

EDITORIAL

DEFENCE AND THE PEOPLE

TRAINED man-power is essential to effective defence; therefore, if Australians are not prepared to surrender to the first force of trained foreign invaders who care to take the opportunity which a major European war involving Britain will present, they **must** be trained to defend themselves.

It is for this reason that all good Australians will help to make a success of any practical national plan designed to strengthen to the country's power of resistance to aggression. The government's present plans, so far as they have been disclosed, are full of weaknesses, but at their worst they do represent the basis of a first step towards greater preparedness for what may, and probably is, to come in the near future. They can, however, serve their ostensible purpose only if they are supported by the people as a whole.

Without such support the government's present defence plans will not only fail to strengthen the defensive power of the nation; they also may conceivably result in the creation of a situation of grave internal danger to the civil and social liberties of the Australian people. For lack of mass support of the citizen militia forces will strengthen the hands of those interests which desire the creation of a standing regular army in this country, a measure which must be opposed to the last ditch by every liberty-loving citizen.

Speaking in the N.S.W. Legislative Assembly on November 4 (Hansard No. 52, 2nd Session 1938, page 2479 et seq.), Brig.-Gen. H. W. Lloyd, C.B., C.M.G., C.V.O.,

D.S.O., the U.A.P. Member for Mosman, criticised the segregation of the military forces from the civil life of the community, a viewpoint in which L.B.C. members can most heartily concur. His purpose, however, demands careful scrutiny. Here are some of the things he said.

"At the time when it was feared that there would be industrial unrest in the early days of the Communist blast from Russia, the military had to provide protection for an eminent personage in N.S.W. It was thought that there might be an industrial insurrection. At the time I was attached to the staff of the First Division at Victoria Barracks (Sydney), and the Battalion selected in case of any unrest at that time was one comprising men from Rozelle and Miller's Point, in the heart of the industrial area. Political misunderstandings do more harm to our military organisations than anything else.

We do not attempt to interpret Gen. Lloyd's meaning; we merely quote the Hansard report of what he said in Parliament. Readers will draw their own conclusions. One of these, we venture to say, will be that if Australia's armed forces are to be an effective instrument for the defence of the liberties and lives of the Australian people, they must be really national in character, drawn from and based upon the mass of the people, and not a small professional army, nor yet a small and therefore more or less sectional body possessing, in civil life, a sectional outlook.