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REPORT

# Parliamentary Debates

HOUSE OF COMMONS

VOL. 302. No. 112.

FRIDAY, 7th JUNE, 1935

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Pamphlet

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HOUSE OF COMMONS.

Friday, 7th June, 1935.

[OFFICIAL REPORT.]

*The House met at Eleven of the Clock*  
Mr. SPEAKER *in the Chair.*

PRIVATE BUSINESS.

Ascot District Gas and Electricity Bill,  
Read the Third time, and passed.

Bristol Tramways Bill [*Lords*],  
Read the Third time, and passed, with  
Amendments.

Glasgow Corporation Sewage Order Con-  
firmation Bill,

Considered; to be read the Third time  
upon Monday, 17th June.

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS.

PROPOSED AIR PACT.

1. Mr. MANDER asked the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs whether the Western air pact will include arrangements for effective collaboration between the chief staffs of the parties to the agreement; and whether facilities will be offered in due course for the 25 other European countries to become parties to the pact?

The LORD PRIVY SEAL (Mr. Eden): I cannot at present add anything to the statements made in the course of the debates on the 22nd May and on Friday last.

Mr. MANDER: If I put down a question in two or three weeks' time, will my right hon. Friend be able to make some communication then?

Mr. EDEN: I cannot say. As the House knows, we are in negotiation, and I think we must be allowed to carry that negotiation through.

FRANCE AND GERMANY (EASTERN PACT).

2. Mr. MANDER asked the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs whether he

has any statement to make with reference to the French note to Germany suggesting negotiations for German participation in an Eastern pact?

Mr. EDEN: No, Sir. My right hon. Friend has no statement to make at present.

Mr. MANDER: Is it a fact that a note has been handed by the French Government to the German Government on this subject?

Mr. EDEN: I understand that a note to this effect has been communicated by the French Government to the German Ambassador in Paris.

OBSOLETE BRITISH SHIPS (SALES ABROAD).

3. Mr. GODFREY NICHOLSON asked the President of the Board of Trade whether he is aware that the steamship "Orient City," of 6,622 gross tons, and the steamship "Francisco," of 6,272 gross tons, have been sold to Italy for breaking up, and whether he will take steps to ensure that tonnage to be broken up under the scrap-and-build scheme is sold to British ship-breaking yards?

The PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY to the BOARD of TRADE (Dr. Burgin): Permission has been given for these two ships, which are being demolished under the scrap-and-build scheme, to be sold for scrapping abroad. Such permission is given only after careful consideration and upon the recommendation of the Ships Replacement Committee. In coming to a decision on any individual case, the main question which has to be considered is whether the difference between British and foreign prices offered for the ship is so great that an insistence on demolition in the United Kingdom would jeopardise the carrying out of the proposal and thus prevent the shipping and shipbuilding industries from obtaining the benefits which the scheme was designed to secure for them.

Mr. NICHOLSON: Is my hon. Friend aware that this is not the only case where ships are being sold abroad for breaking up? Will he take this opportunity of dispelling any suspicions that may exist that there is a ring among British ship-breakers to give low prices, and will he



[Mr. Nicholson.]  
give the industry a chance of putting forward its case on this complex and controversial question?

**Dr. BURGIN:** There is no difficulty about the industry putting forward any views that it desires, but this permission to scrap these ships abroad is an exceptional permission, which was granted on the recommendation of the Ships Replacement Committee. I think the House may rest assured that if the trade committee thinks that it is right that permission should be granted, permission ought to be given.

**Mr. THORNE:** Can the hon. Member say whether we have any guarantee from those who buy these ships that they will be broken up?

**Dr. BURGIN:** I think it is part of the sale contract that the ships shall be broken up.

4. **Mr. NICHOLSON** asked the President of the Board of Trade whether he is aware that approximately 95,000 gross tons of British-owned steamers have been sold during the present year for breaking up abroad, and whether, in view of this and of the fact that nearly 140,000 tons of scrap were imported into this country during the first four months of this year, he will take active steps to discourage the sale of British-owned steamers for breaking up abroad?

**Dr. BURGIN:** The imports of scrap were as stated in the question, and I am also prepared to accept the figure stated as to steamers sold for breaking up abroad. To complete the picture, it should be borne in mind that during the same period vessels of about the same tonnage were disposed of for breaking up in this country; and about 62,000 tons of scrap were exported from this country during the first four months of this year. My right hon. Friend does not consider that restrictions on the sale of British steamers for breaking up abroad are required, other than those contained in the British Shipping (Assistance) Act, 1935.

**Mr. NICHOLSON:** Is my hon. Friend aware that this position is exceedingly unsatisfactory, as the Italian shipbreakers are paying enormous prices for

scrap, owing to political conditions in that country; and is he aware that it is thought that British steel and iron works are paying a bigger price for imported scrap than for British scrap, and that there is a very strong feeling of grievance among British shipbreakers, which I hope he will take an early opportunity of clearing up?

**Dr. BURGIN:** I will certainly keep the whole subject under review, but when the British Shipping Assistance Act, 1935, was passing through this House, a good deal was said about the possibility of vessels being scrapped abroad if it was impossible to secure adequate prices for scrapping in this country, and great care is being taken in every instance where special permission to scrap abroad is granted only to do it when the whole of the circumstances have been reviewed by the Department.

**Mr. NICHOLSON:** Will my hon. Friend treat the question on a broader basis than on each individual instance, as it is a large question?

**Mr. CHARLES WILLIAMS:** Is my hon. Friend aware that many people think it very unsatisfactory that this work should go abroad at all?

## TRADE AND COMMERCE.

### GERMANY (EXPORTS).

5. **Mr. THORNE** asked the President of the Board of Trade whether he has any information in connection with the German levy that is to be imposed on industry to subsidise exports from that country; and whether he can give the House any details as to what effect this action will have on German imports to this country?

**Lieut.-Colonel J. COLVILLE (Secretary, Overseas Trade Department):** I have seen references in the Press to proposals of this kind, but I am not in a position to estimate their probable effect, if adopted, on imports from Germany into the United Kingdom.

**Lieut. - Colonel ACLAND - TROYTE:** Will my hon. and gallant Friend consider putting countervailing duties on all imports that are subsidised by their Governments?

**Lieut.-Colonel COLVILLE:** I think that is a general question, not only in relation to this country, but we have no reason to believe that we have not sufficient power adequately to protect the home market.

### BRITISH WOOL IMPORTS, ITALY (PAYMENT).

6. **Mr. THORNE** asked the President of the Board of Trade what action he proposes to take in regard to the matters reported by the Association of Export Merchants of Raw Materials and Yarns, of Bradford, in connection with the difficulty of receiving payment from Italy for wool yarns exported to that country; and whether he is aware that large sums are outstanding for goods exported.

**Lieut.-Colonel COLVILLE:** A deputation from the Association was received at the Board of Trade on the 31st May, and put forward a number of questions and suggestions. The situation as regards trade with Italy was fully explained to them, and, where possible, action has been, or will be, taken on their suggestions. With regard to the last part of the question, I would remind the hon. Member that provision for outstanding debts was made in the Anglo-Italian Agreement which was signed on the 27th April, and I would add that the operation of that Agreement is being closely watched.

### PIGS AND BACON MARKETING SCHEMES.

7. **Mr. W. S. MORRISON** asked the Minister of Agriculture whether he is in a position to make any statement with regard to the operation of the bacon scheme.

**The MINISTER of AGRICULTURE (Mr. Elliot):** The Government have had the Pigs and Bacon Marketing Schemes under review, and they consider that certain developments of the general plan for regulating bacon imports and assisting the home producer might now be made to the advantage of all concerned. They propose that the policy of maintaining a regulated market should be continued, but they are prepared to contemplate, as from the beginning of next year, an increase in the volume of imported supplies, subject to the imposition of a limited charge on imports from foreign countries the proceeds of which

would be devoted to the assistance of the home industry as the situation may require. Such an arrangement would involve obtaining the assent of certain foreign countries who have at present a Treaty right to free entry of bacon into the United Kingdom, and His Majesty's Government propose to open negotiations with the Governments of those countries forthwith.

**Lieut.-Colonel ACLAND-TROYTE:** Is my right hon. Friend aware that the imposition of a levy will give great satisfaction to the producers?

### LIFT ACCIDENT, SALFORD.

8. **Mr. THORNE** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has received a report from his inspector in connection with a lift accident to a workman, who was killed at the warehouse of Ralli Brothers, shippers, of Stanley Street, Salford; and whether the lift was defective?

**The UNDER-SECRETARY of STATE for the HOME DEPARTMENT (Captain Crookshank):** My right hon. Friend is inquiring into the case and will communicate with the hon. Member in due course.

### TRANSPORT (TRAFFIC LIGHTS, NORFOLK).

9. **Sir ALAN McLEAN** asked the Minister of Transport whether he has considered the application for the installation of traffic lights in the borough of Thetford and in the urban districts of Dereham and Swaffham, in the county of Norfolk; and whether he has reached any decisions with regard to them?

**The MINISTER of TRANSPORT (Mr. Hore-Belisha):** Yes, Sir; I have informed the Norfolk County Council that I am prepared to approve for grant purposes the installation of the type of signals they desire in the places mentioned by my hon. Friend.

**Sir A. McLEAN:** While thanking my right hon. Friend for that reply, may I ask whether he is aware that this further example of his desire to reduce accidents on the roads will be received with much satisfaction?



CABINET APPOINTMENTS  
(ANNOUNCEMENTS).

10. **Mr. TINKER** asked the Prime Minister, whether he is prepared to establish it as a general principle for the future that appointments to the Cabinet should be announced to the House of Commons before they are published in the press.

**The PRIME MINISTER (Mr. Ramsay MacDonald):** My own view is that it is desirable that such appointments when approved by His Majesty should be made public as soon as possible.

**Mr. TINKER:** Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that I raised the question of the general principle to be recognised, and I am asking that Parliament should know first? If, for instance, this change had been announced to-day, we should have had a full House, whereas actually there are empty benches.

**The PRIME MINISTER:** There has been no communication made about new Ministers or new combinations from the Government to any newspaper whatever.

**Mr. THORNE:** Then how did they get hold of the news?

WRITTEN ANSWERS.

PUBLIC HEALTH.

SCARLET FEVER (ETON RURAL DISTRICT).

**Mr. GROVES** asked the Minister of Health where the seven cases of scarlet fever notified in the Eton rural district for the week ending 23rd February 1935, occurred?

**Sir H. YOUNG:** I am informed that these cases were notified from addresses in the parish of Iver.

**Mr. GROVES** asked the Minister of Health whether he is aware that a sample of milk taken at Denham school about 4 p.m. on 6th March, having been in the school since 9 a.m., was stated by the medical officer of health for the Eton rural district to be negative so far as disease germs were concerned; and whether this fact was stated in the report to the Eton Rural District Council on the Denham scarlet fever outbreak furnished by the local medical officer of health?

**Sir H. YOUNG:** As regards the first part of the question, I am informed that the medical officer of health has no knowledge of a sample of milk having been taken at Denham school on 6th March. The second part does not, therefore, arise.

**Mr. GROVES** asked the Minister of Health whether he is aware that after the two bottlers at Mount Dairy Farm returned to work, one on 12th March and the other on 16th March, the medical officer of health for the Eton rural district refused to issue medical certificates, but subsequently agreed to issue a certificate to say that the men had negative swabs on a certain day; that on 8th March medical certificates were issued, and whether he is satisfied that proper precautions have been taken in this case?

**Sir H. YOUNG:** According to the information available to me, the facts are as stated in the first two parts of the question. The answer to the last part is in the affirmative. I would point out that the medical officer of health was under no obligation to issue medical certificates in this case.

VACCINATION.

**Mr. THORNE** asked the Minister of Health whether he has seen a copy of the annual report of the medical officer for South Shields in regard to infant vaccination; and whether he can state the views of his Department on this matter?

**Sir H. YOUNG:** I have not yet seen a copy of this officer's annual report for 1934.

SLUM CLEARANCE.

**Mr. HEPWORTH** asked the Minister of Health the number of houses involved in slum clearance orders in which owners have come forward with alternative schemes for reconditioning; and how many such proposals for reconditioning have been approved by his Department?

**Sir H. YOUNG:** No exact statistics are available, but proposals of this kind are not uncommon and are accepted wherever satisfactory results can be expected.

RAILWAYS (RATES, ASSESSMENTS).

**Sir P. HURD** asked the Minister of Health whether his attention has been

called to the difficulties experienced by rating authorities in consequence of the uncertainty as to the correct legal basis of valuation for railways; whether he is aware that the decision of the Railway and Canal Commissioners in the case of the Southern Railway, having been applied by the railway assessment authority to the London and North Eastern Railway, has resulted in a nil assessment of that railway; that under these decisions rating authorities must make great increases in the rates in order to repay the railway companies; and whether steps can be taken to expedite a final decision in the Southern Railway case so that rating authorities may ascertain what, if any, increase should be levied in the next rate period?

**Sir H. YOUNG:** My attention has been called to the facts stated in the question. While I am not myself in a position to take any steps to expedite proceedings which are already before the Courts, I have no doubt that the parties themselves are fully alive to the importance of obtaining a final decision as soon as possible.

DIET COMMITTEE (WELSH REPRESENTATION).

**Mr. T. MORRIS** asked the Minister of Health whether he has consulted the officers of his Welsh department, or what representations he has received from Wales, regarding the appointment of representatives of Wales on the committee set up to inquire into the British nation's diet?

**Sir H. YOUNG:** The only representation which I am able to trace on this subject is one from a sub-committee of the Swansea Town Council.

INDUSTRIAL EMPLOYMENT.

**Mr. JOEL** asked the Minister of Labour whether he can make any statement as to the progress of his inquiries into the possibilities of the absorption of more workers into employment in certain selected industries?

**Mr. STANLEY:** Since my consultation in January last with the National Confederation of Employers' Organisations and the Trades Union Congress General

Council, I have had meetings with representatives of employers' organisations in 12 important industries, and have made arrangements to see representative bodies of employers in a considerable number of other industries. It is hoped shortly to have a further meeting with the Trades Union Congress General Council. As the discussions which have already taken place have been of a preliminary nature, and further meetings with the representatives of the industries concerned are in prospect, I am not at the moment in a position to make a more detailed statement.

BRITISH ARMY (MERITORIOUS SERVICE MEDAL).

**Mr. CROOKE** asked the Financial Secretary to the War Office whether, as a gracious act this Jubilee year, he will now issue the award of the Meritorious Service Medal to old soldiers whose names have been recommended by the commanding officers of their respective units, in accordance with the King's Regulations, paragraph 1,747, instead of their having to wait so many years after their discharge before the issue of the medal?

**Mr. HACKING:** This proposal has already been considered, and it has been decided not to make any special increase in the awards of the Meritorious Service Medal this year. Vacancies for the award already occur at frequent intervals.

JUVENILE COURTS.

**Sir W. EDGE** asked the Home Secretary whether juvenile courts have now been established in all parts of the country; and whether they are operating satisfactorily and according to the law, or whether he has had to make any representations for improvement in the procedure of the magistrates?

**Sir J. GILMOUR:** Juvenile courts have now been established in all parts of the country, and so far as my information goes, there is no doubt of the beneficial effect of the provisions of the Children and Young Persons Act, 1933, which affect these courts. Shortly before the Act came into operation I addressed a general circular of advice to justices, and since that date no supplementary circular has been issued.



## WORKMEN'S COMPENSATION.

**Mr. RHYS DAVIES** asked the Home Secretary whether he can state in percentage form the amount paid away out of every £1 premium received by insurance companies covering workmen's compensation risks, in respect of payments to injured workmen and their dependants, and legal and medical costs, respectively?

**Sir J. GILMOUR:** I would refer the hon. Member to the particulars given on page 7 of the Workmen's Compensation Statistics for 1933 (Cmd. 4784) from which it will be seen that for that year 66.66 per cent. of the adjusted premium income of all the insurance companies furnishing returns to the Board of Trade was expended in payment of compensation (including legal and medical expenses incurred in connection with the settlement of claims), and 35.17 per cent. in payments for commission and expenses of management. I regret that the figures for 1934 are not available, nor are separate figures for the medical and legal expenses, but as regards the companies belonging to the Accident Offices Association such expenses are estimated at about  $4\frac{1}{4}$  per cent.

## PALESTINE (RAILWAY DEVELOPMENT).

**Mr. JANNER** asked the Secretary of State for the Colonies whether he will

give an assurance that before any decision is reached with regard to the recommendations contained in the report of Sir Felix Pole on Palestine Railway Development the contents of the report will be published, so that interested bodies may have an opportunity of expressing their opinion in the proposals contained therein?

**Sir P. CUNLIFFE-LISTER:** The question of the publication of Sir Felix Pole's report will be considered when the views of the High Commissioner for Palestine have been received.

## CHINA AND JAPAN.

**Captain ERSKINE-BOLST** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs whether Japan has made any new demands for the extension of her influence on the mainland to the Peking and Tientsin district; and whether, in view of the British trade in those areas, he can state the nature of the demands?

**Sir J. SIMON:** It would appear that my hon. and gallant Friend has in mind the reports which have appeared in the press that the Japanese military authorities in North China have demanded the inclusion of Peking and Tientsin in the present demilitarised zone. According to my information, no such demand has officially been made.

## ADJOURNMENT (WHITSUNTIDE).

Resolved,

"That this House, at its rising this day, do adjourn until Monday, 17th June."—  
[*The Prime Minister.*]

## ITALY AND ABYSSINIA.

Motion made, and Question proposed,  
"That this House do now adjourn."—  
[*Captain Margesson.*]

11.14 a.m.

**Mr. ATTLEE:** I rise to call attention to the question of the dispute between Italy and Abyssinia, and I intend to confine my remarks to as small a compass as possible, because I do not think I should make a long speech on an adjournment day. On the 27th May, we had a statement from the Lord Privy Seal with regard to the proceedings at Geneva. He said:

"Without suggesting that the Council's resolutions finally dispose of the tension which has unfortunately arisen between Italy and Ethiopia as a result of the Walwal and other incidents, I am confident that they represent an important advance towards a friendly solution."—[OFFICIAL REPORT, 27th May, 1935; col. 764, Vol. 302.]

The whole House recognises the work of the Lord Privy Seal at Geneva on that occasion, but, as he says, the tension is not over. What has happened is that the procedure for the settlement of part of that dispute has been established, but military preparations on the part of Italy still go on. The question is what is to be the position when the 25th July comes. This matter gets worse the longer it is allowed to drag on. One has to face up to the position of Italy. We have there a country ruled by a dictator and a Government that is in urgent need of something to take off the tension from its internal situation and to re-establish its prestige. There is very serious unemployment in Italy, an almost desperate financial situation, rising prices, declining foreign trade, and a considerable volume of criticism of the existing regime. In such circumstances, it is not uncommon to find an attempt being made to divert attention from discontents at home by interests abroad.

