

EACH MAN AND EACH WOMAN HAS A PLACE IN THE SCHEME OF THINGS TO-DAY IN BRITAIN

Speech in the House of Commons Reviewing Progress of War and Asking For New Vote on the Expenditures.

The following is a verbatim report of the speech delivered in the House of Commons on June 13th by Premier Asquith in submitting the vote of Credit for the prosecution of the War.

RECEIVED WITH CHEERS

The Prime Minister, who was received with cheers, said: "When you leave the chair Mr. Speaker, I shall submit in Committee, a supplementary Vote of Credit for £250,000,000. This will be the fifth Vote of Credit which the House has been asked to agree to since the outbreak of the war. It may be that the House should summarize the votes, although they are fresh in the recollection of the House. In the financial year of 1914-15 there were three Votes of Credit, providing for the amounts required beyond the ordinary grants of Parliament, in order to meet expenditure connected with the war. In that financial year the full normal supply on a peace basis had been voted before the outbreak of the war. Consequently the votes of Credit provided only for the additional expenditure necessitated in consequence of the war itself. The first vote of Credit on August 6th was for £100,000,000. The second vote on November 15th was for £225,000,000. The third vote in March was for £37,000,000 making a total for that financial year of £362,000,000. As I have already said, that did not include the normal expenditure on a peace footing of the Army and Navy. As a matter of fact the £362,000,000 so provided was about £5,000,000 in excess of the actual expenditure of the financial year. The war covered 240 days in that year, and the daily expenditure out of Votes of Credit was therefore roughly about £1,500,000 per day. That was the state of things as regards the last financial year. For the present financial year the first Vote of Credit to which I asked the assent of the House on March 1st was for £250,000,000. I then pointed out to the Committee that the vote differed from its predecessors, inasmuch as it provided not only for war expenditure, but for the whole of the normal expenditure of the Army and Navy during the year, which, roughly speaking, amounted to about £80,000,000. We accordingly presented to the House for the purpose of Parliamentary discussion separate estimates—taken votes—for the Army and for the Navy. It was calculated at that time that the Vote of £250,000,000 would last approximately one hundred days, that is to say, until about the second week in July. The basis on which that calculation was made was as follows: For Army and Navy expenditure a total of £2,000,000 per day, of which the normal peace expenditure, being as I have said about £80,000,000 a year or £220,000 per day, is to be put down under that head. It follows that the Army and Navy for the hundred days require £200,000,000. To this has to be added another £50,000,000 at the rate of £500,000 per day, to meet other expenses, such as advances to our Dominions and to Allied Powers and other foreign States, purchase of foodstuffs and other commodities, and miscellaneous minor items.

FORECAST RELATED

The House will be interested to know how far the forecast which was

made on the first of March has been realized, and to call the figures from the 1st of April, which is the first day of the present financial year, to Saturday last, the 12th of June, the expenditure has been approximately as follows:—

On the Army £121,000,000, on the Navy £36,000,000, on loan to Foreign and Colonial Governments £36,000,000 on foodstuffs £10,000,000, other services £1,000,000, making a total of £194,000,000. Accordingly the average expenditure out of the Vote of Credit passed, on the 1st of March during the 73 days up to the 12th of June may be put approximately at £2,660,000 a day, which, as the House will observe, is slightly, but not very much, higher than the estimate which allowed for £2,220,000 a day. I think it was a fairly exact forecast. If we take the expenditure on the Army and Navy alone during that period it amounts to £157,000,000 or an average of £2,155,000 a day, corresponding to our estimate in March of £2,000,000 per day. On the evening of the 12th of June, Saturday last, the Treasury had still in hand out of that Vote of Credit a sum of £5,000,000 which will be sufficient, it is estimated, to carry on the public services until the end of the present month. So much as to the past. The further vote for which I am going to ask the assent of the Commons presently is for the same amount as the previous one, namely £250,000,000. It is very difficult to make anything like an accurate forecast as to the rate at which public expenditure will continue during the next two or three months. It is clear that the expenditure on the Army and Navy will expand to some extent. And we think it will probably require not less than £2,250,000 per day during the period to be covered by the vote. Further as the war continues and extends its area, the obligations of His Majesty's Government in regard to the financial assistance to our Allies will certainly not be lighter than they have been. On any showing, it will not be safe to assume that the total expenditure from the Vote of Credit will be much less than £2,300,000 a day during the ensuing months. It might conceivably be more. There is only one new feature in the Vote of Credit, which I am about to submit, as compared with the four others that have preceded it. Those who have the White Paper will see that it comes under Head I. It is expressed in these words: "Repayment to the Bank of England of advances made by them at the request of His Majesty's Government for the general purpose of the Vote." I do not think it is desirable to say more in regard to that at this moment than that such advances have been made, and made on a very large scale, and that we desire to have the power, and we hope the House will give us the power, if circumstances show it to be necessary, to repay to the Bank out of the sum included in the Vote of Credit from time to time, such items as may for the time being be convenient.

