

Parliament

SAFETY IN AIR RAIDS

HOME SECRETARY ON THE TASK

CAL AUTHORITIES AND COOPERATION

HOUSE OF COMMONS

MONDAY, NOV. 15
THE SPEAKER took the Chair at a quarter to 10 o'clock.

THE ANTI-COMINTERN PACT

LIEUT.-COM. FLETCHER (Nuneaton) asked the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs if H.M. Government had received an invitation to join the Anti-Comintern Pact. MOUNTAIN CRANBORNE, Under-Secretary of State (Dorset, S., U.)—No, Sir.

ITALIAN TROOPS IN LIBYA

MR. A. HENDERSON (Kingswinford, Lab.) asked the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, in view of the apprehension caused by the concentration of large Italian troops on the Egyptian-Libyan frontier, he proposed to make representations to the Italian Government under the terms of the joint declaration of January 2, 1937?

MOUNTAIN CRANBORNE.—No, Sir. I have no reason to suppose that the reinforcement of troops in Libya to which the honourable member refers is directed against Egypt.

MR. A. HENDERSON further asked the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs whether he had any information as to the approximate strength of the Italian forces now stationed in Libya together with the numbers which he said had been increased during the past few months.

MOUNTAIN CRANBORNE.—The normal garrison in Libya, consisting mainly of native troops, is understood to be about 20,000. The Government recently decided to increase the garrison by two Army Corps, and it is understood that up to the present and in the course of the last three months 45,000 to 50,000 troops have been transferred there. So far as His Majesty's Government are aware, the numbers of the native garrison remain unchanged.

DEFENCE OF EGYPT

MR. A. HENDERSON also asked the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs whether in the view of His Majesty's Government that the provisions of the Anglo-Egyptian treaty required them to defend Egyptian territory in the event of Egypt becoming the victim of an act of unprovoked aggression.

MOUNTAIN CRANBORNE.—Yes, Sir.

MR. A. HENDERSON.—When the noble member says "Yes, Sir," does he mean that the Government intends to carry out its obligations?

MOUNTAIN CRANBORNE.—Yes, Sir, (laughter.)

BRITISH PROPERTY AT SHANGHAI

CLAIMS FOR COMPENSATION

MR. MOREING (Preston, U.) asked the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs what was the position of British subjects in Honkew and Yanchowoo districts

slaughter of affected animals and those in immediate contact, so as to stop the manufacture of virus and to destroy existing virus. It is disinfected. It has been sent to the aerodrome abroad and is being shown to-day in Western Europe that alternative methods are not successful in preventing the widespread diffusion of disease. The research work in progress under the supervision of the Foot-and-Mouth Disease Research Committee is at present costing between £16,000 and £17,000 a year. The present position is fully set out in the introduction to the Fifth Progress Report of the Committee which was published in May last by His Majesty's Stationery Office.

MR. LEVY (Elland, U.)—Is the Minister aware that some authorities think that the cause of this disease is contaminated water?

MR. W. S. MORRISON.—There are many suggestions from many authorities. We think this present outbreak is caused by migrant birds. In reply to Sir P. HEND (Devizes, U.), Mr. W. S. MORRISON said there is no evidence to suggest that the present series of outbreaks is due to infection introduced by raw animal products, and the restricted area in which the numerous independent centres of infection have occurred suggests that articles of commerce are not the vehicles of infection in this case. It does not appear necessary, therefore, to take further measures in regard to the trade in raw animal products.

THE WHEAT ACT

DETAILS OF AMENDING BILL

MR. W. S. MORRISON informed Mr. GRAHAM WHITE (Birkenhead, E., L.) that it was his intention to introduce a Bill to amend the Wheat Act during the present Session. He could only indicate its scope in the most general terms at the moment. Amending legislation was necessary to correct the position in regard to certain decisions of the House of Lords, and the opportunity would be taken for a complete review of the work of the present Act, and any consequential amendments which were necessary would be made in the Bill.

SIR P. HARRIS.—Will the Bill be introduced before Christmas?

MR. W. S. MORRISON.—I cannot say, but as soon as possible.

LISTENING-IN TO TELEPHONE CALLS

LIEUT.-COM. FLETCHER asked the Postmaster-General by whose authority and in what circumstances permission was given to the police to listen-in to private telephone conversations.

MAJOR TRYON (Brighton, U.)—Listening-in is not permitted by the Post Office except on the express direction of the Home Secretary. There is, of course, nothing to prevent a policeman from listening-in from arranging for the police or anyone else to listen-in on his line through the agency of an extension line or other device.

MR. GALLACHER (Fife, W., Comm.)—Is the Postmaster-General aware that when I make a telephone call from this House to my party headquarters I have to wait until the police are connected? (Laughter.)

LORD HALIFAX'S VISIT TO GERMANY

LIEUT.-COM. FLETCHER asked the Prime Minister if, during his forthcoming visit to Germany, the late President of the Council would be charged with any mission on behalf of the Government, and if he would meet the head of the German Government.

MR. CHAMBERLAIN (Birmingham, Edgbaston, U.)—I would refer the hon. and gallant member to the answer given on Friday last in reply to a question put by the right hon. gentleman the member for Wakefield (Mr. Greenwood).

LIEUT.-COM. FLETCHER.—May I ask whether the proposal for this visit was initiated by the Foreign Secretary, and, if not, has the Foreign Secretary been kept fully informed throughout as to what is proposed, and whether everything been done with his full concurrence?

THE SPEAKER.—That does not follow from the original question.

top, stretching over three particular branches of Service activity—first, an air force strong enough to maintain the initiative in air raid precautions; the second, a ground force supported by searchlights and the other methods of modern detection far more numerous and accurate than any they possessed in the War; and, third, on the ground a system of air raid precautions which would achieve two objectives—(1) ensure the country against panic, and (2) ensure that the services without which a civilized community could not exist would continue to be maintained.

