

Parliament

STEPS TO DEFEAT AIR RAIDS

CIVIL PROTECTION AGAINST POISON GAS ATTACKS

MR. LLOYD ON GOVERNMENT TESTS

FINANCIAL CONCESSION OFFERED TO LOCAL AUTHORITIES

HOUSE OF LORDS

TUESDAY, NOV. 16

The LORD CHANCELLOR took his seat on the Woolsack at a quarter past 4 o'clock. The Supreme Court of Judicature (Amendment) Bill was brought up from the Commons and read a first time. The Expiring Laws Continuance Bill was read a second time.

PROTECTION OF QUAILS

BILL TO PROHIBIT CLOSE SEASON IMPORTS

VISCOUNT MERSEY moved the second reading of the Quail Protection Bill, the object of which is to prohibit the importation of the common quail during the close season. The noble lord said that this Bill was put forward on behalf of the British Section of the International Committee for Bird Preservation, in agreement with the Zoological Society and many other similar bodies. The various Government Departments concerned had no objection to the Bill, and it was put forward in agreement with several foreign Governments. Its object was simply to prevent the extermination, in a comparatively short time, of the quail.

The quail was a migratory bird which spent the winter in Central Africa and the spring and summer in Europe. In recent years there had grown up a practice of importing quails alive in large numbers to this country. The birds were brought over in crates just at the period when they would naturally be moulting. The birds were netted in Egypt and Algeria, and after being brought here they were fattened and sold. Something like 250,000 of the birds were brought to the London market in the season.

The Egyptian Government had passed legislation to prohibit the netting of the quail in Egypt during the breeding season and the French Government had prohibited the spring shooting of the quail in Algeria and those parts of Morocco which they controlled. If complementary action could be taken here something might be done towards saving this bird from extinction. The Bill proposed to prohibit the importation of live quails into the United Kingdom between February 14 and July 1.

GOVERNMENT SYMPATHETIC

The EARL OF ONSLOW supported the second reading and said he hoped the Government would be able to give facilities for the passage of the Bill through both Houses. The quail had become very rare here; but if this Bill was passed it was possible that the quail could come again in appreciable numbers, and it would be a desirable addition to the game birds of this country.

EARL FORTESCUE, Lord-in-Waiting, said

were in sympathy with the objects of the Bill and no objection had been taken to it by the Ministry of Agriculture, although some points had been raised by the Board of Customs. The Government would not object to the Bill being given a second reading if it was understood that it might be necessary to make some amendment Clause 2 at a later stage. He could give no pledge that the passage of the Bill would be facilitated in the House of Commons.

The Bill was read a second time. The Merchant Shipping (Superannuation Contributions) Bill was read the third time and passed. Their lordships rose at 22 minutes to 5 o'clock.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

TUESDAY, NOV. 16

The SPEAKER took the Chair at a quarter to 3 o'clock.

PLANS FOR FOOD CONTROL

"SHADOW ORGANIZATION" CREATED

MAJOR MILLS (New Forest and Christchurch, U.) asked the President of the Board of Trade if he proposed to set up any local organization in connexion with the plans which were being prepared in his Department for safeguarding the food supplies of this country during an emergency.

MR. OLIVER STANLEY (Westmorland, U.)—Yes, Sir. It has been decided, as part of the plans which are in course of preparation for controlling the supply and distribution of foodstuffs in the event of an emergency, to create throughout Great Britain a "shadow" organization which could, without delay, act as a Food Control Committee in the area of each local authority, as during the period of food control in the Great War.

MR. BELLENGER (Bassetlaw, Lab.)—What will this shadow organization consist of? Will it be distributive and purchasing?

MR. OLIVER STANLEY.—The shadow organization will be in readiness in case of emergency to perform all the duties performed under the Food Controller in the War.

[Following is the circulated statement:—Great Britain, excluding London and the Home Counties, will be divided into 14 divisions (eight in England, two in Wales, and five in Scotland), for each of which a Divisional Food Officer has been appointed. In addition a Chief Divisional Food Officer has been appointed for Scotland.

