come forward from those who are fighting the country's battles at sea. There are, as I have stated, eight Sea Lords. Of those, only one has not been at sea on active service during the War. He is a distinguished officer, and his very great merit and value to the Admiralty are known full well, not only to myself and to his colleagues on the Board, but to all my distinguished predecessors during the War. One other of the naval members of the Board has not been to sea, but he has had active charge during the War of aerial operations and training, and is employed in that capacity. The remaining six Sea Lords have all come from the Grand Fleet within the last twelve months with one exception, and that officer's service at sea has been most distinguished in an Eastern Command, where he was in charge of naval operations during the War. I think it well to give this information to those who are continually saying: "Why do they not get men from the Grand Fleet with actual war experience?" I have given the answer. I now come to the Flag Officers and Captains on the Active List in Divisions of the Naval War Staff. There are of these twenty-two in all. Of these twenty-two, one Captain has not served at sea during the War. Three Rear-Admirals have all served in the Grand Fleet, twelve Captains have served in the Grand Fleet, and six Captains have served at sea, with other forces, but not in the Grand Fleet. I will leave the matter there. Further comment is, I think, unnecessary.

And so I conclude my first statement to the House, which, I fear, may have taxed both its patience and its forbearance. I have endeavoured in the limited time at my disposal to give some idea of the organisation of the Admiralty, and the changes recently made in it—to give some measure of the great task which the Admiralty and the Royal Navy has to perform, and of how that task is, so far, being carried out. I have tried to show that the best intentioned and patriotic criticism—whether of the strategy or tactics of the Navy, or of the supply of any one particular class of materiel—cannot be conclusive or of real value, unless

the critic knows the whole situation. I have endeavoured to show that the British Navy retains its old traditions of seeking to bring the enemy fleet to action, of keeping open the trade routes, and protecting the commerce of ourselves and Allies. The frontiers of England are still the coasts of the enemy. When the day comes that the enemy gives the British Navy what it asks, namely, battle, I do not doubt that both in strategy, tactics and individual courage, the British Navy will, by its action, uphold its great traditions, of which it and the country are so justly proud. But, whatever controversy there may be, and however a certain faction—and I am glad to believe that it is a small faction—may hold the view that the Navy should commit itself to ventures which every responsible Naval authority condemns, there can be no difference of opinion upon the one glorious fact, that by every action since the beginning of the War—and I feel more than confident by every action until the end of the War—the officers and the men of the Royal Navy have proved themselves, and will continue to prove themselves, worthy upholders of the great traditions of their Service.

Mr. ASQUITH: I rise for the purpose of making two observations of the statement of the right hon. Gentleman. The first is to offer him, not only on my own behalf, but on behalf of the whole House, our most hearty congratulations for one of the most lucid and comprehensive statements made on naval administration and policy to which it has ever in a long experience been my pleasure to listen. The right hon. Gentleman was under the disability or drawback of making his first speech in this House, but he has given us exactly what the House wanted to know, and, if he will allow me to say so, given it in a manner which was worthy in every degree of the importance and difficulty of his task. We all wish him a most successful and distinguished career in the high office to which he has been appointed. The other thing which I wish to say—leaving matters of detail to other speakers—is that I was very glad to hear throughout the right hon. Gentleman's speech the attitude which he adopted to outside criticisms. Now nobody resents, even in war-time—no administrator who is worthy of his task—resents honest, well-informed and patriotic criticism. It is the function of this House to apply that criticism to those who exercise responsible administra-

[Mr. Asquith.]

tive offices, but, unfortunately, we have in these days to deal with a great deal of criticism to which none of those epithets can legitimately be applied, and this is peculiarly the case with the Royal Navy.

The right hon. Gentleman has quoted an expression of mine made two years ago in addressing the Grand Fleet, when I told them that their operations were to a large extent carried on "in the twilight." There is a certain class of critics, ignorant, ill-informed, who seem to hold it a matter of legitimate complaint against the Navy that their actions are not carried on in the limelight. "Why do you not go to the Baltic?" The right hon. Gentleman has demolished that ridiculous suggestion, and the right hon. Gentleman has given it a little more attention than it really deserves, but he has demolished it. "Why do you not do a little more in the way of splashing and spluttering about the world?" That is not the function of the Navy. What the Navy ought to do is what the Navy is doing, and has done since the beginning of this War—maintaining the inviolability of our coasts, sweeping the high seas, on which not a single German merchantman is now to be found, preserving our commerce, establishing and maintaining the blockade of the enemy's supplies, and a ceaseless, unobtrusive, but effective vigilance in maintaining in the only real sense of the word the command of the seas. I am delighted to hear from the right hon. Gentleman that, in accordance with the best traditions of the Navy, while he remains at the head of the Board of Admiralty, that is the policy to which we are going to adhere, and I heartily congratulate him upon the admirable lucidity and cogency with which he has demolished the crude and ephemeral fancies of the hour. Having said this—all I intended to say—the right hon. Gentleman will, I am sure, listen, with attention and with consideration, to whatever criticisms, dictated by a totally different spirit and animated solely by a desire to increase the effective pursuit of the naval policy, which I believe all of us in this House entirely agree may be addressed to him by the House.

Commander BELLAIRS: As one of those who came somewhat under the lash of the right hon. Gentleman, I wish, and wish most unreservedly, to add my congratulations in regard to this statement

which has just been placed before the House. I would like to add that the right hon. Gentleman left out of the account his own contribution in the work which he has achieved at the Admiralty, and that has been no small contribution. It is one of the most difficult tasks in the world to change the whole administrative procedure of the Admiralty in the midst of a war, and while the right hon. Gentleman criticises the critics let him remember that those critics urge that this very change of dividing the Admiralty in two Committees, one to deal with the conduct of the War and the other matériel and maintenance, should be made. I have urged it repeatedly before the War, and on the 21st of March, 1916, I asked the then First Lord of the Admiralty if he would make that change, and his answer was:

"I hope my hon. Friend will probably agree with me in thinking that the present month is not appropriate for reversing the policy which placed the Admiralty on its present footing."

The First Lord of that day, with the assistance of the Board of Admiralty, could probably have made just as good a case as the right hon. Gentleman has made for the policy which he has advocated. The Board of Admiralty then refused to make the change which the right hon. Gentleman has now made, and surely if we had made that change one and a half years earlier, when my question was asked, we should have reaped the benefit to-day. My right hon. Friend has spoken on the anniversary of the battle of Coronel, in which the "Good Hope" and the "Monmouth" were lost, but I have not the least doubt that the First Lord of the Admiralty of the day could have made just as good a case from his point of view, backed by the whole staff of the Admiralty, in reference to the battle of Coronel as my right hon. Friend has in reference to the submarine menace, the Baltic, the convoy, and other matters, using the facts which help most. I do not believe there was a more disgraceful episode in the whole history of the War so far as the Admiralty were concerned—and the Admiralty is not the Navy—than the battle of Coronel.

The critics have said with truth that the Navy has neglected to study the strategical side of war. That is an old controversy, belonging to years ago. In the Nineties Mr. Gibson Bowles put a question for me, asking that a school of strategy for the Navy should be estab-

lished, and he was told that the proper school of strategy for the Navy was the Fleet. Everybody knows that strategy is never studied in the Fleet afloat, and only tactics. The contention has been that while we have naval officers with the greatest possible ability as to tactics, and who have been great administrators, you cannot expect, without the most profound study, that they will ever be great strategists as well. Any soldier will acknowledge that only one man in a thousand is a strategist, and that has been the sole criticism of the distinguished sailors at the Board of Admiralty that they are conducting a strategical war, and that nothing in their past careers has fitted them in regard to the strategical aspects of the War.

The right hon. Gentleman spoke entirely as if this War was a matter for the British Navy, but that is not so. It is the British Navy that gives the lead to the Allied Navies, and when we advocate an offensive we tell you what is absolutely true, that you cannot pool the Fleets of the Allies except on the offensive, because if you rely on the defensive they will, in naval language, look after their own yard-arms. This question is never answered. How is it that we have this overwhelming preponderance of four to one in regard to the Allied Navies, and yet we are unable to use it effectively on the offensive? Take the American Navy, which is on the other side of the Atlantic, except for a few destroyers. Add it to the British Navy, you have 57 Dreadnoughts to Germany's 24, and surely that gives you a margin of superiority for the purpose of an offensive far beyond what naval officers ever demanded in peace time. The right hon. Gentleman dealt with the Baltic, upon the idea that it was an operation for the Grand Fleet, which is certainly not what was suggested. I believe I am correct in saying that the War Staff of the Admiralty never really considered offensive measures until the American naval officers began to ask questions, and then they had to be considered. There has been a change in this House quite recently in connection with the criticism about the lost convoy, and it is this: The House has always been generous in regard to the Navy, so that it has never permitted criticism of the Board of Admiralty to make headway, and this is the first occasion in my recollection that the House has generally been ready to criticise the Board of Admiralty.

The right hon. Gentleman at the beginning of his speech definitely refused to give us the tonnage statistics, because he said once again it would be of assistance to the enemy.

Mr. HOGGE: He did not tell us why.

Commander BELLAIRS: It is a curious thing that the Admiralty lately inspired a statement to the effect that the submarine menace had been mastered. A Cabinet Minister said so, and this refusal of the statistics synchronises with a fresh rise in the tonnage lost in this and neutral countries and in the Allied country of Italy, where the latest figures make a record. We always get a refusal of information when the case is not altogether favourable. We may depend upon it that if we do master the submarine menace the information will be rapidly forthcoming with regard to the tonnage which is lost. There is this criticism to be made about the defensive system, that it is always mastered by a new method of attack.

It was the same with the air. So long as we relied upon a defensive system and did not pay the enemy back in his own coin, but as soon as we had mastered one form of air attack by our defensive system then there came the menace in a new form. The same thing applies to submarines. We mastered the earlier offensive when they attacked on our coasts, but afterwards the submarines went further afield, and I think your new defensive system, which employs 3,300 British patrol boats and your thousands of armed merchant vessels, will probably be rendered useless and wasteful once again by a new type of submarine cruiser. Until you can carry your offensive measures close up to the enemy's coast by putting a barrage across the North Sea, and a barrage to block the entrance to the Baltic, which measures must go right into neutral waters, I believe that the escape of submarines that goes on day after day into the open ocean must necessarily go on with its consequent wastage of shipping which accompanies it. The results which have been achieved against submarines are largely due, as my right hon. Friend pointed out, to the convoy system, and also, I think, he should have added, to the fact that you are able to place guns both in the bow and stern, since the United States came into the War, because our ships before that were not allowed

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into American ports with guns in the bow as well as the stern. The time will come, and must come, when the convoys will be attacked by submarine.

Mr. HOUSTON: They are being attacked now.

Commander BELLAIRS: My hon. Friend says they are being attacked now, and when that takes place on the large scale you will be faced with this fact, that you must increase your defensive arrangements, and the long delays associated with convoys, and we shall have to consider that problem in an increasing degree when the American troops begin to come over. I urge the Government to reconsider whether they cannot adopt some system by which the offensive can be carried closer up to the enemy's coast, and that you should have a barrage which, if the enemy wants to get rid of, he must come out in force and then a battle will result.

There is this disadvantage arising from the non-publication of the tonnage statistics. So long as we do not publish them the German statistics hold the field. My right hon. Friend, in his speech, after refusing to give the tonnage statistics, actually proceeded to give us what we want, and I want to know why we cannot always have these monthly tonnage statistics. Would there be any harm in giving us the whole of the tonnage statistics, both British, Allied and neutral, for each month of the year, such as has been given in the right hon. Gentleman's speech? Would there be any information given to the enemy by such a procedure? That would be an effective counter to the German statistics. My right hon. Friend referred to the great importance of eyesight, and said that of ten vessels which sighted submarines seven of the vessels got away, but of ten which failed to sight submarines eight were sunk. When the anti-submarine Department were asking for ideas, I suggested to them that it would be an advantage for them to take the East Africans who were seamen, whose eyesight is far better than our own, and the answer I received was that a submarine could not be sighted at more than 800 yards, and then it was of little use. I think the idea of putting a number of East Africans upon your merchant ships was well worth considering. They have far

better eyesight than Englishmen, and you could quickly train them to spot submarines and periscopes.

With regard to carrying the War against submarines closer up to the enemy's coast by a barrage across the sea, there is this to be borne in mind: The depths in the North Sea on the German side are much less than the depths elsewhere in the North Sea, and the result of carrying the War close up against the enemy's coast is that you operate in many parts in less than seven fathoms of water. Now, no submarine can operate under water with a depth of less than seven fathoms against ships. When the right hon. Gentleman was criticising the critics who advocated an offensive, he should remember that we were not merely referring to the Baltic. There is the whole cost of Syria, where it is acknowledged that sea power occupies the interior positions as against the railways. Look at the relief you would get for your Army tomorrow if you could guarantee that country against invasion. I do not know why the Board of Admiralty has changed its ideas, for it used to guarantee this country against invasion, and why cannot we do it now at a time when we have a much greater naval preponderance than we ever contemplated? This policy would save many divisions of our troops who are serving in that country on the defensive. If necessary, we could bring the American Fleet here to help us, instead of it being left on the other side of the ocean.

Another question occurs to one. If our ships were used more at sea, would not they help against these air raids on this country? On the few occasions our ships have met the Germans coming over here their anti-aircraft guns have been very effective. It is a very great deal better to have shrapnel bursting over the sea than to have unexploded shrapnel shells falling on our houses. Another point which has been repeatedly raised, and with which the right hon. Gentleman has not dealt, is the question of courts-martial. I hope for the best from the fact that he has resorted to a court-martial in connection with the loss of the "Mary Rose" and "Strongbow" in the attack upon the convoy. Does that mean that the right hon. Gentleman is going to revert to the old policy? I hope so, because, if he does, that nine-tenths of the criticism of distinguished individuals in the Navy would fall to the ground. The court-martial is the palladium of the honour of the Navy, and the nation is not going to be put off

with an inquiry which is not conducted on oath. Had there been a court-martial as to the battle of Jutland as there was after the battle Sir Robert Calder fought the criticisms that have been levied in reference to the distinguished officer who was First Sea Lord would never have been made if the Court had justified him. There was no court-martial. The court-martial does not presuppose that a man is guilty. It vindicates his honour, and again and again in the history of this country captains of ships have refused to accept new commands after they have lost their ships until they have been vindicated by a court-martial of their peers. That is the case for the court-martial.

There is another point in reference to the criticisms that are made on the older admirals. The system which the Admiralty has followed has been promotion by seniority. However much a captain distinguishes himself, they do not promote him out of his turn. The captain who has seen the greatest amount of fighting in this War will not get his promotion, though he occupies a very distinguished position, automatically until September, 1919. I am not going to mention any names, having suffered once. The captain who, so far as I can inquire and get results in answers from the best brains of the Navy, is the greatest strategical genius in the Navy will not get his promotion from captain until March, 1920. Yet I look across the water and I see Petain, the present Commander-in-Chief of the French Army, who was a simple colonel of artillery, occupying a professor's chair at the beginning of this War. These captains whom I have mentioned will continue to occupy the position of captain or commodore, which is the only rank the Admiralty gives them, until their turn arrives for promotion by seniority. The Admiralty has full power under an Order in Council of 1855 to promote a man out of his turn. It can give him acting rank, if it does not like actually to promote him, as Rear-Admiral, Vice-Admiral, or Admiral. That Order in Council was the outcome of the experience gained in the Crimean War. My hon. and gallant Friend (Admiral Sir H. Meux) said that the system of seniority promotion has given entire satisfaction for 200 years. While I am prepared to accept his opinion as infallible in many matters, I would not back that opinion at all, because if he studies the history of the subject he will find that it has been a constant source of

difficulty.

The right hon. Gentleman dealt at length with the recent convoy episode, and I want to ask certain questions. The Admiralty acknowledge that German's spy system in Norway is such that it is absolutely certain they know all about our convoys on that route. They cannot vary their route because they have only got about 200 miles to go. It was, therefore, more certain that convoy would be likely to be attacked than probably any convoy going. Yet it was not met at daylight—the dark part of the night does not very much matter, because it is not likely to be attacked then—by any cruiser to protect it. I understand the Admiralty had knowledge that the raiders were out before the attack took place.

Sir E. GEDDES: I do not know where you get that information from. I did not know of it.

