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Parliamentary Intelligence.

HOUSE OF COMMONS, TUESDAY, JUNE 5.
ADDITIONAL DEFENCE.

MR. PITT rose. In entering on the subject he wished this day to bring under the consideration of the House, he, in common with other gentlemen, must feel that it was one of the deepest importance; and they would also feel that the steps hitherto taken had not met with general approbation. He said so, because he was convinced, from what had lately passed, that it was the fixed and unalterable determination of the House to maintain a regular and efficient army, for the purposes of carrying on offensive operations against the enemy, when any opening might occur, and for enabling this country to regain the rank she had lost among the other Powers of Europe. On a former occasion, when he had addressed the House on this interesting topic, he had stated in the outline he then submitted, the absolute necessity there was for doing away the various and complicated obstacles which existed to the recruiting of the regular army, meaning thereby to do away all competition; in the second place he had stated what to his mind appeared the most probable and certain means of aiding the supply of men to the regular army; and, thirdly, he had endeavoured to shew the facility with which a force applicable to our home defence might be created, and by a proper system of discipline might be rendered of so much effect as to make the regular troops a more disposable force for every purpose, instead of being fettered and chained down as they now were. He was confident that he was not saying too much, that very singular benefits would be conferred on the country, could these objects be attained; and he was of opinion they could be realized with much less hardship to the community than had recently been experienced by measures which had last year been brought forward and adopted. This was what he had formerly stated, but one leading feature of the measure, namely, that of raising the men, differed materially from the plan he had then submitted, and when he came to it, in the course of what he had to say, it should be fully explained. He should not detain the House by going much at length into what he had now to offer, because sufficient opportunity hereafter he hoped would be afforded him for that purpose. He should divide the subject into three parts: the 1st would be the amount of the force; the 2d, the description of service; and the 3d, the mode in which the men were to be raised, kept up, and maintained. On the first part of the subject, all he should propose would be the making good, under certain limitations and restrictions, the call already made on the country, acquiesced in and agreed to by the House, and enforcing the completion of those quotas due from the several Counties to the Army of Reserve. That deficiency, according to the best information he was possessed of, amounted to 8 or 9000 men. It was extremely difficult for him to state precisely the deficiency; but any difference on that point could be easily settled on a future occasion. The next provision which he had to mention, was for the reduction of the Militia to its old standard. He did not mean an immediate or rapid reduction, but what he had to propose would reduce the Militia of England, including the Supplementary, to 40,000 men, and that of Scotland to 8000. In order to accomplish this reduction, he meant that the number of men wanting in the Militia, should be carried towards the Army of Reserve, and that no vacancies in the Militia should be filled up. At present 7000 were wanting to fill up the Militia to its present establishment, but it was his intention these men should be sent to the Army of Reserve, and that no attempts to fill up the vacancies in the Militia should be made, until that force was reduced to its constitutional number, 40,000. Thus, by adding these numbers to the Army of Reserve, and by making good the vacancies in the Militia only on its reduction, the House would perceive that he was making no new call on the country, and that the purpose he had in view was neither more nor less than realizing the original intentions of the Legislature, subject, however, to certain changes in the mode of carrying these intentions into effect, which he should state. Supposing this additional force to be raised, still there was another point, not connected with the Army of Reserve Act, which was of essential importance, he meant a regular disposable army. He should therefore propose, that where persons enlisted in the Regular Regiments, the amount of the whole number from the different districts should be distributed in the army, in proportion to the population of the districts they came from, taking care that the vacancies so created shall not exceed one-sixth. A few months only had elapsed since the Army of Reserve Act had passed, and if in that short space 13,000 men had been obtained for general service, what expectations might not Parliament entertain that the regular force might be made permanent and effectual; and if by the reduction of the Militia, and other means, it might gain 74,000 men, what benefit might not the Country derive from such supplies to the troops of the line! With regard to removing the various obstacles in the way of recruiting the Regular Army, it would be obvious that so long as persons were called to serve personally or pay a fine, in time of war, it was almost next to an impossibility to confine the bounties within any reasonable bounds. Persons who did not procure substitutes were liable to a fine of 20l. in the