Each Divisional Food Officer will at an early date approach each of the local authorities concerned in his division and discuss arrangements for setting up the shadow organization in the area of each local authority. In London and the Home Counties District Food

authorities in these areas and generally undertake for the time being the work which in other parts of Great Britain will be performed by Divisional Food Officers. It is not anticipated that an expenditure will be incurred by local authorities in this connexion in peacetime. In the event of an emergency the expenses of the Food Control Committee would be defrayed from national funds.

The following appointments of Divisional Food Officers have been made, in consultation with the Secretary of State for Scotland so far as appointments in Scotland are concerned:—

ENGLAND AND WALES

NORTH—Durham, Northumberland, and Tees-side.—Sir Arthur Lambert. (Headquarters: Newcastle-on-Tyne.)
NORTH-EAST—Yorkshire (excluding Tees-side).—Mr. W. Carby Hall. (Leeds.)
NORTH-WEST—Cheshire, Cumberland, Lancashire, Westmorland.—Mr. E. Gardner. (Liverpool.)
NORTH MIDLANDS—Derbyshire, Leicestershire, Lincolnshire, Northamptonshire, Stoke of Peterborough, Nottinghamshire, Rutland.—Mr. W. O. MacArthur. (Nottingham.)
MIDLAND—Herefordshire, Shropshire, Staffordshire, Warwickshire, Worcestershire.—Sir James Curtis. (Birmingham.)
SOUTH—Buckinghamshire, Cambridgeshire, Huntingdonshire, Norfolk, Suffolk, Isle of Ely.—Lieutenant-Colonel O. M. Layton. (Cambridge.)
SOUTH-EAST—Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Dorset, Hampshire, Oxfordshire, Sussex.—Lieutenant-Colonel E. Readling. (Reading.)
SOUTH-WEST—Cornwall, Devonshire, Gloucestershire, Somerset, Wiltshire.—Mr. F. T. Lee-Norman. (Bristol.)

NORTH WALES—Anglesey, Caernarfonshire, Denbighshire, Flintshire, Merionethshire.—Major W. Lloyd Griffith. (Caernarfon.)
SOUTH WALES—Brecknockshire, Cardiganshire, Carmarthenshire, Glamorganshire, Monmouthshire, Pembrokeshire, Radnorshire.—Sir Thomas Jones. (Cardiff.)

SCOTLAND

MR. J. W. PECK, Chief Divisional Officer for Scotland. (Edinburgh.)
SOUTH-EAST—Mid Lothian (including City of Edinburgh), Berwick, East Lothian, Peebles, Roxburgh, Selkirk, West Lothian.—Mr. J. E. Eadie. (Edinburgh.)
WEST—Lanark (including City of Glasgow), Agart, Ayr, Bute, Clackmannan, Dumfriesshire, Dumfries, Kirkcubright, Renfrew, Stirling, Wigtown.—Colonel W. D. Scott. (Glasgow.)
EAST—Angus (including City of Dundee), Fife, Kinross, Perth, Argyll, Argyll and Bute, Highland, Inverclyde, Moray, Orkney, Shetland.—Mr. H. Mitchell. (Aberdeen.)
NORTH—Inverness, Caithness, Nairn, Ross and Sutherland.—Colonel Ian Malcolm Campbell. (Inverness.)

THE RISE IN FOOD PRICES

MR. SMEDLEY CROOKE (Deriend, U.) asked the President of the Board of Trade if he was aware of the anxiety of the general body of housewives in the country caused by the rise in prices of groceries and other foodstuffs, which was causing hardship to those with small fixed incomes; whether he would set up an inquiry to make sure that the rise was not due to rings; and whether he would consider what steps he could take to ease the burden of expenditure on the necessities of life.