WIDER SURVEY MADE

I have so far dealt with what I call the technical and financial considerations, which are for the moment relevant to the further prosecution of the war. But in the circumstances in

which we are placed I must ask the House, and not only the House, but the country and the Empire, to follow me for a few moments in a rather larger and wider survey of the situation. (Cheers.) I have during the last few weeks, with the approval of the King, reconstructed the personnel of the government. Let me say at once in the plainest possible terms, that I should have been justified in doing what I have done under the pressure of outside influence, of any temporary embarrassment, or of any transient parliamentary exigencies—I would go further—as repugnant as that may seem to the notion of any man, I have a deep and abiding and ineffaceable sense of gratitude to the colleagues who, under the stress of new and unforeseen responsibilities, for the best part of ten months, discharged with undeviating loyalty, and in my judgment, with unexampled efficiency, the heaviest load which has ever fallen upon the shoulders of British statesmen. (Cheers.) No body of men in my deliberate judgment could have done more, or could have done better, and there is not one of them to whom I, as the head of the government, and I think the nation at large, does not stand under a permanent debt of obligation. (Hear, hear.) To part with them or any of them, has been the severest and most painful experience of my public life. I should like, if I may, to add this. I ask not only my old colleagues, but also my friends and supporters to accept my assurance, if indeed any assurance is needed, that there is not a man among them who is more faithful than I to the great principles of public duty which during the last part of thirty years have been to me the aim, the inspiration, the moulding and governing power of such services as I have been able to render to the state. (Cheers.) I receded from nothing; I abandoned nothing; I sacrificed nothing. What I have held in the past I hold to-day as strongly and tenaciously as ever I did; what in the future, if I have any future, I shall work for and fight for, with whatever remains to me I need not say of conviction of faith, of hope, of energy and of vital force. (Cheers.) I hope the House will not think that I am degenerating into an egotistical strain, in regard to the financial assistance to our Allies will certainly not be lighter than they have been. On any showing, it will not be safe to assume that the total expenditure from the Vote of Credit will be much less than £2,300,000 a day during the ensuing months. It might conceivably be more. There is only one new feature in the Vote of Credit, which I am about to submit, as compared with the four others that have preceded it. Those who have the White Paper will see that it comes under Head I. It is expressed in these words: "Repayment to the Bank of England of advances made by them at the request of His Majesty's Government for the general purpose of the Vote." I do not think it is desirable to say more in regard to that at this moment than that such advances have been made, and made on a very large scale, and that we desire to have the power, and we hope the House will give us the power, if circumstances show it to be necessary, to repay to the Bank out of the sum included in the Vote of Credit from time to time, such items as may for the time being be convenient.