Commander BELLAIRS: I should be glad if my right hon. Friend would make inquiries because the newspapers, at any rate, say that at Malmø the German cruisers were reported to be passing through the Sound on Monday night, and if the Admiralty spy system is good that information ought to have been at their disposal. If that is so, and they were the same raiders, then they were hanging about all Tuesday during daylight. The right hon. Gentleman said that the Commander-in-Chief of the Grand Fleet is responsible. As I understand the matter, in the old days no direct protection was provided for the trade to Norway, but at the request of the Admiralty this destroyer protection was given, and if the wireless had worked, cruiser squadrons could easily have gone to sea and intercepted the raiders. I do not think that statement means that the Commander-in-Chief of the Grand Fleet has been in full control of all the defences of the trading up to now.

Sir E. GEDDES: The answer I gave is perfectly correct. The Commander-in-Chief is in charge. He is responsible for providing the escort for the convoy.

Commander BELLAIRS: As I understand the matter, he provides the escort agreed upon between himself and the Board of Admiralty.

Sir E. GEDDES: I do not know where the hon. Member gets that understanding.

Commander BELLAIRS: I only want to get at the facts.

Sir E. GEDDES: It is not the fact. The fact is that he provides such escort as he can. The Board of Admiralty have not the control of the escort. It is in the hands of the Commander-in-Chief.

Commander BELLAIRS: The next point I want to know is this. There is no record of any aircraft. Surely on such a short distance aircraft would be a very important means of getting information, as the route is the one which blocks the exit of any German raider from the North Sea. Surely aircraft ought to be supplied in sufficient numbers to be available for use constantly across that 200 miles span. I have seen letters stating that it was known that the raiders were at sea. I cannot tell whether those letters are true or not. The right hon. Gentleman mentioned escorting vessels, two of which were not equipped with wireless. We have been three and a-half years at war, and I should think every single aeroplane now is equipped with wireless. Surely it is possible for these escorting vessels to be equipped with wireless. After all, only a very small installation is required to enable them to communicate with the Shetland Islands. Many of our patrol vessels have the same difficulty. They could not summon help in the old days, but surely after three years of war it is possible to do better. Then I read in the Admiralty official account, issued to the evening papers three and a half days after the event, that the Germans left the doomed merchant ships while still sinking, and this enabled British patrol craft which arrived shortly afterwards to rescue some thirty Norwegians and others. Were those British patrol craft equipped with wireless?

Sir E. GEDDES: Speaking from memory, the British patrol craft which arrived shortly afterwards were the two escorting vessels, the "Mary Rose" and the "Strongbow." The armed trawler "Elise" returned to the "Strongbow" and was driven off. Later, when the German cruisers left, she and her consort came back and did the rescue work.

Commander BELLAIRS: At any rate, the Admiralty statement is vague, and speaks of these new arrivals of patrol vessels, and it is the only official statement we have had up to the time of the

right hon. Gentleman's speech. I now come to the point made by the Admiralty that these vessels travelled in darkness. If they came from Heligoland, it certainly cannot be the case that they travelled in darkness. I understand that the Admiralty can identify the raiders; they therefore know the speed of them. We were promised a full statement, but it is not a full statement until we get these facts. It is 430 miles from Heligoland, and at 25 knots per hour it would take over seventeen hours, so that a large part of the distance must have been travelled in daylight. The return journey after the action must also have been made in daylight. Yet the Admiralty simply say that the enemy raiders succeeded in evading the watching squadrons in the hours of darkness. I wish next to ask, Why do we depend upon wireless? Is it necessary at such a moment, with the German Fleet so busy in the Gulf of Riga, for us to depend entirely upon the wireless system instead of ships at sea? We know that the telegraph breaks down constantly, and that measures are taken by soldiers and people not to depend entirely upon telegraphs and telephones. I do not see why the Navy so constantly depends upon wireless, and why ships are kept in harbour. It seems something very like a repetition of what occurred when the "Lusitania" was sunk within sight of Queenstown Harbour. There were a number of cruisers and destroyers there at anchor when the "Lusitania" was sunk. Such a convoy as that which was massacred by the Germans was an excellent bait, just like that Dutch convoy which sailed from Falmouth on another occasion, and which was entirely sunk. Apparently on neither occasion were the convoys used as a bait. It certainly ought to have been possible to have got hold of the raiders. There was a remark made by the German Captain Persius in reference to the whole of our methods of waging warfare. He said that there were two things needed, genius and time, if we were to beat the German submarine menace. The right hon. Gentleman, though he has given us a machine in the reorganisation of the War Staff, and though he has taken the advice which I offered a very long time ago, that soldiers should be brought in to teach us how to form a war staff—General Matthews and another soldier having been brought in—has not yet, except by way of beginning in the new appointment that he has made of Second Sea Lord, brought to

bear on the problems with which we are confronted the genius which will enable us to lay the submarine menace.

Mr. GEORGE LAMBERT: The First Lord of the Admiralty is very much to be envied, inasmuch as he has made a maiden speech which has carried the House almost off its legs. I envy him tremendously. He speaks with confidence and assurance, and without any of that trepidation which some older Members experience to a painful degree. He has given us a glowing account, a not too glowing account, of the work of the Royal Navy. No praise can be too high for the work of the Royal Navy. It is beyond all praise. In many cases it has achieved the impossible. I am sorry to say, however, that I do not agree with the right hon. Gentleman, and I know that distinguished strategists do not agree with him, in the use that is made of the Fleet. There is a very distinguished strategist in North Italy to-day—General Mackensen—who was able to hit his enemy where he is weakest and least expects it. We have never been able to utilise the Army and the Navy in conjunction in attacking the German enemy. I take note, with very great interest, that the First Lord has made a present of the Baltic to the Germans. He says it is impossible. Good! We must accept his dictum. I, for one, would never advocate anything in the nature of a gamble with the Royal Navy—never! It would be a crime against the nation and criminal against the Navy—indeed, it would deprive us of our only resources. Therefore, if present naval opinion says that it is impossible to go into the Baltic, all I have to say is that we laymen must accept it.

The right hon. Gentleman has given us a very glowing account of the state of British tonnage and of our submarine losses. I hope it is not too glowing. I have heard these statements made now for the last two and a half years. I cannot help thinking that the country, even after reading my right hon. Friend's speech, will not be alive to the real gravity and peril—I use the word "peril" advisedly—of the submarine menace. The Germans are not fools. They would not have incurred the hostility of America had they not considered that their submarines had some chance of bringing this country down. The First Lord has stated in as many words this

afternoon that the submarine menace is being mastered. Does he really mean that as a fact, after the sinkings of the last two months, infinitely lower, I agree, than they were in the month of April, but still sufficiently serious to very seriously cripple our mercantile marine? This is rather an old method of dealing with the submarine menace by the Admiralty. In September, 1915, we were assured that the submarine menace was well in hand and that there was no need for increased cultivation in this country. We have seen what the submarine has done since then. Can the First Lord say that the submarine menace is being mastered—I use his words—when in two days last week 65,000 tons of shipping were announced as being lost?

Mr. PRINGLE: More!

Mr. LAMBERT: It is a moderate estimate

Mr. PRINGLE: It is much more.

Mr. LAMBERT: My hon. Friend can give his own figures. I have no access to official information. I am simply giving the information for those two days, which I believe to be accurate. The First Lord defended that return of submarine losses. I say that that return is designed to delude the public. Take this morning. There are 4,606 arrivals and departures; there are thirteen big ships and four other ships reported sunk. Seventeen against 4,606 is practically nothing at all. That is the return that goes forth week after week with the authority of the Admiralty, or, rather, I absolve the Admiralty, and say with the authority of the War Cabinet. It is the War Cabinet which has settled this return, which I say is designed expressly to delude the public.

The PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY to the ADMIRALTY (Dr. Macnamara): How "designed expressly"?

Mr. LAMBERT: Because of the form of the figures.

Dr. MACNAMARA: How are they designed expressly to delude?

Mr. LAMBERT: For the very reason I have given. I am afraid I have not made myself clear. You have 4,606 arrivals and departures and you have only seventeen ships sunk. A man looking at those figures, without inside knowledge, would say that is nothing at all. My right hon.

[Mr. Lambert.]

Friend, when he looks at it from that point of view, will see that the man in the street will say that the submarine menace, as the First Lord says, is being mastered. On the 22nd October the Prime Minister gave us a very optimistic statement about the losses of German submarines. He said:

"The losses of German submarines during this year—not quite ten months—are more than twice than they were during the whole of last year."

He attributed that to that good lawyer and good politician, the right hon. Gentleman's predecessor. On that I want to make this remark: Last year the Germans were preparing their submarine campaign and had not got it into full force. They began it in February this year, therefore it is not unreasonable to suppose that a great many more submarines have been destroyed this year than were destroyed last year, when the Germans were not operating to anything like the same extent that they are to-day. The First Lord gave some figures as to the destruction of submarines. He told us that from 40 to 50 per cent. of the German submarines operating in the North Sea had been sunk.

Sir E. GEDDES: And in the Atlantic and Arctic waters.

Mr. PRINGLE: All over the world.

Mr. HOUSTON: In the North Sea and the Atlantic.

Mr. LAMBERT: If I have made a mistake, I apologise.

Sir E. GEDDES: Perhaps it would be convenient if I tell the right hon. Gentleman what I did say.

Mr. LAMBERT: If you please.

Sir E. GEDDES: What I said was this:

"Since the beginning of the War between 40 and 50 per cent. of the German submarines commissioned and operating in the North Sea, Atlantic and Arctic Ocean, have been sunk."

Mr. LAMBERT: Thank you very much. I notice that the First Lord, in the whole of his statement, hardly mentioned the Mediterranean. How many submarines and how many ships have been lost in the Mediterranean? That is a rather vital factor. Can the First Lord tell us a little more definitely how many submarines the Germans have operating?

Mr. HOUSTON: That is the question.

Mr. LAMBERT: And also whether they are being destroyed faster than they are being built?

Mr. HOUSTON: No, they are not.

Mr. LAMBERT: Those are questions which, to make the right hon. Gentleman's statement absolutely water-tight, it would be well to have answered. The First Lord told us nothing about the new German submersive. I notice that in the "Times" of the 13th July their Christiana correspondent stated that there was a new German submarine of 6,000 tons, with forty torpedo tubes and twelve guns, which could dive in five minutes. Is there any truth in that statement? I do not know whether or not I can have an answer in the public interest. If the information can be given, I am sure it will be welcomed. I have always contended that the true policy of this country was the destruction of the submarines, for to build more ships is simply building more fodder for them, as the Shipping Controller knows full well with his standard ships. I want to ask now, What is the position with regard to shipbuilding in this country? The Prime Minister, in his speech at the Albert Hall, said:

"Time is on our side. Our shipbuilding is increasing. We have laid down plans and made arrangements by which we can turn out next year four times what we turned out last year."

I have noticed that in many of the Government statements it is "next year." The Prime Minister once used a phrase which, I think, the First Lord himself used—"Too late." Next year may be too late. On the 16th August the Prime Minister told us that we turned out in this country 688,000 tons of shipping in 1915, and in 1916 538,000 tons only—a total of 1,236,000 tons. He told us that in the first six months of 1917 we had turned out 484,000 tons, and that in the second six months we were going to turn out 1,100,000 tons, making a total of 1,584,000 tons of shipping.

Mr. WATT: Mercantile vessels alone?

Mr. LAMBERT: Yes, mercantile shipping. Can the Government give us an assurance that that has been done? The Prime Minister stated, on 16th August:

"That is a very fine achievement."

I believe, from my information, that it is not an achievement at all, and that it will not materialise this year. If that is so, it makes a very serious inroad into the figures with which we have been supplied.

I want to give a figure about the submarines and the rate of shipbuilding.

So far as I can calculate, there has been more British tonnage sunk in the last seven months than has been built in 1915 and 1916 or will be built in 1917. That is a calculation which can be verified by the Admiralty; but I think it is pretty accurate. More than that, there has been a greater total of the world's tonnage sunk, including British, Allies', and neutral, than has been built in 1915, 1916, or will be built in 1917. It is very essential that the Government should turn its attention to building new ships; it is one of the most essential things at the present moment. These continual sinkings are cumulative. The ships are not available, the cargoes are destroyed, and, more than that, these figures which the First Lord has given, and which I have been drawing some conclusions from, do not include ships which are damaged and which may take a very long time to repair, nor do they include armed auxiliary cruisers, like the "Orana," which went down the other day. To show to what a position shipping has got, Mr. Hughes, in Australia, said on 12th July, that the British Navy had contracted to lift 600,000 tons of wheat monthly from Australia, but had not lifted a single bushel in June, and by February next there will be 6,000,000 tons of wheat in Australia, and I understand from the papers that mice are consuming what was meant for mankind. I understand Lord Northcliffe is on his way back from America. I am rather glad, for I think he has a real grip of this matter, as he told the Americans that shipbuilding was a vital factor in this War.

We are told, of course, that America will turn out a large amount of shipping. I sincerely hope she may. America is a great and wonderful country; but in 1915 America turned out 140,000 tons of shipping for coastal trade and 37,000 tons for the lakes, and she has, as the Shipping Controller states, to build 6,000,000 tons of shipping or her vital needs will be cramped in conveying her forces across the Atlantic. I hope it may be done; but it is a very large programme. I wanted to ask a question about these national shipyards. Are they to be more Government establishments? I am sorry to say that all I have seen of Government management only confirms me in the belief which I previously had, that the sooner it is got rid of the better. I have always said that if

the Royal dockyards could be managed by business men, with business experience, directing them upon business principles, they would no doubt be 10 per cent more efficient. What are these national shipyards? I have been told, and it has appeared in one of the shipping papers, that the present shipyards cannot get full supplies of steel and that constructional steel is being diverted to the national shipyards. I should like to know if that is so because if it is it is a waste. What is wanted is to develop our existing shipbuilding industry to the very utmost. If you are going to establish a new dockyard or a new shipyard where are you going to get skilled men to look after it? All these great shipyards of the country have skilled men, they have all the tradition behind them, but in your new dockyards you are coming in with a great flourish of trumpets and you will spend a tremendous lot of money with mighty little result. I know there is a certain class in the community which is infected with this incurable optimism and has passed by all the incidents of the sinking of ships as purely insignificant. They tell us that in the French War enemy profiteers sank merchantmen. Quite true. But the analogy there is quite inopposite, and there is nothing so misleading as a false analogy. In those days we built tonnage faster than the French destroyed it. To-day we are not doing that or anything like it.

Mr. HOUSTON: And we were constantly capturing tonnage from the French.

Mr. LAMBERT: Another point is that in the French wars we were producing more food in this country than we consumed. That is not the case to-day, for I do not care whether it is one of these wonderful schemes of tractor ploughs, ploughing by electric light or acetylene, 3,000,000 acres is not going to be brought into cultivation in this country, nor is this country going to be made self-supporting in the matter of food next year. I want to know whether the right hon. Gentleman has reduced the mortgage of our shipping in supplying places like Salonika, Gaza and Mesopotamia. He never said a word about the submarines in the Mediterranean. That is a happy hunting ground for them. Is it not possible to reduce the commitments of the Navy in these seas? By the way, I observed this morning that the military correspondent of the "Times"

[Mr. Lambert.]

is advocating great naval operations in the Adriatic. I sincerely hope that no military man will be allowed to interfere with naval strategy. I understand too—I have no official information—that there is a great deal of lack of organisation in managing the shipping in the Mediterranean, and that there are great delays taking place at Salonika, Taranto and Alexandria. The ships are unloaded at top speed—every rush is made to unload them—but sometimes they have to wait from three to twelve days for want of an escort to return. That is a question, of course, for the Admiralty, and I am sure, with so skilled an organiser as the First Lord has proved himself to be in France, these delays will be very largely minimised in the future.

I have made these observations because I am perfectly certain that this House will be very much fuller in the coming winter than it is to-day. We have only just begun the winter. The pinch has not begun to be felt. I wish the Government would take the nation more into its confidence and tell it more of the bad as well as the good news. It comes as a perfect shock, and, despite the wave of enthusiasm in this House this afternoon, quite legitimate, after the First Lord's speech, there is a great feeling of depression in the country, especially after the Italian retreat. I attribute that largely to the fact that we are fed in the Press with daily victories, and this is the reaction. I wish the Government would take us more into their confidence and, when they have difficulties, instead of suppressing them, bring public opinion to bear upon them. Public opinion is the greatest solvent in this or any other country. I do not believe the spirit of our country is weakening in the smallest degree in the prosecution of this War, and if we have our troubles the Germans have theirs too, as we can see by the change of Chancellors.