MR. OLIVER STANLEY.—I am aware that the rise in food prices is causing concern. In general I would remind my hon. friend that the rise in food prices reflects a recovery from the conditions of the period of depression. I doubt whether any useful purpose would be served by a special inquiry as suggested by my hon. friend. Prices of foodstuffs are under continual observation both by the Food Council and the Government, and I am sure that the council would not fail to report to me if it appeared that the prices of any foodstuffs were being raised unduly by the operation of rings.

MR. CROOKE.—Is my right hon. friend aware that even the threat of an inquiry has caused a small drop in the prices of some foodstuffs, and will he therefore not reconsider whether he will hold an inquiry into the matter?

MR. OLIVER STANLEY.—The hon. member's question referred specifically to the question of rings, and my answer is that it is continually under review by the Food Council, and if they thought there was a ring in any particular industry which was putting up prices they would not fail to report the matter to me at once.

PROTECTION UNDER THE BRITISH FLAG

REGISTRATIONS REFUSED

CAPTAIN A. EVANS (Cardiff, S. U.) asked the President of the Board of Trade how many ships were refused provisional registration under the British flag during the nine months ended September 30, 1937; and whether any such refusals were because such registration was sought only as a temporary expedient.

MR. OLIVER STANLEY.—Since the issue

of the great cities. The statement that it would take 20 ft. of concrete to give protection against high explosive bombs must, of course, be qualified by the fact that these armour-piercing bombs would not be suitable for use against the civil population, and that for all practical purposes very much lighter structures would give a very considerable measure of immunity.

But while he agreed with the Government that it would be wrong to consume an undue proportion of their limited resources on what was after all the most extreme form of passive defence—the "funk-hole"—he did not think the question was quite disposed of by the treatment it had received from the Home Secretary, and more study should be given to giving immunity from high explosive bombs, which were in tin containers and which while they had no great penetrative power could be enormously destructive when flung among ordinary houses.

INCENDIARY BOMBS

He was glad to hear from the Home Secretary that he was fully alive to the danger of incendiary bombs. (Mr. Churchill) earnestly hoped that that matter would be the subject of serious and continuous study. It was true that apparently it had not manifested itself as a serious danger in the bombing of Madrid, but they could never tell what might be the reasons for the non-employment of this weapon against that city.

There were also the questions of the reaction of air attack on the civil population and the protection of the London docks. The destruction of the Thames in view of the dependence of London on the approaches by water. He asked for an assurance that both these questions were being dealt with not only by setting up a committee and the preparation of paper schemes, but also by the taking of concrete steps, the appointment of individuals in the different localities, and by marking the different areas so that if trouble came there would be a practical scheme ready by which a large population might be evacuated.

The position had deteriorated in many directions since he had raised these matters in 1934. The German Air Force was substantially stronger than ours, and our relations with certain foreign Powers had been gravely impaired. Therefore everything showed how urgent was the warning which was given in 1934, and with how much greater emphasis these matters pressed upon us now. (Cheers.)

No doubt hon. members had heard talk sometimes of there being a nine days' wonder—that was to say a war which was so short that the scarcity of food or raw material would not prevent an aggressor striking down his victim and gaining a final result before any scarcity could become effective.

VALUE OF THE COUNTER-ATTACK

That was a hideous form of attack, and without the provisions contained in this measure they were not capable of resisting it. It could certainly not be met by any system of mere passive defence, but only by well-directed counter-attacks against military targets and objectives. He thought that there was no doubt that if one side in an equal war endeavoured to cow and kill the civil population while the other side was attacking its objectives and other points on which the opponent's making capacity depended, the victory would come to the side—all other things being equal—which avoided making war on the civil population.

But for that time would be needed for such effects to manifest themselves, and meanwhile the existing capacity of the civil population to endure punishment with fortitude would be vital. If it was supposed that the civil population would be induced to leave the Government to give in, then this odd form of warfare came much nearer to us. The way to prevent this form of attack being employed was by well-organized means to make the time not worth committing.