WHY THE UPHEAVAL

Why then, it may be asked, and I am sure the question is in the minds if not on the lips of all good party men in every quarter—have I—for after all I am the person mainly responsible for the time being, this upheaval, this transformation of the normal conventions, the inveterate tradition, and the well-settled practice of our political life? The reason is, mainly, and I think to the satisfaction of all, that the pleasant savour in the vocabulary of British politics. It is connected, as in the notorious and classical case of Fox and Lord North with associations of faction, intrigue, rivalries, and antipathy, to which it was widely and perhaps justly believed the national interests were sacrificed. On a lower plane, as in the case of the so-called ministry of all talents, in 1806, and perhaps in a lesser degree in the case of the ministry of Lord Aberdeen, in 1853, the name coalition recalls ill-assorted, and in the results more or less ill-starred attempts, which, with the best intentions, were proved by experience to be lacking in practical efficiency. In the main and in the long run our system of government by party has vindicated itself, and our rare and exceptional departures from it have for the most part been found wanting both in dignity and success. The House and the country will be assured that we are none of us forgetful of these discouraging precedents, but my answer to the question which I put a few moments ago is after all, so far as I am concerned, very simple. It may or may not, carry conviction to others. I can only speak for myself, and I will make to the House the fullest and freest admission, that up to the last moment, apart from the almost invincible personal consideration to which I have referred, I was not without doubt as to how I should best respond to the call of public duty. The situation is without a parallel in our national history. The demand which it makes, and which it will continue to make, upon the energy and the patriotism of a nation, and in a wholly exceptional degree upon the patience and the foresight of those who are responsible for its government, and I shall add—a most vital consideration—upon the confidence felt by the one in the other, cannot be measured by any precedent.

There was not, and there is not, in my opinion, any call for any change in our national policy. That remains what it has been since the first week in August—to pursue this war at any cost to a victorious issue. I can only speak for myself, and I can only speak for the most of the whole matter—what I came to think slowly, reluctantly, but in the end without doubt or hesitation, was needed, was such a broadening of the basis of government as would take away from it even the

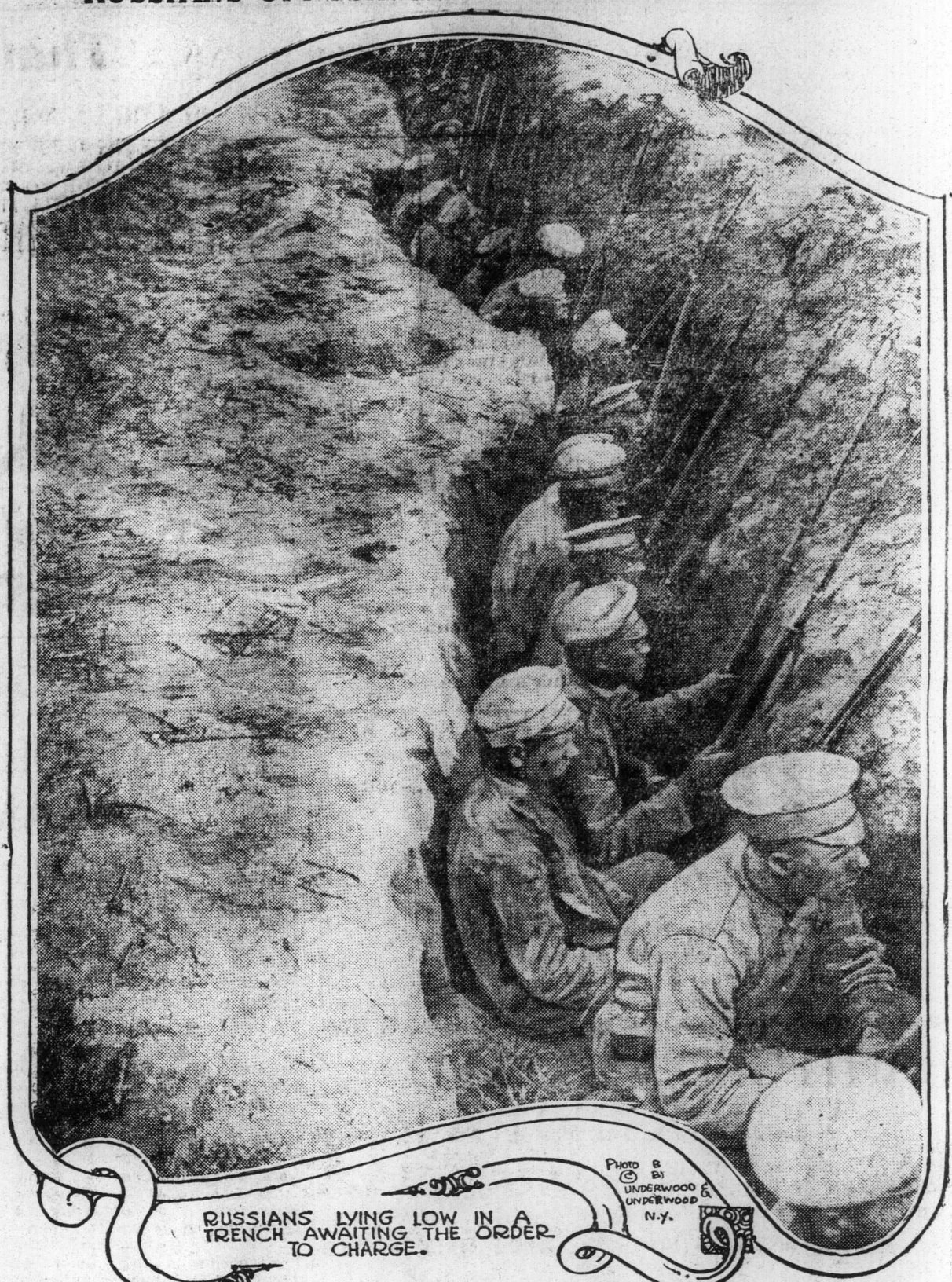
semblance of a one-sided or party character, which would demonstrate beyond the possibility of doubt, not only to our people at home, and to our fellow subjects across the sea, but to the whole world, allies, enemies, neutral, that after nearly a year of war with all its fluctuations and vicissitudes, the British people were more resolute than ever with one heart and with one purpose to obliterate all distinctions and to unite every personal and political as well as every moral and material force in the prosecution of their cause. (Loud cheers.) I suppose there is no man on this Bench or among my colleagues in another place to whom the idea of coalition with all that it involves, in the temporary severance of old ties and in a thousand other ways is anything but uncongenial. Party issues were indeed by general consent, already suspended and put on the shelf. The normal function of an Opposition which is to oppose the Government of the day, had been replaced by an attitude of responsible and patriotic and not unfriendly criticism. But it appeared to me, and I believe with equal clearness to those with whom I have been before and probably shall be again, in sharp antagonism on the main issues of domestic policy, that a unique national exigency demanded from all of us something more—actual visible co-operation, unreserved whole-hearted concentration upon a single purpose, shared and pursued by men of every section of every party, of every political creed. (Cheers.) It is a great, and as many people consider, a hazardous experiment that none of us would have chosen. I suppose there is enough of the old political Adam in the whole of our bosoms that will enable me to say that none of us very much like it, and our friends in the country on both sides are, as everybody knows, doubtful, suspicious, bewildered, perhaps pained.