It was essential for them to organize a comprehensive plan of ground organization, and by organization they would be able to go far to guarantee the country from panic and the stoppage of the national life and to enable the fighting Services to maintain their proper facilities and strategy. They had already made a beginning. It was unfair to suggest that during the last two years nothing had happened except a financial wrangle between the local authorities and the Exchequer. They had made not unsubstantial progress in certain directions.

BIG SUPPLY OF GAS MASKS

Already they had supplied gas masks to the civil population, and the supply was better than the supply in any other country in Europe. Already they had evolved fire emergency measures on a considerable scale and accumulated certain necessary supplies. Already the local authorities had in many cases prepared comprehensive schemes of defence. Already—perhaps most significant of all—no fewer than 200,000 men and women in the country had volunteered for air raid precaution work.

They had now reached a point where they had to proceed to much more comprehensive and fully organized plan of campaign. As soon as this Bill was passed—he hoped that it would be passed without delay—they had to start a new chapter in which the Government, the local authorities, and the citizens of the country would all cooperate to make a much more comprehensive plan of air raid precautions than anything they had contemplated during the last two years.

Air raid precautions differed in important respects from the activities of the fighting Services. Air raid precautions were essentially the work of civilians. The field was a civilian field; it was the field of the householder, of the father of a family, of the local council, Red Cross, and other organizations; it was a field in which the regular troops were the civilian force and the police.

Further, it was essentially a local field. The work must be done on the spot. The duties which had to be performed were in many cases an extension of duties that were already being carried out by the local authorities and local organizations—public order, decoration, sanitation, fire protection. What was new proposed was not the imposition of new duties but the extension of existing duties. It was in the local field that the chief activities were bound to take place.

LOCAL AUTHORITIES' DUTIES

The Bill dealt with the greater part of this field. It did not deal, for instance, with the public utility services. That was a question which was still under the active consideration of the Government; it was by no means lost sight of and was regarded as an important field, and he hoped at no distant date to be able to make a statement to the House of how the Government intended to deal with it.

Nor did the Bill dispense the individual householder and employer of labour from his elementary obligation to protect himself and his household to the utmost of his ability. The Bill dealt principally with the relations between the Government and the local authorities. The Government undertook to provide the emergency items which could be produced centrally; they also undertook a large part of the expenditure and provided an organization for coordinating the various schemes of air raid precautions.

The main duties of local authorities—the list could not be exhaustive with new services which were in an experimental stage—would be: (1) arrangements for storage and housing of gas masks; (2) arrangements for the supply of the public; (3) arrangements for the protection of public streets; (4) arrangements for the repair of roads, repair of persons, repair of debris

it was essential that means should be available to put them out almost as soon as they started. The Government first of all intended to provide the second anti-aircraft gun, and to see as to how to deal with one of these bombs. Secondly, they had been making a series of interesting experiments with a view to providing householders at a small expense with a raid pump and a shovel and a box of sand. Hon. members might laugh at this, but the experts said—and he believed they were correct—that even simple apparatus of this kind, if it was used quickly as soon as one of these small fires started, would be effective in preventing the fire from spreading into a great conflagration in a big centre of population.

NEW FIRE MACHINES

So far as the Government and the local authorities were concerned their part in this sphere of the problem was an interesting one. The problem presented by the possibility of a large number of fires starting simultaneously was a new one, and it needed new methods and new machines to deal with it. For some time past the Air Raid Precaution Department has been experimenting with new types of fire machines, the object being to secure much greater mobility than anything that had been possible in the past. It was felt that the only way of dealing with a very large number of fires was to have a mobility that machines would be constantly patrolling the streets, so that they would be able to visit the principal centres of population every 10 or 15 minutes.

He could report to the House that very satisfactory progress was being made with these machines. Speaking generally, there were three types of machine, going down to the comparatively small machine, which was very mobile and rather of the trailer-car type, carrying with it not only means of extinguishing fires but also means of carrying water. It was proposed that the Government should provide these emergency machines for the local authorities, at the expense of the Government, wherever they were needed. This item would be one of very considerable expense, but it would be well within the scope of equipment to which he had referred in which supply and manufacture were best undertaken centrally.

These machines would be manned by the local authorities. For this purpose the local authorities would need a certain nucleus of whole-time personnel, but they would also need a large body of auxiliary helpers. Towards the expenses of the personnel the Government would give a grant upon the basis of the schedule in the Bill.

There would be an ideal system of protection, which would run into thousands of millions of pounds. The country could not afford it, and it might take hundreds of millions from the even more important duties of the Air Force. But within the limits of sense and reason the Government intended to make preparations on the lines which he had stated. It was essential that there should be the fullest possible cooperation between the Government and the local authorities, and secondly, and not less important, between the Government, the local authorities, and the householders, the ordinary man and woman in the street.

THE FINANCIAL BURDEN

LOCAL RESPONSIBILITY

The Government had always taken the view that, while the Exchequer was prepared to carry the main part of the expenditure, there must be a sharing of financial responsibility by the local authorities. (Ministerial cheers.) Unless there was an effective sharing inevitably there would be no check upon the expenditure that might be incurred. From the first he was very anxious to obtain the full will of the local authorities. At the time of the summer recess he put forward the proposal that he hoped would have obtained their full and unreserved cooperation. In the first category, concerned with various items such as fire brigade expenses required for the emergency, he looked for the Government would find substantially the whole of the expenditure; and in the second category, in which the local authorities had the responsibility of administration, he suggested that the Government and the local authorities should go half and half. To his surprise

Morrison, refused the offer and staked out their claim to a full 100 per cent.

The Government took the view that under the kind of plan contemplated the average expenditure of the local authorities ought not to exceed a penny rate, and that in many cases it would be much below one penny. Accordingly he was authorized to give the undertaking that in the event of the rate exceeding one penny the Government would in all cases give the very high grant of 75 per cent. from the Exchequer. That was a very high offer—(Ministerial cheers)—which he thought would have been received with a unanimous vote of thanks. Again, to his surprise and disappointment, Mr. Morrison, on behalf of the local authorities, said that he was not satisfied. Again he (Sir S. Hoare) went back to his colleagues and they authorized him to make a still further offer.

