

legislation was placed before the house, upon the fact that we were asking authority for only two years—

Mr. GREEN: That was for a different purpose.

Mr. MacKINNON: —so that we would then have to come back to parliament for any extension.

Mr. BOUCHER: A different company and a different purpose.

Mr. MacKINNON: This bill provides for a minor amendment for the purpose of enabling the Minister of Trade and Commerce to use the Canadian Commercial Corporation as an agency for the purchasing of supplies and the execution of works on behalf of the Department of National Defence. This legislation will make possible the efficient and economical purchase of goods and materials and the carrying out of projects required by the Department of National Defence.

Various hon. members expressed concern over the treatment that civil servants would get from the Canadian Commercial Corporation, but I can assure hon. members that in the engagement of staff the veterans preference is observed to the full.

Mr. BOUCHER: How many veterans are in the employ of the Canadian Commercial Corporation?

Mr. MacKINNON: Including the staff taken over from the Minister of Reconstruction, thirty-two per cent of the staff have war service records. The organization was largely taken over as an effective working branch of the Department of Reconstruction.

Mr. GREEN: What is the total staff?

Mr. MacKINNON: I cannot give those figures now; I think they could be given more readily when the officials are before me. It was suggested that the Canadian Manufacturers' Association was critical of this legislation, but if it was I have not heard one word of criticism from them—

Mr. BOUCHER: Not a word was said about them.

Mr. MacKINNON: —or from any other organization having to do with commerce and production. As my colleagues have pointed out, the alternative to this legislation would be a more expensive and cumbersome purchasing organization. This is not a one-man corporation. It is true that Mr. Low, who was employed in a purchasing capacity for one of our great national projects, the Canadian National Railways, has been willing to

[Mr. MacKinnon.]

head this organization and, because of his public spirit, we are to have the benefit of his great experience. He has in this department built up a staff of experts without any consideration for political patronage or political complexion.

Mr. MERRITT: The minister wants to take everything on trust.

Mr. MacKINNON: The hon. member for Lake Centre (Mr. Diefenbaker) referred to the legislation, and I can assure him that it has received the close attention of the law clerks of the Senate and the House of Commons and has been approved by the Department of Justice.

Mr. DIEFENBAKER: Was the point which I raised indicated to them?

Mr. MacKINNON: I did not have the point raised by the hon. member at the time, but the whole legislation was before the department. The statement was made that this legislation constituted a deliberate effort to circumvent the civil service commission. All I can say is that there is no truth in that. I do not think there would be any objection on the part of the employees or of the department to having the whole organization come under the control of the civil service commission.

Mr. DIEFENBAKER: Repeal that section then.

Mr. BOUCHER: Why that section in the bill?

Mr. MacKINNON: It was necessary to secure expert employees to do specific work. Even if the whole matter were under the civil service commission, I think the commission would be glad to cooperate in having certain key men selected by those qualified to select such men.

Mr. BOUCHER: Will the minister delete that section in the bill?

Mr. MacKINNON: No. In his opening remarks the hon. member for Nanaimo (Mr. Pearkes) said that he considered part of this legislation a means of making possible centralized buying in an economical way. That is to be the effort of the corporation and the department.

Mr. PEARKES: I did not give the same approval to the matter of construction projects that I did to the general purchasing. I understood the Minister of National Defence to say that when work was to be done outside by contract the corporation would let the contract. When the Department of Public Works did that they had a supervisory staff