BRITAIN NOT LETHARGIC

For a moment, if I may say a word about my own personal position, if there be those who think that, having had the privilege of serving in confidential and responsible relations three successive British Sovereigns, I have any unsatisfied personal ambitions, they are welcome to that opinion. (Hear, hear.) They little know the truth. Like other people, I revel in the most wicked of calumnies and the most unfounded, the suggestion that the people of this country have shown or are showing themselves lethargic. Like other people, not more than other people, I have done, or I have tried to do my best. But like other people when we think of the gravity of the trust which has been cast upon us, we may think that we are all unprofitable servants. What is the personality of this man or that? What does it mean? What does it come to? A supreme cause is at stake. (Cheers.) We have each and all of us to respond with whatever we have, with whatever we can give, and what is harder still, with whatever we can sacrifice to the dominating and inexorable call. How do we stand to-day? It would be a tempting, but, in my opinion, not a profitable theme to compare the military and international situation as it stands to-day with what it was when, at the beginning of March, I asked for the last Vote of Credit. There is one new fact, indeed, of immense importance, the accession of Italy to the cause of the Allies. (Cheers.) It is impossible to over-estimate either the moral or the material value of her co-operation. But for the rest, I do not think it is well to say much at the moment. The actual fortunes of the campaign fluctuate from week to week and almost from day to day. It is not a war of dramatic surprises or of quick decisions. The theatre is so vast, the scale of operations is so far beyond what the eye can take in at a glance, that it is by splendid acts of heroic adventure, perhaps the main impression at this moment in the minds, both of combatants and of onlookers, is that of a gigantic struggle of endurance. If that be so, let it be said of us at any rate, that we endured to the end. (Cheers.)