May I say this last word? We have had business men in the Government, but it seems to me that they are in the wrong places. They are in subordinate positions, and they have to obey the orders of the War Cabinet. In the War Cabinet the politician is always supreme, and some of the politicians are not too successful. Some of them have not displayed that great vision and insight into the future which we should have hoped. I suggest to the Chancellor of the Exchequer that it would be an admirable addition to the War Cabinet if he could get a cool, level-

headed shipbuilder, or shipowner, so as to build up and conserve our mercantile marine, which has been very recklessly squandered in the past. I feel quite sure that if we had more of this business ability, men who have to lay down plans for one, two, three years ahead, there would not have been so many mistakes made as there have been in the past. I wish again to congratulate the First Lord upon his statement. I feel that he has placed before us, so far as he can, a very full exposition of naval policy, and, subject to the criticisms I have made, I wish him, with the greatest possible heartiness, a very successful term of office.

Mr. HOUSTON: I should like to join with the late Prime Minister in his congratulations to the First Lord of the Admiralty upon the clear and comprehensive speech which he has made. I should also like to congratulate him on what is rather scarce in this House—a clear and distinct enunciation. He read his manuscript most admirably, and I suggest that future speeches may also be prepared in manuscript, for the concise, consecutive, and clear way in which one event follows the other is greatly to be admired. I am under a disadvantage at present because I cannot follow that example, and I shall have to speak largely without assistance. I should also like to congratulate the House of Commons on the advent of such a new Member to the House. I do not propose to follow previous speakers in any criticisms of the Navy. During the three years that I have criticised the Admiralty in this House and in the Press I have always referred to the Navy—that is, the fighting part of the Navy—in the most eulogistic terms. My right hon. Friend (Dr. Macnamara) and I have had many sparring matches and we have exchanged broadsides occasionally, but I hope we are none the less friends for that. [Dr. MACNAMARA: "Hear, hear!"] I do not propose to traverse the same ground that has been covered by my right hon. Friend (Mr. Lambert) and by the previous speaker, but I do say this, that, having listened attentively to the First Lord's speech to-day and to the speech of the representative of the Shipping Control yesterday, I really began to wonder whether I was hearing chapters read out of "Alice in Wonderland." The First Lord and the representative of the Shipping Controller must really credit some of us in this House

with having some knowledge of shipping matters. The first Lord said he did not propose to give figures because it would be conveying information to the enemy. I shall be guided by the Prime Minister, who, I think the House will admit, is a greater authority than even the First Lord. We all know how guileless and trustful the Prime Minister is, and that he never tells us anything but the truth, or what he believes to be the truth, and he credits other people with the same virtues, the result being that information is supplied to the Prime Minister which he has no possible means of checking, as he is such a very busy man. Consequently, he makes speeches in the country and in this House which are often of a very optimistic nature, and unfortunately they are misleading. It may be said that he has to speak to two audiences—the people of this country and the Germans. He cannot speak to two audiences of such opposite characters and tell the truth in each case. He ought to choose one or the other.

If I were the Prime Minister I would prefer to speak frankly to the people of this country and to trust them, and risk the effect of any information which the enemy might get. The enemy, I am sure, from what I know of the prosecution of this War, and the information which I get—for I also have my intelligence department, as well as the Admiralty—are well supplied with information as to the sailings of our ships, convoys, and other things. I can cite instances, but I will not, of the way in which a submarine has appeared upon the surface, has shelled a British ship, and stopped it and ordered the captain to come alongside and bring his papers and has told him clearly the nature of the cargo he had on board, where he sailed from, and when he sailed. I have repeatedly put questions in years gone by to my hon. Friend (Dr. Macnamara) about wireless stations abroad, about aliens on board British ships, and about Germans disguised as other nationals on board British ships, and of the fact that their information has been very complete. Now the First Lord refuses to give figures, and he made certain statements which I am sorry to contradict. Let me tell the First Lord, with all respect, that being an underwriter I know probably as much about losses as he does, because those who pay usually know. He refused to give the figures, and he spoke in very optimistic terms. I would remind

the First Lord—of course, it is not his doing, because it has been going on for a long time—that the Admiralty or the Government issue week by week the number of sailings and arrivals, and the number of ships lost and sunk, over 1,600 tons gross, which is usually supposed to be an ocean-going steamer, and of smaller craft. Therefore, the numbers of ships are published to the world, and the only question is the tonnage and the names of the ships. As he has talked about giving information to the enemy, I will not give the figures, although I have them here, which would flatly contradict his figures in many cases; but I will give the world's losses of tonnage, so that the enemy will not be able to pick out how much of our tonnage has been lost.

Since the beginning of the War we have lost, and our Allies and neutrals have lost, by enemy operations 8,000,000 tons of shipping—gross tonnage. That represents roughly over 12,000,000 tons of dead-weight carrying, and as ships are now being withdrawn from long voyages and concentrated on short voyages, and particularly concentrated in the danger zones—on which the right hon. Gentleman did not comment very much—I am not overestimating it when I say that these ships will perform about four voyages a year, which means that the world tonnage has lost something like 15,000,000 tons per annum of carrying capacity. In order to make it clear I would repeat that the total dead-weight carrying capacity of the world's tonnage which has been sunk has been about 12,000,000 tons, and on the calculation of each ship performing four voyages that would be equivalent to 50,000,000 tons of carrying capacity lost each year.

I will now turn to the speeches of the Prime Minister. The first of his speeches was at the Guildhall. I have the whole of his speeches here, but I do not propose to inflict them upon the House. I have read them very carefully, and if I make only extracts from them in order to make my remarks as brief as possible I hope that I shall not be accused of treating the Prime Minister unfairly. I have every desire to treat him fairly. There is no one in this country who has a greater desire to help the Prime Minister and the Government to win this War, and as quickly as possibly, than I am. Therefore any criticism that I offer will be, as mentioned to-day by the ex-Prime Minister, of a patriotic nature. The Prime Minister at the Guildhall spoke about our shipping. He said that we have

[Mr. Houston.]

a very shrewd, able, and expert shipowner at the head of our Shipping Department, Sir Joseph Maclay, and that with all the canniness of his race he has already made arrangements for three times as many new ships as we had last year. After paying further compliments to Sir Joseph Maclay the Prime Minister said that if the public would stick to their rations, if the farmers would cultivate the land, and the workmen would do their best to increase the supply of ships, and if we carried out all these things favourably we could defy the worst. He added that we were very alarmed by the figures of shipping losses which appeared, but that the Government were publishing all the figures because they wanted the public to know. He further said, "We are concealing nothing. This is a country which you do not get the best out of until it knows the worst." I entirely endorse what the Prime Minister said in that respect. When the Prime Minister talks like that the people of this country believe that he is telling them the truth and the whole of the truth. I have already said that the Prime Minister tells what he believe to be the truth, but there are Members of his Government and heads of his Departments upon whom he has to reply who very often mislead him. They may do it unintentionally or they may do it with intent, because people as a rule are not very fond of advertising their failures. Speaking at Glasgow, the Prime Minister said that the submarines can neither starve us at home nor drive out our armies in the field, and that, despite the worst they can do, Britain will rule the waves during the War and after the War. He went on to say that our losses were heavy, but they were hundreds of thousands of tons below the Admiralty forecast of what they would be. At the Queen's Hall on the 21st July the Prime Minister, speaking about the German Chancellor and the U-boats putting this country out of business, said:

"I am sorry to disillusion him at the very outset of his career, but truth compels me to do so. Gradually but surely we are increasing our production and diminishing our losses at sea."

He went on to make certain statements, and as they have been made public I think we can deal with them without giving any further information to the enemy. He said:

"Our shipping has gone down disastrously during the last two years, but this year, 1917, we shall turn out four times as many ships as we did last year."

On 16th August the Prime Minister gave the figures. What we turned out last year, 1916, according to the Prime Minister, were 538,000 tons of merchant ships, and, according to his statement, we were going to turn out four times as many in 1917. That would mean 2,152,000 tons built this year. The Prime Minister said:

"During the last two months of this year—I want to give these facts to the German Chancellor so as to help him to give a right interpretation to his own statement—we shall turn out as many ships as we did during the whole twelve months of last year."

Last year we turned out 538,000 tons, and according to the Prime Minister we were going to turn out 538,000 tons in two months. Of course, we have had the standard ships which were introduced with a great flourish of trumpets and which were going to save the situation; but we learned from an answer to a question of mine the other day that, so far as the standard ships are concerned, we had up to the end of September built five and lost one. According to the representative of the Shipping Controller we are going to build sixteen of 5,000 tons, one of 3,000, and one of 2,000 between now and the end of the year. What does that mean? Adding all the standard ships together, we shall this year have built, not in two months but in the whole year, 88,000 tons. I shall have something to say about standard ships later. The Prime Minister went on to say that this year we should turn out, in comparison with last year, six times as many ships, and that if Britain is not a very large country, whilst maintaining and equipping and finding increasing equipment for the Armies in the field and the reserves in the field, and while maintaining the largest Navy in the world, could organise herself after the third year of an exhausting war, to turn out millions of tons of new shipping, and now we had America, with twice the population of this country, and with endless national resources, was she going to be beaten? Speaking at Birkenhead in September, the Prime Minister said we could take it from him that the figures he gave in the House of Commons were correct. Those were the figures which appeared in the OFFICIAL REPORT of the 16th August. The last speech we have in connection with shipping from the Prime Minister was at the Albert Hall, where he declared

"Time is on our side, and the second factor is the increasing failure of the German submarine campaign."

On the same day that the Prime Minister made that speech it is perfectly clear that

he had not been fully informed, because on the morning of that day seventeen British ships and fifteen neutral ships were reported as having been sunk. That was the biggest sinking recorded in one day during the whole period of the War. Then he talks about America, and goes on about submarines:

"There are fluctuations and ups and downs, bad days and good days, bad weeks and good weeks, but our monthly loss in tonnage in the good and bad is not much over one-third of what it was in April last. I will give you another figure which I have never given yet—"

which the right hon. Gentleman the First Lord spoke of to-day—

"the losses of German submarines during this year in the ten months of this year are more than twice what they were the whole of last year."

Then the right hon. Gentleman tells us, and he repeats it in answer to a question from my right hon. Friend, that he could assure the House that from 40 to 50 per cent. of the German submarines in operation over all seas except the Mediterranean have been sunk. How can the right hon. Gentleman tell us this? How does he know all the submarines in operation? How does he know? How does the Prime Minister know that we are overcoming the submarines unless you tell us how many submarines per week Germany is turning out and how many you are destroying? We knew at the beginning of the War what sort of a craft the German submarine was—a small, weak craft which you were catching with nets, like blind fish. Is that the sort of thing you mean?

For three years in this House I have been like the voice of one crying in the wilderness. I have been pointing out the dangers to this country due to the wasteful, extravagant use of merchant shipping and the neglect to build shipping. My right hon. Friend knows that perfectly well. We had warning of the submarine menace. Admiral Percy Scott told us all about it long before the War, but of course he was only laughed at. There is no use in the Prime Minister—whom I do not blame for a moment, because he cannot be expected to know these figures, and he must take them from these gentlemen or others who compile them for him, but he ought to be more careful in taking these figures from these gentlemen—getting up and making optimistic speeches and telling us everything is all right when things are wrong, and there is no use in talking about percentages unless he gives us the actual figures. I can give the figures, but I do not do so because it

would be suggested that I was giving information to the enemy. I say that our enemy knows a great deal more, unfortunately, than you give him credit for knowing. He could teach us a lot. The Prime Minister went on to talk about the progress in shipbuilding.

"We have laid down plans and made arrangements by which we can turn out next year four times as much as last year—"

on the previous occasion it was at least six times—

"and America is doing the same. One of the main reasons why we are succeeding beyond our anticipations in turning out so much is due to the persistence of a lawyer who is a politician and a politician who is a good lawyer, Sir Edward Carson."

What I say is that the country ought to be told the truth. At the present time we have one Minister saying one thing and another Minister saying another thing. We have gentlemen going about the country telling us that the harvest is all right, that we have got the submarine well in hand, that we are building millions of tons of shipping, that we have got more food in the country than we ever had before, that we have got, I think, 8,000,000 tons of potatoes, and we have got everything. That is one class of Minister. Another class of Minister is going about and, quite rightly, asking us to eat less bread and dispense altogether with certain articles of luxury. The Food Controller, for instance, and others, are pointing out to us the danger of a shortage, or practically the danger of a famine next spring, or before we get into the summer.

The Prime Minister never said a truer word in his life than when he said that shipping was the jugular vein of this country, that shipping was our life blood, and that what we wanted was, ships, ships, ships. Unfortunately, we are doing very little to get them. We are talking about ships, and the right hon. Gentleman sitting on that Bench understands what the position is to-day. America has come into the War, and we have got to bring over the American troops. It is only the other day that sixteen of our trans-Atlantic liners came into one of our ports. They had brought over troops—not food, and delighted we are to get those troops. But those ships will return in ballast to America, probably to bring more troops. We all rejoice to see that America has come in. Having put her hand to the plough, we know that she will not turn back and that she will raise troops. She has got an enormous population and a patriotic population. She is

[Mr. Houston.] earnest in her desire. One will spare neither men nor money. But, unfortunately, what is wanted is ships. How are you going to bring those American soldiers across if you have not got American ships to do it with? What has become of the American programme, this wonderful programme for building wooden ships which practical men laughed at? That is abandoned. How are you going to build the ships in time? America cannot do it. She cannot build ships in time to bring those troops across to put on the Western Front to be effective immediately. We shall have to do it. What are we doing now? We are diverting shipping from this country with wheat to our Allies who are short. We are not adding to our stores here. We are sending to our Allies who badly want these supplies, to our Allies who are clamouring for wheat and coal and threatening that if they do not get them they cannot go on. And this difficulty arises because we are short of ships. Why? Because of the wasteful extravagance at the beginning of the War, when the Admiralty took ships, filled them with stones, and sunk them to make breakwaters; when it was said that we had 20,000,000 tons of shipping, when we never had anything of the sort.

We never had anything like 20,000,000 tons of ocean-going shipping. Those people, our friends and Allies, were misled when they thought that we had such an abundant supply of shipping, and that it was only reasonable to make these demands, while at the beginning of the War we had only 3,800 ocean-going ships, representing only 15,000,000 tons of shipping, and the diminution would not have been so great to-day if greater care had been used by the Admiralty and the War Office and others who are responsible. Time and again hon. Members have spoken in this House about our far-flown expeditions so costly in ships—Salonika, Palestine, Mesopotamia. What are you to do? It is ridiculous for us to talk about turning out millions of tons. The right hon. Gentleman knows that. How can he do it now, when in peace times our yards, with abundance of men, only turned out about 2,000,000 tons? How are you going to turn out 3,000,000 tons? You would want 6,000,000 tons to bring the troops across from America. We are told that there is not a slip in the yards of this country which is not fully occupied. We have heard all about the standard ships which

are going to save the situation. I have got a bundle of letters here from shipbuilders who know what they are talking about. Here is one, dated the 20th August, which says:

"I am pleased to note, in connection with the ship-building programme of the Government—which is in a state of inconceivable chaos, that you are in full accord with my views."

He goes on to say that the building of standard ships, when gone into, will make a very poor show, and that the action of the Shipping Controller, the Advisory Committee, the Controller, and Deputy Controller of auxiliary shipbuilding, shows that neither the individual nor the bodies mentioned have the least conception of their duties nor of the requirements of the country.

Others, who are practical shipbuilders, tell me the same thing. I know what I am talking about. I may say that I have had the advantage in my early days of being a practical shipbuilder before I started shipowning, and I have had some sea experience, and therefore I know a little of what I am talking about, and in connection with the standard ship I may say that it was of antediluvian design, a design thirty or forty years old, with all sorts of things embodying obsolete ideas. Yet you are going to turn out shipping by the millions of tons. Then, again, you have the alterations made in the face of protests from the shipbuilders that the lines that you wanted were absolutely obsolete, but you insisted upon them being carried out. In one case, after the ship was in frame, these gentlemen, who are supposed to be business gentlemen, wanted to know whether the lines could not be altered. Then, again, you have the case where the ship is built first of all with masts and these masts have got to be removed so that the enemy submarine may not be able to observe the ship, but these gentlemen forgot that there was a funnel on the ship, and though they had thought it necessary to remove the masts they then put up a single lofty mast, amidships, for the purpose of carrying the wireless. It is all very well to listen in this House to optimistic, pleasant speeches, but they do not win the War. I have got another letter here:

"You will see that the shipbuilders are being absolutely muzzled—"

this is dated the end of August—

"We can neither build ships for ourselves nor for our clients nor for the Government in the form of standard vessels. Although we have been told that the supply of steel was to be greatly increased, our supplies have been materially reduced."

