

Supply—Defence Production

the interests of the people of Canada I feel that I should not be placed in this impossible position.

I find that on July 20 last year, near the end of the session, the Leader of the Opposition found occasion to raise this very important question because, as hon. members will recall, the Minister of National Revenue was involved in an estate in connection with his duties as a director of a trust company. It seems hard to understand why, although we discussed that question on July 20, the Minister of National Revenue had resigned his position and yet did not inform us. I submit that that was a typical disregard for parliament of which this government, which has been in office so long, has been guilty on so many occasions. I think that when the Leader of the Opposition raised this question it would have been a very easy matter for the Minister of National Revenue to have risen and stated: While I insist that I have not abused my position as a minister, in view of the public criticism and to protect the good name of parliament and parliamentary institutions, I have resigned. But the minister did not show us that courtesy.

The Deputy Chairman: The hon. member, I think, will sympathize with me if I ask him if he will come back to the Department of Defence Production.

Mr. Nicholson: Very well, Mr. Chairman. I submit that the discussion we had a year ago, with reference to a cabinet minister who had disregarded the traditions which have been accepted in Great Britain for so many years, is a matter that we should have before us now. The point of view of the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre when he presented his bill last year is, I think, relevant. He referred to a discussion which took place here away back in 1921 when the Liberals were in the opposition, and when Mr. McMaster had this to say as reported at page 586 of *Hansard* of March 4, 1921:

I say that no man who is a minister of the crown in this country has any time left to fulfil the duties of a director. That is my first proposition, and I think it is a proposition which will appeal as a reasonable one to members of this house. We have the best of authority for the statement that no man can serve two masters. Either he will have to neglect his duty as a minister or he will have to neglect his duty as a director, if he holds both positions at one and the same time.

Instead of the word "director" I am sure that if Mr. McMaster were discussing it he would substitute the word "executor".

Then, at page 587 of the same volume Mr. McMaster went on to say:

Now, we should be, and I trust we all are, jealous for the good name of this house. We are told by authority, almost as great as the authority I have just quoted, that we are to

"abstain from the very appearance of evil". Years ago Tennyson wrote about "The fierce light that beats upon the throne".

Well, I do not think that light is comparable to the fierce light that beats upon men who enter parliament at this time of the world's history. I do not think that I am using the language of extravagance when I say that all governmental institutions are on trial and are being subjected to criticism which is not only strong but often bitter and often unjust.

An hon. Member: Get back to defence production.

Mr. Nicholson: I am sure the hon. member who just interrupted will have the greatest respect for his former leader, Mr. MacKenzie King, who took part in the debate and shared the views of Mr. McMaster on this important question. I think the point Mr. McMaster raised is true, that a minister is busy enough performing his duties as a minister without being asked to be responsible as an executor of what is, I understand, the largest estate that has ever been built up by a single person in Canadian history. I find in the telephone directory—

Mr. Howe (Port Arthur): That is not true, incidentally.

Mr. Nicholson: The minister says it is not true, but it is one of the largest. My information that it is the largest comes from one newspaper, but if the minister will tell us of a larger estate that will be of interest. I find that the minister is responsible to the parliament of Canada for Atomic Energy of Canada; Canadian Arsenals; Canadian Commercial Corporation; Crown Assets Disposal Corporation; Eldorado Mining and Refining Limited; T. C. A.; Polymer Corporation and Trade and Commerce. Surely there is enough work in the Department of Trade and Commerce to keep any ordinary person busy for all the hours that there are in the days and in the years.

I submit, Mr. Chairman, in view of the discussion last year which resulted in the Minister of National Revenue giving up a connection with a corporation with which he had very sincere and close connections, this Minister of Defence Production should not place his colleagues in the position in which they are now placed. I refer again to the part the Prime Minister took last year when this matter was before parliament, as indicated on page 6451 of *Hansard* for July 20, 1955. The Prime Minister of Canada said that when he was asked to take a cabinet portfolio, there was not any question about what his course of action should be. He said:

I had felt that there would have been no possibility of conflict of interest in the way I discharged my duties as minister, when I became one, and those other connections, but I did not want to be exposed to any unfair criticism, which