But the Government although only subsidiary to the general problem might, by less make the difference not only between victory and defeat, but what was even more important might make the difference between the thing being tried or not tried at all, between the price being broken and the price being preserved. The vulnerable character of the British and its great cities, particularly London,

if a certain mood of exasperation had stolen over them from time to time. But nothing like that seemed to have occurred. On the contrary, they appeared to be mild and meek to the last degree.

When he looked at the correspondence of November 5 he found it remarkable that they should have been so ready to kiss the rod. (Laughter.) The local authorities took the point that considerably more than two years had passed since the Government announced that air raid precautions had become a matter of grave urgency, and they pointed out that as the matter had moved no farther forward, they repudiated all responsibility for the delay, but expressed their willingness to administer any funds which the Central Government might place at their disposal. The local authorities' letter of November 5 was a captious and censorious document.

PERCENTAGE GRANT

THE RATE BURDEN

On the question of the percentage grant the Government were not only justified but were bound in the public interest to stand strictly on the figure they had fixed, and he had no doubt that not only Parliament but public opinion would support them in that course.

It had been made that the Government should give an assurance that the burden upon any local authority should not exceed the produce of a 2d. rate, and Mr. Morrison stated yesterday that if that was agreed to the opposition of local authorities would be withdrawn.

We certainly could not have any local authority drawing a blank cheque on the nation and spending money perhaps out of proportion to other authorities, perhaps out of all proportion to what was deemed necessary for air raid precautions. The taxpayer was obviously entitled to protection from abuses of that kind.

The difference between the two sides of the House at that moment was reduced to the microscopic. It would be fine thing if they could be united in the matter. There was really entire agreement apart from the very small point of the financial arrangement and upon the form which the Bill should take.

The fact that years had passed was a reproach to the system of free government which they enjoyed, loved, and sought to observe. He would not press the Government to concede another penny on the percentages; he would not ask them to deprive themselves of any means of preventing reckless abuse. But if these objects could be obtained in a manner which carried with it agreement would be worth while to endeavour to achieve them. He hoped that further effort would be made in the few hours that remained—either that another effort would be made or that the Ministers when they came to reply would give them more reasons than at present why they were not able to deal with the one in a hundred recalcitrant or extravagant authority.

"A GREAT CONTRAST"

He felt there was a great contrast between the first and last parts of Mr. Morrison's speech last night. In the first part they saw him living up to his position as chief municipal officer in the greatest city and also the most vulnerable city in the world; in the second part they saw him endeavouring to starve the powers of the bench on which he sat. What a contrast! Someone the other day he did not know who it was; it might have been the Prime Minister—during a speech reminded them of the well-known dual personality of Mr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. The dual capacity of the right hon. gentleman was very apparent—what he (Mr. Churchill) had rarely if ever seen before, and what they were privileged to witness yesterday—the actual transmigration of Dr. Jekyll into Mr. Hyde was remarkable to see Mr. Morrison sweep away all his responsibilities, all his care, all the extremely able discussion so formidable in Parliamentary debate, and then come back to the old party talks which in easy and quiet tones might well be the stock-in-trade of politicians on the front Opposition benches.

When Mr. Morrison suggested that air bombing existed in the world, it was all due to the fact that Lord Londonderry had said some-

another place, the right hon. gentleman put a strain not only the credibility but on the decorum of the House of Commons. And when he said that Lord Londonderry had requested his time-honoured function of extended party hospitality on the eve of the Session, and had been chosen as President of the National Union of Conservative Associations, the new Prime Minister was more vulnerable to air bombing than his predecessor, then he (Mr. Churchill) said that Mr. Morrison—at whose career the House and the country looked with great interest and hope—had entered a region which baffled the most extensive vocabulary, where the facetious monstrosity of his assertions defied rejoinder, but happily did not need it because of their inherent folly. (Cheers.)