Accordingly he made an offer to put up the grant to local authorities where the cost was exceeding a penny rate. There were two grades—75 per cent. in the case of the richer areas and 85 per cent. for the poorer ones. The Government was willing to undertake more than 90 per cent. of the total expenditure for air raid precautions. Some hon. members might ask why, if the Government went so far, they did not do the whole way. Why did they boggle at the last 10 per cent. His answer was that the Government went to the uttermost limit, and that if they had gone any farther they would have removed altogether from this expensive field of public activity any check on economy at all. Indeed many government supporters thought they had gone too far. They pointed to the long history of grants to local authorities in which, in actual experience, it had been found that when grants had gone above a certain level almost inevitably it had led to extravagance. (AN OPPOSITION MEMBER.—Prove it.) It was not true. The Act of 1936, which was passed, showed the great danger of guaranteeing the full expenditure over a specified amount. The Government could not put its excess grant up beyond the very high rate of 75 and 85 per cent., which appeared in the provisions of the Bill.

They believed that their estimates were substantially correct and in actual practice expenditure was not going above the penny rate. During the course of their discussions he threw out the suggestion that if it was a reassurance to the local authorities the Government were prepared to consider the possibility of putting a time limit upon the Bill. They felt that, dealing with a new service of this kind, there was a great deal which was of an experimental character and that the time might come when Parliament would wish to reconsider the whole position. Certain representatives of the local authorities approved of this suggestion and certain others were doubtful about it. He undertook to listen to the discussions in Committee with a very open mind and to see what was the view of the House upon it.

HOPE OF A SANE WORLD SOON

He hoped that when the local authorities looked further into the provisions of the Bill they would see that on the whole the Government's offer was a very fair one. The Government accepted by far the major financial responsibility, and they left to the local authorities only that amount of local expenditure which would provide some kind of check upon economy.

He asked for the cooperation of the local authorities, and he asked still more for the cooperation of the householders of the country. The Government plans effectively. Between them they had to make impossible what was the greatest danger to civilization—a knock-out blow. They had got so to organize the system of the country's defences as to make it impossible for any hostile power in the course of a few days, a few weeks, or even a few months to launch an attack which would deal to the nation a knock-out blow. If we could stop such a knock-out blow there would be an opportunity for the forces of reason in the world to get to work, and there would be an opportunity for the resources of this great country and Empire to be fully mobilized.

This Bill and the provisions which it included were directed against the knock-out blow. He impressed upon the House the great urgency of this problem and he urged upon the country the great need for the fullest cooperation between all its citizens. He ended

with a very deep and sincere hope that while to-day in this troubled world it was necessary to ask Parliament to pass, and pass quickly, the provisions of this measure, the time was not far distant when the Home Secretary would come to the House and say that, owing to the world's having become once again sane, the time had come to repeal the provisions of the Bill. (Cheers.)

REJECTION MOVED

LABOUR CALL FOR NATIONAL CHARGE

MR. H. MORRISON (Hackney, S., Lab.) moved:—

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.

He said that the Home Secretary had had a sad and dreary task in describing the necessity for the Bill. They all regretted the breakdown of the negotiations with the local authorities. Sir S. Hoare treated the local authorities with every courtesy and consideration. It was not the fault of those authorities that the discussions had lasted so long. There was an unwillingness for a considerable time on the part of the Government to come down to "brass tacks" on the financial considerations.

So long ago as July, 1935, the local authorities asked that the State should bear the full cost of air raid precautions. So far as the previous Home Secretary was concerned nothing happened. The whole question was permitted to drift until Sir S. Hoare came into office, and then things began to move with speed.

MR. CHURCHILL (Epping, U.) asked whether the House was to understand that there was no communication by the Government to the local authorities between July, 1935, and the fire brigade memorandum in February 1937.

MR. H. MORRISON said that his records showed that there was no communication officially from the Government to the local authorities between those dates.

Continuing, the right hon. gentleman said that the local authorities had no desire to embarrass or obstruct the Government. They recognized that they had a duty in the matter, and must cooperate with the Government provided they could come to a reasonable financial settlement with the Minister. There had been no unpleasant wrangle, and the discussions were carried on with dignity and friendliness and without a loss of temper on both sides.

THE PENNY RATE BURDEN

The local authorities realized that this was a new duty and a new service which the State proposed should be put on them. They recognized that the State could not be expected directly to administer all the services nationally. The local authorities took the view that the services of air raid precautions were interlocked with national defence to such an extent that the expenditure should fall on national funds, in the same way as the cost of the Army, Navy, and Air Force fell on national funds.

The local authorities had seen new services begin before with an indication that they would not cost more than a halfpenny or a penny rate, and they had found that those services had cost much more. Therefore, although the Home Secretary might sincerely believe that the service would not exceed a penny rate, the local authorities were generally apprehensive that under the pressure of the House of Commons or public opinion it might come to exceed that amount. If that occurred air raid precautions would be thrown into municipal elections, and if the burden on the municipalities went beyond a certain point many local authorities might have to consider whether they would not reduce expenditure on the social services because of the new duty that had been imposed upon them.

The argument that the State was to bear 90 per cent. of the expenditure annoyed the local authorities. It was not fair that the local fire brigade services, the respiratory hoses, chemicals, and other things should go into the State pool and the Home Secretary take of expenditure. If he would only put the Army, Navy, and Air Force into the Bill as well it would be 999 per cent. (Laughter.)