first instance and subject to an annual recurrence of that penalty for some time; the parishes were also liable to a fine, and there was no doubt but the anxiety of the individuals, and the parishes, to free themselves from these fines, was the cause why the enormous bounties for substitutes were held out. In stating these facts, he begged to be understood as saying nothing to the prejudice of the Army of Reserve Act, because by it a great momentary exertion was created, of the effects of which it was the duty of the House to take advantage. Some weeks ago he had proposed a mode of balloting, which called on individuals to serve in person, or pay a moderate fine; if he declined to serve and paid the fine, the ballot still should go on, in order that, if possible, a person might be found. If that did not turn out to be the case, then the parish was to procure a man at a fixed bounty. The difference which he had now to offer on this part of the subject was certainly great, but he was sure it would by no means impede the general plan. He now proposed to lay aside entirely the individual service, or more properly the ballot, but still that the men to be raised should be procured under the provisions of the Militia and Reserve Acts. There should now be certain districts from whence men were to be furnished, and instead of the ballot, the several parishes should be required to furnish a certain number of men. The Parish Officers should be employed in discharging this duty, and the means should be furnished them of bringing out all the local exertion of their districts, over and above the ordinary means for general service. He should therefore propose that the Receiver General should issue the necessary forms to each parish for the number of men so furnished; and that only in case of default of the number to be found, the fine should attach and take effect; the fine he intended should be something rather more than the bounty to be allowed for each man, and that these fines should be carried to a general recruiting fund. No man, who wished the country to be in possession of an efficient military force, could possibly object to this measure, as it was gaining a great accession of force without any sacrifice of the recruiting for the Regulars, as the bounty for general service would be higher than for this intermediate description of defensive force. He could not say how successful this plan might eventually be, but he was sure that at first sight it held out prospects of a moral flattering nature, as a trial of its effects could be made without incurring the risk of the smallest inconvenience or hazard, to our other means of recruiting. He had no doubt that great levies could be made in the country, but he felt convinced that the means he first proposed would be equally productive, without that pain and anxiety which such levies always occasioned. If the parishes could not get men by the bounty, then there came a question, how were they to be procured at all. By means of the general fund; wherever they were wanting, the Commanding Officer should fill them up by general recruiting, the bounties being at least four guineas less than for general service. Were these men raised in the first instance for home service, they would insensibly acquire military habits, which would ultimately induce them to join the regiments of the regular army. This was the general outline of the plan he had to submit. But this was not all. He then spoke regarding the severity of the penalties now in force against the parishes for not finding men (20l. per man per quota), and argued, that these penalties should be given up, in order to stimulate the parishes to exertion for this intermediate defensive force, keeping them, however, under the fines he had recently proposed. On the third part of the subject, namely, the destination and nature of the service, he should propose, that the men be raised for limited service for a certain number of years, (for five years) as in the case of the army of Reserve, or during the war, unless it should be terminated within five years, and then to serve the remainder of that time in any war His Majesty might afterwards be engaged in; and also to serve in Great-Britain and Ireland. Each battalion, so raised, should be annexed as a second battalion to a regiment of the line. The promotion of the Officers would go on indiscriminately in both, and the men consequently would be allowed to volunteer into the first battalions. Thus Officers who had, from the second battalion served in the first, would probably, after having seen service, return promoted to the first battalions, and men from the Reserve battalions, having been in the first with them, would return to the second. The conduct of deserting men would thus be watched over by their Officers, which would produce incalculable benefit to the service. These were incentives to enlisting in the Regulars, which would be uniform and constant in their operation. The intermediate defensive force would thus be rendered more respectable, their quality would be improved, and the amount of their force would probably be doubled, although not in numbers. The effect of this plan would be rendering the Regulars more disposable; and even were they sent all out of the kingdom, the question for its defence would not, in his mind, depend on their numbers, but on their quality and power. No body thought more highly of the Volunteers than he did, yet it would be a great question, whether the defence of the realm ought to be left to them, without the aid and co-operation of some other species of force, of tried and approved energy. After some remarks on the inefficacy of balloting for men, in which he stated, that out of 30,000 balloted for Great-Britain last year, only 2 or 3000 served, being one-twelfth for England, and one-sixteenth for Scotland;

he concluded by moving for leave to bring in a Bill for establishing and maintaining an additional permanent Force for the Defence of the Realm, and for supplying the King's Regular Forces, and for the Reduction of the Militia. The Right Hon. Gentlemen expressed a hope there would be no objection to introducing the Bill now, to have it read a first time, and that any discussion which might be deemed necessary, might take place on the second reading, which he should wish to be on Friday. The next would of course be employed in the Committee. The question was then put.