For my part, in every speech which I have made to my countrymen since

RUSSIANS OPPOSING THE GERMANS IN POLAND



RUSSIANS LIVING LOW IN A TRENCH AWAITING THE ORDER TO CHARGE.

These Russians are members of the famous Tomogorjki regiment, of Moscow. They are shown here some where along the Polish front. They are some of Russia's best fighters that have been called to check the great German advance.

the first day of the war, I have tried to strike notes of warning as to the gravity of our task and a note of confidence as to the ultimate issue. There is no discord. We shall do well to continue to pay no heed to blind counsels of hysteria and panic. (Cheers.) We have for the moment, one plain and paramount duty to perform—to bring to the service of the State the willing and organized help of every class in the community. (Cheers.) There is a fit place, there is a fit work for every man and every woman in the land. And when the time comes, be it sooner or later, when our cause has been vindicated, and there is once more peace upon earth, may it be recorded as the proudest page in the annals of this nation that there was not a home or a workshop in the whole of this United Kingdom which did not take its part in the common struggle and earn its share in the common triumph. (Loud and prolonged cheers.)

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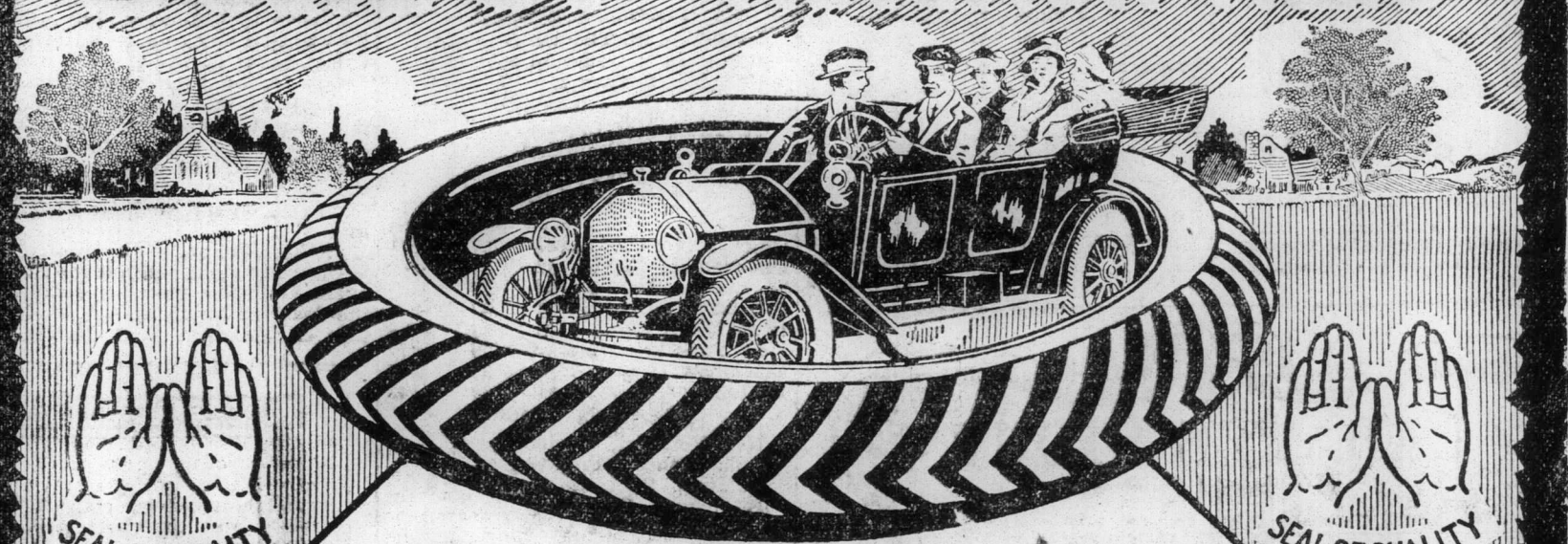
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Mr. B. de Grey.

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have given the world for a
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relieved me. I got better
now I am cured and I can

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