COMPROMISE PROPOSAL

The local authorities still thought that, on the merits of the case, they should have been given 100 per cent. But they were genuinely anxious to reach a settlement if they could. Therefore, they compromised. The Home Secretary had told them that it would not cost them more than a penny rate, and they said to him: "All right, back your belief and guarantee us that expenditure over a penny rate." But the right hon. gentleman was not so sure about his penny rate and he would not give the guarantee. He (Mr. Morrison) was amazed when he looked back at the modesty of the local authorities in these negotiations. But they went further and offered double the margin they were told could not be exceeded and asked for a guarantee of expenditure of a twopenny rate. The Home Secretary would not say "Yes." In those circumstances, who was the aggressor? He would not say. The local authorities would accept such an arrangement, and he appealed to the Prime Minister, as one who had had very great experience of local government, to agree to it. The local authorities would accept that offer and the dispute would be off.

The local authorities had never said they would put sand in the machine for which the Home Secretary was responsible. (Hear, hear.) And they did not say so now. It would not be right. (Hear, hear.) But it would be worth a lot to the Government if this administration could start with good will and good feeling on both sides and with the local authorities feeling that they were not going to be run into unmitigated expenses. This suggested guarantee of a twopenny rate was the real question between the local authorities and the Home Secretary.

It might be recalled that, with some little risk of the controversy that might be involved, he had written to the local authorities in reply to a statement that the local authorities must cooperate with the State, but on the basis that the State should be responsible for all additional expenditure. On that basis they agreed in principle to cooperation.

RELATION TO NATIONAL DEFENCE

This was related to national defence, and must have interlocking working with the R.A.F. and probably other armed forces. There was no more case for the local authorities bearing a proportion of this charge than there was for them to bear a proportion of the charge for the Territorial Army. To secure swift and decisive administration the State should bear the whole cost, and the local authorities should be placed in the position in which they were willing to be agents, doing what the State told them to do. He asked the House to support the amendment, and if it could not do that to support the amendment which would be moved to the financial resolution indicating that the local authorities should have a twopenny guarantee.

The Opposition did not see the necessity for the Bill. It was a terrific commentary on the state of the world, and not a testimonial to six years of the foreign policy of the National Government. (Opposition cheers.) They agreed that in the existing state of the world the Bill was necessary. (Hear, hear.) Had the foreign policy of the Government been more decisive, more courageous in mobilizing world opinion in the direction of peace, it might not have been necessary to contemplate this horrible thing.

In spite of the Government's boast that they were maintaining peace and keeping the country out of trouble, he thought that step by step we were drifting towards the most dreadful war in history. (Hear, hear.) The Opposition could not forget that in 1932, after he returned from the Disarmament Conference, Lord Londonderry said:—

I had the utmost difficulty at that time, amidst all the noise and confusion of the war in the air, to get an aeroplane even on the frontiers of the Middle East and India.

It was a pitiable statement. It was not without significance that when Mr. Baldwin was Prime Minister the Londonderry receptions stopped for a time, and that now a new Prime Minister was in office—(Opposition cheers and Ministerial laughter)—the receptions had resumed. Not only that, but Lord London-

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whose property had been occupied by the Japanese military authorities and thereafter destroyed by bombardment or otherwise in the course of hostilities, and of those who had been deprived of the use of their property by the occupation of the area by Japanese forces and since the beginning of hostilities had been refused access thereto: and what steps these persons could take to obtain redress.

VISCOUNT CRANBORNE.—British subjects whose property has been occupied by Japanese troops should prepare a claim for compensation for the occupation and for any damage that may have been caused thereby. Claims may also be prepared in respect of property damaged by bombardment or in respect of losses due to denial of access to property. All claims should be lodged immediately with his Majesty's Consul-General, who has received instructions to afford every assistance and information to inquirers.

MR. MOREING.—Will the noble lord consider sending instructions to the Consul-General calling the attention of these unfortunate people who suffered this loss to the desirability of presenting their claims as soon as possible?

VISCOUNT CRANBORNE.—I will certainly consider that.

RUSSIAN SUBJECT AND HER MARRIAGE

MR. CRAVEN-ELLIS (Southampton, U.) asked the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs if he would make representations to the Government of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics for the release from Soviet nationality and permission to leave the country of a lady of the name of Mme. Blagoveshenskaya, in order to legitimize under British law her Russian marriage with Mr. H. Langton Wood and so enable her to become a British subject.

VISCOUNT CRANBORNE.—His Majesty's Embassy at Moscow were instructed on July 2 last to make unofficial representations in support of this lady's application for release from Soviet citizenship and permission to leave the Soviet Union, in view of her prospective marriage to Mr. Langton Wood; and in August last they had grounds for thinking that the application would be favourably considered. Since then, however, the lady has been arrested on what appears to be a criminal charge in Soviet law; and it is not possible to take further action on her behalf pending the disposal of this charge.

ITALY AND A LOAN

SIR P. HARRIS asked the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs what was the attitude of the British Government towards any proposal by the Italian Government to float a loan in the London market.

VISCOUNT CRANBORNE.—No such proposal, so far as his Majesty's Government are aware, has been made.

FOOT-AND-MOUTH DISEASE

MINISTER ON SLAUGHTER POLICY

MR. V. ADAMS asked the Minister of Agriculture if, in view of the wide and sudden incidence of foot-and-mouth disease, he could say whether the ailment was at present known to be susceptible of prevention and/or cure; and what money was being spent by his Department on scientific research into the causes, prevention, and cure of the disease.

MR. LEWIS (Colchester, U.) also asked a question on the same subject.

MR. W. S. MORRISON, Minister of Agriculture (Cirencester and Tewkesbury, U.)—The disease is curable, though fatalities occur in the case of very young animals and exceptionally among adults. No innocuous method of producing prolonged immunity against the disease has been discovered. Referring to the temporary protection afforded by the use of immune serum, the Foot-and-Mouth Disease Research Committee reported recently that "such serum as is at present available cannot be relied on to protect a bovine from infection when intimately exposed to a highly infective case of disease." The most effective method of preventing the spread of infection is the prompt

Minister say whether, in spite of the statement made by the Chancellor of the Exchequer on Friday, that the visit is private and unofficial, he will give an assurance to the House that in due course a public and official statement will be made covering the conversations?

MR. CHAMBERLAIN.—I have no difficulty in doing that.

