COTTON FOR DEFENSE

"As soft as cotton" is a traditional expression. But it's very soft-ness now becomes an essential element in national defense. Every reader of history remembers how General Jackson piled up cotton bales for protection at the battle of New Orleans in 1812. One difficulty was that the British were constantly setting these cotton bales afire. Since then, government technicians have given attention to cotton and several important developments have resulted. The first is a practical method of fireproofing cotton by immersing it in a mixture of borax and boric acid. This treatment not only fireproofs but keeps out insects and prevents mildewing. The second development is that soft cotton is very effective in stopping a bullet. The third is that a seven foot layer of cotton over a steel structure is better than concrete in providing a bomb shelter. From bandages to bomb-proof shelters is a long cry for cotton.

A BILL TO DEFER PHYSICIANS FROM SELECTIVE SERVICE

In the World War Draft Act, provision was made for deferring certain classes of persons on the ground that their continued efforts in their civil occupations or pursuits were essential to national defense. In the Selective Service Act of 1940, there is no provision for deferred service or for exemptions of groups and classes. Each case must rest on its own merits. First challenge to this provision came from the mayor of New York City who sought deferred status for policemen and firemen. To do it for New York means that it must be done for other cities. Now comes the question of deferring physicians, interns, medical students and others on the ground that the army uses so many more professional men per capita than in civil life and that for every physician taken into the army, five or six civilians are deprived of medical service. A bill has been introduced to defer medical practitioners, interns and medical students. The Secretary of War and the Selective Service officials appear opposed to it. The U.S. Public Health Service might be disposed to favor it. It will develop much controversy because the deferring of one group may be followed by demands from other groups for like treatment. This action would require an amendment to the Selective Service Act.

THE INVESTIGATION OF DEFENSE CONTRACTS.

After the world war, Congress created a special investigating committee to examine into all war contracts and making a thorough report. That Committee operated under the Chairmanship of Representative Graham of Illinois and disclosed many scandals. It disclosed such things as the purchase of 19 bridles, 33 halters and 3 branding iron for every horse in the Army. There is a demand for a similar investigation now to make certain that the tax payers secure value for every dollar of public funds expended. Accordingly the Rules Committee finally brought in a resolution to create a committee of 9 members with authority to subpoena witnesses and make an investigation. By a vote of more than 2 to 1, the House rejected that resolution. The public may wonder why. There was good reason. It was a very faulty piece of legislative carpentering which would have yielded no results. More than that, the language was so drawn that such a special committee would have virtually destroyed the prerogatives and powers of standing committees like that of Military Affairs, Naval Affairs and Appropriations. In due course, a proper committee, armed with ample authority will be set up to go into the matter thoroughly.
OLD MEN VERSUS YOUNG MEN.

It is a rather singular thing that the average age of the Senators who voted against the lease-land bill is slightly higher than the average age of those who voted for it. There may have been some general opinion that age was a factor in the debate and passage of this historic measure but the record does not support that contention. The youngest Senator against the bill was Clark of Idaho who is 39, while the oldest was Johnson of California who is 74. Other Senators voting against the bill include McCarran who is 64, Thomas of Idaho who is 67, Walsh of Mass. who is 68 and Davis who is 67. On the other hand, the youngest Senator favoring the bill was Bunker of Nevada who is 34, while the oldest Senator in favor was Glass who is 83. Other Senators favoring the bill include Sheppard who is 75, Norris 79, Hughes 74, Green 73 Smith 74 and McKellar who is 70. The average age of the Senators opposing the bill is 58 while the average of those favoring passage is 57. Thus does fact topple fancy.

MELLON'S MILLIONS.

Andrew Mellon was one of the nation's foremost industrial tycoons. He had a gift for business. His interests were many. He grew to great riches. In a business-like manner he set about devoting his vast fortune to human welfare. The Mellon Research Institute at Pittsburgh is an example. On March 17th, there will be further evidence of his benefactions. On that date occurs the formal opening and dedication of the Mellon Art Gallery in the nation's capital. The huge edifice on Constitution Avenue done in pink Georgia marble, the priceless collection of art treasures which will be accessible to the public at all times, and the perpetual maintenance fund have all been supplied by the Mellon estate. The art treasures alone are estimated at more than 80 millions in value. This gallery thus becomes the finest in the nation.