What was actually accomplished at Geneva was that some kind of breathing space was obtained, a time limit for conciliation and arbitration, but there were certain very important defects in that

agreement. It is true that the Wal-Wal incident is to be subject to conciliation and arbitration under a time limit, but that incident arose out of the matter of an undelimited frontier. As I understand, Italy has refused to deal with the question of the delimitation of the frontier until the matter of the Wal-Wal incident has been disposed of. This seems to me to beg the whole question as to who was responsible as the aggressor in the Wal-Wal incident. Italy has not renounced the use of force. Preparations go on and troops are constantly used to meet the situation. A statement was made by Signor Mussolini on the 25th May, which is of some importance as indicating the attitude of the Italian Government. He said:

"Political realism, that is, the accurate weighing of international forces in their relations to each other on the basis of their respective interest and of their inevitable changes, must be the basis of our action."

That was a statement of *real politik* worthy of a compatriot of Machiavelli. I want to suggest that Signor Mussolini should be given some political realism. This incident, this tension between Italy and Abyssinia, is a test of the reality of the League and the sanctity of the covenant of the League. If, you have one party accepting arbitration and another party refusing it, if you have a failure to renounce force, and if that is acquiesced in by the League, you have practically brought the whole system of the League and the Covenant into disrepute. There is to-day, I believe, a great opportunity in this incident for re-establishing the authority of the League and the rule of law in Europe. We require a clear statement by our Government. We want to tell Signor Mussolini that among the political realities of which he has to take account is that this Government, like other Governments, uphold the Covenant against an aggressor State, that it believes it is a matter that affects our honour and our vital interests, that the refusal to accept the League's authority constitutes a refusal by an aggressor, and that we shall in that event be bound under Articles 10 and 16 of the Covenant to see that we give no assistance whatever to an aggressor, but, on the contrary, that we are bound to act against an aggressor.

The vital point in this matter is the question of the control of the Suez Canal.



[Mr. Attlee.]

If Italy were to count on the fact that the League would not act if she intended to use force, she ought to be told frankly that in that event she would not have the use of the Suez Canal. This is really a vital matter, and it ought to be decided at once. A statement ought to be made now. It is not even fair to the Government of Signor Mussolini that he should be left in any doubt on this matter. In a matter of this kind, the longer the time, the more difficult it is to get acceptance because a matter of prestige is involved. There are movements of troops; there is an enormous expenditure with nothing to show for it, and there is the pressure of the military machine. The matter has already drifted on too far. Behind this matter there is not only a question of a frontier dispute, or even a frontier delimitation. It is pretty clearly indicated that behind it are Imperialist designs. We have talk of Italy's sphere of influence, trading rights and so forth; in fact, it is very much the kind of situation that we have seen in the past as regards Persia, Algeria and elsewhere. The League will be destroyed altogether if, within the circle of the League, powers are enabled to carry out Imperialist, filibustering enterprises. I hope for a clear statement from the Government.

11.24 a.m.

**Mr. MANDER:** I should like warmly to congratulate the Lord Privy Seal on the great combination of courage and skill which he showed at Geneva the other day in dealing with this question, but I am sure that he would be the first to admit that we are only over the first fence, and that a long and dangerous course lies in front of us in this matter. The situation at the moment is extremely dangerous, and my own impression, from such information as I can obtain, is that Italy has made up her mind to go forward and to do as she wants in Abyssinia, and that the only thing that will prevent her doing so is the full knowledge that the world as a whole through the League of Nations is not going to tolerate that. I do not think that anything indicates it more clearly than the series of astonishing and really disgraceful attacks that are made every day in the Government-controlled Press in Italy on the good faith of this country, quite

apart from the personal attacks that are made. One finds it difficult to understand how such attacks are consistent with normal good relations between countries.

I hope my right hon. Friend may be able to make some reply to the entirely unfounded and grossly unfair attacks made on our good name day after day by Signor Gayda on behalf, apparently, of the Italian Government. In this matter we have no interest in any one particular country, either in Italy or Abyssinia. Our attitude is entirely pro-League, and nothing else. That is our only interest in the matter. There may be arguments that Abyssinia is not a very suitable country to be a member of the League of Nations, but she is a member of the League, and Italy played a considerable part in seeing that she was made a member; and that being so surely there must be one law for the great and the small State alike. The whole collective system is at stake in this matter, and if Italy is allowed to use force, to take by military action what she wants, what possible objection can we have to Germany doing the same thing in Austria or in Memel or in any of the other places surrounding her? It would be an absolutely final and fatal precedent which would destroy all the moral authority of the League to deal with the great and growing menace, as I believe it is, of Germany at the present time.

I have one or two practical suggestions to offer as to how the matter might be dealt with, first of all in the earlier stages. Would it not be of some use for the League of Nations, with a view to avoiding tension on the spot and to obtaining information, to have observers who could travel about on aerial patrol—obviously that is the only way with vast distances over desolate country? They would be in a position to report to the League from time to time exactly what was taking place, and the League would not have to rely, as was the case in the early stages in Manchuria, on the necessarily biased statements of both sides. I believe that suggestion might be of real, practical value, and I hope it will not be lost sight of in any further discussions that may take place at Geneva. There are certain more fundamental questions, such as the right hon. Member for Limehouse (Mr. Attlee) has referred to, and

I hardly expect the Lord Privy Seal to make any very definite statement on some of the points, but I should feel very much happier if we could appreciate that some of these considerations, or all of them, were definitely in the mind of the Government and would not be lost sight of in dealing with the problem.

I agree that the first thing is to convey to the Italian Government, either publicly or privately, that we regard this as a matter of national honour and vital interest, that we intend to see that the Covenant is upheld, that we have given our pledged word in the matter, and that we do not intend to allow our pledged word to be broken. Then there arises the further question of possible international action to deter and prevent this taking place. Here, again, I feel that private representations would be, probably, the most valuable way of dealing with the matter at the present stage. What possible action could the League take? In what I am suggesting I do not contemplate action by this country alone, but by this country through the League, with all the other nations who have any obligations. I understand that at present Italian military aeroplanes are allowed free access through Egypt, with which country we are in close relations on foreign affairs. I imagine that obviously could not go on if war broke out. Furthermore, assuming that Italy were plainly guilty of aggression and breach of international obligations under the Covenant, it would not be possible to allow Italian troopships to make use of British ports in any part of Africa. Then there is the most important question of all, that of the Suez Canal. It is true that under the Treaty of 1888 the Canal is to be open in peace and in war to ships of all nations. That Treaty is, I maintain, abrogated by Article 20 of the Covenant. I will quote the relevant words, as they are very important on this matter:

“Abrogation of inconsistent obligations. (1) Members of the League severally agree that this Covenant is accepted as abrogating all obligations or understandings *inter se* which are inconsistent with the terms thereof.”

I therefore submit that if the League thought fit to do so it would be perfectly competent for England, France or any other country that may be interested in the Canal to take action preventing the military forces of an aggressor State

from passing through. Even if that were not done, obviously action could be taken in the Gulf of Suez or in other parts of the Red Sea. I hope the matter will be carefully considered by the Government and that such action as they feel usefully they can take will be taken.

The Lord President of the Council said some time ago that our frontier was the Rhine. So it is. But our frontier is in a number of other places, too. I submit that wherever the peace of the world is likely to be disturbed there lies our frontier, and that it is our duty, under international treaty, by appropriate means—I do not necessarily mean military means, but appropriate means, diplomatic, economic and, in the last resort, military—to take steps to see that the aggressor is properly dealt with. I do not think anyone can dissent from that view, though there may be differences as to how we should apply it in a particular case. We consider that our frontier lies on the River Plate. We have seen the admirable initiative taken by the Government in trying to prevent war between Uruguay and Bolivia. But certainly our frontier lies at the present time in the Suez Canal and the Red Sea, and I press the Government to use that form of wise diplomacy of which I am sure they are capable, as the Lord Privy Seal and others have shown, to make plain to both parties to this dispute that, so far as we can influence it, we will not allow the League to forgo its obligations to preserve the peace of the world.

11.34 a.m.

**Mr. HAMILTON KERR:** I should like to associate myself with the praises which the two previous speakers have bestowed on the Lord Privy Seal for his conduct of affairs at Geneva. I find that I can best express my appreciation in the words of an enthusiastic lady traveller who recently landed at Southampton from a cruise. Turning to the captain she said, “Captain, I do not know what we all should have done without you.” The Rome press has lately published critical articles of this country, and certain journals claim, I believe, that whilst we in this country, during the days of Imperialism in the 19th century, greatly extended our sphere of influence and our colonial possessions, we now look with disfavour on the Italian adventure in Abyssinia. One paper, the “Tribuna,”



[Mr. Kerr.] publishes a cartoon of the British lion teaching the small lion of Judah, representing Abyssinia, to roar defiance at Italy. There is no mistaking the lion's future intentions, because all round him lie the bones of past victims of British Imperialism marked "Boers," "Suez," "India," and "former German Colonies." One hesitates to believe that well-informed Italian opinion, much less the sagacious head of the Italian Government, gives credence to such extravagances. But the situation has perhaps a more difficult phase than that aspect, because the same journal prints this somewhat sinister passage:

"The Italo-Abyssinian dispute can only be solved by force. It would be absurd to think that the use of force can be eliminated from colonial enterprises."

The British Government urge upon Italy arbitration instead of force through no sinister political motive, but because His Majesty's Government base their foreign policy upon the League of Nations and upon its necessary corollary, arbitration.

Quite recently, the head of the Italian Government gave a striking lead to European solidarity at Stresa. At that Conference, Italy, France and Great Britain agreed upon a common formula. They professed to base their policies upon the League of Nations and upon collective action. Certain sections of Italian opinion now say that the principles which applied at Stresa cannot apply with equal force at Addis Ababa; but Abyssinia, we must remember, is a member of the League of Nations. A certain time ago the Secretary of a golf club was doing his rounds when he found a tramp sleeping on one of his favourite greens. He told the tramp to move, whereupon the tramp asked: "Who are you." The official replied "I am the secretary of the club." "Well," grumbled the tramp "that is not the way to get new members." Within the framework of the League we must observe the principles of the League, or I am very much afraid that the prestige of the League will suffer considerably.

Critics of the League often say that the League is merely an instrument of policy of the great Powers, who, by its measures, inflict their policy upon the lesser nations. The present situation illustrates with great force the vital point, made in his recent speech by the

right hon. Gentleman the Member for West Birmingham (Sir A. Chamberlain), that the League has found a satisfactory solution for those difficulties which flare up from time to time between nations, but has yet found no satisfactory solution for those long-planned and determined wars of aggression which certain nations may have in their minds. Any hasty or undue Italian action in Abyssinia only supplies that argument with another example. Furthermore, the solidarity established at Stresa would be seriously strained thereby. So sagacious a leader and politician as Senor Mussolini must realise that, in the troubled conditions of Europe which present themselves to his eyes, he had much better turn a more watchful gaze upon the Brenna Pass than upon the highlands of Abyssinia. We must remember also that there was a treaty of friendship solemnly entered into by representatives of Italy and Abyssinia in 1928. The Duke of Abruzzi, as the accredited representative of his Government agreed that all future disputes between the two nations should be subject to arbitration.

We cannot help pointing out that any contemplated military action in Abyssinia would be fraught with the utmost difficulty. From the middle of June until the middle of September the rainy season prevails, and, with the exception of a single straggling railway line from Djibouti to Addis Ababa, communications are lacking. Torrential rains make other communications extremely difficult. The French found an extremely difficult situation in Morocco. It required the fine flower of the French armies, long versed in the traditions of Colonial warfare, the genius of Marshal Petain and a two-years' campaign finally to overcome the diffident tribes in the Riff. Even then the French found that they could only advance by establishing an ever-tightening circle of fortified posts to prevent the eruption of guerilla bands. Military critics estimate that the Emperor of Abyssinia can put into the field a resolute army of 300,000 armed men, inspired by the tradition of their grandfathers concerning the legend of a great victory at Adowa.

To all those other arguments we must add one last, in the shape of an appeal to the Italian people's sense of realism. The lira is already heavily strained by the grandiose schemes of public works which

the Fascist Government have undertaken, and Italians will judge their government by the material benefits which bring that Government to the people. Those material benefits are contained in schemes of internal reconstruction, and these will be seriously jeopardised by any vast scheme of expansion in Abyssinia, which will necessarily entail enormous expenditure. No nation, least of all this nation, traditionally the friend of the great Italian people, wishes to block any legitimate scheme of expansion or to hinder Italy's search for new markets. Italy has already obtained by friendly negotiations with France certain rights on the Djibouti railway, and I am certain that further friendly negotiations would obtain in the course of time further economic concessions in Abyssinia. If Italy wishes some of the waters of Lake Tsana to be diverted to Eritrea, in order to fertilise the parched lands, and thus encourage enterprise, I am certain that such a solution is not beyond the brains of European statesmen. I refuse to believe that European statesmanship is dead, and that Senor Mussolini, who combines in himself rare gifts of imaginative constructiveness and sense of realism, can fail to see the dangers of any undue action in Abyssinia. I refuse to believe the cynical remark of the late Lord Dewar,

"statesmen are merely dead politicians."

There are plenty of constructive statesmen in Europe to-day who could, with honour and safety to all countries concerned, arrive at a satisfactory conclusion.

11.43 a.m.

**Lieut.-Colonel Sir ARNOLD WILSON:** As a man of peace, I am rather alarmed by the speeches made by the right hon. Gentleman who opened the Debate and by that of the hon. Member who followed him. I am reminded of an observation which was made in this House some 15 years ago by the late Mr. Bonar Law:

"We cannot police the world."

The general effect abroad of such speeches as we have listened to is likely to be mischievous. The hon. Gentleman who opened the Debate observed that "we are bound to take action against an aggressor." That statement needs very considerable modification, in the light of the Covenant which provides only for collective responsibility and collective

action. The hon. Member for East Wolverhampton (Mr. Mander) said that our frontier is wherever peace is in danger. That implies a sort of two-Power standard for the world at large. I am convinced that public sentiment in this country would be very greatly alarmed were we to take such obligations *au pied de la lettre*. Both the speeches which have been made suggest that sanctions might subsequently become necessary and that we should be disposed to adopt one particular sanction. The closing of the Suez Canal appears to me, from such knowledge as I have, to be of all possible sanctions the most complicated, the most dangerous, and, quite possibly, the most ineffective. The Suez Canal is managed by a French Company with headquarters in Paris. It is subject in all respects to Egyptian law, and it operates under a concession obtained in 1856 from the Egyptian Government. Egypt is not a member of the League, but Egypt is a near neighbour of Italian Libya. By a convention of 1888, to which the hon. Member for East Wolverhampton (Mr. Mander) alluded, ratified only in 1904 by the British and French Governments, it was agreed to maintain the Canal open for the ships of war of all nations, whether in time of peace or in time of war. It was universalised rather than neutralised, and that arrangement has worked exceedingly well.

It is true that points of detail and difficulty have arisen. In 1904, I think it was, the Russian Fleet went through on its way to meet its doom at the hands of the Japanese, and certain difficulties arose during the Great War. To announce that we proposed to close the Canal if the League of Nations so desired would be to throw a strain upon the French administrators of the Canal which they would find intolerable. It would be for them to search ships and ascertain whether they contained troops or munitions; it would be for the Egyptian Government to take the responsibilities. It would be practically tantamount to a declaration of war, and only two Powers namely, France and Great Britain could effectively participate in executing that sanction. It might have the gravest repercussions on the future of the Canal, and, indeed, upon its safety. It is not to be supposed that any foreign Power to whose ships the Canal was barred would submit



[Sir A. Wilson.]

without protest, and there might be military repercussion. Egypt, which is not a Member of the League of Nations, and with whom we have very close and intimate relations, would be bound to hesitate long before assenting to any such step, which would involve a breach of a whole series of international conventions.

Sanctions may sometimes be necessary; a League of Nations Committee is, I believe, sitting at this moment to discuss how they can best be applied. There are many alternatives, and it is wrong either in this House or elsewhere, to single out one particular sanction in advance and to say that we will adopt it. Not only would that be quite unfair to Egypt, not only would it open up a series of difficult and dangerous questions, but it would clearly mean that we were prepared to take upon our shoulders a burden which would not be shared by any other of the European Powers, with the possible exception of France; and it would place upon the Egyptian Government an intolerable strain. I hope that we shall do nothing which will commit us to unreserved acceptance of the point of view of either party to this dispute. There are limits to our strength; there are limits to our ability effectively to intervene in distant countries. We cannot police the world. We must restrict our responsibilities to places where we can exercise them effectively. There is one country which can effectively prevent folly being perpetrated in Abyssinia, and that is Italy. The Italian people can, if they wish, exercise pressure on the Government of their country, and I look to them to do more to induce their representatives at Geneva and elsewhere to reach a peaceful and reasonable solution than all the discussions which may take place in all the chanceries of Europe and in Geneva itself.

11.51 a.m.

**Mr. VYVYAN ADAMS:** The hon. and gallant Member for Hitchin (Sir A. Wilson) described himself as a man of peace. That is indeed a safe description and definition. I have never yet heard a Member of this House have the hardihood to describe himself as a man of war. But both my hon. and gallant Friend and myself doubtless agree that peace cannot be secured without order and without law. That, I believe, is one

of the domestic principles of our common party. Yet much of my hon. and gallant Friend's speech seemed to be directed to showing how impossible it would be to oblige a potential aggressor in North Africa to observe the rules of order. My right hon. Friend who sits for Warwick and Leamington (Mr. Eden) has been obliged to-day to listen to so many golden opinions about himself that he can hardly want any further congratulations from me. But I cannot help saying what I have constantly heard repeated lately: "Thank God for the Lord Privy Seal." At last the generation which survived and succeeded the last war has discovered that for which it has been looking somewhat disconsolately for the last few years—an admirable representative and an inevitable leader. I trust that my right hon. Friend will not resent it when I say that I am thankful to him for reviving my hopes, and that he will forgive me for saying that I hope and expect that his great and growing success is merely a prelude to early distinction in the highest offices of State.

What are the chief gains which my right hon. Friend has achieved for Europe at large, for the collective system, and for England? They are, as I think he will agree, limited gains. He has gained time, and he has also prescribed its limits. But, more than that, he has vindicated both the authority and the competence of the League. I hope, and we all hope, that Italy will do what seems good in the eyes of the world as well as what seems good in her own eyes; but, as every speaker so far has hinted, it is far too early to treat the measure of conciliation which my right hon. Friend has achieved as a final success comparable, let us say, with the policing of the Saar or the assuagement of the dispute between Hungary and Yugoslavia. Why, we in this country may well ask, are the subjects of Mussolini being poured into Italian Somaliland and into the Territory of Eritrea, so near to the fateful field of Adowa? Is it to improve their health, or is it, perhaps, to admire and observe the habits of another servile population? I think we must face this grim fact, that all the circumstances in North Africa at the present moment are favourable to those incidents which often happen so conveniently, and in any case can be manufactured terribly easily. We

are all familiar with them over comparatively recent years of history—the Ems Telegram, the bomb at Serajevo, and more recently in the Far East the tearing up of the railway near Harbin.