MR. LEONARD (Glasgow, St. Rollox, Lab.) said that London would be in a first-line position in any air raid because of the possibility of such an attack breaking the moral of the nation as a whole. It must be remembered, however, that there were other towns just as vulnerable. Glasgow was one of them because it had such a densely packed population and because docks, munition works, and heavy industries were in close proximity. Moreover, some of the poorer homes in his own division were ill enough equipped to withstand the elements, not to mention liquid fire rained from the heavens. In view of what happened in the last War immediate action should be taken by the Government to control the price of air raid defence equipment.

LIBERAL MEMBER AND MR. CHURCHILL

SIR P. HARRIS (Bethnal Green, S.W., L.) said that the moderation of the speech of the right hon. gentleman the member for Epping (Mr. Churchill) was most marked. What puzzled some members on both sides of the House was the fact that he was a private member. He (Sir P. Harris) was not one who admired all the views and opinions of the right hon. gentleman, but if they were bound to face the problem of defence on a large scale surely no one would be more suitable to carry out that policy than the right hon. gentleman. One did not know if he was absent because Baris was not willing or whether his absence was due to jealousy or perhaps to the fear that his abilities and capacities would rather dwarf those of some of his colleagues.

If they had to give some Minister to deal with the problem he would have thought it wiser to entrust it to the Minister of Health. If the local authorities were to be entrusted with any work of any character there must be some financial liability, however small. The amendment he had tabled in relation to the money resolution was at the request of the local authorities. It would not encourage extravagance. He had so framed the amendment that if any particular local authority went in for extravagant schemes that would involve expenditure over a twopenny rate, then automatically the Minister's veto came into operation. That gave an adequate safeguard against waste, inefficiency, and extravagance.

MR. SIMMONDS (Birmingham, Duddesdon, U.) said there was general agreement in all parts of the House in connexion with the imperative necessity of evacuation and the importance of bomb-proof shelters. In some respects the Home Office had adopted a hesitant and negative policy. The Government had been too apt to set a limit to finance and formulate a policy thereafter.

The Government had to make up their minds in regard to the question of evacuation and shelters. The peril must be mastered, no matter how small the matter. The evacuation must be from what might be described as target areas for aircraft. If the Government did not direct that evacuation in an orderly manner the people in those areas would carry out themselves in a disorderly manner. Powers should be taken to enable the Government or a local authority to compel evacuation in certain areas. Citizens who volunteered for air raid precautions service should not be called to go into an area to rescue those who had refused to leave that area if refused. He trusted also that preparatory work would be done for the evacuation of the Government.

On the question of bomb-proof shelters the issue was not whether the Government must be found. The House had been told that all types of bombs 20 ft. of reinforced concrete

disregard armour-piercing bombs, as they would only be used for ships and naval targets. He and some of his friends who had been studying the subject had come to the conclusion that the missile against which they ought to provide protection was the 500 lb. explosive bomb and those beneath that weight.

COST OF SHELTERS

The French Government, who had carried out more research in this matter than our own, reckoned that four or five feet of ferro-concrete was adequate for protection against these bombs. Shelters that would resist even a direct hit could thus be constructed for £40 a head, or £1,000 for 25 people. The provision of shelters affected three parties—employers, employees, and the Government. There was no reason why the three should not contribute equally to the cost, at the rate, say, of 3d. a week each for 25 years. To those who said that was a very long period he would reply that it would save the country might have a defensive organization that might last as long as the air bomb was a menace, and enable us to have a different foreign policy and strengthen our influence in the world.

Referring to the fundamental consideration of the insurance of property in time of war, he said that there were no fewer than 1,000,000 people at present purchasing their houses through building societies. Were they to see their life savings invested in those houses wiped out without expecting the Government to find replacement?

Admirable though the efforts of the Home Secretary had been, this was the work for a full-time Minister. So far as the country was concerned public indifference to the problem must be removed.

If bomb-proof shelters were provided, as he thought they should be, the expenditure might well be higher than a twopenny rate. Could the Home Secretary not give an undertaking that after three years he would review the financial implications of the Bill? If he could put in a clause to that effect it would go a long way towards closing the ranks. This was part of rearmament, and in the face of external dangers he appealed to the Opposition to let the Bill go through without a division.