LIEUT.-COM. FLETCHER.—Will his Majesty's Ambassador in Berlin be present at any conversations that will take place?

MR. BELLENGER (Bassetlaw, Lab.)—Is this visit designed to take the place of the projected visit to this country by the German Foreign Minister, which was postponed?

MR. CHAMBERLAIN.—No, Sir. The SPEAKER.—None of these questions arises from the question on the paper. (Hear, hear.)

THE KING'S BENCH DIVISION

SIR W. DAVISON asked the Attorney-General whether it was the intention of the Government to appoint an additional Judge in the King's Bench Division; and what necessary steps to enable such an appointment to be made would be taken.

SIR D. SOMERVELL (Crewe, U.)—My noble friend the Lord Chancellor has been in communication with the Lord Chief Justice on the matter to which my noble friend's question relates. In his opinion there is at present no need to appoint an additional Judge to the King's Bench Division inasmuch as there is good ground for believing the existing number of Judges is equal to the work especially as the new arrangements concerning official shorthand notes should save a good deal of judicial time. The whole question, however, of strengthening the Judiciary is under constant review by my noble friend who will continue to keep a watchful eye upon it.

RETIREMENT OF J.P.'S

MR. M. SAMUEL (Putney, U.) asked the Attorney-General whether, in view of the desirability of justices of the peace retiring in certain circumstances, he would consider the holding out of some inducement to this end by way of permitting those who did retire to continue the use of the title J.P. with the suffix (Retired), as was done in regard to the members of some other public services.

SIR D. SOMERVELL.—My noble friend the Lord Chancellor is now engaged in considering certain proposals with regard to the retirement of justices of the peace; but the suggestion of my hon. friend is not one which is likely to be entertained, as justices of the peace have no title as such. A justiceship of the peace is not a title of honour, nor is the office conferred as a reward for past services, but as an opportunity for future services, and the use of the letters J.P. as equivalent to a decoration is to be deprecated. (Hear, hear.)

AIR RAID PRECAUTIONS

SIR S. HOARE ON THE NEW BILL

SIR S. HOARE, Home Secretary (Chelsea, U.) moved the second reading of the Air Raid Precautions Bill. He said that the problem with which the Bill dealt could be described in one sentence. During the four years of the War 300 tons of bombs were dropped in this country; to-day the lowest estimate indicated that a greater tonnage of bombs could be dropped in 24 hours, and the scale of attack could be maintained for many days.

Making every reservation for inaccuracies and uncertainties, the fact remained that the position to-day was much more formidable than it was in the years of the War. It was so formidable that there were some people who said it was no use attempting to take defensive measures, air attack always broke through, and nothing we could do would be of any effect. He did not take that view, and he was supported by the whole course of British history. They had to make the aeroplane as little dangerous to the British Empire as they made the submarine.

To-day they were justified in saying that, although the submarine was an extravagant nuisance that should be abolished, it was no longer a danger to the security of the British Empire.

If they were to succeed in their effort they must have not only a concentrated but also a well-balanced programme coordinated at the

and arrangements in connection with street lighting and air raid warnings.

Perhaps he could not do better, if hon. members were to understand the scope of these provisions, than put into a concrete form the kind of action that would be necessary in the event of an air raid. If this country was threatened with an air raid the first responsibility would be upon the Government. It would be the duty of the Government, having detected the raid, to spread over the country the necessary warning. There would be first a corps of observers working under the Air Ministry for the purpose of detecting the raid. Next there would be a communication to the threatened parts of the country; where at once the local authorities—and particularly the air warden, the officers who would be responsible for the safety of a street or a block of houses—would set the local activities in motion.

PUBLIC SHELTERS

There were three kinds of bombs—high explosive, gas, and incendiary. Let them suppose that it was the high-explosive bomb that was being used in a raid. Neither this Government, nor, so far as he knew, any Government in Europe could protect a building—short of overwhelming expense—from a direct hit by a high-explosive bomb. It had been calculated that if we attempted protection against direct hits of this kind a low estimate of the expenditure would be £1,500,000,000—and even then we might not be effective in protection. What the Government and the local authorities would attempt to do was to provide protection not against the direct hit but against blast and splinter; and for that purpose local authorities would provide public shelters for those who were caught in the streets, and for those who, owing to the condition of their houses could not provide makeshift refuges under their own roof.

It was proposed to give the individual householder detailed advice as to how he could improvise a refuge room against the blast and the splinters of these bombs. The householder could improvise a room of this kind at much less expense and trouble than might be supposed by people who had not been into the details of the cost.

The gas bomb was the one that was directed principally against a country's moral; it was human nature as to weaken the power of resistance. It was not a bomb for the destruction of property. So far as the gas bomb was concerned the preparations that they envisaged comprised, first, a supply of gas masks for the entire population. He was glad to be able to tell the House that the production of gas masks was proceeding satisfactorily, and in quite a short time they ought to have this full supply, which could then be distributed over various parts of the country.

FIRES FROM INCENDIARY BOMBS

PUMPS FOR HOUSEHOLD USE

Next there would be the activities of the local authorities, with their gas-proof shelters and their decontamination organizations, for which the Government intended to provide bleaching powder. Then there would be careful instructions to the householder as to how to act in the event of a gas raid and how to make one of the rooms in his house gas-proof. Where, owing to housing conditions, it was impossible for the householder to carry out these directions there would be the emergency shelters of the local authorities available to him. The same sort of precautions would be taken against mustard gas.