Really the scandal which is attached to the Controller of the Department of Auxiliary Shipbuilding is one of the greatest in the history of the War. Yet we are told about standard ships. Really it is about time for someone to come and carry out the injunction of the Prime Minister and speak the truth.

I do not want to traverse at any length the statement made by the right hon. Gentleman to-day nor even the speeches of the Prime Minister, but I would point out that in all our difficulties which have arisen the word "ships" is like King Charles' head in Mr. Dicks' Petition. The shortage of food, the rise in the price of food, the position of our Allies, who threaten to leave us because we cannot supply them with the necessaries to go on with—all are due to the want of ships. In every direction which we turn there is this question of ships. I impeach the successive Governments for their gross neglect in providing ships for the use of the nation. It is about time that someone should speak out and call the attention of the country to the way in which they have been misled by optimistic, pleasing speeches. If speeches, rhetoric or rhodomontade could win the War, the War would have been won long ago. I have nothing to say about these Gentlemen. I do not want to make this a personal question with them. I have never had the pleasure of speaking to the right hon. Gentleman. I have known of his career for quite a considerable time in connection with his railway work. He is a first-class railway man, but he will forgive me, I hope, if I say that it does not follow that he is a first-class sailor nor a first-class shipbuilder nor a first-class shipowner. A man may be a very good shoemaker and be a very bad tailor. The other gentleman, the Auxiliary Controller, is a very good soldier and administrator, but I am afraid that he does not know much about shipbuilding.

I will turn now to another subject. I want to come to refer to the Ministry of Shipping. We learn from the Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Shipping that they are eleven Departments, nine of them with directors. I do not know what the other Departments do, but they evidently get on very much better, though they have no directors. It is surprising—I might say stupendous—their ignorance of business, and the autocratic audacity of some of these directors enables them to hold their own anywhere. I had occasion,

on behalf of a gentleman, to communicate with the Department in connection with the White Sea, a subject on which I have been protesting to the Government and to the various members of the War Cabinet, as well as to the Departments, against the insensate piling up of different munitions and sending them from this country to Russia, to pass into the hands of the Germans. I listened to a question put to the Under-Secretary for War yesterday as to an English gun being used on the German frontier, but I could have told him that there were more than one. I wrote on behalf of this gentleman to the Department, and I received a reply to the effect that the White Sea trade was no more dangerous than any other trade, as during the last two years there had only been one loss caused by fire, which was by no means peculiar to the White Sea trade. I took the trouble to investigate that statement, with the result that I wrote pointing out that during the summer months of 1915 six steamers were wrecked and totally lost, and many damaged, in some cases most seriously; that during 1916, forty steamers were damaged; in 1917, up to October, thirty-two steamers seriously damaged, mainly by ice and grounding, five being a total loss; and that not one caused by fire was included in these casualties. I added that I thought it well to call attention to these facts compared with the definite statement made by a member of the Ministry of Shipping. I further added that, under the circumstances, would it not be well to add another Department to the Ministry—a general intelligence branch? This is an example of the sort of thing the ship-owners of this country have to submit to at the hands of the Ministry.

Yesterday the representative of the Ministry of Shipping gave us the benefit of his short experience, and I do not suppose that my hon. Friend will claim that he has any practical knowledge of shipping. I assume that he acquired his information second-hand. He was beginning to tell us, amongst other things—I am afraid I was rude enough to ask him not to mislead the House, though it is perfectly true that he did mislead the House—about the requisitioning of an Australian liner. He said that the Shipping Controller has the power of "fully requisitioning" a vessel, meaning that it could be used for the Admiralty and for transport purposes. But in the case of a modern liner the Controller who requi-

[Mr. Houston.]

sitions it leaves the shipowner to run the business as if it were his own, but he is only to get Blue Book rates and nothing more, the Controller taking all the profits beyond that. The shipowner has got to work the business at Blue Book rates, which often leave him with a loss. The hon. Gentleman (Sir L. Chiozza Money) tried to defend that operation by saying that losses were made in every direction, and he talked about the heavy insurance that had to be paid. But I pointed out, yesterday, that before the requisition was signed the shipowner had to pay £9 9s. for ninety-one days, and for a Mediterranean voyage £10 10s. from Liverpool to Archangel and back, or about £120 per annum insurance for a voyage of a month. Yet during all this time the shipowners of this country have been denounced as profiteers, and the Chancellor of the Exchequer has referred to the disgraceful profits that were made. But what about the disgraceful profits made by the Government? Take the case of the Australian liner. Did not that ship show a loss? I ask the hon. Gentleman to say whether it showed a loss or not.

The PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY to the MINISTRY of SHIPPING (Sir Leo Chiozza Money): Yes, I think it did.

Mr. HOUSTON: It must have been very bad management. This steamer sails from America to Australia and back again, and she pays an insurance rate of £9 9s. for twenty-one days, amounting to £55,900. Notwithstanding that, what did the Shipping Controller make? He made a profit of £102,000 on that voyage. What is the shipowner getting? He is getting the Blue Book rate. Yet the hon. Gentleman representing the Ministry of Shipping tells us that they are not making profit. Ships are requisitioned and taken up by the Government and instructions are given that War Office cargo must be carried at a certain rate—a fourth or fifth of the rate which shipowners get for carrying other commodities. The country is being deceived in every direction. The shipowners were held up to public execration and contumely as blood-suckers, while they are nothing of the sort. The Chancellor of the Exchequer made reference to some big shipping profits he had made with steamers that had been requisitioned. Probably they had been bought at a cheap rate. I do not want to depre-

ciate his property, but I did point out at the time that two of these steamers were bought at scrap prices, £5,000 or £6,000. My hon. Friend who represents the Ministry of Shipping is new to the business, and he should not come down to this House and make rash statements that are not correct. I do not say for a single moment that he deceived intentionally, but it is just as bad to deceive through ignorance as through intention. The hon. Gentleman quoted a list of steamers in the South American trade, and pointed out that in the case of the refrigerating steamers at the beginning of the War the Board of Trade arranged with the owners that they were to carry meat at practically the same rates as pre-war rates. All this time the owners of these vessels have carried out their contracts. They have carried out their contracts at low pre-War rates, getting their contracts on scraps of paper, and carrying them out during all the time that they were being denounced as profiteers and as making huge profits. There has been no discrimination as to money-making profiteers, and I submit that you cannot lump all shipowners together any more than you can lump any other class. I do not blame the Prime Minister; he cannot be here every day; he is a busy man; he has no time to attend to these things; he has to be all over the shop, and he has no time to spare to tell the public what are the true facts. He wants the truth and he wants all the facts, and therefore I am helping him, and I will continue to help him, to give the truth to the people with regard to these matters. He must insist on getting supplied with true information. If information were supplied to me, and it misled me into making incorrect statements, I should deal very drastically with the persons concerned, and I should insist on their telling me the truth. It is only by the united efforts of the people that we can succeed, and when they know the true facts, however black the picture may be painted, like true Britons they are prepared to face them. The people of this country always like to know the worst, and if the Prime Minister will only tell them the true facts, and let them know what they are facing, then I have no doubt that, submarine or no submarine, we shall win this War.

Mr. HOLT: I desire to join in what has been said as to the very lucid statement.

made by the First Lord of the Admiralty.

I am sure everybody must have heard with great satisfaction the particular statement he made as to the way in which we were sinking submarines, or getting rid of them. I should like to endorse what my hon. Friend (Mr. Houston) has just said in his very able speech as to the admiration which everybody feels for the conduct of the Navy. The First Lord proceeded to give certain figures with regard to the losses sustained by the mercantile marine from enemy attacks during the present War. I am sorry to say I cannot accept them as correct. I have recently had put into my hand a very carefully drawn up statement of figures from the beginning of the War up to the end of August last. They differ very considerably from the figures which have been given by the First Lord, and, if he will permit me, I will lay before him what I believe to be correct figures, and ask him to compare them with those that he gave, and let the public know what really are the right figures. When the War began, the total tonnage of liners in the trade with the United Kingdom was approximately 900 vessels with a gross tonnage of 5,500,000, and of vessels outside the United Kingdom there were about 300 with a gross tonnage of 1,500,000, or a grand total of liners of 1,200 vessels with a gross tonnage of 7,000,000. Of that total the figures I am going to give are in respect of 5,921,575, so that I have got here what I believe are correct figures for six-sevenths of the total liner tonnage, and there is no reason to suppose that the other one-seventh will differ very much from the six-sevenths. These figures have been very carefully compiled very recently by a very able statistician. Since the 5th August, 1914—that is, the commencement of the War—these liners have lost on service rendered to His Majesty forty-one ships with a tonnage of 251,000, by marine losses thirty-three ships of 174,000 tonnage, and by war losses 231 ships of 1,465,046 tons, making a total depletion since the beginning of the War from six-sevenths of the liner service of 305 ships with a total tonnage of 1,890,550. That is the total gross deduction from six-sevenths of the total liners of this country. Against that we have to set off ninety-five new vessels of 776,000 gross tons.

The effect of those figures is that there has been a gross loss of, roughly speaking,

33 per cent., and there has been replacement of 13 per cent., giving, as far as that tonnage is concerned, a net loss of 20 per cent. That is the amount by which that tonnage has gone down since the War began. I need hardly say, and it is common knowledge, that the bulk of that loss has occurred since the submarine war began, and it is obvious that the main part of the losses occurred in the latter period of the War. In addition to that, in order to keep pace with the normal expansion of trade, that tonnage ought to have increased by 10 per cent., so that you lost your increase of 10 per cent. as well as the loss of 20 per cent. Those are the figures for liners. I must add one qualification, they apply only to ocean-going vessels of 1,600 tons and over, and smaller vessels are left out of account. I understand for vessels of the same character that, roughly speaking, the total before the War of liners and tramps was 3,600 vessels with a gross tonnage of 16,000,000. The war losses have been 1,120 vessels of a gross tonnage of 4,685,000, and no doubt replacements have been on a small scale, as in the other case. When the First Lord made the optimistic speech he did make, why did he tell us nothing about the insurance premium? I assume that the Government marine insurance scheme is an honest scheme, conducted for the purpose of giving indemnity against war risks, and that it is not being conducted with any ulterior motive, such as making huge concealed profits. The rate of premium at the present time is £9 9s. per cent. for a voyage of ninety-one days, or, in other words, an annual premium of 36 per cent. That means that, in the opinion of the Government, one-third of our mercantile marine is going to be lost every year. If it is not the opinion of the Government, and if they do not honestly believe it, I put it to them that the war risks insurance is a dishonest scheme. They have no right to charge one-third premium for indemnity and get up here and represent to the public a totally different state of affairs. The Government must stand by their premiums. That is the only true test of what is the real scale of losses. Their premium puts their loss at about 33 per cent., and if they are going to suggest that our losses are at a less rate than one-third per annum, then I say they cannot defend the premium which they are charging.

There is, I think, another serious omission from the statement of the

[Mr. Holt.] Government. They have not told us, and never do, anything with regard to disablements. We know that this country has now a whole lot of damaged ships, which will not be serviceable for many months. They are not now included in the total of the losses, but we know that they are very large, that there are a great number of those ships and that those ships, though not disabled for ever, are disabled for a very long time. Those are some of the reasons which make many of us very uncomfortable about statements which emanate from the Front Bench in regard to the conduct of the War. We know that in some very important matters statements are being made which are not true, and directly people get to know that Ministers of great importance are making, no doubt quite unintentionally, statements which are not in accordance with the facts, we naturally think no statements from the Treasury Bench are in accordance with the facts, if the facts would be unpleasant to the Government. It is not merely a question of whether or not you are giving information to Germany. This policy of partially disclosed truth and partial statements is sapping the confidence of the country in the Government. That is what it is doing. I believe it is doing the Government a very great deal of harm. We have heard, with regard to this question of mercantile marine, a great deal about replacement and a scheme of standard ships. We have never really been given a true account with regard to the standard ships, so far from start to finish. The time it was to take to build them has been incorrectly stated. They have all taken very much more time so far than we were led to believe they would take. There is nothing very much in the standard ships, except that they are common, cheap, and nasty. Surely it is an alarming situation that, while private shipbuilding is stopped, the Government is pouring out a type of ship which very few responsible shipowners would like to put their money in. If after the War is over we are going to find ourselves, and the country is going to find itself, in possession of a lot of very poor tonnage, that is not a very good lookout for our future commercial and trading position all over the world.

When the Government are considering their plans for the replacement of tonnage lost, I think there ought to be much more consideration given to the question

of the suitability and usefulness of that tonnage after the War. After all, seeing that those ships are going to take from a year to eighteen months to complete, we may hope that they may be of some use after as well as during the War. I think it would be better if the Government paid more attention to the suitability of those ships to the general trade of the country after the War is over. I want to ask this plain question of the Government: Why is it that British shipowners are not permitted to build any ships? Why is it that the Government refuse to allow any shipowner under any circumstances to build a ship, and insist upon building the ships themselves? We really ought to know that, and ought to know what is the intention of the Government with regard to those ships after the War is over. Is it, as many people think, an insidious attempt to establish State Socialism? Are they trying, as many people think, to get hold of the mercantile marine of this country through the present owners' losses and by forbidding them to replace the ships, so that when the War is over the State will have all the ships, and the shipowners will have nothing except the money for the ships lost? The Government must see that all enterprise and any attempt to promote British trade after the War is over must be knocked on the head, so long as there is a large amount of doubt as to what the future of the industry is going to be. We heard a great deal about the Chancellor of the Exchequer's investments in shipping. He himself brought that subject to the notice of the House, and he cannot complain of hearing what other people have got to say on that subject. There has been a great deal of disquietude aroused by the very remarkable fact that a particular group of owners with whom he was known to have been connected have been selling their property. There has been a most remarkable and extraordinary sale of shipping by Glasgow owners. They have taken very large profits on the sale of the ships and have received very large sums. I do not believe myself that it is a particularly patriotic action at a time like this to sell your property for what you can get, put your money in the bank and give up all idea of using your property in the future, with your experience and knowledge of the mercantile marine trade. It is a very remarkable thing that at these large prices this sale of shipping has

taken place in this particular connection in which, the Chancellor of the Exchequer quite frankly told us, he himself was financially associated. It has given a very unpleasant impression to the public generally. This uncertainty and this refusal to allow people to carry on their business is not by any means to the good. It makes the enterprising man a gambler, and the only man who has common sense and prudence is the man who gets as much money out of the business as he possibly can, invests it in safe securities, sits still, and does nothing at all. The First Lord of the Admiralty, and the Government, tell us about all the things they are going to do to increase the number of ships available for the trade of this country. Surely they know that the ships we have got at present are not doing anything like the work they might do because the condition of our ports is of such a character that the work cannot be done. If you were to have a great many more ships you certainly would not, so far as this country is concerned, do any more work than you are doing, because you have not got the means for the inland traffic that you must have to do the larger trade. While we are talking on this matter of ship-building I should like to put before the House a very interesting piece of information which will show the House what the Government has been doing in the past, or, at any rate, trying to do, to increase the mercantile tonnage. The letter is from a friend, and it refers to a ship that was requisitioned in October or November of 1915. The letter says—

“Our ship, though she could have been launched in six weeks, was not actually in commission in the oil business much inside seventeen months, a state of things which the Admiralty, no doubt, would not like the public to know of; also it is believed that the cost of alteration alone far exceeded the cost of building a new oil tanker, which could have been done in far less time on the next slip.”

I want to draw the attention of the House to this letter because it raises another very important subject. One of the reasons why there is a deficiency in mercantile vessels, and why so few are launched, is that the Admiralty seizes the vessels on the stocks and turns them from their proper purpose into oil tankers. We all know that the supply of petrol in this country is alarmingly and lamentably short. That is why we are being forbidden to have petrol for ordinary inland transport. The shortage of oil in this country is so serious that ordinary merchant ships that were never intended for the purpose are being compelled to have double bottoms to carry

oil to this country. I have taken figures for four or five ships of my own which recently came into London. The total reduction from the carrying capacity of these vessels for the purposes of ordinary trade, and diverted for the purpose of carrying oil, is at least 10 per cent. I believe that is true, that something like 10 per cent. has been taken off the capacity of every ship coming into this country by making her bring in oil.