Mr. WINDHAM observed, that the public attention had been much excited by the knowledge that his Right Hon. Friend was to submit a plan for the additional defence of the country; but he was sorry to say, that what he had just heard was not, in his opinion, extensive enough, or any thing like that to which he could give his entire approbation. When he stated that he differed from the Hon. Gentleman, he meant that he did so only in some points; if he differed from him in others, he should differ from himself, and fly in the face of all he had so recently urged in that House. He agreed with the Right Hon. Gentleman in the propriety of reducing the Militia. He and his friends had often insisted on this point, and as often had they been censured. In like manner he applauded the commutation of substitution to fixed bounties for service; these two measures, backed by getting rid of the competition against the recruiting for the Regulars, and the service by ballot, were extremely welcome to him, and he hoped that nothing further would be done until the great principle he had so often recommended of changing general service for life, into service for a limited number of years, was accomplished. The plan now proposed did not add to or increase the powers of any Act agreed to by Parliament; it only gave the means, which Government had before, of filling up the men wanted. It was a mixture of voluntary and compulsory force, and the question was, which was the best. It was not the case in this Country to take men by force, as was the case in Prussia and Russia. In our hands it was completely different; as we could not take the short cut these powers did in compelling men to serve; but in this country half the force was lost in overcoming the friction, by exemptions, limitations, &c. Great stress had been laid on that part of the subject, where it was said that men, serving in a limited way, would be more eager to serve generally. It was fallacious to say so; on the contrary they would infallibly prefer the home service. For all those who go on general service, a more than equal number, after sowing their wild oats, would go no farther than the home army, and for the best reason in the world, because there was an army of that kind. With regard to the ballot, Gentlemen seemed to be pretty well agreed; but this plan was neither more or less than converting parochial into recruiting officers. He contended that this would not limit the bounties, on the contrary, the parish officers would soon discover, that if they did not find the quota of men, they would be liable to the fine, and of course would give higher bounties. What law could be made to prevent this? Some men in the country, who might be liable to this ballot, but who would sooner be struck by an apoplexy than by it, would take leave, and go and mow grass in one parish, and then in another; like David Simple, wandering about in search of a friend, until some kind person recommended him to a crimp, and then he is provided for. Being poor, he durst not, with this ballot hanging over his head, apply to his own parish for relief; if he did so, it would be refused, and he would be instantly seized on. With regard to the men being obliged to go into the first battalions, he thought such rigour ought not to be exercised. A man might say, Captain Such-a-one who has left the second battalion, has gone before me, and Lieutenant So-and-so, who used to tyrannize over me, is also there. I don't wish to go into that regiment, for then my misery will recommence; neither do I wish to join the first battalion, because it is in a hot climate; but there is Sergeant Such-a-one in another regiment, a good fellow, whom I know, and there's Ned This, and Tom That, and Will Somebody-else, my old working comrades, whom I should wish to serve with. Having every man a soldier, was having no man a soldier, and it was not the practice of nations which were deemed of a military description. It was not so in Russia and France, for in those countries there was no militia. The women kept the men up to and excited on all occasions their military habits. (a laugh.) If the country was to have this great dead weight round its neck, of a home army, with fine clothes, high feathers, and trumpets well sounded, without any real military service from it, the regular army would continue to lie hid and sink in the obscurity it at present was doomed to endure. *Veram cerues, si vela removers.* He complained of the complicated machinery put in practice for raising men. Having got them first for limited service, they were then, by a sort of double distillation, entered to the regulars, which he was sure would never answer the end proposed. A broad, open, and beaten track lay before His Majesty's Ministers, but they seemed to have the same passion for machinery with Dick, in the face of the Apprentice, who having got into Gargle's house by a ladder of ropes, to carry off the daughter, is told, "you can get out by the door."—"Oh!" says he, "what would then become of my ladder of ropes? That way must I go.—The effect of the scene will be charming!" The Hon. Gentleman concluded by opposing the motion.