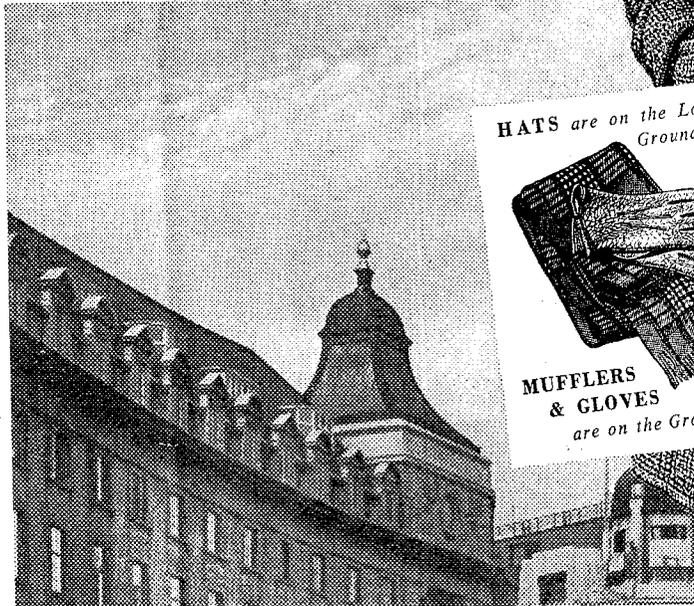
Then there was the problem of the incendiary bomb, and he was inclined to think that in the past we had not given sufficient attention to the danger of this small type of bomb, which could start a large number of fires. He was informed that even a medium-sized bomber—not one of the larger types—could start no fewer than 150 separate fires by means of these small incendiary bombs. When it was remembered that the average number of fires in London was 15 a day the House would see the scope of this new problem. A single machine was able to start 150 separate fires. He did not suggest that all these would be serious fires, but if these small fires were not to develop into dangerous conflagrations

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77 CHEAPSIDE, E.C.2

Parliament

Continued from page 9

Union of Conservative and Unionist Associations. Honour had been done to the man who said that. It was significant of the thoroughly bad outlook of the new Prime Minister. He (Mr. Morrison) was not complaining. Politically this Prime Minister suited the Opposition down to the ground—which was more than they could say about his predecessor. (Laughter.)

HIGH-EXPLOSIVE BOMBS

THE DIRECT HIT

Mr. SANDYS (Norwood, U.) said that he warmly welcomed the Bill, which was the first legislative recognition of a new branch of national defence, the passive defence of the civilian population. It was something which had come to stay; air raid precautions were going to become a permanent part of our defence system.

This was a sadly belated measure. (Hear, hear.) The only serious criticism one could advance against the Bill was that it ought to have been introduced three or even four years ago. The work would then have been complete by now and the people secure, instead of which they were only just at the beginning. It was most necessary and expedient that the local authorities should have a direct financial interest in the wise and economic spending of the money.

Unlike the British Government, the French and German Governments did not take the view that the majority of bombs which would be dropped would be either armour-piercing or semi-armour-piercing. The French Government were building shelters of 6ft. to 7ft. of concrete, sufficient for all except armour-piercing bombs. The German Government had laid down that new buildings should have thick concrete floors, old buildings had been strengthened with girders, and every house had its prepared cellar. In view of the wide divergence of opinion on this question between the British Government and the French and German Governments—

SIR S. HOARE intervened to say that there was not any divergence of opinion. He was speaking of direct hits by high-explosive bombs.

Mr. CHURCHILL.—Armour-piercing or not? Everything turns on this question.

SIR S. HOARE said that he was speaking of shelters for every kind of bomb, except direct hit of the high-explosive bomb. There was no country in Europe which was attempting to deal with that.

Mr. SANDYS.—Armour-piercing or non-armour-piercing?

SIR S. HOARE.—Both.

Mr. SANDYS said that it made all the difference whether bombs were armour-piercing or not, and the Government should consider whether it was feasible to provide protection against the high-explosive but non-armour-piercing bomb, which was being done in other countries. (Hear, hear.)

PLANNING AND PUBLICITY

He suggested that the Air Raid Precautions Department should have a highly efficient and enterprising publicity section, which would take advantage of the cinema, the Press, and posters for making this problem and their duties known to the public. Much valuable work had been done, but with the passing of this Bill the real work of planning, organizing, and carrying out. The work was only beginning. Other countries had been perfecting their preparations for many years.

He did not think we were safe in taking it for granted that we had three or four years in which to make these preparations. (Hear, hear.) He took the view that if we could get over the next three or four years, then it might be that these precautions would not be necessary at all. Those years would be the dangerous years. For that reason he wished to make two proposals for speeding up this work. It seemed to him that its work and responsibilities had grown too big for the Air

constituted. He did not suggest that there should be a new Ministry or that the Department should be taken away from the responsibility of the Home Secretary, but that the Department should be immeasurably enlarged, its personnel increased, that it should be given more independence and authority, and that its status should be raised all round.

During the next two years an intense effort would be required and success was going to depend on leadership and impetus from the top. The Home Secretary had too many other duties to devote the necessary time and personal attention to air raid precautions, at any rate during the initial period of organization. During this initial period the Home Secretary should entrust this work to a responsible deputy, and there should be appointed a Director-General of Air Raid Precautions to take charge of an enlarged and reconstructed Department.

Such an official would keep in close touch with the Home Secretary, and would be under his control; but on the other hand he would have a very free hand and wide authority. Exceptional qualifications would be required for such a post, and he thought that such a post should be a national honour, and that the national Government had policies—somebody, for instance, of the stamp and standing of Lord Trenchard.

THE LIBERAL VIEW

WIDER SCHEME ESSENTIAL

Mr. W. ROBERTS (Cumberland, N., L.) said that the Government had made for themselves difficulties that might have been easily avoided. They ought to accept the compromise which would give a maximum expenditure of a twopenny rate.

He might be wrong, but he should have thought that there was no possibility that any precautions under the Bill would make it possible to release any spare capacity of planes that would otherwise be used for home defence. The experience of Spain and China had shown that war was to-day a war against civilians almost more than a war against armed forces. If our air strategy were that the best defence was a attack, that was also the enemy's best defence, and, as we had a much more vulnerable country, the counter-attack on us would be deadly indeed. Roughly, the proposed expenditure under the Bill was 3s. a head of the population, whereas there had been expended, perhaps over a slightly longer period, 130s. a head on the offensive Services. It seemed an astonishing claim that an expenditure of 3s. a head represented a really comprehensive plan.