Let us look a little bit at the record of the Admiralty in regard to oil. The Admiralty started a grand scheme of burning oil fuel throughout the Navy. The merits of oil are indisputable—provided you can obtain the oil. I think we are entitled to raise the past doings of the Admiralty against the Government because every one of the gentlemen who was First Lord of the Admiralty during the relevant period is now a Member of the Cabinet. When the Admiralty originally started oil consumption for warships on a large scale they took no steps whatever to provide for the carriage of that oil from abroad. The matter was necessarily kept secret, and the trade could not possibly of its own accord provide vessels. The Admiralty knew all that. What was the first thing that took place in the War when everybody must have known the urgency of having large supplies of oil? The present Minister of Munitions, by a curious freak of his own, took a large number of oil vessels, had them filled up with ballast, and fitted for transports—for which they were totally unfitted—and kept them for months at Southampton doing nothing. Everybody knows the story. That is an example of the wisdom and foresight by which this Government conducts the affairs of the nation! This was done contrary to the advice of every man who knew anything about the matter. Only one ship made the expedition to France with troops on board, because when at sea it was found to be so unseaworthy and unsafe that it was not used again, but put back to its original purpose. It is all very well to ask us to put our destinies in the hands of men who do that sort of thing. But people get alarmed. They ask, and very rightly ask, whether those destinies are safe? We have a right to ask as to our safety in the hands of gentlemen who use oil tankers for conveying troops to France. The Admiralty perfectly well remember this matter, and the right hon. Gentleman opposite does not deny it.

Dr. MACNAMARA: I am sure that my hon. Friend will remember that the endeavour here was to provide a vessel which would give men greater immunity from torpedo attacks.

Mr. HOLT: I know!

Dr. MACNAMARA: Then I think that ought to be stated. It was to endeavour to protect the lives of the men who went abroad. It is one of those things which we did in advance. If we had not done it and things had gone wrong the critics would have turned round and said, "Why didn't you do it?"

Mr. HOLT: True it was done with the idea of giving the troops greater immunity from attack by the enemy.

Dr. MACNAMARA: Hear, hear!

Mr. HOLT: The experiment was tried once, and those concerned were so horrified with the results that they never dared to try again. I do not for a moment suggest that the motive was not a good one. It was. But the folly was good. I hope the Admiralty will be able to give us an assurance in regard to the oil and petrol supplies of this country that we are now absolutely all right. I think we ought to have a definite assurance on this subject, because the position is one calculated to make reasonable people uncomfortable. I think we ought to have the facts. The whole power of our Air Service is depended upon the supplies of oil and petrol. We know perfectly well that attacks on the mercantile marine have diminished those supplies, and I think we ought to have a very definite assurance from the Admiralty that they are quite satisfied with the position in this respect. I listened with interest to the speech of the First Lord and to all he said about the anti-submarine campaign. I agree entirely with what he said as to the value of a good look-out. It is absolutely true. We all know by our own experience, almost every one of us, can tell of the loss of ships simply because the persons on board were not doing their duty in keeping a proper look-out. It does make all the difference. But we must remember that you find in every rank of life some people who do not do their duty. You cannot rely upon everybody in a boat being a first-class look-out. You must allow in your calculations for this. There will be men who are sleepy and men who are lazy, and, after all,

the great majority of these men have never been brought up to this business. These men of the mercantile marine are facing danger with the greatest possible heroism. It is no part of their profession. They were not brought up to it. This work to them is, so to speak, an "extra," and if many of these men do, as unfortunately they do, fall short in regard to these precautions, it ought not to be visited upon them altogether for unrighteousness. They have been asked to take a job which is altogether beyond what might fairly be expected of them. The most marvellous thing about the business is the success these men have attained in avoiding submarines. One thing upon which I am very glad to congratulate the Admiralty is in having abandoned the old system of the concentration of merchant ships in certain areas said to be protected, but in fact not protected. We all know, as a matter of fact, that the worst losses by the submarines were brought about by the Admiralty directing masters of different ships to move to a certain spot where there was to be protection, and when they got there there was no protection, but a German submarine, which had a capital time. That policy has been abandoned. It was a policy responsible for bad losses. The policy of convoys has been alluded to. I believe it is the right policy. I believe it is doing very well. I have a very interesting letter from a captain in the mercantile marine, not a person in my own employment, but in the employment of a friend. He deals with this subject. It is such a good letter, and so sensible, that I would like to be allowed to read it. There is no need to give the name of the ship, or of the writer of the letter, or the exact places, which are not relevant to his argument. The writer says:

"Lying here waiting the arrival of sufficient vessels to make up a convoy, I have had time to give careful consideration to the advantages or otherwise of vessels proceeding in convoy. To take the advantages which in my opinion favour the convoy—

- (1) The probability of locating the attacking submarine and its probable destruction by the escorting torpedo-boat destroyer, if escorted by such.
- (2) The moral effect in enemy countries of hearing of decreased losses of our tonnage and increased losses of their submarines.
- (3) The wide gaps of distance, and intervals of time, between each convoy, with the consequent fruitless cruising of hostile vessels for considerable periods.
- (4) The probable greater saving of life and lessening of suffering in the event of a vessel being lost.
- (5) Greater protection from enemy raider."

I may be allowed to interpose, I should like to be allowed to add one other advantage which this captain has not indicated, and that is that if your vessel is damaged in the convoy you have a very much greater chance of getting her in safe, whereas if attacked and you are not in convoy the submarine gets a second shot and you go to the bottom. It is another considerable advantage. The writer deals with the disadvantages—

- (1) A colossal waste of time and tens of thousands of tonnage.
- (2) Tremendous extra strain on the personnel of the convoy ships.
- (3) A longer time running through the danger zone.
- (4) Tremendous extra expenditure of money.
- (5) Far greater risk of collision and ordinary sea perils.

It seems to me that the naval authorities and the mercantile marine, having been trained in different schools, look at the handling of merchant tonnage from totally different standpoints."

This is a paragraph of the letter upon which I should like to lay stress in speaking to the First Lord of the Admiralty. The writer continues:

"Consistent with the safety of lives and property, despatch has ever been our first consideration, and when in doubt to give the preference to moving on, and this, I think, should hold good in this case. Of paramount importance in naval training has been efficiency in manoeuvring, gunnery, etc.; whether the vessels sail to-day or to-morrow was of minor importance in pre-war days, and so, it appears to me now, the naval authorities do not weigh the advantages of moving on in its true proportion. If vessels are lying in harbour for long periods there are bound to be fewer sinkings, but to my mind that is a questionable advantage, for even if there is less need for tonnage in home waters at present it would be as safe and more advantageous to carry on our trade over the rest of the world. The naval intelligence officer quoted me some statistics relating to attacks on vessels conveyed and those not conveyed, but failed to mention the number of sinkings. There are bound to be more attacks on, say, 110 separate units than on, say, 120 vessels sailing in six convoys, so that these statistics prove nothing in favour of the convoy. All other merchant ship-masters, officers, engineers, and crews with whom I have discussed the matter are against the convoy system, which I consider the greatest argument against it."

That is a very fair and reasonable letter from a man who has had some experience. I myself think that, on the whole, the balance of opinion of the mercantile marine is in favour of the convoy system. On the whole, it has done good, but it has very great drawbacks, and I want to ask the Government to consider very carefully whether some of those drawbacks cannot be eliminated. For instance, I think a good deal might be done in the way of grouping fast vessels together. It is obvious that if you have a convoy the convoy must proceed with the speed of the slowest ship. I know of one case at least in which six vessels came back from the

Cape, five of them being 13-knot vessels and one a 9-knot vessel, and the aggregate loss of time, of course, was very considerable. I cannot help thinking that if the Admiralty would consult the shipowners rather more about organisation of convoys they would find it very much easier to collect vessels of similar speed together, and if they were told in advance what they were wanted to do—it is no use telling a man to have a ship ready at two days' notice—I believe it would be quite possible to organise a good many convoys of ships of similar speed. Something has been done in this direction, and by that method a good deal could be done to get rid of some of the bad features of the convoy system.

There is one more subject on which I should like to say a word. I think we ought to be told a little more about the position in the Mediterranean. At any rate, up to recently British mercantile shipping was entirely kept out of the Mediterranean unless actually trading with Mediterranean ports. It is quite obvious to everybody that the loss in going round the Cape is very considerable, and it is a very unsatisfactory thing that we should be in this position, that, although we are supposed to have command of the sea, we dare not send a ship into the Mediterranean. I think the time has come when the Government ought to make a frank statement to this House with regard to the work of the French and Italian Navies. Everyone connected with the sea in this country will tell you very unpleasant things about those two forces, and, after all, the reason British shipping is asked to go into the Mediterranean is to meet the necessities of Italy and France; and if we are doing this we are entitled to ask those Allies to give a very strict account of what their Navies are doing. The other day I saw a statement that, in consequence of this unfortunate Italian reverse, the Governments of the Allies had pledged themselves to give them every assistance. That seems to me a very proper thing to do, but may I suggest to the Government that the effective way to afford them assistance is to offer to provide sailors for their ships? Instead of sending soldiers for their ships? Army in the north, if we were to offer to provide sailors so that their Navies became efficient fighting machines, we should produce a very much better effect

[Mr. Holt.]

upon the fortunes of the War than by sending four or five divisions or four or five Army corps into Lombardy.

This, after all, is a serious crisis in the War. It is much too serious a time for mere sentimental consideration. We have been asked to do all sorts of foolish things to please our Allies. We have been pouring munitions into Russia, well knowing they were not going to be used, and, in fact, finding out that they were falling into the enemy's hands. If we are to be asked to do all these things to please our Allies, we ought to ask them to do their best for the winning of the War. The Government ought to see that all these warships in the Mediterranean are manned by competent crews who have the capacity and intention of fighting the enemy wherever they possibly can. The fact is, many of us feel that matters are very serious, and that the Government are putting this question of the submarine menace in altogether too light-hearted a manner—that they are not putting the people of this country face to face with the real truth of the matter—and I feel that my duty, at any rate, is to put my view of the matter before the House.

Sir C. KINLOCH-COOKE: We have had two very interesting speeches from the two hon. Gentlemen who have just spoken. I do not propose to follow the line they have taken, and I do not propose to adopt the methods they have taken. I think their methods of criticism are not those which commend themselves usually to this House, and in that I would include the right hon. Gentleman who is not now in the House. I think that for two hon. Gentlemen and one right hon. Gentleman to get up and tell the Government that they are not speaking the truth, one right hon. Gentleman saying that the Government framed their figures designedly to mislead the public—I think that line of debate is not in accordance with the usual rule observed in this House, and, therefore, I shall be excused if I do not follow their methods. I am sorry that the First Lord has gone, but I am glad to see the Financial Secretary here, because he will perhaps be able to appreciate better than the First Lord would the line of argument which I propose to address to the House. I do not intend to go over the ground which has been traversed, and traversed so ably, by previous speakers, but those speakers have not mentioned what seems

to me a very important matter in connection with any Debate upon the Navy. And here I would like to pay my tribute to the very able statement which has been made by the First Lord. I must say it was a statement which interested the House very greatly, because it was to a large extent a sanguine speech. It was not one of those optimistic speeches which we sometimes have a little doubt about, but it was a sanguine speech, and I think rightly so. At any rate, it was based upon facts and figures to which the First Lord had access, and those facts and figures, to my mind, fully warranted the sanguine statement which he was able to make.

But, as the right hon. Gentleman drew to the end of his speech, I looked in vain for some mention of the men who man these ships; I looked in vain for any reference to the men of the lower deck. In previous speeches made by First Lords we have had a great deal said about the lower deck—in fact, it has always been one of the great features of the First Lord's speech. But to-day, whether it is because the First Lord is somewhat new to the business or not, he seemed to me to have entirely forgotten that there was such a thing as the lower deck, or that there were such men as seamen who man the ships. There was a letter, which will be within the recollection of the House, addressed by the Prime Minister to the First Lord of the Admiralty on 29th September. That letter wound up by saying that certain concessions were to be made to the men of the Navy. It gave six concessions. I will just mention one—hospital stoppages. Now we all know hospital stoppages have existed in the Navy for a very long time, and we all know that every man in the Navy has been desirous of seeing an end put to the system of hospital stoppages. I myself have made many speeches on this subject in the House, and only a few months ago I brought the question forward at some length. That was before the statement made by the Prime Minister, and therefore, when the statement was made by the Prime Minister that hospital stoppages were to be abolished, except where a man is responsible for the complaint for which he is treated, obviously the public, and certainly the men of the lower deck, supposed that that was going to be carried out. What are the facts? Here we have the Admiralty Order No. 3615 carrying out the concession which their Lordships have made. It says:

"It has been decided to abolish hospital stoppages and the cessation of pay on D.S.Q. (during the remainder of the War) in all cases where naval ratings and Marines (including Reserves) are sent sick on account of disabilities for which they are not themselves responsible."

There was nothing in the Prime Minister's letter to the First Lord of the Admiralty that hospital stoppages were only going to be abolished "during the remainder of the War." Hospital stoppages have been one of the crying shames in the Navy for many years, and does the right hon. Gentleman mean to say that the Admiralty and the Government seriously propose to bring in these hospital stoppages again when the War ceases? I will just read a few lines from a naval correspondent which will express the view which prevails on the lower deck:

"You can hardly realise how this limitation irritates the men at the front. And is it British to give a concession and to attach to it a stipulation that it is only to be operative while the man is laying down his life for his country?"

I think the House will agree with me that really some explanation of this should be given. Either it was intended that hospital stoppages were to be abandoned as part of the programme of the Navy discipline or it was not. If it was intended, then let it be so, and for goodness sake do not

"Give a thing, and take a thing;
Why, that's an old man's playinging."

Another concession I should like to mention is concession No. 2, which says that 3d. a day extra is to be given to able seamen after three years, and a corresponding increase in the allowance to Royal Marines. The right hon. Gentleman will remember that in 1910 I myself suggested that the three years should be the limit and not the six years, and he will also remember that not only did I suggest it then, but I have suggested it several times since. Therefore, I congratulate the Admiralty upon adopting the suggestion which, at any rate, to my mind appeared to be one of practical common sense. But they have not gone far enough. They have said that seamen and Royal Marines are to receive this 3d. a day, but they have not given it to the equivalent ratings like writers, carpenter's crew, and cooper's crew. Those men are on the same footing as the able seaman and those men I submit have a legitimate grievance. All ratings equal to the able seaman should be put on an equality, and all receive that increase after three years. I put that forward, and I trust the Parliamentary Secretary will bring it to the

notice of the First Lord of the Admiralty, and if he wants to, I will not say please, but if he wants to satisfy men of the lower deck, he will take care that the equivalent ratings of able seamen are placed on the same footing as able seamen.

There is another matter I want to deal with, and that is the question of promotion from the lower deck. We have heard a great deal about this question of promotion. A number of men without any special qualification whatever have been entered from the shore as commissioned officers. I do not think the right hon. Gentleman will question that statement. These men are trained by petty officers for their duties, but their instructors are not eligible for promotion to warrant rank or to commissioned rank because they are active service ratings, and if they were given the step they would be in excess after the War. But who can say what will be the requirements of the Navy after the War? Why should the Admiralty take up the position that these men would be in excess of those requirements? That is a question I should like to address to the First Lord. Surely if a man is efficient his services should be used now rather than the services of an inefficient man. The efficient man should be given the promotion which rightly belongs to him. No class has suffered more in this respect than the Writers' class. Over 1,000 commissions as assistant paymasters in the R.N.R. and the R.N.V.R. have been given to men outside. Who have trained these men? They have been trained by naval writers. Can the House imagine anything more grotesque than the present position? Here you have an efficient naval writer training an accounting officer who is inefficient, and the inefficient officer is held responsible that the books are kept correctly, while the writer who is his tutor is performing the duty of keeping the books correctly. That is exactly the position that obtains to-day in the Navy, and I ask the right hon. Gentleman to contradict me if he can.

There is one more point I should like to put before the House. It is in reference to the question of long service men and their disability pensions. This matter is not brought before the House for the first, second, or third time. It is a matter in which I am right in saying the Financial Secretary takes considerable interest. He has himself endeavoured to remedy this grievance. He has been unsuccessful so far. I would ask him to try again,

[Sir C. Kinloch-Cooke.]