I think everyone will agree that the massing of Italian troops in Italian territory in the North of Africa constitutes a danger such as is contemplated under Article 10 of the Covenant of the League, under which the Council is to advise how the obligation undertaken by all the signatories to preserve against aggression the territory of other signatories is to be fulfilled. I hope, as we all hope, that the peaceful processes of conciliation will prevail. I do not think it is an exaggeration to say that both the fortune and the future of the League are directly involved in this dispute. But I think the wider question with which to-day and in the immediate future Great Britain and Europe must concern themselves is, how soon will there appear upon the Continent of Europe, to which, in the language of the Lord President of the Council, we are indissolubly tied—how soon is there going to appear an imitator of what Japan has done in the Far East, and which many fear Italy may do in North Africa? How soon are we on this shrinking Continent to be faced with one of those long planned and determined acts of aggression hinted at just now by the hon. Member for Oldham (Mr. H. Kerr)? I would very respectfully say in the presence of the right hon. Gentleman the Member for West Birmingham (Sir A. Chamberlain) that whatever the origin of modern war, whether it be accidental or due to prolonged planning, its incidents and its circumstances must be just as terrible, comprehensive and devastating. I think that we ought not to be blind to this possible contingency. Do not let us be like the man who, when asked why he sat in the corner of a crowded omnibus with his eyes shut, replied, "I can't bear to see the ladies standing."

At present the League of Nations is little more than an opportunity which can be exploited by States of good will and moderation. I wish to see the League converted into something considerably more than that when it can lay obligations upon all State members to observe the law of nations just as irresistibly as

citizens have to observe the municipal law. I submit to the House that national armaments, particularly air armaments, which are exclusively offensive, mean that sooner or later one State or another will ride down the law and try to win its own way by force. By rearmament you may succeed in postponing the day of aggression, but you will never finally deter the aggressor.

I am going in a moment to sit down in order to give way to the right hon. Gentleman, but I would like to say this—because I think that this matter is inextricably interlocked with international relationships—that if only the Lord President of the Council, the repository of power, would authorise the Lord Privy Seal, with whom he is now conversing, to go to Geneva and there to propose the general abolition of national armaments in the air, accompanied by the establishment of an international air police force, a number of beneficent consequences would inevitably follow. I cannot to-day, because there is no time, deploy that argument and its consequences in full. But if you could succeed in doing that the League would finally cease to be the butt of cynics; it would no longer be possible for the stunt press exultantly to scream "Mussolini flouts the League." I wish to give way to my right hon. Friend, but I believe that the people of this country, whether in this narrow dispute or in the wider possibilities of European relationships, are ready for the widest possible measure of collective security and international action. The 11,000,000 votes in the peace ballot which has been so ignorantly and maliciously criticised in various quarters certainly prove that. I believe that the will to the end which I have ventured to indicate is growing elsewhere as well as in this country, and I dare to think that it is the business of our own Government to formulate, to foster, and to direct that will.

11.59 a.m.

**Mr. EMMOTT:** It would be inconsistent with my determination not to prevent the House from passing to the next subject to go in any detail into the important, interesting and numerous matters which have been raised in this Debate; nor is it my intention to offer any defence at all of the action which is now being taken by the Italian



[Mr. Emmott.] Government in Abyssinia. My contribution to this discussion shall be of the briefest nature. I desire to reinforce in the strongest possible manner the general tendency of the argument which was addressed to the House by the hon. and gallant Member for Hitchin (Sir A. Wilson). Every other hon. Member who has taken part in this Debate offered advice of a particular tendency to His Majesty's Government, and I very sincerely hope that that advice will not be accepted by them. The point of view I want to put before the House this morning is this. What good purpose is served by this discussion? And what good purpose would be served by the acceptance by His Majesty's Government of the advice which, with one exception, has been freely tendered to them by hon. Members who have taken part in the Debate?

The right hon. Gentleman who commenced this discussion used a most extraordinary phrase. He said that Signor Mussolini should be given some political realism. I do not at all see that this is the proper occasion upon which to offer to the head of the Italian Government any of that commodity. He went on to say that there is to-day a great opportunity for re-establishing the authority of the League, and he also asserted that this question ought to be decided at once. I fail entirely to see how this is a proper occasion for determining this matter or indeed for any such pronouncement by His Majesty's Government, as has been attempted to be elicited from them. The Commission which is charged with the duty of studying this matter has only just begun its sessions in Milan. It is not, if I recollect the matter rightly, until 25th July that the Council of the League has to meet in the event of the failure of the Commission to choose an arbitrator, and it is not, I believe, until 25th August that the Council has to meet in the event of the failure of the Commission to reach agreement upon the main topic under consideration.

I said that it is no part of my purpose to offer any defence of the Italian action in Abyssinia. But if a foreign government is engaged in an enterprise of great difficulty and danger, which may fail to attract the general support of its people,

then the one thing that it requires in order to rally to its aid the support that it requires, is hostile comment or criticism in foreign countries, and it is exactly that course which has been pursued to-day. For this reason—although I should not be so impertinent as to question the right of any right hon. Gentleman or hon. Gentleman to raise in this Debate any topic he desires to raise—I very much regret that this Debate has taken place, and I am convinced that the acceptance by His Majesty's Government of the advice so freely tendered to them would produce the result least desired by those who offer it.

12.4 p.m.

**The LORD PRIVY SEAL (Mr. Eden):** It is far from my intention to take up much of the time of the House this morning, and, also, I consider the least said the better on the eve of going on holiday, but I think that the moment is perhaps opportune for me to make one or two brief observations on the position of His Majesty's Government. They can be all the briefer, thanks to the admirable speech made by my hon. Friend the Member for Oldham (Mr. H. Kerr) a little while ago with no word of which I should have any cause to disagree. As I listened to the right hon. Gentleman who opened this debate and heard him laying great emphasis—emphasis with which I agreed—upon the importance of the part which the League must play in all disputes. I thought that he had at the same time rather overlooked what in fact the League had already done in this matter. He mentioned that there had been no undertaking by Italy not to resort to force. That is quite inaccurate. The second of the two Resolutions adopted at Geneva on the 24th May read as follows:

"The Council leaves to the two parties full liberty to settle the dispute in question in accordance with Article 5 of the Italo-Ethiopian Treaty."

Article 5 says, in set terms:

"Both Governments undertake to submit to the procedure of conciliation and arbitration disputes which may arise between them and which it may not have been possible to settle by ordinary diplomatic methods, without having recourse to armed force."

I would say, in general, that this League procedure, which is a perfectly proper procedure in accordance with the Treaty between the two countries, having been set in motion we make a mistake if we

ignore what is a cardinal principle of British law that a man is innocent until he is proved to be guilty. After that statement perhaps hon. Members will allow me to make a few observations on the dispute in general. The existence of an undefined border is always liable to be a fruitful source of difficulty. That is one of the reasons why, even before the incident occurred in December last at Wal-Wal, His Majesty's Government had represented the desirability of an early demarcation of the boundary between Italian Somaliland and Abyssinia. The demarcation of that boundary forms part of the 1928 Treaty between the two countries and will be carried out, as has been agreed and accepted by both parties, when these other points have been settled.

As soon as news was received of the Walwal incident its possible serious repercussions on the relations between the two countries were fully appreciated here. From that moment His Majesty's Government exerted themselves to the utmost through the impartial extension of their good offices to both parties, to promote a peaceful settlement of the difficulties which have unhappily arisen. In taking this action we were not influenced by any purely selfish motives, such as, for example, the urgent importance to our Colonial administration of peaceful conditions in British territories themselves bordering upon Abyssinia. Nor have we been animated by any desire to oppose Italian influence in Ethiopia. Our rights in that country are already amply protected by Treaties. In fact there is no reason whatever why British and Italian interests should not be mutually and harmoniously developed side by side, for neither do they nor need they conflict.

I mention this because, to my regret, the House will notice that many wild accusations have lately been directed against His Majesty's Government in the Italian press. It is unfortunate that such misrepresentations should have been allowed to appear, unfortunate particularly because of the effect that they might have on the truly excellent relations between our two countries. I am not going to attempt to deal with those misrepresentations in detail. We have been charged with intrigue of one sort or another to the detriment of Italy. It is alleged that we had gone so far as to encourage

the Ethiopian Government, for our own nefarious ends, to adopt a hostile attitude towards Italy. This story is as mischievously absurd as the suggestion that Colonial football fields are aerodromes in disguise. Equally fantastic is the assertion that for years we have had in mind the possibility of some form of protectorate over Abyssinia. What have we, as a Government, to whom the League of Nations and the sanctity of Treaties are of paramount importance, to gain by adding fuel to a fire which as yet is only smouldering. Our interests, of course, are precisely the reverse. It has been our constant, our persistent endeavour to help to bring about a permanent settlement mutually satisfactory to Italy and Ethiopia; a settlement which would take account of our responsibilities and those of France and Italy in the Tripartite Treaty of 1906, by which we, France and Italy agreed to co-operate in maintaining the political and territorial integrity of Abyssinia, and a settlement which would lie within the framework of the Covenant of the League, the Kellogg Pact and the Italo-Ethiopian Treaty of friendship of 1920. That is our desire. It is our earnest hope that such a settlement may be achieved.

The present position is that the Conciliation Committee set up and agreed to by the Geneva Resolution met yesterday for the first time in Milan. We must await the result of their deliberations. In the meantime, under the terms of the resolution adopted by the Council of the League last month, the Secretary General has been asked to communicate to the Governments who are members of the Council all information which reaches him from the two parties, in particular regarding the development of the work of the Commission. We sincerely hope that that work will proceed smoothly and well. If it does not proceed smoothly and if there be difficulty about fixing the choice of the fifth arbitrator, the Council of the League will meet. We all hope that the need for such a meeting will not arise. Nothing would better please His Majesty's Government than a peaceful and lasting settlement of this dispute and a restoration of friendly relations between the two countries, one of whom is a great Power in Europe, with whom we have long-standing and traditional relations of friendship, and both of whom are our neighbours in Africa.



## SALARIES AND WAGES (SEX EQUALITY).

12.13 p.m.

**Colonel CLIFTON BROWN:** I hope the House will permit me now to turn aside from Italy and Abyssinia and to draw attention to a domestic matter of interest to men and women in this country. For some time I think it may be said that men have been increasingly nervous of what they believe to be the unfair competition of women in our industries and offices. On the other hand, women have been exceedingly worried because they believe that owing to the lowness of their pay they are not getting fair treatment either in industry or in Government offices. Where they are doing the same work as men and giving the same output and the same results the women do not see why they should be penalised merely because they are women. The men do not see why they should be subject to competition at lower rates of pay of the other sex, who can give an equal output with themselves. It is worth our while therefore for a short time to discuss this matter in the House of Commons, and if a complete answer can be given to it it is just as well that we should have it in Debate rather than that this discontent and unrest should continue. That there is such a problem cannot be denied. When the Civil Lord of the Admiralty investigated the conditions on the North East Coast he reported that the time might come when the employment of women might have to be restricted there. If such a thing were true on the North East Coast where normally men are employed in industry how much greater must the problem be in the Midlands and the Southern counties where the lighter industries are employing such a large number of women to-day?

Let us turn our attention to Germany. There, we know, most drastic regulations have been enforced, and if they want to employ a woman even in a women's industry, she has to go to the labour exchange and get a certificate to say that she can be employed, and she has got to give proof that she is either supporting an aged mother or family, otherwise she is not allowed to work. There is a problem which exists in this country. If one takes the census figures of 1931, one finds that more than 500,000 women secured places in industry. During the period, as we know, from 1921 to 1931, unemployment as

a whole had not been increasing, while women's employment increased steadily the whole time. If we take the monthly unemployment returns to-day, we find that the period for which women draw unemployment benefit is exactly half that for which men draw it. Therefore, the finding of work for women is twice as easy as finding work for men to-day, and really, when so many men are out of work, it seems an anomaly that unemployment among women should exist except in a few areas.

Let me mention some of the main avenues in which women get employment to-day. Roughly speaking, one-third of our women are employed in domestic service. There we find no change one way or the other. If anything, including hotel work, men are slightly improving their position. Coming to the next class, clerks and shopgirls, you find women steadily increasing their numbers over the last 20 years, and during the years from 1911 to 1921 women made enormous gains. In the case of shop assistants alone, men went down by 100,000 and women went up by 300,000. Since that time all these gains have been held, and so much employment has been lost to men. Unquestionably there, you may say, there is a strong competitive factor between men and women. Coming to the third group—industry—you find that women are improving their position—I suggest, at the cost of men—very rapidly. For the last 40 years women have doubled their proportion. In some industries, of course, they have gone up a little and in some down, but in certain industries quite definitely the number of men has decreased and that of women has increased. In the glass and chemical industries, the number of men has increased and that of women decreased, but in other industries where there has been a general expansion, women have increased at a far greater rate than men. In the electrical manufacturing industry—a new and expanding industry—men have increased their proportion by 43 per cent., whereas women have increased by 112 per cent. How much longer at that rate are we going on before women will be doing all the work in this country, and the men will be sitting at home looking after the babies? It is not a healthy situation. What happens is that under the system of mechanisation, new

machines and processes come along, and women instead of men are put on to them.

Throughout the whole field the opportunities for the employment of men are getting less and less. Let us examine the causes of that a little further. I have only mentioned light industries. There is another large section of women in industry which, so far, I have not mentioned, and that is the textile and weaving industry, and here, curiously enough, the proportion of men to women has remained almost the same in the last four years. Women, of course, have always been a big factor in this industry, but if you take the last 40 years, the increase of women generally is just over 4 per cent. compared with 15 per cent. in light industries. There has been a decrease of 10 per cent. in the case of men and 7 per cent. in that of women in the woollen section of the industry, whereas in the cotton section men increased by one per cent. and women remained exactly the same. There has been practically no difference in the sex distribution in this industry for 40 years. What is the reason for that? One knows perfectly well that piece rates in the light industries are from one-half to four-fifths of the men's rates, whereas in the textile and woollen industries women's rates are far more equated with those of men. Therefore, there is a far more stable situation in regard to the sex proportion of the total number working in that industry.

I suggest seriously to the Government that, from the point of view of employment, this question of equal pay in industry is one which should be very carefully examined. There are so many things being said about equal pay, that I think one ought to answer one or two of them. People say that it is perfectly absurd; a girl goes into an office only for pin money, and why should she have better pay? As a matter of fact, there are very few who do that. If you consider the life of a girl who works in industry or in an office all day, she probably has had to cook breakfast before leaving for work, and probably has to work in the house after returning home. That is a life of some drudgery, and no one is going to do it for fun. It is really economic pressure that is driving these girls into industry.

Again, I am told that women do not know what is good for them, and that if they had anything like equal pay, not nearly so many would get employment. The answer is that the leaders of the women's societies say quite frankly that, whether it is going to be better or worse for them, this ought to be done, and if women did not want it they would not support the leaders of these women societies who advocate equal pay for equal work. I suggest that even if women did lose some employment—and I think they would—what they lost on the roundabouts they would probably gain on the swings, because I am certain that women go to work through economic pressure. What women really want is to have their own homes as early as they can. By remaining in industry, by taking the place of men, they are preventing men from marrying, and, therefore, they are preventing themselves from having their own homes and their own families, and doing exactly what their natural instincts tell them. Therefore, even if a few women were put out of industry, a great many more would be enabled to marry and have their own homes, so that what they lost in one direction they would gain in another, and I believe it would result in greater happiness.

I have tried to make a case, and I hope that I have made it moderately. Is there anything that the Government can do? We cannot do what Germany is doing, regulate the whole thing, we cannot prevent women going into industry; but is there no lead which the Government might give. They are large employers of labour. At the present time, if there is any suggestion of equal pay for women employers at once say what is the Government doing about it. I think that the Government should look at this matter not so much from the Treasury point of view but consider the whole field of industry and give a lead with regard to equal pay on their own staffs. It would have great reactions all round. I know it is said that it cannot be done in Government offices because it would have great reactions outside, but that is the very reason why I want to see the Government make a start; and it is also the reason why I have ventured to bring this subject before the House this afternoon. I hope that I have not put an exaggerated case or a case which will in any way embarrass the Government. These things



[Colonel Brown.] cannot be done by a stroke of the pen in a moment. We have to have a gradual change and, therefore, I hope hon. Members will think that I have not wasted their time this afternoon.

12.27 p.m.

**Mr. LANSBURY:** I do not propose to occupy the time of the House for more than a few minutes, but this is a subject in which I have been intensely interested during the whole of my political life. It is not a matter which can be settled very easily within our present competitive system. Neither shall I expect the hon. Member who may reply for the Government to drag in King Charles's Head as to what the Labour Government did or did not do. We as a party have pledged ourselves in conference resolutions to the principle of equal pay and—have tried to do it in some localities but have found ourselves up against the judgment of the auditor, who has not considered it the right policy to adopt. All the same, I want to support the proposition that this is a matter on which the Government should give a lead. The present competitive system is unfair to women because employers use the fact of sex to the disability of women and the danger of men, that is to say, they utilise the services of women at lower rates and displace men, they create a sort of sex discrimination in regard to employment. The kind of industries which have developed during the last 40 years have made it possible for women and children to be utilised on light machinery to the detriment of older people and men. I do not see myself any way out of that within the competitive struggle which goes on.

Last night I received a deputation of teachers in the room behind the Chair and it was put up to me that there was a movement on foot which took the line that if this business could not be settled in any other way men's wages should be brought down; that is what the teachers are fearing. Any proposal of that kind would be sheer lunacy. We all want to level up the status of women rather than level it down, and I think that women would join with men in fighting any proposal to level down. I should not have dreamt of making this statement this morning if that proposition had not been put to me last night by intelligent

men as a danger which they were fearing from the present situation. It seems to me that the Government ought to take a stand on this question and say that as soon as possible they will introduce the principle into the Government service. A Cabinet Minister who happens to be a woman is paid £5,000 or £2,000 a year, just the same as a man. There was no discrimination against Miss Bondfield either as a subordinate Minister or as a Cabinet Minister, and if it is good enough in that respect it is good enough for the girl clerk in the Civil Service or women workers anywhere else. Therefore, I hope the Government will be able to accept the principle and will apply it at the earliest possible moment.

Having sat on the Government bench for nearly 2½ years I know that this will not be done, as the hon. and gallant Member has said, by a stroke of the pen, I know the difficulties, or the alleged difficulties, which the Treasury can always set up. I am not asking that whoever answers for the Government shall say that in the next Budget provision will be made for this but I should like to have a statement that the Government accepts the principle and, if they last long enough, will endeavour to apply it as soon as possible. I do not think the question of the relationships of women and men in industry is likely to be settled in this way. I listened to the hon. and gallant Member when he was talking about there being more chances for women to marry and settle down and take care of a nice little home.