He congratulated the Government on producing gas masks in such large numbers, but it was the cheapest gas mask in Europe, and there had been some criticism of its quality in a German paper. Why should it not be impartially tested by persons whose ordinary cigarette smoke goes through it—a fact, which is the enemy's best defence, and, as we had a much more vulnerable country, the counter-attack on us would be deadly indeed. Roughly, the proposed expenditure under the Bill was 3s. a head of the population, whereas there had been expended, perhaps over a slightly longer period, 130s. a head on the offensive Services. It seemed an astonishing claim that an expenditure of 3s. a head represented a really comprehensive plan.

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UNDERGROUND SHELTERS

The Government eventually would have to provide proper bomb-proof and gas-proof shelters for at least a large part of the population. The French Government were building their underground stations for the purpose of their underground stations for the purpose. Why had the decision been taken that we should not use the Underground stations in London? If there was a very big raid on London, the Government would have to order the police would be needed to prevent people from going to the Underground. Unless they had been made safe from attack the Underground stations would prove to be absolute death-traps. The Government's scheme only seemed to touch the fringe of the real problem. If the civilian population was to be given anything like protection a far greater programme would have to be carried out.

SIR R. MELLER (Mitcham, U.) said he was glad the Bill had been produced. It was vital that the people should know what sort of precautions were to be taken, and that cooperation was likely to be expected from them. The work that had to be done was so closely allied to the general work of local government that it could not be separated.

EVACUATION PLANS

DR HADEN GUEST (Islington, N., Lab.) said that in every area which was contiguous to a point of military importance the question of evacuation was a matter of life and death.

of evacuation was and the associated problem of transport, it must be realized that in the event of war London would be in a front-line position. In the East End it would be a case of hundreds of thousands of people pouring into the street and making for the air raid shelters with only 7½ to 10 minutes' warning. They would never reach the shelters and would be exposed to the probability of bombing and slaughter on a wholesale scale. There were also the questions of the distribution of industry and food storage, on which the Government should give clear indication of what should be done.

He asked the Government to give an assurance that the efficiency of the civilian type respirator and the methods of gas-proofing rooms was vouched for by competent scientific authorities. The Government should issue for every kind of privately manufactured appliance for protection against gas some kind of national mark, to make sure that only effective appliances were sold. The Bill should be amended to lay down a standard of qualification for air raid precaution officers.

VISCOUNT WOLMER (Aldershot, U.) said he wished to support the Government, and their stand on the Home Secretary had yielded to the arguments advanced by Mr. Morrison he would have been betraying a principle which was fundamental to all sound government—namely, that administrative responsibility must be accompanied by some degree of financial responsibility. He did not think that Mr. Morrison's fear that this decision would cause delay would prove well founded. He was sure that the local authorities, when they knew what they had to do, would do it as promptly and with as much energy as any Government Department.

THE SOCIAL SERVICES

It was probably true that the social services must suffer. He did not see how it could spend hundreds of millions on defence without the social services suffering. That was part of the tragedy of the situation. But we could not eat our cake and have it, and at this moment national defence must take first place.

It was most important that detailed instructions to householders should be issued without delay telling them how to make bomb-proof and splinter-proof shelters for themselves, and how they could make their homes gas-proof. He doubted if it would be possible to make very small children wear gas masks. It would be necessary therefore to provide gas-proof underground crèches where they could be accommodated. The Home Secretary should take the House into his confidence and give it as much information as he could as quickly as possible so that every local authority and every householder should be able to press on with the job.

Mr. STEPHEN (Glasgow, Camlachie, I.L.P.) said that the protection under the Bill was largely illusory. The Government should set out on a peace policy and take the necessary steps to try to lead the nations into a realization that the end was to seek disarmament while it might yet be obtained.

SIR M. SUETER (Herford, U.) said that the local authorities in his constituency were very anxious to know whether a penny rate or twopenny rate was going to be the limit of the cost to them. They also wanted to know much more about the air raid precautions.

THE HIGHER DUTY

ABOLITION OF AIR WARFARE

Mr. C. WILSON (Sheffield, Attercliffe, Lab.) said that the House of Commons had a much higher duty than merely to pass resolutions dealing with expensive measures which could not be wholly effective, and which it would be deceiving the people to say were effective. The House had been in the habit of happening in Spain and China, and it was probable that a new feeling had been aroused. Was it not possible for the Government to see whether some move could be made towards the total abolition of air warfare? Nothing would so enhance the reputation of this country as some such effort, even if it were unsuccessful.

Mr. ANSTURTER-GRAY (Lanark, N., U.) said that nothing was more vital to our whole defence programme than the financial soundness of this country. For that reason he supported the Government's proposal that local authorities should bear a much larger proportion of the cost, because that was the best way of ensuring economy.

Government were wrong in leaving any initiative to the local authorities. Nothing was more likely to split the nation than the provisions contained in the Bill.

SIR R. GLYN (Abingdon, U.) said that a Bill of this kind was essential. He hoped that the Home Secretary would set up an organization apart from his own department to deal with the great number of inquiries of a technical nature. The Home Secretary had made it clear that he wanted good will and cooperation and trained every effort to obtain them. If the Government were going to be prepared for any emergency they could only do it with public opinion behind them.

Mr. BELLENGER expressed alarm at the dilatory policy of the Government during the last two years.

A CHARGE AGAINST 18 LONDON BOROUGHS

SIR G. FOX (Henley, U.) said that it would be a great mistake to say to local authorities that if they spent more than a twopenny rate on anything they would be paid for by the Government. That would lead to a vast waste of public money and do no good. There were 18 Socialist boroughs in London where no steps had been taken to protect the civilian population. That was a great indictment against the Socialist Party, who did not mind what happened to British men, women, and children. (Opposition laughter and ironical cheers.)