GOVERNMENT OFFER

FINANCIAL REVIEW AFTER THREE YEARS

SIR S. HOARE, Home Secretary (Chelsea, U.), intervening, said that a series of appeals had been addressed to him. He dissociated himself from the criticisms of Mr. Morrison and Mr. Churchill against the dilatory methods of his Department. The Home Secretary would deal at length with the criticisms that had been made, and the House would then see how groundless the charges were.

One of the satisfactory results of the long chapter of discussions had been to diminish to a great extent the margin of difference that at the beginning divided the various parties in the negotiations. The only point of substance now between Mr. Morrison and the Government was the single issue of the excess expenditure over a twopenny rate. Sir P. Harris had put down an amendment to the financial resolution proposing that there should be a veto on schemes which would involve local authorities in more than a twopenny rate. Mr. Morrison had put down an amendment to ensure that expenditure over a twopenny rate should be backed by the State.

He (Sir S. Hoare) was anxious to eliminate this margin of difference if it was humanly possible so to do. (Cheers.)

After very careful consideration of the amendment and with a desire to remove any differences which might exist between the Government and the Opposition, he had decided and he had come to the view that this was not the best way to do it. They did not feel that it was possible in a question which involved issues of life and death to put a definite veto on expenditure. The only instance he had been able to discover was that of the Government forbidding any more than a penny rate for public libraries. Hon. members would see the great difference between a minor question of this kind and the far graver issues that were raised by air raid precautions.

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regarding the special scrutiny of applications for provisional certificates of registry, which have been refused, on the ground that the applicants were not qualified to own British ships. Prior to that date, certificates of provisional registry were usually issued by Consuls without reference to the Board of Trade, and it is not possible to say how many applications were not proceeded with because of the inability of the applicants to satisfy the Consul as to their title to own British ships.

Mr. THURTELL (Shoreditch, Lab.).—Is the Government doing everything it can to hamper the efforts of the Spanish Government to receive supplies?

Mr. STANLEY.—Our desire is not to give the protection and advantages of the British flag to people who are not really entitled to them. (Cheers.)

Miss WILKINSON (Jarrow, Lab.).—In view of the recent actions of the Admiralty in not protecting British ships, are there any advantages?

Mr. STANLEY.—From the number of applications received from foreigners there would appear to be. (Cheers.)

VISCOUNTESS ASTOR (Plymouth, Sutton, U.).—What about all the children the British sailors have saved?

JAPANESE IMPORTS

Mr. OLIVER STANLEY stated, in reply to CAPTAIN PLUGG (Chatham, U.), that, taking the latest available figure, British trade with Japan did not show any appreciable decline as a result of the disinclination of the public to buy Japanese imports.

THE GOLD STANDARD

SIR J. SIMON, Chancellor of the Exchequer (Spen Valley, L.Nat.), informed Mr. J. R. ROBINSON (Blackpool, U.) that no negotiations were in progress between Great Britain, France, and the United States of America, with a view to an early return to the gold standard on the basis of a reduced gold content of the standard coin.

FIDUCIARY NOTE ISSUE RAISED BY £20,000,000

Mr. ATTLEE (Limehouse, Lab.) asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he proposed any variation in the fiduciary note issue to meet Christmas demands.

SIR J. SIMON.—Yes, Sir. I have given directions at the request of the Bank of England and under the powers conferred on the Treasury by the Currency and Bank Notes Act, 1928, that as from the middle of November, 1937, the fiduciary issue which was reduced from £260,000,000 to £200,000,000 last year should be temporarily raised to £220,000,000.

This arrangement is to meet seasonal demands, and it is, therefore, contemplated that it will obtain for about two months, that is to the middle of January, 1938.