Let me tell the House in a few words what this grievance is. In 1916 an Admiralty Order was issued directing the medical boards not to invalid men out of the Service through wounds or injuries received if their experience would be of value for clerical or instruction work. Even if a man lost a limb he was not to be invalided, and the result has been that long-service men who have been retained under this Order have not received the disability pension which in the ordinary course they would have received for their wounds. Is that a fair position to put the men in? It may be said that as they are receiving payment for what they are doing why give them the pension? Surely if the officers are given the disability pension the same treatment ought to be meted out to the men. Are the officers allowed to receive the pension? Let me read Article 1906, which lays it down that:

"A pension awarded for wounds or injuries may be held together with any other pension to which the officer may be entitled and may be received by the officer while serving."

Surely if the officer may receive his pension the man ought to receive his. Again, in the case of men invalided out of the Service and men re-entering the disability pension is paid concurrently with the payment for services. Yet a little band of long-service men retained in the manner I have referred to have been entirely overlooked. They are kept on active service under this Order, and the man who has lost a limb is actually penalised by virtue of his long service and experience. Had these men been invalided in the ordinary way and then re-entered, they would have received their disability pensions. Officers and re-entered ratings are receiving their disability pension in addition to their full pay, while men who have given and are still giving the best of their lives to the State have to experience all the discomforts attending the wearing of artificial limbs and are deprived of their disability pensions. I think it is fair to ask the Financial Secretary what he proposes to do about that. I would remind the House that the Minister for Pensions recently made a speech in which he declared in effect that he would pillory any employer who endeavoured to profit by a man's disability pension. But in effect that is exactly what the Admiralty are doing, and I venture to make an appeal to the Financial Secretary to put that matter right. Before I sit down I

would like to ask when these other concessions are going to be given effect to. When are the Orders to be promulgated, and when they are promulgated is the House to understand that the concessions I have referred to are to be given for the remainder of the War only? If that is so, an announcement of that fact had better be made at once, so that the House and the public may understand clearly what is proposed.

Dr. MACNAMARA: I will endeavour to take up the points which have been raised since the First Lord spoke. My right hon. friend the Member for South Molton (Mr. Lambert) and my hon. Friend the Member for the Toxteth Division of Liverpool (Mr. Houston) laid stress upon the vital importance of expediting merchant ship-building. We all agree as to that; and I confess that, in my opinion, if one thing more than another emerges from the statement of the First Lord of the Admiralty this afternoon, it is this: that, so far as scientific organisation is concerned, so far as the complete utilisation of all the factors in the case is concerned, the country's resources are likely to be thoroughly utilised to the utmost profitable extent and the work is to be conducted by practical, experienced men. Both my right hon. Friend and the hon. Gentleman to whom I have referred rather charged the First Lord of the Admiralty with putting *colour de rose* on the submarine situation, and suggested that his assurances had been too optimistic. I really think that is due to a misconception of what my right hon. Friend said; and I doubt whether, when they come to read carefully the statement to which they listened, they will continue to hold the opinion they have expressed. The speech struck me as a perfectly fair, perfectly frank, and carefully balanced—neither optimistic nor pessimistic—but a carefully balanced presentation of the facts. I would like to remind the House of what the First Lord said in summarising the submarine situation. These were his words:

"To summarise the submarine warfare as clearly as I can, I would put it thus. Our defensive measures have, during the past seven months, proved so efficacious that, in spite of an increased number of ships passing through the danger zone, there has been a steady and very great reduction in the damage done by the enemy's underwater craft. Meantime we are sinking enemy submarines to an increasing extent. Our offensive measures are improving and becoming more effective and will still more considerably improve and multiply. But on the other hand, on the best information before us, I believe that the Germans are building submarines faster than they have

hitherto been able to do, and that they have not yet attained their maximum strength. It appears to me, therefore, that in submarine warfare, as elsewhere, it is becoming a test of determination, grit, and ingenuity between the two contending forces. For the present I come to the conclusion that the submarine warfare is going well for us. The enemy has done far less damage than he hoped, and, as I have told the House, less than we estimated. He has done this with serious and heavy losses to himself. At present one may be justified in feeling that his attack on our trade is held, and is being mastered, and one is justified in looking to the future with courage and determination, confident that he will fail.

I would suggest that these words are neither too optimistic nor too pessimistic. I agree with both the right hon. Gentleman and my hon. Friend that it is essential that the country should know exactly what it is up against. While I feel that Germany's submarine campaign has not had the effect she counted upon, and it certainly has not given her the swift victory—to use a phrase uttered by the German Chancellor when he introduced his policy in the Reichstag on the 31st January last—it has not given her the swift victory that she anticipated, I also agree it will fail. But I want to make this emphatic proviso, which will be found also in the statement made by the First Lord to-day, and it is that everybody, man and woman, must do his duty. The country has been told by Lord Rhondda and Sir Arthur Yapp that there is and will be a serious world-shortage of food, and that the need to practice rigid economy is imperative. There is also the vital necessity for redoubled effort in the marine engineering shop and in the ship-building yard. I know that the men in these shops and yards have been working at a great strain, but it is vital that they should continue their efforts, for it is in the engineering shops and the ship-builders' yard that will be found the direct answer to the submarine menace. If these men need a stimulus they could not have a finer one than the peerless courage shown by the men of the merchant service. I can imagine nothing more unjust than the remarks which have been made upon the inefficiency of the Allied Navies' personnel. I could imagine nothing more unjust than the remarks made by the hon. Member for Hexham (Mr. Holt) on this point. He did not discriminate in any way. He was equally unjust to us—perhaps that is a compliment—for he told us that we deliberately sent ammunition to Russia, well knowing that it would never be used. I would ask my hon. Friend did he serious mean that? Does he realise what it amounts to?

I do take very, very strong exception, not to the criticism of ourselves at all, but to the comment he made on the inefficiency and personnel of Allied Navies, I repeat, most unjustly. They should never have been made.

My hon. Friend the Member for Devonport (Sir C. Kinloch-Cooke), like my hon. Friend the Member for East Edinburgh (Mr. Hogge) last night, asked me some questions about the recent War Cabinet decisions in regard to sailors' pay. I will, as briefly as I can, cover the

8.0 p.m. points he raised, and I make no apology for making a comment or two upon those decisions because, as he very properly put it, our first consideration is for the men of the Army and the Navy. As regards the scheme generally, it was certainly most painstakingly prepared and submitted, and it did apply itself—and in this I think my hon. Friend will agree with me—at the points where a close and solicitous consideration of the facts justified us in believing the concessions would be most appreciated. He has himself referred to some of them as most ancient problems which he has put before us from his place for some time past. Shortly after the concessions were publicly announced the Prime Minister received a deputation requesting that, notwithstanding what had been done, something more should be done by way of pay for the lowest ranks of both Services. As my hon. Friend will remember, that request was at once sent back to the Cabinet Committee which was dealing with the matter, and of which my right hon. Friend the Member for Dublin University (Sir E. Carson) is Chairman. Again I have to say that the reference back has been, and is being, most painstakingly considered and examined. I cannot anticipate the decision because none has been taken, but it certainly ought to be, and will be, taken without delay one way or the other. I should like to remove another misapprehension. It was mentioned to us last night by my hon. Friend the Member for East Edinburgh, and was that the first of the naval concessions, under which the State takes over a portion of the compulsory allotment, will only affect a very small proportion of the men, inasmuch as it leaves out all the single men and men without dependants. That, I believe, to be a general impression; but it is entirely unfounded, and I am glad of the opportunity to say that the first of the series of concessions

[Dr. Manamara.]

dealing with the taking over of a proportion of a man's compulsory allotment will affect 73 per cent. of the men in the Navy, that being the proportion of men who are married and of men who make an allotment to other dependent relatives. Of course, those men would also come in for the other concessions under the conditions set forth, and all the men come in for them too. As regards the first concession—the separation allowance concession—as I have said, that affects 73 per cent., and I am glad to remove the idea that it only affects a small number. I do not know that I need say anything about the other concession, except two that were particularly referred to. The concession that men are to have improved pensions for twenty-two years' service is a concession which arises in this way: Down to the year 1885 the seamen engaged for pensions up to a full period of twenty years' service, and the standard of pension was 10d. a day when that time was completed. That works out at a halfpenny a day for each year served. In 1885 the engagement was increased to twenty-two years, the second period being increased to twelve, and the men at the time thought that the period for pension having been increased to twenty-two years, the amount ought to be increased to 11d., which would give a halfpenny for each year. That was not done then. It has always been a great grievance, and it is going to be done now. As regards all these concessions, hospital stoppages, and free kit, they are all for the period of the War, Army and Navy, and I am bound to tell my hon. Friend that that is the fact. They are for the period of the War.

Sir C. KINLOCH-COOKE: The Prime Minister did not say so in his letter to the First Lord of the Admiralty.

Dr. MACNAMARA: In the communication of the Prime Minister to the First Lord, and the Secretary of State for War I think my hon. Friend is quite right. I believe that that particular point was not really covered, but I am perfectly sure that I am accurately stating the decision of the War Cabinet when I say it is to be a war bonus.

Sir C. KINLOCH-COOKE: Hospital stoppages a war bonus?

Dr. MACNAMARA: The whole series of concessions is for the period of the War. The only other question is that of free kit.

As my hon. Friend knows, the sailor is provided with his kit at the outset and then has to replace it himself. There were certain concessions in the past when he changed from one rank to another, and an allowance was made in certain circumstances. But he has to keep up his kit from his pay. The concession is a free kit, and on that I have to say that we made the most careful inquiry, and we have no shadow of doubt that the men would prefer to have a money allowance for the upkeep of kit rather than have free issues of kit in kind. That, we are quite confident, would meet the sailors' wishes, and I should like to say for my hon. Friend's further information what this upkeep allowance will be. That is to say the particular form which this concession will take. It will be as follows:—

Royal Navy, including Coast Guard, Royal Fleet Reserve, Royal Naval Reserve, Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve and Royal Naval Air Service: £7 a year for the chief petty officers of all classes.

£5 10s. a year for petty officers and men dressed as bluejackets, mainly seamen and stoker classes.

£6 a year for petty officers and men not dressed as bluejackets, including shipwrights, ship's corporals, sick-berth ratings, ship's stewards ratings, writers, ship's cook ratings, officers, stewards and cooks.

Trawler reserve, yacht patrol and motor-boat reserve—neither of which have to purchase such an extensive kit—£3 10s. for men not dressed as seamen, and £2 10s. for men dressed as seamen.

Then as to how it will be worked. I think these figures will be found to be generous.

The allowance will be credited to each rating on his account in the ship's ledger in advance on the first day of each quarter beginning the 1st October. The value of any clothing taken up from paymaster's stores will be set off will then be set off on the debit side, and the balance at the end of the quarter will be paid to his credit.

That is shortly the system we propose to put into operation, and I think my hon. Friend will agree that that will meet the sailor's wishes, and is a liberal way of dealing with the matter. The existing provision for warm clothing in cold regions, and for light clothing in tropical regions will stand. We are not going to give with one hand and take away with

the other. That we think would be quite a wrong policy. Not only will all the existing provisions remain, and not be affected by this at all, but we are further going to take the opportunity to add to the free issue on entry, certain articles which have not in the past been included in the compulsory kit such as an overcoat and waterproof coat. As to the 3d. a day after three years instead of six, that is for the seamen class, and certainly the stokers are included. In order, however, that there may be no misunderstanding, if my hon. Friend will put a question, I will tell him precisely what is really covered by the phrase the seamen class. I think that would be the best way of answering the question, but I can say that stokers are included. The only other point is the question of a man being discharged with a disability pension and then when he comes back to active service, if he does, his disability pension being for the time withdrawn. My hon. Friend says that we do not do that with officers, and that the officer gets a wound pension and can draw that while he is still on the active service list, and is drawing active service pay. That is quite true. The men and officers are treated differently there. The treatment as regards officers is a very old institution indeed. I do not know how old it is, but I am quite sure that my hon. Friend would not wish to withdraw that.

Sir C. KINLOCH COOKE: No.

Dr. MACNAMARA: I think it has its origin in the circumstances that whereas an officer might be disabled for actual physical fighting by the loss of an eye—there is a case which I need not mention where a great sailor lost an eye—in such a way as would not prevent him taking full control of the movements of ships or fleets, he might still be a very valuable officer, and I imagine the origin of this was a desire to retain such men, such as distinguished tacticians. As regards men, that distinction between the two functions would not arise. I can give no undertaking upon the matter. I do not suppose that in this the last word has been said, and I will take note of what my hon. Friend has said, and will make representations once more.

Captain DOUGLAS HALL: I am sorry to keep the House at this gastronomic hour, but I believe this may be the last occasion on which it is possible to raise a question that must be of interest to the

whole country, namely, the Admiralty intention with regard to Osborne College. At any rate, it may be the last opportunity I may have of speaking on the subject, owing to my other duties. I should like to ask the Admiralty what their intention is regarding the college. We all know that they have seriously reduced the numbers of the college because it was very seriously overcrowded in an inadequate building, and I have been told, in answer to a question, that they are looking out for another site, and that it will be no longer in the Isle of Wight. I should like to know if that is their decision, because it is a very serious decision. They must have very serious reasons for arriving at it, as it means the scrapping of very valuable buildings and workshops, and the buying of another site at a time when they are very short of money and we are all told to be economical. I have heard elsewhere that perhaps they think the Isle of Wight has not a very suitable air. I should like to know how they came to that conclusion. Queen Victoria lived to a good old age at Osborne and found it one of the most salubrious of her residences. King Edward, when he came to the Throne, gave to the nation a portion of Osborne as being the most suitable place for an officers' convalescent home. We know that the National Hospital for Consumption searched the whole of England and finally settled on Ventnor as providing the best air to combat that malady. I know that last summer the island was more crowded with visitors and tourists than any other part of England, and they came for recuperation because the air was good. Could there be a more magnificent site for this college than in the beautiful park at Osborne by the Solent and near Portsmouth with its glorious naval traditions, where the boys can constantly see passing the greatest battleship of England? Surely a sight like that ought to help to raise up the spirit which we want in the young Navy which we are creating to defend our shores. I am forced to believe that what has been said is not the real reason why it is proposed to move this college from the island. The reason given is more or less to whitewash the hideous blunders and mistakes made in the buildings at Osborne and the complaints made with regard to the management. Perhaps the Admiralty think by making a spectacular move of the college they will meet the wishes of the parents who have grumbled, and they may think

[Captain D. Hall.]
that "new brooms sweep clean." Would it not be better to remedy all these things on the present site?

Is it reasonable to suppose that boys of tender age, just from the nursery, can be healthy in temporary buildings, built of urolite which I have poked my umbrella through, and these buildings are on the ground floor, and under these circumstances how can you expect boys to be healthy? I have just heard of some scheme of providing hot water in the trenches in the damp earth which will raise a sort of tropical miasma which will affect the health of the boys. If it is necessary to rebuild the college, why not do it on the present site? To suggest the moving of this college to another part of England is simply a piece of window-dressing, and surely is very uneconomical at the present time. You are going to scrap those splendid workshops, and all because your present buildings are utterly inadequate, and they might have been put up by an architect who lived in a lunatic asylum when you consider the purposes for which they were built. It is said that you have not adequate hospital accommodation, but the removal of the site will not remedy that. It is said that the boys had to wait for medical examination in draughty corridors, but that will not be remedied by removing the college, and removal will not remedy complaints in regard to the management. At Osborne the boys are kept strenuously at work, and it is too much for the young boys.

Mr. KING: On a point of Order. I would like to ask is not the raising of the Osborne establishment out of order here, because that Vote is borne upon the Estimates, and can we raise such matters now? Are we not discussing now only such matters as relate to the Vote of Credit?

Captain HALL: I think Rosyth was erected with Treasury sanction, and the money was voted without the House having a chance of saying anything about it.

Mr. DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr. Whitley): The hon. Member will recollect that the Navy Votes were taken in the form of Token Votes this year and during the War, and it is for that reason that a wider scope than usual has been allowed on the Vote of Credit, which represents the actual money both for the Army and the Navy Services.