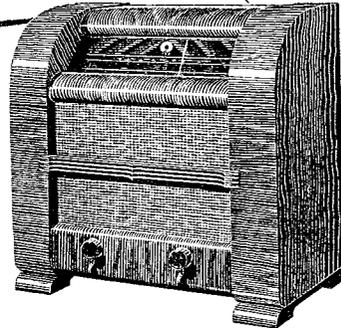
He hoped the Government would be able to take steps against those people who, whenever a "blackout" was arranged, distributed leaflets to ridicule and mock the whole system of air raid precautions and to stop the public from cooperating.

Mr. R. TAYLOR (Morpeth, Lab.) said that the House had never listened to a more depressing debate. They were discussing the end of civilization. It was untrue to suggest that the Opposition and their supporters were treating this subject with levity.

Mr. NOEL BAKER (Derby, Lab.) said that the present measures were lamentably inadequate to the need. If they were to be adequate defence at all, it must be real. There was more hope about them there who could afford to set aside a room as a refuge which had got to be done in times of peace? There were something like 7,000,000 or 8,000,000 who could not do so, and vast numbers who could not afford to equip such a room. There was more hope about them there who could afford to set aside a room as a refuge which had got to be done in times of peace? There were something like 7,000,000 or 8,000,000 who could not do so, and vast numbers who could not afford to equip such a room. There was more hope about them there who could afford to set aside a room as a refuge which had got to be done in times of peace? There were something like 7,000,000 or 8,000,000 who could not do so, and vast numbers who could not afford to equip such a room. 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...ormously expanded directly local authorities sent in their schemes, and the Government knew how many of these appliances would be required. With regard to evacuation, he doubted whether it would be practicable to remove large sections of the population a long distance off in anticipation of an air raid or the outbreak of war. But local schemes would be worked out in collaboration between one local authority and another to provide against those cases where the worst effects might be expected. The Government were paying particular attention to the problem of schools. The Scottish Office and the Board of Education hoped shortly to issue a joint memorandum to education authorities concerning the desirability of preparing to close certain schools in particularly dangerous spots in war time and making provision for the children being sent elsewhere, and providing for other precautions in other schools.

Many local authorities, some openly, some secretly, were congratulating themselves on the terms they had received from the Government. Everyone was agreed that the Bill was necessary, and he felt confident that there would be no delay on the part of the local authorities, as there certainly would be none on the part of the Government in carrying out a measure which they hoped they would never have to apply, but which must be undertaken for the safety of the people.

Mr. CHURCHILL said that Mr. Wedderburn had made a speech in which there were some statements of great honesty and candour. He hoped to refer to them when the debate was continued to-morrow.

The debate was adjourned.

The Money Resolutions in connexion with the Blind Persons Bill and the National Health Insurance (Juvenile Contributors and Young Persons) Bill were agreed to on report.

LOCATION OF INDUSTRY BOARD OF TRADE EVIDENCE CRITICIZED

On the motion for the adjournment, Mr. LAWSON (Chester-le-Street, Lab.) said he wished to draw attention to the nature of the evidence given on behalf of the Board of Trade before the Royal Commission on the location of industry. A few days ago he pointed out that that evidence was definitely weighted against any interference with the present system and in the direction of the maintenance of things as they were. He gathered from an answer of the President of the Board of Trade that the right hon. gentleman did not question that interpretation of the evidence given and said that it simply related to the economic aspects of the problem as distinct from any social and strategical consideration.

The outstanding thing was that the Board of Trade had got in first with its evidence and thrown its weight, as though it were speaking for the whole of the Government against any interference whatever with the present state of things. The summaries of the evidence in the newspapers had been like a cold douche. Indeed, *The Times*, a newspaper usually regarded as fairly friendly to the Government, gave expression in a leading article to the following remarkable statement:—

It is profoundly to be hoped that the Board of Trade was speaking for itself alone and not representing the attitude of the Government in the evidence which it gave on Wednesday to the Royal Commission. That evidence has been read with astonishment and uneasiness. In a mid-Victorian voice the Board pronounced the policy of doing nothing, which is not only unworkable but is utterly unsuited to the present day.

He (Mr. Lawson) submitted that the Commission would get the same impression from the evidence as the country had done that it was the point of view of the Government. Departments would give evidence regarding the social and strategical side, but it was the Board of Trade's evidence only that would give definite guidance to the Commission on the attitude of the Government.

The Government which had set up the Commission had torpedoed the Commission at the beginning. (Hear, hear.) He admired the sublime faith of the Board of Trade in its evidence on economic grounds. That evidence was not accepted by many economists and business men and was questioned by Sir Maitland Stewart. A critic at a Conservative Conference in Newcastle during the week-end had talked about getting rid of the Methuselahs in the Conservative Party. (Laughter.) There were certainly Methuselahs

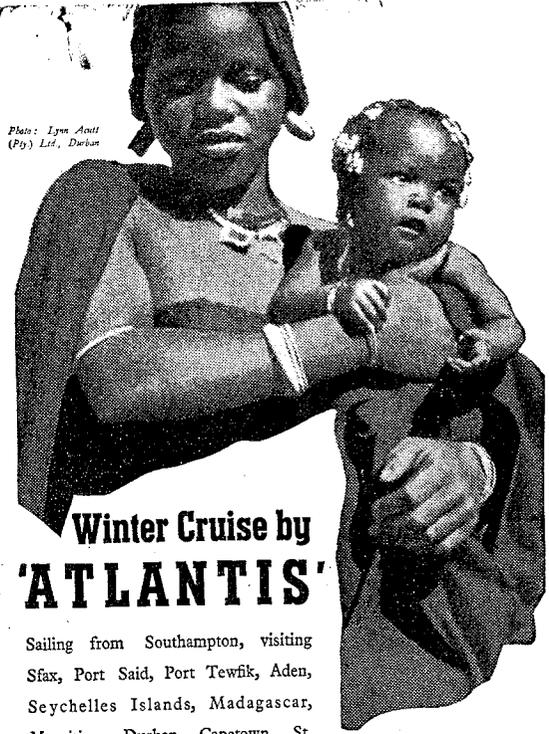


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