I have had sent to me this week a book written by someone whose name I forget. I think it is called "Martha, M.P." I commend it to everyone here, for it is an extraordinary book. It is written as if at a time some years ahead, and if you read what men have become, the spoiled darlings of the women, and the masculine position of the women, you have something to look forward to, those of you who are young men. It shows what is stirring in the minds of women. They propose to reverse the roles. When I heard the hon. and gallant Member for Hexham (Colonel Brown) speak of a man sitting at home to mind the babies, I recalled that that is exactly what women are proposing. As there are more women than men, and as women grow more intelligent, it is possible that they will

give the future generation of men some of the kind of medicine that my generation of men has given the women.

12.37 p.m.

**Mrs. TATE:** I welcome the fact that this subject of equal pay between the sexes has been raised by a man Member of the House, although I did not think that the hon. and gallant Member who introduced it did so altogether from a fair point of view, if he will allow me to say so. When we argue the question of equal pay the argument always used by the Government is one of expense, but that is not the point of view from which it should be regarded, if it is to be regarded in the light in which a very great problem has to be faced. The question that we are really discussing is the standard of life of the people of this country, because the inequality of payment between men and women will, as the right hon. Member for Bow and Bromley (Mr. Lansbury) pointed out, inevitably lower the standard of life of the people if allowed to continue.

The question really is one of principle. I believe that work should be done by the man or woman best qualified to do it, and that the pay should be commensurate with what the work is worth. But it is just as well to recognise, when we consider the question of women's work, that no one has ever objected to women working. They have always worked extremely hard. They not only ran their homes, but if we go back to the Middle Ages we find that they also spun their cloth, worked hard on the land, brought up their children, and in fact produced or helped to produce most of the consumable products in the country. It is only when women begin to work for gain that the question of her work ever arises. That is a thing which it is just as well to remember when we are talking of women taking men's work. If we look back we find it was when men began to bake bread and sell it for profit, when men began to manage the heavy laundry machinery, when men began to produce by industry the consumable products, that it was first recognised that women had no right to work for gain. Therefore, do not let us talk only of women taking men's work, because obviously not so long ago it was the men who took the women's work.

Women do not work for the sheer love of working when they go out to earn

wages. What has driven them out has generally been the fact that they have had to increase the purchasing power of the home. As the work that they used to do without gain was gradually taken over by men for gain, they have had to increase the purchasing power of the home in order to be able to buy the products of industry. The thing that we have all to face to-day is that with the mechanisation of industry and the increasing simplification of machinery every firm is more liable to take on women for automatic jobs. I believe that that is a very great danger not only to women and to men, but particularly to the rising generation. As one sees the large factories where girls are taken on at perhaps 15 years of age and stand for three years doing nothing but sticking a label on a tin day after day, one cannot help wondering what exactly those women are being fitted for. That is a very serious matter. They are paid a little less than men would take at the same age, and a little more than perhaps they would get in what would not be considered blind-alley occupations. They leave that work at 18 years of age, and they have been fitted neither for the home nor for any other form of industry. That is a thing we have all to face very seriously in future.

With regard to the Government's attitude, we can safely say that they have given perhaps the worst possible example, as regards equal pay. We know that with regard to the Civil service, the teaching profession and everywhere where they have employed women, they have systematically employed them at a lower rate of pay than men. In spite of resolutions that have been passed by this House the position is steadily getting worse, with the result that you will inevitably have an increase in the number of women employed and a decrease in the number of men. Every day we are faced with more complex problems in the world. Every day there is a greater need for those who are doing the work of the world to be the very best people for the job. Yet we have the fact that people are being chosen not by their ability to do the work, not even by their sex, but merely by the wages for which they can be obtained. Therefore, in continuing to pay women at lower rates than men all that we are doing is to sacrifice the gains of recent years in the standard of living



[Mrs. Tate.]

by lowering the standard of wages, and the women of this country are the very last people who would wish to be a party to that.

The hon. and gallant Member for Hexham (Colonel Brown) said that women should be taken out of industry in order that men might go into it and earn money sufficient to support women, and to enable women to marry. Personally I do not believe that that is the way in which we should legislate. If we in this House do our duty we should work for a greater freedom for all sections of the community. Whether a woman wishes to marry or to go on working is nobody's business. We should try to enable all people to have a greater and wider freedom, not necessarily to insist that women have to marry and go into homes and then to forbid them to continue working. I quite agree that probably the best profession for most women is marriage, but I do not believe that marriage should necessarily debar a woman from taking up any profession. In many professions I think a married woman is better qualified than an unmarried woman. I believe that to be true, for instance, of the teaching profession. A married woman ought to know more than an unmarried woman about the training of the young and about certain aspects of life even if she does not always do so.

With regard to the bringing-up of the young we must admit that nowadays we especially want the very best people and those who have the most experience to undertake this work. The problems facing us to-day are so great and so complex in every department of life that it is essential that the people who are best fitted for a particular work should be doing that job. That can only be achieved if men and women are employed on absolutely equal terms—which involves the payment of equal wages. I believe what the hon. and gallant Member said is true and that equality of pay as between men and women would result in the employment of fewer women and I would far rather see fewer women employed on fair terms than a large number of women employed on unfair terms. Further what is unfair to women must, of necessity, be unfair to men, because none of these problems affect men or women solely. What is good for

women in this country is good for men and what is good for men is good for women because their problems are not divisible. I hope the Government will indicate to-day that they are going to take some steps to have this matter put right. Not long ago we had a lamentable example of the Government's attitude towards the payment of women when the Unemployment Assistance Regulations were submitted to this House. I am thankful that those regulations have been withdrawn, and I hope that if the Government come forward again with scales of unemployment assistance which are as unequal between men and women as those which they proposed on the last occasion, not one woman Member of this House will vote for them. But I hope to find from the reply to-day that the Government have had a change of heart on this subject and that they intend not only to make the unemployment pay for men and women equal but also the pay in employment.

12.48 p.m.

**Mr. WEST:** I was much interested in the well-informed and well-reasoned statement of the hon. and gallant Member for Hexham (Colonel Clifton Brown). I would like to quote some figures in support of one of his economic arguments. He said that the number of women in industry was increasing, at the same time as the number of men in industry was decreasing. I find that in the engineering trade in the last 10 years the number of men employed has declined by 60,000, whereas the number of women employed has increased by over 15,000. In the textile trade the number of men employed has decreased by 20,000, while the number of women employed has increased by nearly 10,000. In the boot and shoe trade there are 2,000 more women employed and 10,000 fewer men and, altogether, since 1913 I find that there are over 800,000 more women employed in industry. That is very significant and while it may be partially due to new industries, more simplified methods and improved machinery, which can be looked after by women, I believe the chief cause of this replacement of men by women is the fact that women can be employed more cheaply than men.

The employer who tries to maintain as many adult males as possible in his

factory finds it very difficult to compete against the employer who substitutes women for men at perhaps half or two-thirds of the men's wages. Thus, it is difficult for one employer to refrain from following the example of another employer in taking on women wherever possible in preference to men. When we discuss the danger of Japanese competition in this House, hon. Members often point out how low-wage products come into this country and swamp the products of certain home trades, and, rightly or wrongly, they claim that a tariff against the low-wage products is the remedy for that trouble. But the same principle applies in this case. The employer who tries to retain male labour might well ask for a tariff against goods produced by cheap women's labour. At any rate it is the same kind of argument. It is just as difficult for the employer who is paying good wages to men, to compete against the employer who is paying low wages to women, as it is for a London employer to compete against an employer in Yokohama or any part of the East, who is paying a very low general standard of wages. There is no doubt that the increased employment of women at low wages tends to depress wage standards and purchasing power in this country. Some people argue that women should be paid lower wages because women are inferior but I have never been able to convince myself that women are, generally speaking, inferior to men. I know some respects in which they are certainly superior.

**Viscountess ASTOR:** Hear, hear.

**Mr. WEST:** I am not saying that that applies in the field of politics.

**Viscountess ASTOR:** They have not had the experience of men in that field.

**Mr. WEST:** I think it may be argued that in politics men are, generally speaking, superior to women, though I admit the possibility of exceptions. There may be some—from Plymouth for example—who are better. But the argument that women have only been in politics for a short time, whereas men have monopolised the field for a very long time, seems perfectly sound and I accept it. I would say that wherever women have been given a fair and equal opportunity to compete with men they have shown no inferiority. In the case of the teaching

profession, I willingly confess that I found women at least as good as men and in some cases better. I have worked in schools staffed by men teachers only, and I thought the men in those schools were very good indeed, but when I went into schools in which there were women teachers I would have been blind had I not recognised that most of the women were better than I was at teaching. Therefore I think we must recognise that women generally are as efficient as men.

It is then argued sometimes that women have not the physical strength of men and that is probably true, generally, but year by year strength is becoming a less important factor in industry. Indeed to-day mechanisation has rendered strength a very minor factor in industry. Training too is not so important a factor as it once was. With new machinery women can be trained in a very short time to work as efficiently as men. To put women to do equal work with men in the same industry at lower wages is wrong both from the ethical and the economic standpoints. Some people argue that women have not to maintain dependants, while men have to do so, but, generally speaking, that is not the case. The last census returns show that 30 per cent. of men in this country are unmarried, and 60 per cent. of those who are married have no children. On the other hand, it is true to say that probably 50 per cent. of women also have dependants. Very many women keep mothers, sometimes fathers, and relations of all kinds. So that on this argument of dependants we have not very firm ground on which to stand. In any case, in time children sometimes become an asset for the man.

Equal pay is now given to certain sections of society. We give equal pay to doctors, lawyers and Members of Parliament. If we gave payment in this House on grounds of ability I often think that mine would be very low indeed. On grounds of strength some would be getting a thousand a year and some £10 a year, while on the grounds of ability I should see some of my hon. Friends getting very high rates and some of my opponents getting very low rates. But we do not do that; we have a good principle of saying equal work for equal pay. All of us get the same pay whatever our virtues or vices may be. It is a good principle which might be extended. The



[Mr. West.]

State is a great employer and ought to be a model employer. We ought to point the way, and in respect of Civil servants, teachers and other employes where they are doing equal work we ought to put into operation the principle of equal pay. I do not suppose that there is a great deal of hope that this principle will be put into operation in the near future. But I believe that next week we are going to have a reconstructed Cabinet, and that there will be a more Socialist Prime Minister. A diehard reactionary Tory will be replaced by a more moderate and liberal Prime Minister, one who will have much more go in him, much more vigour and much more humanitarianism than the old Prime Minister had. I hope that he will begin his term of office by looking into this question. I hope also that the Parliamentary Secretary, who also has humane ideas, will support him, so that the last act of the National Government before it is defeated in a few weeks' time will be to bring into operation this great principle of equal pay for equal work.

12.58 p.m.

**The PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY to the MINISTRY of LABOUR (Mr. R. S. Hudson):** I understand, Mr. Speaker, that several other hon. Members wish to catch your eye in this Debate, but that they want to speak about this particular subject with special reference to equal pay in the Civil service, to which the Financial Secretary to the Treasury will reply. Perhaps therefore it would be convenient to the House if I spoke now on the broader aspects in relation to women in industry and left the narrower question to my hon. Friend. I noticed that none of the speakers to-day was unwise enough to commit himself to the question of what equal work was. Hon. Members equally refrained from endeavouring to suggest how you could get equal pay for equal work, and what steps the Government could or should take to secure that particular end. In this subject people are very apt to draw general conclusions from particular instances, and I think the first thing that one wants to ask oneself is whether in fact people do not get equal pay for equal work in industry at the moment. What is equal work? A Committee of the Government which examined the matter in 1919 asked

the very pertinent question of how on earth you could measure the work of a coal miner and the work of a nursery maid.

Let us look at what is actually happening in industry. We have at the moment in industry a large number of trade boards which fix minimum rates of pay. If you look at these minimum rates of pay, you will find in the case of the hourly time rate that in the majority of cases the hourly time rates for women are lower than the hourly time rates for men, but in the majority of cases you find that the processes that are the subject of these time rates are not the same, and so there is no question there of unequal pay for equal work. If you take the question of piece work, again you will find that for women and men the processes are not the same, and therefore you cannot argue from that that women are not getting equal pay for equal work. But where you find that the processes are the same you will find in the majority of cases that the piece rates are the same.

If you pursue your investigations out of the range of industries where trade boards apply and take the industries which are subject to voluntary collective agreements, there again you will find that where the rates which are the subject of agreements are for particular processes, in the overwhelming majority of cases the processes are performed either by men or women where the rates agreed on are different. You will find in the vast majority of cases where the process is the subject of an agreed piece rate, it is the same for men and women. There is no difference between the rates of wages for men and women. In other words, where the output is the same the rate of wages is the same. That is particularly the case in the weaving industry, where you have a common rate for men and women. In certain cases women actually earn more than men, but in the majority of cases where the rate is the same, men earn more than women because they attend to more looms and require less ancillary help than women. Therefore, you can say that taking industry as a whole there is not this disparity which is commonly alleged to exist.

Let me turn to the other argument, that women are displacing men. There again people are very apt to argue from

one or two instances, and the conclusions that they draw are, I hope to show the House, wrong. I do not think that it can be said with any truth to-day that, taking the last 10 years, women have materially displaced men in industry. The hon. Member for North Hamersmith (Mr. West) quoted some figures showing the change between 1913 and 1934. But the interesting thing if you go back as far as 1911 is that 1911 was the end of a period of 20 years in which men in industry had been increasing faster than women. The percentage of men occupied in industry for the period 1881-1911 actually rose, and the fact that since 1911 there has been a tiny increase in the proportion of women, as compared with men, a difference of one per cent.—as between an increase of 15½ per cent. for women and 14½ per cent. for men—really is not a material factor to-day, when you take account of the enormous changes that are going on in industry generally. Some hon. Member suggested that women were displacing men because they did repetitive work more cheaply than men. I do not know that, taking industry as a whole, there is any real justification for that statement. Our information is rather that where women have displaced men in purely repetitive work, the reason is more that they do it more efficiently and that they are better adapted for purely repetitive work than are men, and that that is one of the main reasons for their engagement.

**Mr. LANSBURY:** Lower wages.

**Mr. HUDSON:** I have no doubt lower wages have something to do with it, but they are by no means so important a factor as is commonly supposed. The fact remains that women do repetitive work in many instances better than the men.

**Viscountess ASTOR:** What about telephones?

**Mr. HUDSON:** They would still do the work in many cases even if they got the same or higher wages, because they are more efficient at that particular kind of work. I would like to return to the question whether or not, if we take industry as a whole, women have displaced men. Some very striking figures were quoted three or four years ago showing that the number of women at work in this country had increased over the

previous ten years and that the increase was much greater than the increased number of men. I think the inference drawn was that women were displacing men, but that was not due to women displacing men; it was due to the fact that the industries in which men were predominantly at work, namely, the heavy industries, were those which were suffering most from the narrowing down of international trade, and that the industries which employed most women were industries which had developed especially since the war and which were still developing.

But if you take the figures for any considerable period, which is the least you can do to get a real picture of what is happening in industry, you will find that the proportion of men employed has not increased now compared with what it used to be. Furthermore, what is more striking still, if you take the big industry which has resulted in an increase of women, namely, the distributive trade, you will find that the number of males engaged in the distributive trade has increased by 73 per cent. in the past 11 years, and the number of females by only 48 per cent.; in other words, in that one trade, which is always quoted as the trade in which women are displacing men, the fact of the matter is that the number of men employed has increased proportionately much more than the number of women. If you take the list of trade in this country in which the number of women employed has increased, you will find that in every one of them, with the exceptions of electric lamps and accessories, professional workers, and tailors, all three of which are comparatively small groups, the proportion of men engaged in those trades has not fallen in the last ten years. I hope that will show the House that the idea which is commonly held about the displacement of men by women is not borne out when you take the real facts of the case over any period of years, and although I should like to have developed the case at considerably greater length, I hope I have said enough to show that there is not the same cause for apprehension as some hon. Members seem to think.

1.11 p.m.

**Major HILLS:** I want to deal with the Civil Service, but first I want to say a word with regard to the speech to which



[Major Hills.]

we have just listened. My hon. Friend the Parliamentary Secretary asked what was equal work. In the Civil Service men and women enter by the same examinations, do the same work, and do not get the same pay. Then he made an admission which to me destroyed a large part of the case which he built up. He told the House that in certain cases of repetition work women are more efficient than men. Then why, may I ask him, do they receive lower pay? That is our case. Nobody asks that women doing less efficient work than men should receive the same pay.

**Mr. HUDSON:** I did specifically say that in those agreements the details of which we knew in the vast majority of cases where the work is similar the piece rates are the same.

**Major HILLS:** Certainly they are. But the case we make is one of equal pay for equal work. To come back to the Civil Service, I will deal very shortly with the history of this question. In 1920 and 1921 the House passed two Resolutions in favour of equal pay. I may add in passing that the 1920 Resolution was supported by the present Minister of Health, and the 1921 Resolution was seconded by the Secretary of State for India, so that we ought to have two very good friends within the Cabinet on this question. The second Resolution, the 1921 Resolution, put off the consideration of equal pay in the Civil Service for three years. It stated that the remuneration of women compared with men was to be reviewed within a period not exceeding three years. That promise of review was given and was not fulfilled for eight years, though many Members of the House, including myself, pressed the Government very hard on the point, and the only review that was given was the appointment of the Royal Commission in 1929, the Tomlin Commission, which stated that they were divided about equally on the question of equal pay, and so they left that question exactly where it was when they were appointed and exactly where it was in 1920. The 15 years that have gone by since 1920 have seen on the whole a worsening of the women's position compared with that of the men.

I want to make an appeal to my hon. Friend the Financial Secretary. I shall not make that appeal on the same

grounds as those on which such appeals are sometimes made, namely, that his heart and intention is with us but that his official position prevents him carrying out what he would like to do. I think that that is rather an undignified appeal to make. I appeal to him as one who is sincerely of the modern mind, who sees these questions with the present outlook, and I am certain that, as far as the responsibilities of his great office allow him, he will help to bring about equality in pay between men and women. The 1918 Parliament passed those two Resolutions calling on the Government to pay men and women equally. That Parliament was a much criticised body, and I have heard it described as composed of hard-faced men who had done well out of the War, but it did something for women that other Parliaments had not done. It passed the Sex Disqualification (Removal) Act and two declarations in favour of equal pay.

I will not go through the usual reasons that are given for refusing equal pay. I do not believe that the family argument, the argument that a man's responsibilities are more than a woman's, carries much weight nowadays. It is all very well on the surface, but if you follow those women who are paid less than men into their homes, and see what they have to pay to their families, you will find that their responsibilities are very much more in many cases than those of a married man. Nor will I deal with the argument that women are an inferior class, always inefficient compared with men, and always lucky even to get lower pay for the same work. All the women's organisations have spoken with one voice in this matter. They want the best person to get a job, whether a man or a woman, and I believe that the effect of equal pay will be to differentiate trades as between men and women. There are certain trades which will remain or become predominantly men's trades, and certain trades which will be largely staffed by women. Nobody asks for equal pay for unequal work. I said a moment ago that the last 15 years had seen a worsening of the woman's position in the Civil Service, and I asked the sympathetic attention of my hon. Friend to this. I do not believe that it is intentional, but it is real. A series of discriminations have taken place against women. These are small in themselves,

but their cumulative effect is great. Still more, the moral effect is not to be disregarded.