Captain HALL: I should be glad to leave this question if we had an assurance that nothing will be done in regard to moving this site without an opportunity of discussing it in this House, and that is why I am making my little protest. All the things I have pointed out have nothing to do with the site. The boys could be better looked after by having a proper matron. She might see a little boy looking peaky, and she would ask, "What is the matter with you?" That is a woman's job, and it is only part of their nature to look after children, and you will not get all these things attended to by regulations and orders. You may post the whole college round with regulations with regard to health, but it will make no difference. The boys get up too early, and they ought to be allowed more rest. The consequence of all this is that they fall sick, and it should be remembered that there are many more boys of tender age at Osborne than any other establishment of that sort, and it is a place which is constantly in the public eye. No doubt the least epidemic there is magnified and questions are asked about it. If, instead of paying attention to the unreasonable complaints made by some of the parents, the authorities saw some of the superlatively pleasing letters of those who approve of Osborne College and the present site, they might take a totally different view. I believe the Admiralty have had a report on Osborne, and I ask that it should be laid before the House, so that hon. Members can judge whether there is the slightest necessity for this gross waste of public money in scrapping Osborne College and moving it to another site. Look at the space the college occupies in that beautiful park. By having all that room the boys can have any amount of recreation and play. Have the Admiralty obtained from any of the local health officers an opinion as to the so-called unsuitable air in the Isle of Wight. They have taken no outside evidence. They know that there is a splendid bed of gravel, and to put the country to that waste of money simply in order to do something new seems to me out of all reason when we are asking everybody to be economical. If we can afford to build a new college, then we should alter the present buildings at Osborne. They simply want raising so that there is a current of air beneath. The present buildings would not be passed by a local sanitary inspector of the smallest rural council in England. Of course, the

mighty Admiralty put them up, and nothing can be said. I do ask, before they settle upon another site and go to this great expense, that they should give the House a chance of discussing the matter and expressing its opinion in some way. I am quite certain, if this extravagance is perpetrated behind the country's back, that it will raise a great deal of indignation. We know that you can do it on Treasury sanction—we know that Rosyth was built on Treasury sanction—but surely we are here to be consulted when the great national training ground for our Navy is going to be moved. It is not a hole and corner matter, but one which ought to come before the House, and I ask the Civil Lord of the Admiralty to give us an assurance that the Report will be submitted to the House and that we shall have a chance of discussing the whole question. Of course, if there are any confidential portions of the Report, we do not wish the Germans to see them.

The CIVIL LORD of the ADMIRALTY (Mr. Pretzman): I do not at all complain of my hon. Friend raising this question, but the decision of the Admiralty, if and when the Naval College is rebuilt that it should not necessarily be rebuilt at Osborne, to which they propose to adhere unless the House expresses an opinion to the contrary, which I hardly think is likely—

Captain HALL: Shall we have an opportunity to do so?

Mr. PRETYMAN: My hon. and gallant Friend has the opportunity to-day, and he has raised the matter. I really think the importance of the question of the site has been rather exaggerated. It is a very simple matter. The college has to be rebuilt on account of the deficiency of the present buildings, which were never intended to be more than temporary, and it is perfectly clear that so far as the actual rebuilding is concerned the cost will be just as much at Osborne as anywhere else.

Captain HALL: You would not have to rebuild the workshops there.

Mr. PRETYMAN: I was going to say except so far as the workshops are concerned. If we are going to rebuild the college, we want to be able to choose the best site possible, and the Admiralty cannot be hampered in their choice. If we could not find a site better than that at

Osborne so as to justify the purchase of land and the rebuilding of the workshops, then no doubt the college would be rebuilt at Osborne, but in the opinion of those who have been closely into the question there are disadvantages in that site. I do not wish to say anything derogatory of the soil or climate of the Isle of Wight. I have been closely into the matter, and have examined the soil on the spot. I have had holes dug in it, and I have had expert advice on it, and the surface soil is far from being gravel.

Captain HALL: I did not say the surface soil. I said that there was a bed of gravel.

Mr. PRETYMAN: There is a bed of gravel, but at the top there are 2 feet of clayey sand or sandy clay, which is very retentive of moisture. When it becomes thoroughly wet, it retains the moisture the whole winter. It cannot be drained, because the water does finally get away through the gravel. It does not stand, but it is like a wet blanket all over the ground the whole winter. The medical opinion is that it has an effect upon the virulence of the epidemics. I do not suppose that the hon. and gallant Member suggests that the Admiralty have any desire to buy a new site if they have already got one which is satisfactory. What possible object could they have in doing that? We do not want to spend one penny unnecessarily, and we certainly have no prejudice whatever against the Isle of Wight. I should never suggest that the serious epidemics which have occurred at Osborne were due to the soil or climate of the Isle of Wight, but we are advised by our medical advisers that when these epidemics come—and, as my hon. and gallant Friend very justly said, when you congregate large numbers of very young boys you are bound to have epidemics—the winter soil and climate at Osborne are not the best that could be chosen for restricting their virulence. Our medical advisers say that the great virulence of the epidemics at Osborne has been due to the soil and climate, and they have no prejudice against the Isle of Wight whatever.

Captain HALL: Are you quoting from the Report?

Mr. PRETYMAN: No; I am not quoting from any Report. I have not mentioned the Report. I know quite well what my hon. and gallant Friend means. I have

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merely said that the Admiralty have been advised that the soil and climate are perhaps not the best that could be chosen for combating the epidemics that are bound to come in a college of very young boys. We should be failing in our duty to the House and to the country if, merely for the purpose of retaining the college in one particular locality in the Isle of Wight, we were to pass by the major considerations. If we are to start the training of a very large number of young boys for the Navy, we are bound to do it under the best possible conditions of soil and climate that can be obtained. We cannot, therefore, restrict our choice, and I cannot believe that the House of Commons would wish to restrict the choice of the Admiralty, and say that if they determine it to be necessary to build a new Naval College they must build it in the Isle of Wight and not anywhere else. I cannot believe that my hon. and gallant Friend would carry the House with him in that proposition.

Captain HALL: I never said that. I asked that the House should be given an opportunity of discussing the matter.

Mr. PRETYMAN: I really cannot give that undertaking. My hon. and gallant Friend has his opportunity now if he had his Friends to support him, but I do not observe that any great interest is taken in the matter.

Captain HALL: At this hour?

Mr. PRETYMAN: That I cannot help. It is not reasonable to suppose that the House would want to restrict the Admiralty in seeking for a site for a new college. We want to do the best we can for the Navy and to select the best site, and I cannot give any pledge that will restrict our choice. It is obviously unwise, when a new site is being selected, that the different localities should be discussed here and thus make the purchase of the land more difficult. My hon. Friend referred to the building of Rosyth on Treasury sanction, but I am sure he meant the acquisition of the site. Rosyth was built after the introduction of Estimates in this House.

Captain HALL: I was dealing with the purchase of the site.

Mr. PRETYMAN: For reasons which are well known, if you are going to buy a site and there is a choice between dif-

ferent places, you cannot announce publicly the fact that you are in the market for land. It is, therefore, quite obvious that the Admiralty must be free to look round for a site, and at any rate to obtain a right to that site before coming to the House for sanction. My hon. and gallant Friend asked me whether the Report of a Committee which considered Osborne would be laid before the House. I will ask the First Lord whether that can be done, and let my hon. and gallant Friend know if I can do what he asks.

Mr. KING: What innovations we see in these days! Two innovations struck me very forcibly indeed in the speech of the Parliamentary Secretary to the Admiralty. He is a very old Parliamentarian. I believe he is the only Minister who has held the same post from the very first day of the War till now. He is one of the old stagers; in fact, he stands in an old stager class by himself, yet to-day he introduced two remarkable innovations into the Debate. After the announcements on the submarine question had been made by the First Lord, there was a variety of critical speeches, and my right hon. Friend got up to reply simply by reading out, from the very manuscript which the First Lord had used, the identical words of his speech, and he considered that a sufficient answer to a lot of very important and weighty criticisms. That is what we have come to in this House. That is what the Admiralty and the Government have come to. They cannot meet criticism; they only say just the very same words they have said before. I sympathise very much with the hon. and gallant Gentleman the Member for the Isle of Wight (Captain Douglas Hall), who brought very good criticisms to bear, and was treated very much more courteously than previous speakers have been treated by the Parliamentary Secretary. Another curious innovation introduced by the same right hon. Gentleman was in answer to a very pungent criticism on the inefficiency of certain higher commands in the Navy. What did the right hon. Gentleman do? He deprecated calling attention to inefficiency at this time. He thought it was injudicious, unwise, and even unfair. It makes my heart droop with envy when a Minister gets up in this House and deprecates that anybody should have a word to say against inefficiency. They are all inefficient on

the Treasury Bench, except a very few—I will except present company if they will allow me. We have come to this, and it explains a lot in the position of the War at the present time, that when a Member gets up and denounces inefficiency which, as a matter of fact, is admitted, all the Government can do is to say, "Please do not tell us that we are inefficient."

Now let me turn to the First Lord of the Admiralty, who made an advent into Parliamentary performance here which we shall all remember. My own feeling was that he had one thing which is lacking upon the Treasury Bench. He seemed to have grip. When I see how the people on the Bench flounder about, change and prevaricate, as his junior did just now, when I see the change, the wait and see, the put it off until a more convenient season policy of the Government, I am thankful when I meet a man whose attitude, words and actions suggest there is a real grip and hold upon the events with which he has to deal. I congratulate the House and feel encouraged myself that we have at last got a man of grip. I rise chiefly to call attention to a very curious anomaly in the position of the First Lord of the Admiralty. Here is one of our chief officials holding a position which he can only hold with a seat in Parliament and who is not paid by this House. There is no Vote, and apparently there is to be no Vote—on which we are to be able to challenge his salary. I hope the decision taken on this matter will be changed, because if there is one man on that Bench who is not likely to have his salary very severely challenged and who will be able to put forward a very good case if critics like some of us challenge it, it would be the First Lord of the Admiralty. What are the facts of the case as to the First Lord? He is paid an enormous salary. I am told it runs a long way into five figures. I do not grudge it to him—I am sure he is worth it—but that salary does not come out of the Votes of this House. It is paid by the Railway Committee. By some arrangement with the Treasury the salary paid by the Railway Committee is saved here. As a man who stands for the rights and traditions of Parliament, I call attention to this anomaly and recall the words of Burke, that every Minister ought to be obliged to take his salary. Why? Because when a man is paid for a job we can bring him to book, and also because by the rights and traditions of

this House the voting of the salary gives a regular occasion on which the Minister's record, his services, his position, his statements and achievements can be brought under review. In spite of the satisfaction I feel about the First Lord of the Admiralty's performance and the prospects we have, under his control, of increased efficiency and success in the Navy I would ask the Government to consider whether his salary cannot be put into the next Estimates presented to the House in the usual way, and also whether any surplus amount above that salary which he is entitled now to receive should be paid from the Railway Committee. Inasmuch as the Railway Committee now is practically a Government Department it only requires a few book entries to give us an opportunity, on the First Lord's salary, of having a regular Debate and to carry on in the right way the traditions of this House. The Secretary to the Admiralty is really one of the older Members of the House who understands financial questions and the traditions, and I hope he will listen to my arguments.

There was one remark in the First Lord's speech which did not seem to attract very much attention, but it had a great interest for me. He said he did not belong to those who thought this War was going to be soon over. He made his plans for a very considerable continuance of the War. I am very glad to hear it. This question, I suppose, is in everyone's mind. Certainly, I am asked again and again when I go to my home amongst my friends, and especially if I go to my Constituency, how long will the War last? Will it be at an end this year or next year, or when? That question, which is in everyone's mind, is only just incidentally noticed. I am sorry for this, because I believe if, on the one hand, Ministers felt that we must be ready to face a very long prolongation of the War they will get the people's minds steadier. They will get their determination more fixed if they tell them that. If, on the other hand, there are hopes held out, and they have been held out by very high authorities lately, that the War is going to come to an end very soon, in all probability I think Ministers ought to be united in taking up the attitude that the War will very soon come to an end, and that we must be ready for all emergencies. I would call attention to a few statements which have recently been made, not only in order to elucidate this profoundly important question whether the

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War is likely to be long or not, but also to call attention to the fact that members of the Government and the highest authorities are inconsistent one with another. There is no clear vision. There is no harmonious and united view. In February of this year Field-Marshal Haig gave an interview to a Paris journalist, which was endorsed by the Government here, in which he said first of all that the campaign of 1917 would certainly be the decisive campaign of the War. I hope it is proving so. I do not know. He also said that though the War might continue into the next year it would be practically over this year, and I see that he takes the same view now. He has made known his views recently through the able pen of his friend, Mr. Horatio Bottomley. Mr. Horatio Bottomley has been on a long visit to General Haig, and on his return he appears to have written a full account of his conversations and impressions at Headquarters in France. He tells us this.

"In the opinion of everyone on the Western front, from the High Commander—that means, of course, General Haig—to the humblest Tommy, we might be able to sit down to our dinner at Christmas with peace on earth and goodwill towards men once again."

[Interruption.] It has a great deal to do with whether the War is going to be prolonged or not. My hon. Friend seems to think that may not be a very important question. It may not be to him, but to many people it is absolutely vital.

Sir W. BEALE: What I said was, what has it to do with the Admiralty?

Mr. KING: We have had that question before on a point of Order. We are not on any Admiralty Vote, but on the Vote of Credit for all the Services of the country, and anyone can discuss any question. I noticed, too, that General Smuts has been telling us that in his opinion the Germans are already beaten, and their soldiers know it, and another Member of the War Cabinet said a very short time before that the Germans were thoroughly beaten, and from top to bottom they all knew it. Then you have Sir John Jellicoe taking up only last week exactly the same attitude. The end was almost if not quite in sight. There is no doubt a very strong feeling engendered by these utterances and other things that the War is going to come to an end very quickly. On the other hand, you have certain statements, like that of the First Lord of the Admiralty just now, and certain facts like the terrible events

in Italy, which point at any rate to the necessity of our being prepared for a very long War. I believe the Government ought to be more clear. It ought not to allow its chief officers, the Higher Command, both of the Navy and the Army, to tell the people that the War is just about to end, whereas the First Lord of the Admiralty says we must prepare for several years. I look upon it as indicative of the lack of grip which the Government, as a whole, has on the affairs of this terrible time. The Government, I believe, does not know what policy it ought to pursue.

The fact of the Italian reverses really proves this. The Italian reverses are certainly not due to any lack of fighting force in the men. They are certainly not due to any lack of ammunition, for they have been amply provided for. I believe they can only be explained in the fault of the strategists, and I believe the higher command, both at sea and on land—and especially the War Council of the Allies—is seriously at fault. In what way it is very hard to say, because we are refused any information as to the nature and the province of the War Council of the Allies. We are even refused information as to who is in command of all the armies of the Allies on the Western front. The absolute mind control of the operations of the war is a mystery, and is kept a mystery. I believe they are very gravely deficient; and here we are with a man-power at least five times as great as that of our enemy, and a power of ammunition four to six times as great, with the whole control of commerce and the sea—they are practically shut out from it—and with financial resources far beyond the enemy's, and with exhaustion and hopelessness of victory staring them in the face, and we see a great set-back like this in Italy. The men who are to blame for this are the High Command—the High Command of the Allied forces. They are very seriously to blame for our terrible position two years ago in Mesopotamia and they are to blame for the humiliating position we have been content to be in for two years in Salonika. They are to blame for the position at Gaza, which was hailed as a great victory, and now we are not allowed to know anything about the story of Gaza. If I were allowed to say to every man in this House what I would like to say, there is one thing above all others I would say and it is this—are you sure that this High Command to whom you entrust millions of

money and, more than that, the lives and the future of millions of your fellow citizens, are the most efficient, the most able, the most trained and the most capable set of men that you can get for the purpose? I say that when the High Command has failed egregiously, it ought to be put down and a new set of men brought in. We have had practically no change in the Imperial General Staff. There have been certain changes in the personnel, but the Imperial General Staff remains the same. When Hindenburg was brought back from the Eastern Front and made head of the General Staff in Berlin, German military power took an unexpected step forward, and I believe that in bringing in new minds, and men who have not failed, in the place of the men who have either become stale or have failed, and these new men take an intellectual leadership and control of the War, in that way we have hope of victory. Unless that is done we shall not get victory. The alternative is that we should go on with the waste and ineffectiveness of our military operations.

