

DOMINION SHIPPING IN WAR TIME

7.28.2.39.
LORD CRAIGMYLE'S
WARNING

Lord Craigmyle, a former chairman of the P. & O. Company, addressed a public meeting at Galashiels last night in connexion with the National Service scheme.

Nothing was more clear, Lord Craigmyle said, than that an abundance of shipping was vital to Great Britain's ability to survive a war if it came. The submarine campaign which reached its height in March and April, 1917, came near to knocking them out, and now there was added to the submarine danger the peril of bombardment of shipping from the air. They were no better prepared to keep the country supplied with food and raw materials from overseas than they were in 1914; on the contrary, they were in a far worse position as regards their shipping than they were before the Great War.

Britain's seagoing tonnage had not merely shrunk relatively to other nations, it had diminished absolutely. The figure was unchallenged that they were short by 2,000 ships of the useful type which carried essential food and munitions in an emergency.

There was a tendency in certain high quarters to disparage the gravity of those figures. The shortage of United Kingdom shipping was admitted, but it was said that, taking the Empire as a whole, the situation was not so bad. It was pointed out that, while Great Britain's tonnage had fallen by about 1,250,000 tons, the tonnage of the Dominions and Colonies had gone up by 1,400,000 tons and was now some 3,000,000 tons gross. The conclusion which they were apparently left to draw from those figures was that those Colonial and Dominion vessels, or a great proportion of them, were available for Great Britain in need in time of emergency.

That was an argument which was extremely dangerous to the safety of this country. It was a public duty that it should be investigated, and one was entitled to ask whether the Government had found what proportion of those Dominion and Colonial ships were suitable for United Kingdom purposes and how many of them could be spared from their own local duties of commerce and defence in time of war. Instead of vague talk about 3,000,000 tons of Colonial and Dominion shipping they ought to be furnished with precise plans and exact figures. Had those who put forward that soothing argument considered, for instance, that 400,000 tons of the shipping to which they referred was lake shipping used on the Great Lakes between Canada and the United States, and that a fair amount of the rest consisted of comparatively tiny vessels plying in smooth and sheltered coastal waters—for instance, in the Malay Straits?

Those who depended upon that tonnage for more than a small proportion of aid to the United Kingdom were living in a fools' paradise.

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CREATION OF A FOURTH ARM

CIVIL DEFENCE

SIR JOHN ANDERSON AND EMPLOYERS' HELP

Sir John Anderson, Lord Privy Seal, addressing the council meeting luncheon of the National Chamber of Trade at the Holborn Restaurant yesterday, emphasized the need for building up a fourth arm—civil defence. It was, he said, a matter of the insurance against dislocation, damage, or even destruction of their civil life in time of war, and the premium on the policy of civil defence was National Service. Alderman Ernest Broadbent, president of the Chamber, presided.

Those present, said SIR JOHN ANDERSON, represented trade and commerce, and to their business war or even the rumour of war was damaging or disastrous. If they could extend, as they were now extending, cooperation and good will through the channels of international trade they would go far to remove the clouds that seemed to overhang Europe at the present time. They had been taunted in the past with being a nation of shopkeepers, but it would be well that all should realize that there were some things which they held dear that were not for sale; their treasures of liberty and freedom, their right to live their own lives and to enjoy their own form of government. They had to prepare themselves to meet possible eventualities.

A JOB OF WORK

They entered the last war with an Army and a Navy and emerged with a third arm, the Royal Air Force. They had now to consider the building up of a fourth arm, the new arm of civil defence. Behind the front lines which would be maintained by everything that human ingenuity, human endurance, and human courage could do, they must build up their second line, manned not by specialists in arts of warfare but by the general citizen body. Moreover, they had not merely to man the first line of civil defence, but to secure and fill up ample reserves behind it; the more every citizen had some understanding of the meaning and methods of A.R.P. and of maintaining the civil life of this country in wartime the better. It was a call to men and women to come forward to do a job of work.

The National Chamber of Trade, Sir John Anderson continued, represented a very considerable body of employers, and he felt that they would do all in their power to assist in the present recruiting campaign. Any element of pressure or of compulsion would deny the voluntary character of the whole scheme, but employers could help by giving encouragement and the facilities for training needed by those who enrolled.

Next week he hoped to have available complete returns from all over the country to show how the campaign was going, giving the figures of enrolments in all the services up to and including February 18. They had deliberately abstained from over-driving the campaign at the start. With a clear picture before it, each locality would be able to take whatever steps were required to stimulate and intensify the appeal to secure the filling of complements within the next few weeks. It was no question of giving service to the Government; it was service to the community, and, indeed, by each to himself and to his kith and kin. A new unity of purpose, a new unity of effort, were required to secure their lines of civil defence, and that might go far to weld their nation into one, and bring a new spirit into their whole national life.

ALDERMAN BROADBENT, who was re-elected president of the Chamber, presided over the meeting of the council in the afternoon.