I will take one or two cases. In the present year new scales were put in force for employment clerks in employment exchanges. The pay was increased and both women and men benefited. The women, however, lost equality with men at the age of 19 instead of at the age of 22. In most of the classes where men and women work together their pay runs level from starting until the age of 22, and then the women begin to fall slowly behind and they get further behind as they get older. In the case to which I am referring, the equality used to prevail until 22, and it was now fixed at 19. Two years ago a very glaring case took place. Sir Alfred Yarrow made a gift of an experimental tank to the National Physical Laboratory. Sir Alfred Yarrow was a great shipbuilder, and the tank was for the purpose of experimenting with model ships. He made it a condition that the staff should receive equal pay. At that time there was a very distinguished woman who was, I think, in charge; at any rate, she was high up in the staff. In many cases before he had made his gift the pay of women was equal to that of men, but since 1st April, 1933, in spite of that promise, new scales have been introduced which involve for every grade but one a heavy reduction of the salaries payable to women before 1933.

A common thing is for scales of pay of both sexes to be increased together—women like increases as men do—but alongside the increases we find an increased differentiation between men and women. My hon. Friend will remember that a short time ago he answered a question whether women who were in charge of a department employing men were receiving a smaller rate of remuneration than the men whom they controlled, and the answer was that it only happened rarely. It ought not to happen at all. It is entirely wrong. It puts a woman in a wrong position because it puts her in the position of being a sort of inferior man, of being there by grace and favour, of being permitted to be there so long as she will accept smaller pay instead of having all the equality which she requires. I am sure that my hon. Friend will admit that a woman in charge of a department containing

men has, in any case, a very difficult position to fill, and her position ought not to be made more difficult by smaller pay.

I come now to one reason why equal pay is refused. The Treasury told the Tomlin Commission that the cost of treating men and women equally would be between £2,500,000 and £3,500,000 a year. The figures for the Ministry of Labour which employs about one-tenth of the women in the Civil Service have been got out for me. If the women were paid equally, and the extra cost was multiplied by 10, the cost, if the pay is confined to what are known as the Treasury grades, comes to only £440,000 a year. The Treasury grades are the administrative, executive and clerical grades. If equal pay is extended to all grades common to men and women, I am told that the cost is under £1,000,000 a year. Where does the difference lie between the £1,000,000 and the £2,500,000 to £3,500,000? I think it lies in the fact that the Treasury include women who do the work that is not accepted as common work, the women employed, for instance, in the manipulative grades in the Post Office. I should like to see them get more money, of course, but I do not ask, on the question of equal pay, for more than equality in grades common to men and women, where the men and women do the same work. My hon. and gallant Friend the Member for Hexham (Colonel Brown), who made such an able and brilliant speech a short time ago, showed very clearly, in spite of what my hon. Friend on the Treasury Bench said, that women are replacing men in industry. If any Member of this House likes to go round to some of the nursery clinics in London he will find that it is common for the father to bring the baby to be weighed because the mother is at work. The same thing is happening to a smaller degree in the Civil Service.

I do not want to exaggerate this case, because it has been exaggerated. A large number of civil servants enter the service by way of the competitive examinations for men and women equally, and in all those cases women get an equal chance with men, according to their brains and ability they get a higher or lower place in the examination. There you are not decreasing the women by paying them less, except that you can possibly say



[Major Hills.]  
 the attractions are smaller for women, but in the lower classes of the Civil Service a movement is taking place which will lead to the replacement of men by women. The lowest class of all is the writing assistant class, confined to women. There are no men in that. The next above that is the clerical class, in which men also are employed. I am told that it is the intention of the Treasury to grade down certain clerical work formerly done by clerical members, comprising men as well as women to the writing assistant work. The effect of that would be that work that was before regarded as common to the two sexes is to be done by women alone. Further, I am told, though I hope it is not true, that the Government mean to start a sub-writing assistant class in which they will take girls of 14½ or 15½. I hope that is not the real intention of the Government. Those children ought to be at school, and we hope they will be soon. The Government ought not to employ either boys or girls at 14½. I do not want the Civil Service to be confined entirely to women. I have pleaded for the women for a great many years, but the last thing I want to see is a Civil Service entirely composed of women. I want it to be a service for men and women, each giving their best to the State.

A very significant resolution was passed on the 4th June by the Association of First Division Civil Servants in favour of equal pay. It was carried by an overwhelming majority. They represent the higher officials in all Departments and they are very largely men. A few women are included among the high officials, but very few. They passed that resolution, no doubt, partly because they felt their own position was being imperilled. But it is not only a question of pay. There are bigger things than pay. I assure my hon. Friend that this is a great movement, which was started a long time ago and was helped on by the Sex Disqualification Removal Act, and further helped, I freely admit, by the Treasury admitting men and women on equal terms, but which will not be satisfied until women are paid equally. It is not only a question of pay, as I have said, but a question of self-respect and of their position in the modern world. They regard, and I regard too, unequal

pay as archaic, something that ought not to exist in this country.

By the action of the Government women have been admitted, on the same examinations, to work alongside men and to do the same work as men. If you do not want them to do the same work turn them out, confine the service to men, but do not at the same time say, "You are welcome to come in, the door is open to you, but as soon as the door is open you step down into a lower storey than the men." Do not do that. I do not think you can maintain that position, whatever the extra cost will be. May I say, in passing, that when I said a moment ago that £1,000,000 was the final cost of assimilating common grades that £1,000,000 would be reached only in the eighth year; the cost in the first two or three years would be very small. Again I appeal to my hon. Friend. Let him help as far as he can. I am not expecting everything in a day, I do not look for miracles. What I ask for is careful consideration and sympathetic re-examination of the whole question, and then I believe he will come to the conclusion that no modern and self-respecting Government can continue to pay women unequally with men.

1.33 p.m.

**Sir PERCY HARRIS:** I do not intend to detain the House very long, especially as my noble Friend the Member for the Sutton Division (Viscountess Astor), who is far better qualified to speak on this subject, is anxious to give her views; but I do want to endorse what has been said by that great champion of women's rights my right hon. Friend the Member for Ripon (Major Hills). Women could not have found anybody better to put their case. In fact, it is always a surprise to me that such a sound and experienced Parliamentarian is not included in either a National Government or a Conservative Government. He would be an acquisition to any Cabinet and keep it sound on many progressive problems. It is a good thing to have this very live issue ventilated in the House of Commons, but I think it is a pity that this should be the only occasion. Not only is it the occasion of the Adjournment of the House for the Whitsun holidays, when many Members are away whom we might have converted to our point of view, but it is the dying day of a Government. I will

not say that many Ministers will disappear from the Treasury Bench, but they will perhaps be promoted to higher posts or transferred to different spheres. At any rate, most Ministers are in a state of transition, and even if my hon. Friend who so ably represents the Treasury were sympathetic he could not commit the new Government. I hope that he will be in the new Government and will be able to exert some influence.

My hon. Friend reminded the House that the remarkable thing about the 1918 Parliament, the reputation of which is much criticised and which has never been lauded as a great and progressive Parliament, was that it nevertheless gave a very clear lead on this issue. It passed resolutions which are in the archives of Parliament for all time in favour of equality between the sexes. The reason is very simple; that Parliament was very much nearer to the war than we are, and the memory of it was fresher to them. Sex disqualification had almost disappeared in many spheres of industrial and social life. Women were able to discharge men's duties efficiently. The younger members of the House of Commons to-day have forgotten the women omnibus conductors and the women workers in munition factories. Such facts inspired the resolutions between 1918 and 1920. I am glad the Secretary for Mines is here, because in a short time he may be interested in this problem.

It is a mistake to think that the problem is becoming less urgent than it was 15 years ago. On the contrary, the issue is disturbing the working and middle classes and other sections of the community. I remember when, not so very long ago, you never saw a woman in the City of London. A skirt was very conspicuous on the underground railway.

**Viscountess ASTOR:** It will be again.

**Sir P. HARRIS:** In the streets of the City of London to-day you can see almost as many women as men, and their number is growing. Before 1914, employment of women in the banks of the City of London was almost unknown, but to-day women are rapidly displacing men in the banks. That is not because of any question of pay, but because of a change in the methods of performing clerical work. This is an issue which

sooner or later the Ministry of Labour and the Government will have to face, because it is introducing new problems and causing conflict, irritation and bad feeling even among families and in the homes of the people as well as in our industrial life. The Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Labour quoted a great number of statistics, but I often think that statistics are used to confuse issues rather than to clarify them. It is fair to say that women are equally employed between what I think is technically called personal labour or more rightly domestic service and clerical labour.

It is a very significant and curious thing that domestic service is the one occupation in which men are displacing women. The reason is that there has been so much unemployment in the heavy industries, such as mining and shipbuilding, that working men had to master their prejudices and go into domestic service or into service in hotels and restaurants. The serious problem arises in the clerical occupations, where the inrush of women is causing great dissatisfaction among a large body of men, many of whom have been thrown out of employment. The Financial Secretary to the Treasury may rightly say that that is not his business, that he cannot alter that situation and that an alteration would need a revolution in our industrial system. The Government can, however, do something among their own employées.

We want the Government to give a lead by making it clear to the country that if they employ women to do men's work it is not on account of cheapness. That is practically all that we ask. If there be a sphere of work in the Civil Service for which women are most qualified, and which is almost entirely done by women, nobody could take objection to the payment of the correct pay for women, but where women are doing men's work and doing it efficiently, they should not be required to take lower pay on account of their sex. It is not merely the women in the Civil Service who make this demand but also the men who say that the Government's desire for economy may give rise to a preference for women in order that the Government may save money. We ask the Government to face that issue. Perhaps the most



[Sir P. Harris.]  
serious aspect of it is in some of the higher administrative posts. It is a degradation for a woman who is in charge of a big department and holds a responsible post if she is paid less because she is a woman than some of the men under her and whom she has to supervise. I ask the Financial Secretary to the Treasury to advise the new Government of the feeling in the House of Commons among all sections that the Government should face up to this question.

1.43 p.m.

**Viscountess ASTOR:** The case for equal pay for equal work has been put so extraordinarily well by the men that it seems as though the women do not need to speak. The men have spoken for the women. My hon. and gallant Friend the Member for Hexham (Colonel Brown), who made a most interesting speech, was followed by that well-known champion of women the right hon. and gallant Gentleman the Member for Ripon (Major Hills). I do not suppose that any man in the whole of England has been a more consistent supporter of the rights of women or has had more political vision both where women are concerned and where the Government is concerned, than he. Perhaps he has too much vision to be put in the Government. Perhaps he sees things too clearly, and would be uncomfortable. I sometimes think that Prime Ministers, when choosing their Cabinets, select people who will be comfortable followers and not people who would set up a light that might make it uncomfortable for some men who still want to sit in darkness. There are plenty of such men in this House and a good many of them in the Government, some of them fairly young. At one time I used to talk a good deal about the young men, but I have come to the conclusion that I would rather have an old man with the courage of his convictions than a young man without convictions. I do not want to be personal—and I am not personal. We were horrified by the speech of the Parliamentary Secretary. One woman in the gallery has sent me a note in which she says:

“As far as I could hear the Parliamentary Secretary's speech, every word he said was false and every figure he gave was wrong.”

That is from a woman who knows a good deal about this question. The

statistics that he gave were entirely off the point as far as we are concerned, and to deal with what he said would take us still more off the point. All that we are asking is that the Government, in their employment, should give a lead which we hope industry would follow. The Parliamentary Secretary, in speaking of the question of equal pay for equal work, talked about coal-miners and nursery-maids. It is hardly worthy of a young man with a future to make so misleading and futile and ridiculous a speech. All that we say is that, if you are employing a coal-miner or a nursery-maid, they should be paid equally whether they are men or women. If you want a man nursery-maid, pay him as much as a woman nursery-maid; or if you want a woman coal-miner, pay her as much as a man coal-miner.

The hon. Gentleman talked a great deal about women in industry, but many women in industry are unorganised, and it is those unorganised women who are getting such low pay. In the textile industry, naturally women are doing well, because they have always been organised with the men; but what about the catering trades? What about domestic service? What about agriculture, which is a large employer of women—the third largest industry in the country in which women are employed? I do not think you will find women getting equal pay with men in agriculture. I am very disappointed at the hon. Gentleman's speech, and am sorry he is not here, because I had a few more things that I should have liked to say to him, but I would never hit a man when he is at luncheon.

The case which has been made out is almost a fool-proof case, and I wish more members had been here to hear it. The right hon. Gentleman the Member for Ripon spoke about the position of women in the House of Commons of 1919, and how even that House of Commons, which we all know was pretty reactionary, passed a resolution on the subject of equal pay for equal work. Indeed, some of us found it easier in that House even than this to put forward our views on this matter. It is true that it was just after the War, and men had seen that women were not to be treated as futile, half-witted creatures from the point of view of citizenship. Men had come to realise that we had some rights and were

of some use to the country. What strikes me as strange is that, after all these years, we are still having to press this question of equal pay for equal work.

The right hon. Gentleman the Member for Ripon has said that no Government wants equal pay for unequal work, but that is not the case; that is exactly what this Government wants, and what all Governments want—unequal pay for equal work. We know that equal pay for equal work has got to come. When we are told about the cost, we say that any Government that can give £7,000,000 a year for a Beet Sugar Subsidy can afford to give to its own employes equal pay for equal work. As long as the Government have that amount of money in the Treasury we are never going to be put off with a million here and a million there. The Government have to clear up their own House as far as these subsidies are concerned before they tell us that they have not the money for what everyone must admit is simple justice.

I myself am rather alarmed at the way in which women are crowding out men in certain industries. We do not want to see men having to go into domestic service, or bringing babies into welfare clinics. We do not like it any more than you do. We want women to be women, and men to be manly. It is because of the unmanly attitude of men in the past that they are now finding themselves in domestic work. If men had fought from the beginning for equal pay for equal work, that would never have been necessary. Even the men school teachers are now getting worried, because they see that they themselves are being brought down by the depression of women's wages. We ought not to move from the point of view of fear, but from the point of view of justice. After all, women are not asking for mercy—we give mercy—but they are asking for justice. Hon. Members talk about women in politics, and say that perhaps they have not done so well, but really, in view of the short time that we have been in politics, I think we have done remarkably well, and I warn the House that it is nothing to what we are going to do. Although women may not have had the training that men have had, and perhaps have not the same ability for collecting facts and in

other ways, we are getting that training, and what we have, which is far more important sometimes than facts, is moral courage which, surely, in politics, is more needed than facts.

I would ask the Parliamentary Secretary, who, I know, at heart used to be with us, but the Front Bench has the most devastating effect on hearts—I ask him and the young men in the Government to press on the Government this question of justice for women. That is what we expect them to do; and I would also ask some of the middle-aged men who are going to be in the new Government to do the same. All of them sooner or later will go back to their constituencies. They may come back here again, and, if they do, they will come back pledged to give equal pay for equal work. But what is the good of anybody pledging themselves to it unless they are going to fight for it in the House of Commons? If hon. Members in this Chamber this afternoon would speak if they have convictions in this matter—I do not want them to speak unless they have convictions—they would have an effect on the Government. That is what we are here for—to change the minds of the Government when the minds of the Government are wrong; and the minds of the Government are certainly wrong when it comes to this question of unequal pay for equal work as far as women are concerned.

When I look back on the kind of women that have fought for equality, and see what vision they had, I am sometimes depressed by the kind of men that women have put in the House of Commons. Women like Florence Nightingale, Josephine Butler, and Octavia Hill fought for equality of opportunity because they knew that women had something to give to the country. No country in the world has profited more by the work of women than England. I believe that the fact that England stands where she does in the world is largely due to women's work since the War. It is important to notice, in connection with this question of the status of women throughout Europe, the way in which women are being pushed down. It is very alarming. In all auto-crat countries we find that they are doing their best to get women out of all the higher occupations and push them down to domestic service and child-bearing. We know that that would never



[Viscountess Astor.]

be the policy of any Government in this country, but, if our Government at this moment would once more reaffirm its belief in the necessity for equality, they would not only be helping women here, but would be helping women throughout the world, and we who are interested in this women's movement throughout the world want to help those other women, because ultimately we believe that if ever we are going to get peace it is coming through the political activities of the women of other countries as well as our own.

I beg of the Government to be bold now that they are making changes and to risk taking this step, even though it may cost a million pounds. It will not hurt them in the end; it will do far more good than a lot of their subsidies, and it will show us and the nation that the women were right in backing the National Government. I hope that we shall have the chance of doing it again, and by adopting the right attitude to-day you will be a tremendous help to us women who go about the country saying that the National Government have done wonderful things, and are going to do even more wonderful things in the future. I appeal to the Financial Secretary to the Treasury to ask the members of the Cabinet to read the speeches that have been made in the House to-day, and to divorce from their minds the prejudice which seems to cling not only in the mind of some of the males, but also in the minds of females. I do not say that the prejudice against women is felt only by men. We have some hon. Members in this House who take an anti-woman's view. I ask all to put away prejudice and to face the facts. Until we succeed in getting equal pay for the sexes, the tendency will be to pull down the wages of the men, which is the last thing in the world we ought to do.

The right hon. Gentleman the Leader of the Opposition referred to a book which I have not read, and which must have been written by an extreme woman, who said that she hoped the time was coming when women would do all the work of the world and the men would stay at home nursing babies. But until the men have the babies we had better face the facts. They may not be mothers in this world, but they are certainly going to be mothers in the next. That has always been one of

my hopes, and when that happy time comes perhaps they will take a more reasonable view. We who are feminists and have fought for women do not believe in the extremist view. We want women to go on playing a womanly part. We want them to marry when they desire to marry, and to have children when they want to have children. That is a matter for them to settle and no one else. We think that that is not a question upon which you can legislate. We are up against a very dangerous movement in the younger generation of both men and women, and we ask the Government to take the middle-aged sailor point of view and not to play into the hands of the extremist by being unfair and unjust. To be unjust is to play into the hands of the extremist. Give women justice and judge us by our abilities. Pay us according to our abilities, and, above all, stick to your promises and to the pledges which were made by every Member, I think, who has ever come into this House. We are all pledged in favour of equal pay for equal work, and we can force the Government to give it. I appeal not to the Government, but to Members of the House of Commons, stand by your pledges, and stand by the strongest section of your supporters, the women workers.

1.59 p.m.

