

*Supply—Defence Production*

I ask the minister if I am to take from that statement that Saskatchewan will continue to receive only one-tenth of one per cent of defence contracts in the future? When the Department of Defence Production came into being, the parliamentary assistant was kind enough to supply me with details of the various defence contracts placed as they were released every two weeks. Those of you who have gone through these will know that there is no provincial break-down and that the totals are not included. I wonder if that is done for obvious reasons? The first departmental release was for the period April 1 to April 15, and the only contract awarded in Saskatchewan was for fuel oil at Prince Albert in the amount of \$27,500. The next one was for the period of April 16 to April 30. Not five cents out of a total of millions of dollars was awarded to my province. The next release was for the period May 1 to May 15. Again there is not one five cent piece for the province of Saskatchewan. A release termed "No. 3" for the same period also showed not one five cent piece for Saskatchewan.

Then we come to the latest figures which I was able to obtain only yesterday, "release No. 4", which shows a contract to W. C. Wells Construction Company, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, for the building of an airport in Alberta. We are grateful to have that contract, but it will be admitted I think that the men who will be employed will come mostly from Alberta. That contract is not going to mean an awful lot to the economy of my province.

**Mr. Low:** We should have had it ourselves.

**Mr. Thatcher:** Let me sum the matter up. Despite the figures which the minister gave this morning, only two contracts out of 415 have been placed in the province of Saskatchewan since his department commenced operations. Possibly there are later figures, but according to those which I obtained yesterday, at this date only two contracts out of 415 have been placed in Saskatchewan. If that is treating the province of Saskatchewan in "a reasonable way", as the minister suggests he has been doing, then I think the minister had better check his dictionary.

There is one other aspect I feel I should mention at this time. People in all walks of life are concerned about this matter in my province. Resolutions are being passed by trade unions, boards of trade and city councils. I hope my good friends from Saskatchewan who are in the Liberal party will also take exception to this discrimination.

**Mr. Ferrie:** They built an airport at Moose Jaw, and they are sure taking exception to that.

**Mr. Argue:** Are you opposed to that?

**Mr. Thatcher:** I suppose it is fortunate that some members object once in a while. There is an old saying that the squeaky wheel usually gets the grease. I remind the committee again that in every case these figures I have used today have been supplied by officials of the minister's department. Possibly some hon. members will say, as the minister has said, that Saskatchewan has no industrial capacity, or that the other prairie provinces and the maritimes lack such capacity. I have looked through some of these contracts, and I note that many of them are for food, meat and dairy products. There are contracts let to Canada Packers in Toronto, Canada Packers in Montreal, and Bordens in Toronto. Surely these are products that we could produce economically in Saskatchewan. We have clothing industries out there. We have lumber and saw mills. We can produce boxes. We have an oil industry. We can produce petroleum products both at the initial and refined stages. We have a brick plant. Surely if the minister and his department are genuinely interested in this problem there are many things they could do to diversify industry. Certainly the department is not using the industrial capacity we have there now.

Are there any particular reasons why parliament should be interested in the giving of more defence contracts to outlying parts of the country? I humbly suggest there are numerous reasons why every member of the House of Commons, regardless of his politics, should try to see that the outlying provinces receive fair treatment in this regard. In the first place there is a great need for the dispersal of industry for reasons of defence. For the most part our present industrial capacity is concentrated in the two central provinces. If there should be war, and the enemy had any kind of an air force at all, with four or five well placed bombs on the hydro plants of eastern Canada our whole industrial capacity could be wiped out overnight. If we can believe our United States friends to the south, about thirty per cent of any attacking group of bombers is all that can be stopped in a concentrated air attack. That means the other seventy per cent can get through. Therefore I think Canada's industrial capacity is very vulnerable to air attack at the present time. Surely it would be senseless to add to that concentration and make it worse.