AIR RAID PRECAUTIONS

MR. CHURCHILL'S SUPPORT OF THE BILL

Debate was resumed on the second reading of the Air Raid Precautions Bill, to which yesterday Mr. H. Morrison (Hackney, S., Lab.) had moved the following amendment:—

That this House, while conscious of the regrettable necessity for taking measures to protect life and property in the event of air raids, cannot assent to the second reading of a Bill which does not provide for the cost involved being made a national charge.

Mr. CHURCHILL (Epping, U.), continuing his speech, said that he wholeheartedly supported the Bill. Perhaps it was not an easy decision to take, but he thought on the whole that the Government were quite right in not taking any responsibility for according complete immunity by passive defence to the population against air attack. It was beyond the power of any organization to do that. The large armoured-piercing or semi-armoured-piercing projectiles were not weapons which would be used against the civil population; they were used to attack warships, and perhaps power stations or docks, or possibly in order to disorganize water supply and electric mains in

was not remedied by constant and well-conceived measures, might well draw down upon the whole world the on-rush of a merciless catastrophe.

TWO YEARS' DELAY RESPONSIBILITY OF MINISTERS

He was in the fullest accord with the Government in the Bill which they had at last produced. With regard to the Circular of July 9, 1935, pointing out to local authorities that it was necessary to create organizations to minimize the consequences of air attack, and that, as it would not be possible to improve effective measures on the spur of the moment in time of emergency, preparation must be made in time of peace, this Bill was its child. The process of its birth throes, however, appeared to have been severely protracted. (Hear, hear, and laughter.)

There was no reason why this Measure should not have been brought before Parliament when they reassembled in the autumn of 1935. (Hear, hear.) Up to the present they had received no adequate explanation of the hiatus of two years which seemed to have intervened in carrying forward the negotiations with local authorities and presenting a Bill to the House, and serious responsibility rested upon all or any, whether they were national or local, authorities who had contributed in any way to the delay.

Of course the main responsibility rested on Ministers. Their power was overwhelming. They had the whole matter in their hands and were supported by the great majority of Parliament. There was nothing in the way of Parliament for in this matter in which they would not be wholeheartedly supported.

LOCAL AUTHORITIES' SHARE

If the responsibility of Ministers was clear local authorities also had a definite share of the burden. He could not feel that in his speech yesterday on behalf of the local authorities Mr. H. Morrison had a very good talk to tell. From the very beginning, two and a half years ago, local authorities' first thought was to claim 100 per cent. from the Government for air raid precautions. He (Mr. Churchill) challenged that principle absolutely. These precautions were not in any way on the same footing as the fighting Services.

They were told that this was a new feature in local government. But surely an attempt to undermine the freedom of a great people by destroying their women and children from the air was a new feature in the government of man. (Hear, hear.) These precautions were so intimately associated with the localities that they could only be administered by the localities, and, without an earnest and helpful effort on the part of localities nothing that the Central Government could do would be of any avail. If these measures were to be administered frugally and effectively, local authorities must bear their share of the expenditure and must have an effective interest in the economies which they could create from day to day without prejudice to efficiency.

As regarded the percentage the Government had been generous to the last degree. (Hear, hear.) The first offer was to share the administrative services on the basis of 50-50. That was a very fair offer.

"CAPTIOUS AND CENSORIOUS" DOCUMENT

Still, after three or four separate concessions had been made to local authorities the position at this moment was that the Government were bearing at least nine-tenths of the whole expenditure, taking into consideration the provision of the appliances. Still Mr. Morrison was not satisfied; still those for whom that right hon. gentleman spoke, and whom, with a consummate art of generalship, he kept together in a strong body, were not satisfied. Now we had reached a position where the whole burden was borne by the Central Government except a minimum percentage which was insisted on to ensure that local authorities had an interest in an economic and healthy administration.

When listened to the account which was given yesterday of the successive concessions offered and which were so continuously rejected by the local authorities, he could not blame the Home Secretary or his Department

they could entirely fail to withdraw the check on economy that was

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