**Miss RATHBONE:** After listening to the Noble Lady, I should like to bring the House back to a few jog-trot facts. It has been one of the satisfactory features of the Debate that this claim has been put forward quite as much in the interests of men as of women. It is the claim of all those who strive to bring about equal pay for equal work, in the Civil Service and in industry, that the object is to safeguard the rights of men as well as to secure equal opportunities for women. We find that where equal opportunities are secured, as they are in the Civil Service through the sex disqualification removal, invariably the equality is falsified so long as it is accompanied by unequal rates of pay for equal work. There is always that undercurrent of motive in the minds of those who have appointments to make, on the one hand, to economise by appointing women, or, on the other hand, that men have a kind of natural right to the better jobs because of their

greater responsibilities. The first defence, the economic argument, and the second, the danger of unfair competition between the sexes, would be swept away if the Government would set an example to other employers and grant equality of pay.

I want to draw attention to the other side of the picture. I do not think that anything is gained by refusing to face the facts. There is no doubt that at the bottom of the minds of many men the one argument that applies strongly against both equal opportunity and equal pay is the feeling that men's family responsibilities entitle them to a higher scale of remuneration. That was dealt with rather lightly by one or two of the previous speakers. It is obvious that it is not universally true that the burden of families only rests upon men. A very large proportion of men have no families to keep, and quite a considerable proportion of the women have some burden of dependency. Let us frankly face the fact that men do bear the much greater burden of dependency because the greater part of the cost of rearing the future generation falls upon them. The suggestion which I want to put forward and to ask the Financial Secretary to consider very seriously is whether, when the subject is gone into—I cannot think that there is very much hope that we shall get an immediately favourable reply; and all that the right hon. and gallant Gentleman the Member for Ripon (Major Hills) asked was for a thorough consideration—the path we have prepared might not be smoothed, and the greatest difficulty which stands in the way met if the Treasury would consider, in connection with equal pay, some system of family allowances for children where men or women of the Civil Service have children to keep.

Proverbially a little experience is often worth a pound of theory, and is it not worth while at least looking at the experience of other countries who have adopted the principle of equal pay? A few years ago we discovered, at any rate, that there was equal pay for women and men in Austria, Belgium, the Netherlands, France, Germany, Yugoslavia, Norway and Sweden, and in all those countries it was accompanied either by marriage or children's allowances. A circular was sent out to all confederations

of civil servants in a number of these countries, and from Belgium, Czechoslovakia, Germany, France and the Netherlands, in every case, except in the case of the Netherlands, where there happened to be two associations, the reply was that the system of family allowances, coupled with equal pay, was acceptable to confederations of Civil servants and worked well and smoothly. One of the Dutch organisations took that view, and the other took the contrary view. It is obvious that you would clear away a good deal of the difficulties in the shape of equal pay if some system of that kind could be adopted, so that we do not only secure equal pay for them but equal standards of life for all people who are doing the same kind of job. You do not always secure an equal standard of life even if you secure equal monetary remuneration, if it just happens that one person getting, say, £500 a year has only himself or herself to keep and the other has a wife and several young children to keep. Knowing that the House is anxious to pass to another subject, I will not detain it much longer, but I would beg the Financial Secretary to the Treasury to go very carefully into this question. One word as to the cost. Many people who discuss this subject for the first time are apt to entertain very exaggerated ideas of the extra burden that would be imposed if the present rates of pay were accompanied by family allowances.

**Mr. MORGAN:** Can the hon. lady say whether in the countries she has mentioned where they have family allowances the tendency has been or has not been to reduce the general standard of the rates of pay?

**Miss RATHBONE:** I can answer that question, but I cannot pretend that my information is completely up-to-date. Obviously, conditions have changed, particularly in countries like Austria and Germany. We tried honestly to get the facts and we have nowhere been able to find evidence that where family allowances were introduced they have either led to a lowering of the general rate of pay or are alleged to have led to such a lowering, by the trade unions or other federations in the countries concerned. Family allowances for public servants exist in every European country except Russia, Turkey and this country. There



[Miss Rathbone.]

is one organisation which has adopted the system of family allowances, and it is the only organisation entirely devoted to the study of economics. I refer to the London School of Economics, the largest constituent college of the London University. Ten years ago they adopted a system of allowances for children on the basis of £30 a year from the child's birth to the age of 13, and £60 a year from the age of 13 till the child has left the university, if it was at a university. The total cost of that system works out at about three per cent. of the salaries bill. We estimated what it would cost for secondary and technical school teachers and we worked it out that it would amount to very much the same sum, namely about three per cent. on the salaries. I do not know anything about the incidence in the Civil Service, but it is obvious that the birth-rate has been falling rapidly in both classes and more so as you go up in the social scale. I do not put this forward as an obstacle to equal pay, which demand is based on justice, but I believe that the actual application of the principle of equal pay and its smooth working would be greatly facilitated if the Financial Secretary would go very carefully into the question of accompanying equal pay with family allowances for people in the Civil Service, whether men or women.

2.10 p.m.

**The FINANCIAL SECRETARY to the TREASURY (Mr. Duff Cooper):** One of the greatest disadvantages of the office that I hold is the frequency with which my answers are necessarily in the negative. We have had a Debate to-day in which nearly every hon. Member who has spoken has taken the same view. We had the clearly reasoned logic of the right hon. and gallant Member for Ripon (Major Hills) and the impassioned and moving oratory of the noble Lady the Member for the Sutton Division of Plymouth (Viscountess Astor), and we have just had very interesting suggestions from the hon. Lady the Member for the English Universities (Miss Rathbone), which I can assure her will receive every consideration. I can assure the House that the Government will necessarily pay attention to the views expressed by so many hon. Members with such force, but that is all that I can undertake to-day. As my right hon. Friend anticipated,

the first ground for refusal to take action on the lines suggested at the present time is a financial one. He very ingeniously showed that the figure which should be accepted as the additional cost of such a change of policy has been much exaggerated. I am not in a position to say whether or not his figures are correct or whether we should abide by the old figures, but the argument against spending £3,000,000 applies with equal force against spending £1,000,000. The argument applies with equal force against spending money unnecessarily whether the sum be large or small.

Other governments have said that they were not in a position owing to their finances to indulge in such expenditure. We are now in a better financial position than those previous governments, and one of the reasons why we are in a better position is because we have continued to say "no" to a demand such as that which has been made to-day, and we have by sound finance enabled the financial situation of the country to recover. I do not want hon. Members to think that I am making the proposition that if it were not for the extra cost we should accept their suggestion, and that we are in any way pledged to the principle underlying it. The demand has been summed up in the cry: "Equal pay for equal work." Very often a slogan is extremely misleading, and the words "Equal pay for equal work" are misleading, because they imply what appears to be an obvious justice, namely, that two people doing exactly the same work should receive exactly the same remuneration whatever their sex. I would suggest that we should get nearer to the truth and we should be able to form a juster conception of the whole problem, because it is a problem, if instead of saying "Equal pay for equal work" we said, "Equal pay for equal value."

I am not going to enter into the thorny topic whether some women in some cases are less valuable or whether in some cases they are more valuable than men. The right hon. Gentleman has said that I have a modern mind. I have never taken the view that women are in any way inferior to men, but I have been old fashioned enough to stick to the opinion that they are entirely different from men, and the evidence of my eyes and my ears continues to confirm that

opinion. I am rash enough to believe that there are some tasks for which women are better fitted than men just as there are some tasks for which men are better fitted than women. The hon. and gallant Member who opened the debate gave instances, supported by figures in many industries, which go to prove that where women's pay approximate most closely to men's pay there were fewer women employed than men. As women's pay rises the demand for their labour decreases. I do not think that anyone has denied or can deny the fact that if we had complete equality of payment the number of women employed would be lowered. That can point to only one ultimate conclusion and that is that in the majority of cases employers would prefer if they could have it for the same money the work of a man to the work of a woman. Have employers a very good reason for this preference; or is it just an old-fashioned and narrow minded reason? We all know that old-fashioned narrow-minded views do not prevail for long in a commercial community which is out for profit. If there is a way of increasing their profits the commercial community will be quick to notice it.

We have found from our experience in the Civil Service that the same value is not obtained from female work, in the long run, as from male work. That is due to several causes. There is, first, the cause of health. Our figures show that the number of absentees on sick leave among women is 50 per cent. higher than among the males. We also know, as everybody must necessarily know, that for certain kinds of work where great endurance is needed, women are not as efficient as male workers. Figures also show that the number of those who leave under what is called marriage wastage is very much higher among women than among men, for the reason that more women decide to retire from business when they get married than do men. All these are definite reasons why the State, as well as other employers, get less value in the long run from female employment than from male employment.

**Viscountess ASTOR:** Will the hon. Member tell me whether there is a higher percentage of ill health in the higher grades of the Civil Service among women than there is among men?

**Mr. COOPER:** I have not the figures by me at the moment, but I feel very confident in saying I shall find in the higher grades as among the lower grades, that there are more absences owing to ill health among women than there are among men. We have been urged to set an example in this matter—to take the lead. The policy of the Government in this matter of fair wages has never been that we should go ahead of all employers. That is not the principle that any Government would accept. The principle is that we should be in the front rank, if not better than the best employers in the country, but not that we should be a long way ahead, because that would be unfair to industry by putting a strain upon industry. It is the duty of the Government to keep abreast, and when we are charged with any breach of the fair wages clause all our inquiries are directed to ascertain whether in any part of the country we are in the least behind the best employers. In this particular matter we have been ahead of rather than behind industry in admitting people first of all into the Service on entirely equal terms by examination and other ways. My hon. Friend mentioned one or two special cases which I have not had time to look into, but I will do so. He should bear in mind that in the Civil Service where there is any sign of a decision being taken which is unfair to the employes, there is already the remedy to their hands of the Whitley Council, which works admirably inside the Service, and which settles disputes almost every month of the year, a great many of which are entirely satisfactory to all parties.

I will not be so rash as to look into the future. We know that the position of women has changed in every way enormously in the last half century. The right hon. Gentleman the Leader of the Opposition told us of a book recently published in which it was said that women in the years to come were to rule the country, and in which a diminishing number of men would have become merely the spoilt darlings of women. Heaven forbid that I should do anything to prevent the advent of that happy time. I shall endeavour to play my part in it with resignation. Meanwhile, all that we can say is that the Government will continue to keep abreast of the times, will inquire into every complaint about



[Mr. Cooper.] any injustice to women Civil servants in their employment, and will certainly pay attention, as any Government must do, to the speeches which have been made by so many Members of the House. But they are not at present able to incur the expenditure, or to pledge themselves to a principle which is represented in this House and the country by a slogan which we do not believe truly represents the facts.

## AIR DEFENCE.

2.21 p.m.

**Mr. CHURCHILL:** I wish to divert the attention of the House from a topic which has aroused much interest here and out of doors, and which has been dealt with, if not disposed of, by the witty and terse speech of the Financial Secretary to the Treasury. I wish to draw the attention of the House and of the public to a question connected with air defence. The question is limited in its character. It has nothing to do, on the one hand, with the present method of defence, namely, counter-attack, the only method which exists at present, the belief that by having adequate air forces such a deterrent may be imposed upon a potentially hostile State that bomb-dropping, especially upon defenceless areas, will not be pressed. The point I am raising has nothing to do with that. Neither has it anything to do with that other large sphere of air defence, namely, the organising of the civil population in case of air raids, the provision of shelters, the provision of gas masks and so forth. This point is limited, and largely technical and scientific in its character. Nevertheless, I venture to think that it is important in character. It is concerned with the methods which can be invented, adopted or discovered to enable the earth to control the air, to enable defence from the ground to exercise control—domination—upon aeroplanes high above the surface.

This, naturally, must be a technical matter, but I am not going to tire the House by involving it in detailed technicalities. I will make only one or two observations upon that point. I have not been able to feel at all satisfied that the limits of the usefulness of artillery have been reached. It is quite true that in the great war, as every hon. Member who took part is aware, an enormous number

of shells were fired at aeroplanes without, as far as my recollection serves, or from what I have read, any aeroplane ever actually having been visibly brought down from a great height. In consequence, the anti-aircraft artillery has been generally discredited, but I think it would be well worth while to pursue that study carefully. The range of guns and the character of the projectiles which they fire should be most carefully considered. After all, an aeroplane, though a very formidable engine of war, is also a very fragile structure and an explosive charge no bigger than a small cigar is sufficient to bring down the most powerful aeroplane if it strikes a spar or the propeller, even a bird has been the cause of fatal accidents. Merely to fire at an aeroplane in the air is like trying to shoot a flying duck with a pea-rifle. What must be aimed at is not the hitting of the aeroplane but the creation of conditions in the air around the aeroplane which are extremely noxious if not destructive to it. For that purpose it is clear that the effect of the shell which is fired should not be momentary.

At present the moment after explosion a shell is useless, but suppose you were able to create conditions—I am not going into details—which make a considerable area very perilous to an aeroplane for an appreciable period of time, say five minutes, and suppose that a number of these shells were fired at the same time, a large space would become deadly to an aeroplane. That is only one line of inquiry, and there must be many more. The question of kite balloons, which was being hopefully examined in the last year of the war, is also another line which should be pursued, and matters of sound detection of the approach of an aeroplane and the range, and so forth, are also lines of inquiry which should be pursued. These are some of the more obvious aspects of the field of scientific inquiry, but no doubt there are many others which are not so well known.

My experience, and it is somewhat considerable is that in these matters when the need is clearly explained by military and political authorities science is always able to provide something. "Seek and ye shall find" has been borne out. We were told that it was impossible to grapple with submarines, but methods were found which enabled us to strangle the submarine below the water, a

problem no harder than that of clawing down marauding aeroplanes. Many things which were attempted in the war we were told were technically impossible, but patience, perseverance, and above all, the spur of necessity under war conditions, made men's brains act with greater vigour, and science responded to the demand. That being so, I venture to set this particular aspect of air defence in a position of primary importance on the research side. I agree that there is nothing which can offer any substitute for an equal or superior force, a readiness to retaliate, but, if you can discover some new method, the whole of our affairs would be greatly simplified.

Let me say a word about the past history of this subject. During last summer a number of letters were written to The "Times" newspaper by Professor Lindemann, prof. of physics at Oxford University, pointing out not only the possibility of scientific results being obtained in this sphere but dwelling upon its enormous importance to this and every other country. I had long conversations with him last autumn, and we endeavoured to bring the matter to the attention of His Majesty's Government. We made a pilgrimage to Aix-les-Bains, where we thought we had enthused the present Lord President of the Council upon the subject. He seemed to be most interested, but when we came back to London more difficulties arose and the matter seemed to hang in the balance. Many letters were written and interchanged, but no progress made. There was in existence at the Air Ministry an Air Ministry Committee on this subject, with scientists exploring the matter. This Committee was in existence at the time when the Air Ministry advised the Lord President of the Council to make the speech which made such a great impression two years ago, that there was really no defence, and, consequently, an air of giving up the problem undoubtedly rested on the department concerned. Although the Committee was still working, no real hope stimulated its onward progress.

What we thought was so necessary was the removal of this Committee from the Air Ministry and putting it under the Committee of Imperial Defence, where the heads of the Government, the most powerful politicians in this country,

would be able to superintend and supervise its actions, and also make sure that it was supplied with the necessary funds. What is £100,000 a year if you can discover some method which will make us more secure from this sudden and disturbing menace to civilisation? It is nothing at all. At this stage we were joined by the right hon. Member for West Birmingham (Sir A. Chamberlain), and we continued at intervals to address the Government on the subject. In February we had the good fortune to be received by the Prime Minister personally, and we laid our case before him with as much cogency and force as we could command. No difference of principle at all existed between us. The right hon. Gentleman was most sympathetic to the idea, and I thought that I made a considerable impression on him when I pointed out the peace aspect of this idea. Nothing would do more to remove some of the terrors and anxieties which overcloud the world than the removal of these surprise attacks on the civilian population. However, the Prime Minister found difficulty with the departments concerned in regard to the Committee which was already in existence. Everything went on in a very gradual progression and, finally, on 19th March the right hon. Member for West Birmingham had a personal interview with the Prime Minister in which he asked for a specific answer, as a result of which the Prime Minister told us that he was, shall I say, hardening his heart to overcome the department's resistance. In fact, he did not need to harden his heart, perhaps he was softening his heart to meet our supplications—

**The PRIME MINISTER (Mr. Ramsay MacDonald):** The right hon. Gentleman is wholly wrong.

**Mr. CHURCHILL:** His heart remained neither hardened nor softened: it continued to beat with its even tenor; its texture was in no way altered. The result was a satisfactory answer to the question, and the setting up of this new Committee, under the conditions we had desired. The Prime Minister said:

"We have, therefore, decided to appoint also a special sub-committee of the Committee of Imperial Defence through which the Air Ministry Committee will report to the Committee of Imperial Defence itself. This sub-committee will have the direction and control of the whole inquiry, and the necessary funds to carry out experiments



[Mr. Churchill.]  
and to make researches approved by this committee will be made available.”—  
[OFFICIAL REPORT, 19th March, 1935; col. 1005, Vol. 299.]

That was all we required. But I ventured to ask two days ago how often this Committee had met, and the answer I received was that it had met on no fewer than two occasions in the three months since it was set up. I do not know what was the last occasion on which the Committee met. When was it? I understand it was 27th May. There have been two meetings. I doubt very much whether that will be accepted by those who have interested themselves in this matter as at all a satisfactory result. Let us look back on this. Really the whole story is a slow-motion picture. Beginning in August, on this matter, about which there really can be very little argument once its importance is realised, we have got now to the middle of June. If a really scientific Committee had been set to work and funds provided for experiments, 20 important experiments would be under weigh by now, any one of which might yield results decisive in the whole of our defence problem.

I am raising this matter to-day with a view to stimulating and stirring on the action of that Committee. No doubt a great deal of material has been accumulated by the old Air Ministry Committee, but what we are arguing is a drive behind this work, not only that money should be freely supplied, but also, and more important, the personal energy of persons possessing real political power in the State. I have ventilated this topic and assigned to it the publicity and importance which it certainly requires, but I must in conclusion once more draw the attention of the House to the value that a discovery of this kind would have upon the whole of our affairs. It is not a matter which interests one nation alone. Every single nation in the world has an interest in this. I wonder that the League of Nations at Geneva does not offer an enormous monetary prize to stimulate inventors of any country to discover methods of bringing down the marauding aeroplane.

It is only in the 20th century that this hideous conception of inducing nations to surrender by terrorising the helpless

civil population and massacring the women and children; it is only in the 20th century that that vile idea has gained acceptance and countenance amongst men. If that continues one can clearly see that the conquest of the air may mean the subjugation of mankind and may mean the destruction of our civilisation. This is no national cause only. No, every country would feel safer if once it was found that the bombing aeroplane was at the mercy of appliances erected on the earth, and that haunting fear and suspicion which are leading nations more and more to the brink of another catastrophe would be abated by such a discovery. This island nation more than any other nation would gain by such a discovery.

