DO OR DON'T

In spite of the tremendous sums recently appropriated for national defense and the efforts of conscientious workers in Washington, the facts reveal a nation which is still pitifully unprepared for any military challenge.

Everybody is placing the blame somewhere. The Administration declares it is the unwillingness of large business industries to cooperate. Political hedging and just plain bungling of the defense program are at fault. The people of the United States feel that this defense business is mostly up to this body, and that any criticism or any blame should be lodged with it. If the Army and Navy still have only 500 tanks, 500 planes, they need the Army, Navy, and Air Corps the equipment they need desperately.

Moreover, the Army and Navy have urged the creation of such an agency in a national emergency. The Senate Document, Number 134, 76th Congress, Second Session, reveals the desire for a real industrial defense board with a single executive at the helm, "charged with the responsibility and charged with adequate authority to make and enforce"—not simply to advise—"decisions." This recommendation, however, has been passed by. President Roosevelt should temper his reluctance to share authority—ven with the Supreme Court—at least in these moments of national need and immediately set up a self-sufficient, responsible, war industries agency. For if we're going to do a job, let's do it right.

INSIDE STORY

Currently, the most popular features of newspapers and periodicals are departments pertaining to the Selective Training and Service Act of 1940. Question and answer columns, explanations of clauses, feature stories, etc., all are designed to clear up certainties regarding the conscription bill.

Of particular interest to college men is the news that one such interpretative department soon will give forth with advice strictly for college men, and that at least in these moments of national need and immediately set up a self-sufficient, responsible, war industries agency. For if we're going to do a job, let's do it right.

The truth is that the thing handling our national defense preparations is not at all what a lot of people seem to think it is. The Council of National Defense is not a powerful emergency committee consisting of leading industrialists, like Mr. Knudsen and Mr. Stettinius, which can quickly get the guns, tanks, and planes we need. In fact, Mr. Knudsen and Mr. Stettinius are not members of the Council, but only members of an "Advisory Commission". The Council is composed of Cabinet officers, to quote in their ears in business in their own departments, and at least two of whom, Miss Perkins and Mr. Icke, can scarcely be considered experienced in national defense.

Now this "Advisory Commission," on the other hand, takes its cue from its name and can do nothing but advise. It has no authoritative powers whatsoever. It doesn't even have a chairman to call meetings. Mr. Knudsen and Mr. Stettinius, though they undoubtedly are doing a fine job in the duties they do have, couldn't even secure a branch

knife for the Army by their own actions of signing a contract or two. There are several causes for the slow progress of the United States defense program. Lining up a huge nation for military preparedness is bound to take time. But the point is that we have created a body to see that we have, as a nation, adequate defensive strength. And by whatever name it is called, it should do just that. What is needed in Washington, in strong contrast to what we have, is a potent war defense board with one responsible executive head, and sufficient executive authority per se to get the Army, Navy, and Air Corps the equipment they need desperately.