The military position to-day is not at all satisfactory compared with what it ought to be and compared with what we thought it would be at the beginning of this year. The alternative is that we shall have sooner or later to state clearly our war aims and to consider opening up negotiations with the enemy. I should prefer that we should do that at once unless we are going to carry on energetic warfare with better men at the head and with a better directing brain than we have at the present time. This Government, which came into power by denouncing those whom they said were old men of the wait-and-see type, have been waiting and seeing and marking time worse and more than any other Government we have ever had. I believe that one of the greatest blessings that could come to this country and the world would be the fall of this Government, because I am sure we could not get a worse. At any rate, I believe that if we had the fall of this Government we should be forced to realise that the mere reliance upon military power, men, money, and munitions, even when ill-directed—because that is what we are relying upon now—will not win the War. People will think that because we are spending seven or eight millions a day we are much more likely to win the War than when we were only spending four or five millions. It is the mere reliance upon

men, money, and ammunition, apart from mind and direction, which is proving the failure of this Government, and I believe it is accountable for the tragedy of the present position. We are

9.0 P.M. unfortunately in the position, as will be seen by anyone who takes the recently-issued Report of the Committee on National Expenditure, having given ourselves over to a military régime, which simply disregards economy, disregards the rights and traditions of the people, and believes that by mere brute, brainless force it is going to win the War.

I intend to call the attention of the House to one or two instances of the attitude of mind which has come over the Government and unfortunately, over a very large section of the Press in this country, and that is mere trust in millions of soldiers, millions of money, and vast amounts of ammunition, regardless of moral force and intellectual honesty. I have called the attention of the Under-Secretary for War on more than one occasion to the position of men who in one way or another have suffered from shell shock. I have in three cases had advice from the front about men who have been sent into hospitals suffering from shell shock in France, and in a very short time they have been turned out of hospital and told to go back to their unit. In two cases the men almost immediately reported sick, but the doctor would not allow them to be sick and sent them back to their unit. They were put in the firing line, and in two cases they were guilty of an act of desertion. A very fine young fellow, a son of one of my Constituents, who enlisted in the very first days of the War and who went out in 1915 to France, and has been there with one very short leave ever since, was brought before a court-martial on a charge of desertion because when the doctor refused him leave to go sick, suffering from shell shock, and he was sent back into the trenches he ran away. That young man is now suffering ten years penal servitude. I call that a scandal and I would say that the doctor would deserve the ten years penal servitude much more than did that young man. It may be said that I am making an *ex parte* statement, but remember that there is no public trial in a case like this. Nominally, a man may be defended, but suffering as he is from shell shock what can he do or say? These cases, as was admitted yesterday at question time, are now getting numerous, and I

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would appeal to the military authorities in these shell shock cases, resulting as they do in desertion, and then in court-martials with heavy sentences, sometimes even the sentence of death, to find some other methods than those at present pursued. A case like that which I have just mentioned becomes known to people, and it weakens them in their power of endurance, and in their determination to see this business through to a victorious issue, and I believe that from the mere point of view of military efficiency and the real stamina and strength of the nation, and its military forces, it is foolish to continue this policy towards those shell shocked soldiers.

I would like to call attention again, though it may be hopeless, to the treatment of the conscientious objectors. The Ministers on that bench are not quite the Ministers whom I would like to see, though they are Gentlemen for whom I have a considerable respect. One of them, at any rate, I know is anxious to go to his dinner, but he has been good enough to stay to listen to my humble remarks instead, and I am very grateful, and therefore shall not complain that his less efficient and less respectful colleagues have not remained. From my point of view the position of the conscientious objectors has not been adequately brought forward. I have before now tried to show what waste of man-power, money, and moral force there was in putting these conscientious objectors into prison and putting them to work which they are ill able to do. I would like to call attention to the increasing severity and the vindictive way in which they are treated by both the military and civil authorities. It is seen first in the very severe dietary restrictions to which they are now increasingly subjected. In their Report for the year ending the 31st March last, the Prison Commissioners have got a page about the treatment of conscientious objectors. It is quite interesting, but I will only read one sentence, which is suggestive. After saying that some of these people have been satisfactory and some not, they tell us that

"dietary restriction is the principal instrument of punishment."

I object, whether it is the principle of our prison methods or not, to starving a man when you are up against him, I object to a prison system which gives a man hard work to do and yet gives him less food.

That is just the policy which has been habitually and deliberately adopted by the Home Office towards the people at Dartmoor. The Home Secretary would have been present here to-night to meet me on this subject only he had a previous engagement, and he very courteously indicated to me his disappointment at being unable to be present. The Under-Secretary to the Home Office is in a similar position, but I have here a statement with reference to a very large reduction of rations at Princetown.

Princetown is the settlement in South Devon to which are sent those conscientious objectors who are admitted even by the War Office to be genuine and who are engaged on work of national importance. They are sent there to do obviously what under the Military Service Act is admitted to be work of national importance. That being so, they should be decently treated. The hon. Member for Devonport is constantly trying to get them treated worse, and we know that frequently the Home Secretary has given him very encouraging answers. Now the diet which they had in the summer months of May and June has been very much reduced. They used to have 22 ozs. of bread per day. That has been reduced to 11 ozs. Then they used to have 2 pints of porridge per day, and, if a man earned full marks, 1 pint of porridge in the evening as well. Now the allowance of porridge has been reduced to 1½ pints, and the loss of 11 ozs. of bread and ½ pint of porridge is supposed to be made good by giving them 1 oz. of cheese. The Home Secretary has admitted that the previous dietary was based on what was considered by the medical authorities to be a minimum for men engaged on hard work, and it is very hard work that these men are engaged on. They are making miles of roads, many of them mere clerks and men of low physique. They are put on the hardest work on the land and at road-making, and are given a ration, which is little more than half of what was a year ago considered to be the minimum ration suitable for men engaged on hard labour. There is not, to my mind, any doubt about it that dietary restrictions are now being deliberately used by the Home Office to try to break the spirit of these men. It is a terrible accusation to make, but I believe that that is their attitude of mind. It is an attitude which is approved of by certain people. I have heard it said publicly and privately that all con-

scientious objectors should be shot, or that they ought to be all sent out of the country. I have heard people say that they should be sent to the trenches and made to stand on the parapet. If it is to be the law of the land, let us have it as a law of the land. If you take men, who are admittedly genuine, and put them to the hardest and severest toil, do not give them half the ration which a little time ago was said to be the minimum for a man doing hard work. Action like that strikes me as being worthy only of a Tzar of Russia, or of Siberia; it is contrary to the spirit of our national life. The effect of this treatment of conscientious objectors causes these men to lose seriously in weight. That statement is borne out by a number of cases which I have here. One man lost 30 lbs. in three weeks, another 40 lbs., and many have lost 12 lbs. in weight, in a very short time, under this reduced ration. I passed to a very terrible proof of the real cruelty with which these men are now deliberately treated by the authorities.

I have in my hands a number of cases of conscientious objectors who have been driven insane under this treatment. If a young and healthy man is subjected to treatment which he feels is undermining his health, and if you still continue that treatment, it is not unlikely that he will become insane. I can only say that I could not be an agent to such treatment, and I would rather myself die than carry out a policy which is deliberately designed to have such results. I have a large number of cases, some of which I have looked into personally by writing to friends of the men, and making other inquiries. I have a list of thirty cases of men who have been imprisoned, some of them having been only once court martialled and afterwards considered to be genuine, and set to work of national service. These are not men who are standing out, but are undertaking work of national service. I have a number of such cases, and these men suffer far less than those who absolutely refuse to submit to any form of service. The names of these men are not published, and their friends, if reports come to them, do not want them known to the public. I should think it likely that the 30 men I have got on this list could be multiplied four or five times. I wish to refer to only one more aspect of this subject, namely, to the men who have been driven to suicide. When the sufferings of these men are referred to there are supporters of the Gov-

ernment gloat over the kind of treatment given to them, and when you have the Government refusing to do anything save making that treatment more severe, I am afraid, as I said, that there is a growing vindictiveness arising from this militarism under which we are suffering. I believe that militarism at the present time is much more efficient in cruelty, and that we have been suffering from militarism for years, but I hope that when the War comes to an end that militarism, with all its brutality, will disappear from this my country, which I love.

Mr. BYRNE: Hear, hear!

Mr. KING: Ireland will be more united, for she sees more clearly than we do the danger of militarism, and if only the men of Ireland would not put their trust in militarism, I am not quite sure that I would not leave this House and join them in their country, which has already recognised the curse of brutal militarism.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE: I rise for the purpose of asking you, Sir, whether I may move the Adjournment of the Debate. The speech which has just been delivered contains facts which, as set forth in the speech of the hon. Gentleman, are of the utmost gravity, and they call for an immediate reply from a responsible member of the Government. There is no member of the Government present in a position to reply. I do not complain of the absence of the Home Secretary, because I understand that he has already intimated that it was impossible for him to be here. But surely I am entitled to ask that there should be some responsible member of the Cabinet, or some other responsible member of the Government present not only to listen but take notes of what has been stated. I have not observed any great literary activity on the Treasury Bench, but I think we are entitled to ask that not only should notes be taken of such serious and remarkable facts as have been set forth by the hon. Gentleman, but that the House should have an immediate reply from a responsible Minister. For these reasons I beg to move, "That the Debate be now adjourned."

Mr. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: I cannot accept the Motion. The hon. Member who spoke went from one subject to another, going into a great number of subjects, without having given notice to Ministers to whose Departments he referred. There is no case for this Motion.

Mr. KING: On the point of Order. I do not know whether you refer to me as not having given notice, but I would respectfully say that I gave notice to the Ministry, and was in communication with the Chief Whip on the subject; and as to the absence of the Home Secretary, that is quite understood by me, and I am not complaining. I do think there is no reason why someone should not be present, and I should have been pleased to have seconded the Motion if it had been accepted.

Question put, and agreed to.

Bill read a second time, and committed to a Committee of the Whole House for Monday next.

The remaining Orders were read, and postponed.

NECESSITOUS SCHOOL CHILDREN (FEEDING).

Whereupon **Mr. DEPUTY-SPEAKER**, pursuant to the Order of the House of 12th February, proposed the Question, "That this House do now adjourn."

Mr. BYRNE: I put a question to the Chief Secretary, as follows:

"To ask the Chief Secretary to the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland if he will take steps to obtain a grant for the feeding of school children in Dublin, and if he will state the Government proposals in this matter."

That is a question which requires immediate attention, and to it I got a most unsatisfactory reply to the effect that there were sufficient funds for the purpose. The funds we have in Dublin for the feeding of school children amount only to a sum of £4,000 per year, raised by 1d. rate on the Dublin ratepayers. The Chief Secretary is very fond of giving us sympathy, but nothing more, and of trying to convince the House that he was perfectly right and that I was wrong. Two hours after the Chief Secretary's reply I received a telegram from Dublin as follows:

"Hundreds of starving children turned away to-day from here, no funds for the purpose."

That is signed by **Miss Page** of the Gardiner Street Cooked Food Depot, and

I am quite prepared to take that lady's word against that of any Cabinet Minister who does not know anything at all about the matter as far as Dublin is concerned and does not want to know. I gave the Chief Secretary notice that I was going to raise this question to-night and I would like to know why he is not here to tell us what the funds are or whether he intends to be always in a position to state that there are plenty of funds for the purpose of keeping a close lock up on them and never releasing the amount there is there for the purpose of feeding the children. If he does not spend whatever little money has been given it will always remain. My anxiety is to see that the school children are fed and not that the money should remain in Dublin Castle. It is rather a strange thing that when I asked the Chief Secretary to introduce legislation to give us sufficient funds for the purpose to be paid by the ratepayers of Dublin he refused to consider the request, while at the same time a sum of £85,000 per year was given to prosperous England for that purpose. In the view of the sympathetic Chief Secretary £4,000 is quite sufficient for a poverty-stricken city like Dublin. I am also informed that out of this £85,000 given to the children of the well-to-do artisans of England that the Treasury pay half. All that we ask for is power to raise money in the city of Dublin, and, pending legislation being introduced, that the Chief Secretary should try and make an immediate grant, so that hundreds of children may not be turned away from the schools every day hungry. I ask what is the cause that not a penny will be given to Ireland by the British Treasury? Is it because it is Ireland? Is it because it has always been the wish and ambition of Members on the Treasury Bench to crush and cheat Ireland? If it is not so, what reason is there? Why should England receive £85,000 for the feeding of school children and Dublin receive nothing? Your people here have all the munition works; your artisans are earning £5 and £6 per week. Ireland has got to pay its share of that munition work, and Ireland's share of the munition work is nil. Our workmen have to be satisfied with 25s. or 30s. per week, and they have to pay the same, and in many cases higher, prices for their foodstuffs than has to be paid by British workmen earning five times their wages.

Then we have the Chief Secretary, the sympathetic Chief Secretary, who

does not think it worth his while to be here to make a statement on this most urgent and important question. In Ireland the wages are bad. We have no industries, we have no employment. The Government take jolly good care that there will be no industries, and that there will be no employment. The restrictions placed on everything that is likely to give employment in Ireland hit nothing but Ireland. You can get your timber or your petrol or anything that is wanted in England. The Irish workman may walk about the streets of Dublin or may come over here and try to work for a poor wage and keep two homes, and send a little home to keep his children and spend the rest in a lodging-house in Great Britain. I ask the House whether they are going to put up with the Chief Secretary for Ireland any longer. He refuses to take note of the deplorable conditions of the poor people of our city. Whether it is because I am a Junior Member or not I do not know, but when I stand up here and ask a question containing statements of fact of which I can give proof, in polite Parliamentary language the Chief Secretary tells me I am a liar. He does it in a nice Parliamentary way, but that is his attitude towards me for the past couple of months, especially when I try to expose to the House the true conditions of affairs as far as the city of Dublin is concerned. I have a letter here from a lady in charge of a cooked food depot in the city of Dublin. She says:

"I regret to say the response to our appeal for funds to feed the children has been very disappointing. The thing is too terrible to contemplate, to see poor little children going hungry, and they would scarcely come here in the pouring rain shortly after nine o'clock a.m. if not expecting a meal, and will only wait till eleven or twelve o'clock in the day."

"Owing to red tape no grant has come for Saturday, the last day of the week."

The children cannot, out of the little money that is being raised in Dublin, get a breakfast on Saturday, or Sunday morning, because neither are school days. In pre-war times these people were feeding in thirty-two schools 8,000 children a week. If this was required in pre-war times when there were no restrictions upon our manufacturers, what is required now? Will nothing open the eyes of the Chief Secretary to what is going on? We want at least £15,000 to £20,000 for the purpose. The sum given to England is £85,000. We ask for the smaller amount from the great British Government that

has taxed us out of existence, gives us no employment, takes away our industries, and then refuses to give us anything. The British Government are paying £7,000,000 a day to carry on a war which they boast is for the purpose of protecting small nationalities, whilst they have the grandest of small nationalities under their heel. They allow the children to die. Our death-rate in Dublin is the highest in the United Kingdom. What steps are the Irish Office and the Chief Secretary going to take to alter this? Last year in Dublin, in a tenement house where there were nine families, consisting of forty persons, typhoid fever broke out. The medical officer was sent to investigate. He declined to fill up the questions on the regulation form, but, instead, wrote in red ink that the cause of the outbreak was starvation. Typhoid fever in a tenement house in Dublin in the year, a year of war, when you are paying £7,000,000 a day for the protection of smaller nationalities, and the cause is starvation! How long is this to continue? The day is coming when the people of Dublin and the people of Ireland will not wait for your actions. They will take the law into their own hands and see that the children are fed. They will not come here, as Members for the last thirty years on this Bench have been doing, begging and appealing to the Members on the Front Bench opposite to do justice to Ireland—appealing for the crumbs that fall from your table. For thirty years we have received nothing but broken promises, and the appointment of a Chief Secretary who is sympathetic! The children cannot live on his sympathy. They want something more solid, more nourishing, than the sympathy of the Chief Secretary for Ireland. We ask him to open the lockers, and to allow us to buy food for the children. If you do not do that, if he does not do it, I tell you that, before this month is out the people themselves will see that the children are fed and will take it from you.

Lord E. TALBOT (Joint Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasury): I regret the Chief Secretary is not here to have heard the point raised by my hon. Friend opposite. I can assure him that the absence of my right hon. Friend is not due to any want of courtesy to the hon. Member, or any lack of sympathy, in the important point he has raised.

Mr. BYRNE: Sympathy!
Lord E. TALBOT: My hon. Friend, I am sure, will realise that this Debate ended somewhat earlier than was expected. Otherwise, I am quite certain, my right hon. Friend would have been here. I will take care to have his atten-

tion called first thing in the morning to the important point which has been raised.

Question put, and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at Eighteen minutes before Ten o'clock until Monday next, in pursuance of the Resolution of the House of the 12th February.

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