We have not only to fear attacks upon our civilian population and our great cities, in respect of which we are more vulnerable than any other country in the world, but we have to fear attacks upon the dockyards and other technical establishments without which our Fleet, still an essential method of defence, might be paralysed or even largely destroyed. Therefore it is not only from the point of view of a world effort to eliminate one of the worst causes of suspicion and war, but from the point of view of restoring to us here in Great Britain the old security of our island, that this matter should receive and command the vigorous thought of the greatest men in our country and in our Government, and should be pressed forward by every resource that the science of Britain can apply or the funds and the wealth of the country can liberate.

2.51 p.m.

**The PRIME MINISTER:** I assure the right hon. Gentleman that the reflections he has made on what would likely happen if any Government neglected its duty in providing for air defence are not confined to himself. The Government are keenly alive to these dangers. The only question I have to answer is, are the Government taking steps to discover preventives and so protect the country against air attack in that particular direction? I was rather surprised that the right hon. Gentleman laid so much stress upon there having been only two meetings of the committee. The announcement of the appointment was

made on 19th March. I think I explained to him, when I saw him with the right hon. Member for West Birmingham (Sir A. Chamberlain), that this Committee was to be a co-ordinating committee. It was not to be an investigating Committee itself. Its duty as a Sub-committee of the Committee of Imperial Defence was to see that investigations were being pushed ahead with all due expedition, that the investigators were the very best scientific, practical and technical men upon whom the Government could lay their hands, that the work was carried on with as great expedition as possible, that the reports on the results of the work should be sent in as soon as they were ready, and that this co-ordinating Committee should study them, with further instructions, further investigation into the subject to be dealt with, new ideas to be experimented with, and so on.

A committee like that does not require to meet every day or every week. Since the Committee has met the investigation work has been speeded up most substantially. Its first duty was to collect the information which was available as to work already done, to collect ideas that have been experimented with or that had not yet reached experimental ripeness, and to see that in every respect where this question should be investigated and was being investigated no time was being lost, and that the results should be the product of the very best brains upon which they could lay their hands. It did not scrap any of the defence committees which were in existence. It would have been foolish if it had scrapped for instance the Tizard committee. That committee was a small one, and I think the less said about it in this House the better because I hope that whoever is here, or whoever is chairman of the Committee of Imperial Defence, will always remember the very wise injunction laid down by Mr. Arthur Balfour as he was at the time when he said that the work of the Committee of Imperial Defence must pre-eminently be secret work. Once anyone begins to give information here or there as to the details of its works, then it will be impossible to draw the line, and the Committee of Imperial Defence work will become changed in its character, because in the House of Commons information will have to be given in regard to the details of that work. The Tizard

Committee is composed of exactly the type of men with the type of experience and knowledge which such an investigation requires.

The right hon. Gentleman referred to Professor Lindemann. Professor Lindemann was asked to join that committee, and he replied that, pending the debate in the House of Commons, he would suspend his judgment, and there the matter stands. The fact of the matter is that this committee is working day by day on the most important questions involved in this investigation and its progress is very marked indeed. With that, the investigation committees attached to the various defence departments are also working. They are reporting to the committee which was announced on 19th March and that committee will meet as often as is necessary. It is under the chairmanship of a member of the Cabinet. There is another member of the Cabinet a member of that committee and representatives of industry, science and departmental knowledge are associated with it. I believe that the organisation is just precisely the organisation that is required to conduct these investigations.

As to the rest, the remarks which the right hon. Gentleman made regarding funds might be taken to mean that funds are not being supplied. May I assure the House that that is not the case. The statement made that the necessary funds would be supplied has been fully carried out and will be fully carried out in the days that are to come. The House need never fear that stinginess on the part of the Exchequer will hold up in any way investigations that are so vital to the well-being and safety of this country. This is a very fascinating subject, and one would like to go on enlarging upon what is being done. It is not because that is impossible that I am not going to try to do it, but it would certainly not be in the national interest. I would just like to say this, that in order that I might be sure that the contact which I have had up to to-day—with a very slight break—with this question was still up-to-date, and that I might be sure that I could describe my own experience of a short time ago as being possible for me to have to-day, if I had the time, I have had an interview with one of the most responsible of the investigators, and I am



[The Prime Minister.] authorised to say that thanks to the investigation over the whole field of air defence by those committees, this supervisory committee and the committee of scientists set up by the Air Ministry, I feel able to take an optimistic view of the outcome of these researches. I hope that this very limited statement may give the House the assurance to which it is entitled and which I give with pleasure.

**Sir AUSTEN CHAMBERLAIN:** The House will be grateful to my right hon. Friend the Member for Epping (Mr. Churchill) for initiating this discussion and will have received with satisfaction and with hope the statement of the Prime Minister and particularly its concluding words. When my right hon. Friend the President of the Council made that great speech on air warfare and the whole problem of the air nearly two years ago I found that the impression which it made upon me so very different from the impression which was produced in the House at the time or on the Press next day. My right hon. Friend's speech was hailed generally, in this House and outside, as a very noble declaration. Frankly, to me, it seemed a confession of bankruptcy when he presented us with a problem and then turning to the young men said, "It is you who will have to face this difficulty; what are you going to do about it?" From that moment I have been uneasy about the policy of the Government in respect of this matter. I do not think it is possible for any Government in that way to pass on to another generation, not yet invited to replace it on that bench, the responsibilities which those who sit upon that bench ought to bear.

My right hon. Friend, speaking on the information then supplied to him by the advisers of the Government, took it as axiomatic that there was no defence to air attack except counter attack. I think we should make no progress at all if we treated our problems in any field upon that basis. My right hon. Friend the Member for Epping, has already recalled how, under the pressure of the country's necessities, problems were presented, which had never been presented before, and were at first declared insoluble, but were, in the end, resolved. This new problem is as capable of solution as the half-dozen or more problems—and one

could name others—which arose in the War and were solved under that urgency, if the Government will work in the same spirit and under the same spur, not merely of necessity but of urgency as they did in War time.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, very naturally, after what had been said by my right hon. Friend the Member for Epping, made allusion to Professor Lindemann. I think it right that I should say that he consulted me as to the invitation to join the committee and that I advised him not to join a departmental committee of the Air Ministry. I would not give him that advice to-day. I mean the character of the Committee had changed in the subsequent stages, and I should give different advice to-day. But when the right hon. Gentleman says he was invited to join that Committee and he replied that he would await a discussion in the House of Commons and nothing since has happened, I think I ought to say in justice to Professor Lindemann that, as the channel of communication between the Government and him, I have failed in my duty, and that, while I left on the responsible Member of the Government the impression that Professor Lindemann would communicate with the Government, I distinctly told Professor Lindemann that the Government would communicate with him. I owe that explanation to Professor Lindemann and, if any misconception has arisen out of my mistake, I hope that it will be remedied.

All I want to urge is that here is a question of vital consequence to every one in this country—as my right hon. Friend has said, of equal consequence to everybody in every other, or nearly every other, country. This is a search which menaces no one. It is a search for a weapon that can be used only in defence, and not for attack. I am convinced that that weapon can be found. Probably it is not a single weapon. Probably it is a combination of half-a-dozen different things, but what we want to know, and what I am encouraged to hope from the concluding words of my right hon. Friend, is that every idea will be explored, that those who are charged with the matter will have open minds, that they will not be deterred by the first difficulties which will inevitably arise, but that they will consider a difficulty as

something to be overcome and not as an impassable obstacle, and that they will pursue this policy in peace with the same urgency, the same determination, and the same enthusiasm with which they would if we were already engaged in a war and our cities were already being laid waste. I am quite certain that if they will work in that spirit this menace from the air, which is the curse of our age, which does more to excite immediate alarm, to aggravate every suspicion and fear, and to poison international relations than anything else—if they do it in that spirit, this menace from the air, if not conquered, will at any rate be reduced to much more manageable proportions. The world will recover something of its sanity if this or any other Government solves that problem.

2.59 p.m.

**Mr. WILMOT:** I will not venture to detain the House more than one or two minutes, but there are some observations concerning what has been said to-day that ought to be made. The House will readily understand that the right hon. Gentleman the Member for Epping (Mr. Churchill) should feel it to be his duty to raise this very grave and urgent matter, and, in view of the Government's record with regard to aerial defence, one can readily understand his misgivings. I have a great personal admiration for the courage and initiative of the right hon. Gentleman. If the Government view of the European situation is the right view, the Government's course of action over the last few years is the course of action which is, in fact, the only course which circumstances have ordered, and the right hon. Gentleman is right that this problem had been neglected, has been laid on one side, has been the subject of innumerable delays and references to committees—a method to which the Prime Minister is only too prone—in exactly the same sort of way as the question of the provision of an air force itself was delayed and the House was misled as to the position.

There is another aspect of this situation which is very grave. The right hon. Gentleman and the right hon. Gentleman the Member for West Birmingham (Sir A. Chamberlain) said that the discovery, the pursuit, of means of defence from the ground would menace no one; that it was

an international problem, one which curses the lives and worries every people in every land and that the League of Nations might well take a hand in devising some effective means of defence against surprise attack from the air. The League of Nations has devised a means of attack, but it is not a means of attack of the kind which the right hon. Gentleman has in mind.

The menace in turning the whole energy and purpose of the Government into this pursuit of methods to bring down hostile aeroplanes is that we shall entirely lose our sense of proportion and forget, what we remembered only too well a short time ago, that the object of the increasing pressure of every civilised Government should not be defence from the air but the abolition of the air menace altogether. It may be that the right hon. Gentleman believes that to be impossible. I am sure that the Government have come to the view that, while it is still fashionable to make pleasant statements with regard to the League of Nations, it is in fact impossible to secure any kind of defence that way.

We on this side do not share that view. We believe that because it is a menace to everyone, because every civilian population is likewise in peril, because there are in aerial warfare no fruits of victory, because everybody in every country and every Government everywhere has everything to lose and nothing to gain by aerial warfare—because of these peculiar circumstances, which are new in war, it is still possible to secure by energetic action the removal of the air menace altogether. It is a terrible thing for us younger people to see the Government of the day drifting steadily along to the belief that aerial warfare cannot be prevented, that its outbreak is only a matter of time, and that all that is left to us is to devise some sort of means of attack upon the enemy aircraft when they come. The right hon. Gentleman spoke, and he has a unique knowledge of the matter, of projectiles by which it is possible to make whole areas of the air so noxious as to be uninhabitable by hostile aircraft.

**Mr. CHURCHILL:** For some time.

**Mr. WILMOT:** It used to be said by those in the best position to know that such projectiles, dropped from the air upon the civilian population, could create



[Mr. Wilmot.]  
havoc and devastation over wide areas, that great towns could be simultaneously poisoned, that after hostile attack great towns would be utterly devastated, that there would remain alive no man, woman, child, cattle, or dog; but it has been fashionable in recent months for Government spokesmen to deprecate that kind of talk, to talk of it as scaremongering, to say that books have been published which have received influential backing to the effect that this talk about poison gas has been greatly exaggerated, and that in fact for a very small sum a civilian can purchase some sort of defensive apparatus. I do not believe it, and I do not believe that the right hon. Member for Epping believes it. We know, on the evidence that is available, that it is impossible to exaggerate the power of modern poison warfare from the air, even now, before the devilish mania of invention which war would bring in its train has increased its effectiveness a thousandfold. No kind of ground defence will remove that menace. It may lessen it, it may set at work inventors devising means of defence against the new air attacks, but there is only one way to safety, and I still believe that that way is open if only we could induce the Government—and the British Government are in a unique position of opportunity in this matter—to pursue it.

There are three cardinal planks in this bulwark of defence. There is agreement on the abolition of the military plane. It is not impossible, I believe, to secure that agreement, because every country shares this terror and this menace. Coupled with it, there must be the rigid control of civil aviation, because any paper pact, any treaty, any agreement to abolish military planes is utterly valueless while States may possess commercial aeroplanes capable of being turned at short notice into bombing planes. Civil aviation must be placed under rigid international control. It can be done. In fact, it has been done. After the war the Allied Powers effectively controlled the armaments of Germany. The right hon. Member for Carnarvon Boroughs (Mr. Lloyd George) has fully explained exactly how effective that control was and how it was worked. Because every State is primarily interested

in the removal of the air menace, it would be possible, if we would only pursue it as resolutely as the right hon. Gentleman has been urging us to pursue this problem, to secure, first of all, the abolition of the military plane and secondly, the effective international control of the civil plane.

There is a third and equally necessary part of this complete scheme of defence by removal, and that is the establishment under international control of a force of aerial police, a force of attack, capable of dealing with sudden and unknown infringements of the other two parts. It may be argued that this idea of a striking force under international control from the League is unworkable. I do not believe it is. I believe it could be tried. I believe that, if it was possible towards the end of the war for those vast armies, navies, and air forces to operate under a unified command—so far as our great forces were concerned, under a foreign high command—surely it would be possible, in view of the enormous stimulus and the incalculable gains to humanity which the removal of this menace would mean, to achieve those three things, namely, the abolition of the military plane, the effective international control of civil aviation, so that it should not be used for military purposes and thus defeat the other provision, and, finally, an international aerial striking force capable of dealing with any sudden banditry that might arise in any place.

That, I submit, is the only solution to this aerial menace. By all means pursue, so long as it is unsolved, such means as there may be of protecting the unfortunate population, but such protection and defence at the best can be but a poor thing. It can only reduce by a small proportion the number of certain victims of this shocking thing which will break upon us unless we take energetic and immediate steps to get this solution worked out and put into effect. Unfortunately, the Government record in this matter is deplorable. It is the main obstacle to the development of this invaluable gift to humanity, and I beg the Government to give some sign that they will turn over a new leaf and pursue this objective resolutely, determined and prepared to take some risk and courage, if need be, because the prize is a priceless one.

3.12 p.m.

Sir EDWARD GRIGG: I am sure the House will agree that it owes a great meed of thanks to the right hon. Gentleman the Member for Epping (Mr. Churchill) for having called attention to the subject to-day and for the valuable response which he elicited from the Prime Minister. It is a very great satisfaction to know that a committee is hard at work upon scientific research into the possibility of dealing with aeroplanes by various measures of prevention, and to know that no money is being stinted in this research and that the prospects of success are, at any rate, fairly good. This is not merely a matter of protection for our civil population, although that is a matter of great importance. It is always possible—and we must strive to achieve it, if we can—that attacks on the civil population may be limited by some kind of convention. Obviously, we must try to secure that if we can, but the danger to this country from the air will remain enormous even when such a convention is secured. We have lost our insular security, and everything that can be done to minimise attacks on our munition factories will restore some measure of that security. We are nearly always slow to move, and we want to get some measure of security so that our power of resistance may not be suddenly destroyed while we are endeavouring to make up our minds as to what action we should take.

There is another aspect of this matter which deserves attention. In modern war unquestionably the new technique will be to deliver rapid, successive and widely distributed hammer blows upon nerve centres. Those attacks will be directed not merely on munition factories, but necessarily at the whole industry of the country, and we shall find, if we are unfortunately the victims of an attack of this character, that the whole of our industry will be exposed to attack. We cannot distribute industry widely in this country. It is bound to be concentrated and to be more exposed than elsewhere to attack of this character. We know that it is impossible to ensure the capital of industry against the terrible damage that may be wrought as the result, and we also know from hard experience that reparation for damage cannot be secured at the moment of victory.

We therefore face the fact that an air attack would be at an attack upon our whole industrial system, upon the livelihood of our population, and it might be very difficult to repair things even if we were victorious. Therefore, it becomes of enormous importance to discover, if we can, by research, by expenditure and by using all the authority, force and driving power of the Government, some means of restoring to ourselves the security we used to possess but no longer possess. For that reason I welcome very warmly the statement made by the Prime Minister this afternoon. I hope the Government will press this research forward in every possible way, and that, without giving away any secrets, its progress may from time to time be reported to the House and the country, which must be very deeply interested in it.

I wish to turn for a moment to another aspect of the air peril which was dealt with by the hon. Member for East Fulham (Mr. Wilmot). He said that the only security against air attack was to abolish it altogether, but I would ask him to consider exactly what responsibilities we may have to face if an air pact of the kind which he described is to be secured. What is to be our contribution to any system under which an air pact may be attained? We shall not attain any limitation of this air danger except as part of some system of collective security. It is no good dealing with the air as if it were a separate thing, for a very obvious reason, that if we limit the air danger we thereby *pro tanto* restore and intensify the old danger of ground attack. Take away the menace of the air peril to France or, if you like, to Germany, and instantly the old danger of sudden invasion by ground becomes more intense. That danger is, I think, in many ways more serious at the present time than it has ever been before, because it may be carried out by secretly-mobilised, highly-mechanised professional forces, comparatively small in numbers, moving very rapidly with tanks and with all the other destructive mechanism which has been developed.

If we set out to secure an air pact, as I hope we are doing, surely we shall be asked some searching questions. It will be clear that we gain more than anybody else by an understanding of that kind. The immediate danger is removed from



[Sir E. Grigg.]

us, and our insular position is once more restored, but other people *pro tanto* increase their dangers by giving us that new security. I would like to ask the Government—I do not press for an immediate answer, but I hope they will be able to tell us before long—what is the attitude of the other Powers in relation to the other defence forces to an air pact of the character which we are seeking to negotiate. The French press has already called attention to this aspect of the matter. It will be interesting to know whether the French Government has not already done so. But, quite beyond that, it seems to me that if we are to secure an air pact we shall have to define very much more clearly the definite, concrete contribution which we are prepared to make to a system of collective security in Europe. Can such a contribution be made with the air arm alone? Personally I do not believe it.

I believe that if we are to secure a limitation of air armaments, if we are to secure an air convention to remove this peril from us, if we are to secure, best of all, the abolition of the air peril, we must be prepared to say quite definitely what we shall do in the case of the *casus foederis* of the Locarno Treaty coming into operation. I believe that will quite inevitably involve the co-operation of the military arm with the air arm, if the air arm still exists, and action by the military if the air arm does not exist. We have no idea what is happening to the Army while all this public attention is being concentrated on the expansion of our Air Force. Obviously, if ground defence is to be greatly developed it will call for personnel. Where is the personnel to come from? Is it to be secured at the expense of the Army? Are the needs of the Army being considered in this tremendous pre-occupation with the air peril? I do not ask the Government for a definite answer to these questions this afternoon, but they are matters upon which the House of Commons is obviously entitled to information before long. We shall want to know what is being done in regard to the Army as well as in regard to the Air Force, and we shall want to know what definite contribution we are making to the proposals for collective security. We shall have no prospect whatever of

securing an air convention unless we are prepared to make a practical and concrete contribution to collective security in another way.

3.22 p.m.

**Lieut.-Colonel MOORE-BRABAZON:** My right hon. Friend the Member for Epping (Mr. Churchill) raised a very simple question. He asked how the Committee is getting on which is charged with the duty of seeing whether there is any defence against air attacks. I maintain that we should speak to that subject, yet we have just listened to two speeches, one of which was the well-known speech of the Fulham Road, having nothing to do with the point at all, but roaming over the whole of air policy. I protest very much at that form of abuse of the very narrow subject which was raised.

**Mr. WILMOT:** The hon. and gallant Member need not be offensive.

**Lieut.-Colonel MOORE-BRABAZON:** Not at all, but I have heard the hon. Member make that speech several times on technical points. I am not saying anything against it, except that it is very much bigger than the point which was raised, and when other people are trying to get in on other subjects it curtails the Debate very much. Hopes have been expressed to-day of a solution of the problem of air defence. Even the Prime Minister said that one scientist was very optimistic about a successful solution of the problem. I hope that everyone will not run away with the idea that the problem is easily solved. I am very far from that opinion myself. Warfare up to now has been of two dimensions, but aerial warfare is in three dimensions, and that is the fundamental difficulty which is very difficult to overcome.

The gunner, who is one of the most self-confident of soldiers, thinks he can shoot and make his projectile go approximately where he wants it to go, but he made a very sad mistake when he started shooting at aeroplanes. That was the cause of those astonishing inaccuracies which caused the anti-aircraft gun to be called an "Archie" from that well-known song of the time, "Archibald, Certainly not!" The opinion has been expressed that something should be done to put fear into an invading air army. Certainly during the war the balloons which were hung up with a curtain of

wire underneath them had a restraining influence. People did not like that idea. It may be that my right hon. Friend the Member for Epping, thinking well into the future as he does, has thought also of something ingenious, when he speaks of throwing up into the air something which may last there, rather like a firework, remaining in the air for a certain time, and into which aeroplanes would run and get damaged.

Whatever you do in trying to defend yourself from the ground against aircraft must be done by projecting something into the air. Our organisation to-day is fundamentally wrong, because anti-aircraft measures are put into the hands of the military and not into the hands of the Air Force. It would seem to me that these problems are wrapped up, not with pure ballistics, but with the possibilities and movement of aircraft, that it is necessary to change the organisation and wrap it up together. That may or may not be part of the function of the Committee, but I would ask my right hon. Friend, when he is thinking of defence on the ground against air attack, to go into this question again, because I am certain that, if there is anything in it, it must be done by the Air Force and not by the Army.

3.26 p.m.

**Captain GUEST:** I cannot let a subject of this nature go by without adding, if I can, a useful comment. In the first place, I would congratulate my right hon. Friend the Member for Epping (Mr. Churchill) on having so psychologically, if I may so say, introduced this subject, because he has continued the pressure upon the Government to wrestle with this problem. Many of us have been engaged for 2½ or three years in the attempt to bring them up to date on the subject raised by my right hon. Friend, which seems to me to be a terribly important one. If a solution of this question can be found by means of scientific research, so much the better but do not let the Government slow up their programme because of these investigations. I have seen during the last few weeks that the discussions on the possibilities of successful air defence are having an effect upon recruiting for the expanding Air Force, and therefore, with great respect, I would say to the Government and to this House that we must now

slow up in any way in our determination to bring ourselves up to what we consider to be a condition of safe parity. Shortly there will be coming along the Supplementary Estimate which will implement the programme that has been announced by the Government. I only hope that it will come soon, because water is flowing under the bridges, and without the support of the House of Commons the finance cannot be found. I wish with respect to warn the Government and the representative of the Air Ministry who is here to-day that, if civil aviation is ignored in the Supplementary Estimate, increasing pressure will be brought upon them not to do so. Many of us hold that the support of civil aviation is vital to all forms of national aerial defence, and I hope my right hon. Friend will report to his Department, whoever his chief is when the Supplementary Estimate is introduced, that civil aviation must not be left out of the Supplementary Estimate.

#### RUSSIA (BRITISH SUBJECT'S CLAIM).

3.29 p.m.

**Sir WILLIAM DAVISON:** I would ask the House to leave the consideration of dangers from the air, and to be good enough to give me its indulgence for a very few minutes to put before it what I consider to be a very serious injustice which has been suffered by one of my constituents, a Mr. Bucknall, by reason of the fact that the British Government have hitherto avoided the discharge of a debt of honour contracted with him by one of His Majesty's representatives abroad at a time of emergency, by pleading certain legal technicalities in avoidance. My constituent, Mr. Bucknall, had for many years prior to the War been a resident in Petrograd, where he carried on a large business as a dealer in precious stones. He was a gentleman of the highest reputation, well known to a series of British ambassadors and to the embassy staffs, as well as to citizens throughout Petrograd. When war broke out, his three sons at once joined the British Army, while his three daughters also joined the Russian Red Cross and served during the War as sisters of mercy with the Russian army. Some Members of the House may have read that very wonderful book, "One Woman's Story," which was written by one of



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Mr. Bucknall's daughters, who served during the War and married a Russian doctor.

After the outbreak of the revolution in the Autumn of 1917, as the House knows, a very serious state of affairs arose in Russia, and in February, 1918, Sir George Buchanan, the British Ambassador, left the British Embassy in Petrograd for England, leaving the Embassy in charge of the British consul, Mr. A. W. Woodhouse. Early in April, 1918, Mr. Woodhouse told Mr. Bucknall that it was very risky for him to have large quantities of jewels connected with his business in his office, and suggested to him that it would be safer for him to deposit these jewels in one of the safes at the British Embassy. This offer Mr. Bucknall accepted and jewels to the value of some £57,000, and about £700 in cash, were placed in the Embassy in a bag stamped with the consul's name, "A. W. Woodhouse," with full particulars of the contents listed, and this bag was placed in one of the Embassy safes.

About July, 1918, Mr. Woodhouse found that he was getting short of money, as he was practically cut off from England, and large sums of money were then required at short notice for payments in connection with the Embassy, and he then asked Mr. Bucknall whether he would sell some of the jewels which were deposited at the Embassy and give him, Mr. Woodhouse, the cash obtained by that sale. Mr. Bucknall made some attempt to sell them, but, owing to the depreciation of the rouble at that time, he found it impossible, and he so informed Mr. Woodhouse. Mr. Woodhouse then asked Mr. Bucknall whether he would allow him to make use of the jewels themselves for the purposes of the British Government to meet some of the payments which they were expecting shortly to have to make. As I said before, hon. Members will remember that the rouble was then practically valueless and that the general form of currency in Russia at that time was silver and gold and jewels. To this request Mr. Bucknall agreed, and from that time he considered that his bag of jewels, which he had lent to Mr. Woodhouse, originally deposited for safe keeping but subsequently, at the Consul's request lent to him for the purposes of the British Government, were

in every way at the disposal of the British Government. That this was also the opinion of Mr. Woodhouse is clear from a letter which he wrote to Mr. Bucknall on 26th November of last year, just after I had raised Mr. Bucknall's case by a question in the House of Commons. As the accuracy of my statement as to Mr. Bucknall's property was questioned in the House, immediately after questions were over on the 26th November, I asked Mr. Bucknall, who was in the Lobby, whether he would kindly show my statement to Mr. Woodhouse, who was then in England, and ask him whether or not it was consistent with the facts. This is the letter, dated the same day, 26th November, which Mr. Woodhouse, the British Consul at the time referred to, wrote to Mr. Bucknall. The House will forgive me reading it, because it is of vital importance and is first hand information:

"Dear Mr. Bucknall,

Referring to Sir William Davison's questions to the Foreign Secretary in the House of Commons to-day, when he stated that at my request as British Consul in charge of the Embassy at Petrograd in 1918, you had placed at the disposal of the British Government the jewels at the Embassy which you had deposited with me for safe keeping, I have pleasure in again confirming the accuracy of Sir William Davison's statement"—

and this is the important part—

"I considered, from the moment when you had agreed to my request, that all your property deposited at the Embassy in a bag endorsed with my name as British Consul was the property for the time being of the British Government, and could be used at any time for such purposes as we, i.e., the Naval and Military officials and myself, thought necessary. Owing to the impossibility at that time of getting money from England, I intended to make use of your jewels to provide us with funds for certain emergent purposes which were then in our minds. The fact that your property had not actually been so utilised when the Embassy was raided and your property was stolen should not, I consider, make any difference to you, seeing that the use of the property was then in the hands of myself and my colleague.

I may add that I am personally aware that had you not placed your property at our disposal you could have sent it out of Russia through diplomatic channels, as you did actually send other jewels belonging to yourself and your wife."

With regard to the last paragraph, Mr. Bucknall did send out of the country other jewels he had at the time belonging to himself and wife, through diplomatic

channels to England and they were safely delivered there. The House will remember that on the 31st August, 1918, the Embassy at Petrograd was raided by officials of the Soviet Government. Captain Cromie, the Naval Attaché, was shot on the staircase of the Embassy, the gold and silver plate belonging to the Embassy was removed, and the bag stamped with the name of the British Consul, Mr. A. W. Woodhouse, containing Mr. Bucknall's jewels was split open and left in the Embassy, all the contents, the jewels and cash, being taken from it. Part of the Embassy plate, which was seen some time afterwards by one of the British officials on the table at a banquet which was given to him and others at Petrograd, was subsequently returned. He saw the British plate with British arms upon it and that was restored, but the rest of the plate, of the value of some £12,000, has not yet been returned nor has any compensation respecting it been paid in spite of repeated demands from the British Government. The property has still not been restored nor has any of Mr. Bucknall's jewels or cash. The House may recall that I have on many occasions raised this question of the plate, the most recent occasions being the 18th March last, the 13th May, and the 3rd June. So far no reply has been received to the numerous representations made by the British Government to the Soviet authorities in this matter.

To return to the case of Mr. Bucknall. The House may wonder what is the reason for the long delay. The reason is that at the request of the Foreign Office Mr. Bucknall who had registered his claim with the Foreign Claims Department against the Russian Government, never imagined that the British Government would not demand full compensation from the Russian Soviet authorities for all the property stolen from the Embassy, including his jewels and cash, before the Soviet Government were recognised by the British Government. It was not until March, 1926, that Mr. Bucknall realised that the British Government were not going to demand compensation, and he then claimed that if the British Government were not going to obtain compensation for him he must look to the British Government itself to make good the loss of his jewels,

which had been lent to His Majesty's representative at Moscow. This request to the British Government is clearly admitted and stated in his letter by Mr. Woodhouse. Mr. Bucknall failed to get satisfaction, and he applied to the then Home Secretary, Sir W. Joynson-Hicks, to be allowed to bring a Petition of Right before the courts. Sir W. Joynson-Hicks consulted the then Attorney-General, the right hon. Member for Fareham (Sir T. Inskip) who is the Attorney-General to-day and they granted him permission to bring a petition of right.

There was a change of government and the new Attorney-General looked into the facts of the case again. It must be remembered that at that time Mr. Bucknall had got all his witnesses, his case was going to come before a British jury in the High Courts, it was ready for submission. Then there was this change of Government, and the new Attorney-General said that he had not got the proper formal fiat from the Attorney-General. Technically that was so. Although he had had the authority of the Home Secretary to bring his Petition of Right and although that authority had been given after consultation with the Attorney-General, he had omitted to get what is known as the fiat of the Attorney-General in addition. It was a technicality which was necessary. That point was taken by the then Attorney-General, who also took a second point, that Mr. Bucknall's claim could not be proceeded with as it was out of time owing to the provisions of the Indemnity Act 1920, and he applied to the Court that Mr. Bucknall's case should not be heard before a jury and that it should go to the High Court on these two points of law.

The court eventually held, after a long argument, that if the Crown pleaded the technical plea and the Indemnity Act, Mr. Bucknall could not proceed with his case before the jury, though what the Court of Appeal actually thought of the plea made by the Attorney-General can be gathered by one sentence in Lord Justice Scrutton's judgment. Referring to the action of the Attorney-General in prosecuting the appeal, he said:

"Possibly the Attorney-General takes the action he has done in order to put in a somewhat more rosy light the general result of the proceedings. He does not seem very



[Sir W. Davison.]  
happy with regard to the view which the public might take with regard to the consent of the Attorney-General."

In this way Mr. Bucknall was prevented from submitting his case and calling all the evidence before a jury of this country. There the matter stands. I cannot help thinking that Lord Justice Scrutton's surmise as to what the opinion of the British public with regard to the British Government pleading these two technical matters would be will be shared by the House of Commons. When I pressed the Foreign Office on this matter some time ago, Mr. Bucknall being in my constituency, their somewhat evasive reply was that, even if Mr. Bucknall had lent his property to Mr. Woodhouse on behalf of the British Government, it had not actually been made use of when the robbery took place, and therefore the Government were not liable. I ventured to say, in reply to that, that if I were to see the Foreign Secretary in the Lobby here, and he told me that he was going to Geneva, and had left his watch at home, and therefore might be late at his appointment, and I said, "I will lend you my watch so that you will not be late for your appointment," and it was then found that the meeting had been postponed for ten days, and he locked my watch in his study drawer and it was burgled, and he said "I was not able to use your watch for the purpose for which you lent it to me, and therefore I am not liable, and you must try to catch the burglar"—that seems to be a fair parallel to the submission of the Foreign Office with regard to my constituent's case.

I have given a skeleton of the case. As I have said, there is no doubt whatever as to what the Court of Appeal thought of these technical submissions. I have much fuller quotations than those I have given which bear it out. I only say, in conclusion, that if the Government no longer rely on this technicality, it is necessary for them to allege that both Mr. Bucknall and Mr. Woodhouse, although men of untarnished reputation, have deliberately conspired together to attempt to obtain money by false pretences and by deliberate falsehood from the British Government—a suggestion so monstrous that I only mention it to dismiss it as incredible. Mr. Bucknall's

Petition of Right, which I hold in my hand, is headed with these words:

"George R.I. Let right be done."

This is the request which I submit today to the House of Commons. I trust that the last act of the present Government will be a legacy to their successors to see that "right be done" to my constituent, Mr. Bucknall.

**Mr. EDEN:** I can only speak again by leave of the House. I can assure my hon. Friend that the Government at all times are anxious that right should be done. In this case the question involved, which has been discussed from time immemorial is, what is right. I should like to recall to the House certain matters in this claim, now very long-standing, with reference to events which took place 18 years ago. On the 15th April, 1918, Mr. Bucknall, a British merchant in Petrograd, deposited some jewellery with Mr. Woodhouse, then His Majesty's Consul in that city. He deposited that property for safe custody in the Embassy safe in view of the disturbed conditions, a very natural thing to do. In July of the same year, Mr. Bucknall made a verbal arrangement with Mr. Woodhouse that he should try to sell such of the jewellery as he could and hand over to Mr. Bucknall any money realised over and above what he himself needed for Government use, as the ordinary channels for the transfer of money were blocked by the conditions that existed. This arrangement, however, never actually materialised as he found it impossible to raise more money than he himself required for current expenses.

Eventually, in November, 1918, the Embassy in Petrograd was raided by Bolshevik agents and property in the Embassy, including Mr. Bucknall's jewellery, was stolen. On the 18th December, 1918, Mr. Bucknall put in a formal statement for the value of the jewellery estimated, I think, at some £50,000, declaring merely that he had deposited it with the consent and approval of his Britannic Majesty's Consul at Petrograd for safe keeping in the safe of the Chancellery at his Britannic Majesty's Embassy. This claim was filed as one of the numerous British private claims against the Soviet Government, which that Government has

so far refused to honour. In this respect this claim is one of a very large number totalling very large sums. In 1926, eight years after the filing of this claim, Mr. Bucknall presented to the Foreign Office a claim not against the Russian Government but against His Majesty's Government, alleging that the arrangement with Mr. Woodhouse implied that the jewellery had been lent to His Majesty's Government. He was then informed that His Majesty's Government could not admit responsibility for any loss that he had suffered any more than they could have done in any other circumstances where a similar practice had been followed. But in 1929 a Petition of Right was presented on his behalf. The whole case was then carefully reviewed by the Law Officers of the Crown, who came to the conclusion that it had no merit. The Petition of Right failed both in the Court of First Instance, and later in the Court of Appeal.

**Sir W. DAVISON:** On the technical point.

**Mr. EDEN:** I do not think that my hon. Friend disputes the accuracy of my statement. In 1931 Mr. Bucknall made an application to the then Attorney-General for an *ex gratia* payment in compensation for his loss. The case was again carefully reviewed and Mr. Bucknall was informed that after this fresh consideration no payment could properly be made to him out of public funds. As my hon. Friend has stated, Mr. Bucknall has returned to the charge by putting forward in the course of correspondence with the Foreign Office two contentions, which I ask the House to note found no place in the original claim or complaints which were made 18 years ago. Eighteen years after the original claim these two new contentions are put in as follows: (1) That Mr. Bucknall could and would have sent his property out of Russia, but that there was an agreement with Mr. Woodhouse that the property should be handed over for Government use; (2) That at a date subsequent to this verbal arrangement with Mr. Woodhouse the proceeds of the sale of the jewellery might, if necessary, be used for Government purposes, and that a further arrangement was made by which the jewels themselves were transferred to Mr. Woodhouse to be used as currency in kind.

Those are the two new contentions after 18 years had elapsed. The first assertion is based upon a letter from Mr. Woodhouse which my hon. Friend has quoted. It contains this statement: "I am personally aware that had you not placed your property at our disposal you could have sent it out of Russia through diplomatic channels, as you actually did send other jewels belonging to yourself and your wife." In this connection I should remark that what Mr. Woodhouse thinks about the responsibility of the Government is quite beside the point so far as the responsibility of the Government itself is concerned. But this statement, if it means that the jewels would have been sent away, which I presume is what my hon. Friend means, is quite inconsistent with Mr. Bucknall's original formal statement of claim, which I quoted to the House a few moments ago and which related entirely to the deposit of the jewellery with the consent and approval of His Britannic Majesty's Consul at Petrograd for safe keeping in the safe of the Chancellery of the Embassy. And it is also inconsistent with Mr. Woodhouse's statement in his letter of 9th March.

I put it to the House that there is in fact no evidence to show that Mr. Bucknall, who certainly had no intention of taking the jewels out of Russia when he originally deposited them for safe custody, afterwards changed his mind and would have attempted to smuggle them out of Russia but for the arrangement with Mr. Woodhouse. He never before made any such assertion, which I claim is inconsistent with his own previous statements and his own original claim upon the Russian and not upon the British Government. The alleged attempt to use the jewels as currency is also unsupported by evidence. Even if there were such an agreement it was of a conditional nature, as an agreement to utilise the proceeds of the sale of the jewellery, and it was never carried out. No money and no jewellery was, in fact, ever lent to Mr. Woodhouse for official purposes. The jewellery remained in the Embassy safe as Mr. Bucknall's property, in a bag of which he retained the key throughout, and for such property it would be quite impossible for His Majesty's Government to assume responsibility at any time, anywhere. The Government's responsibility



[Mr. Eden.]

has never been involved in this case. The Law Officers have upheld that decision, and though I fully understand my hon. Friend's anxiety that we should make a departure in this case, I think the House will appreciate, after all these years and after the full account I have given, that it would be quite impossible for us to do so if we are to maintain

the position which, in justice and equity, we have done in all similar cases of this kind throughout history.

Question, "That this House do now adjourn," put, and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at Six Minutes before Four o'Clock, until Monday, 17th June, pursuant to the Resolution of the House this day.



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**Wednesday, 12th June, 1935.**

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