

Minister of Finance must necessarily be in close contact with whatever organization is entrusted with the responsibility of securing munitions and supplies.

No one can foretell what demands this war will make upon the country. We must be prepared to meet unexpected demands quickly. This legislation gives us the power to act quickly and effectively if the need should develop for another department with a full time minister in charge. In the earlier stages, however, it is considered that surveys, investigations, organization and administrative methods can be initiated and worked out by a board in close touch with business and practical conditions, these activities to be later continued under the board or merged in a ministry as the occasion and circumstances demand, and as the experience gained may warrant.

Mr. LAWSON: It may not be strictly in order, but perhaps the Prime Minister would permit me a question. Is it the thought that this war supply board to which the right hon. gentleman has referred is to supplant what has been previously set up as the defence purchasing board?

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: Yes.

Hon. C. H. CAHAN (St. Lawrence-St. George): Mr. Speaker, when I read this bill and attempted to consider it in all its ramifications and complexities, I felt I need not discuss its provisions in detail, either on second reading or in committee. It is an elaborate effort to provide for a Department of Munitions and Supply under a minister who will have the most extensive powers ever given to a minister of the crown in Canada.

Section 6 of the bill provides that the minister shall examine into and organize the resources of Canada, the sources of supply and the agencies available for the supply of munitions of war, and supply for the execution and carrying out of defence projects, and the needs present and prospective of the government and of the community in respect thereto; and may make use of the services of any board, agency or association in carrying out the provisions of this section.

Then in the definitions section it is provided that "munitions of war" shall mean:

Arms, ammunition, implements of war, military, naval or air stores, or any articles deemed capable of being converted thereinto, or made useful in the production thereof.

And the term "supplies" is defined in this way:

"Supplies" includes materials, goods, stores and articles or commodities of every kind including, but not restricting the generality of the foregoing: (i) articles which in the opinion of the minister, would be essential for the needs

of the government or of the community in the event of war; and (ii) anything which, in the opinion of the minister, is, or is likely to be, necessary for, or in connection with, the production, storage or supply of any such article as aforesaid.

Therefore the scope of the work of the department is very extensive indeed, and I might almost say unrestricted. It occurred to me, therefore, in reading the bill that it was to be brought into operation at an early date by order in council, and that it was to continue for a period of three years, with a possible extension of one year for certain of its provisions. I had thought therefore that it would be advisable to refrain from any criticism of these provisions for the present, in view of the fact that at a later date—perhaps at the ensuing session of parliament—the bill would have been in operation for several months, and that we would then know something of the success and efficiency of the measure.

I now find, however, that this bill will be held in abeyance for the time being, while the new war supplies board, which is to be created and which is to function under the War Measures Act, is to make the necessary investigations and examinations of the economic conditions and industrial life of the country, preliminary to setting up the Department of Munitions and Supply as provided in the bill.

Under those circumstances I think criticism is vain and premature. I trust, when the war supplies board is constituted, that the order in council, by which it will be constituted, will be made known to the public, so that during the recess we may thoroughly examine into its provisions and watch with great care the manner in which it functions.

I should have thought it might be advisable to start at once with the Department of Munitions and Supply because that department, if it is to be created, should be under the administration of a minister of the crown. The war supplies board will not be under the direct administration of a minister of the crown, whose time can be given exclusively to the efficient operation of the board. Perhaps any further comment from me is unnecessary.

I notice that under section 20 the governor in council may from time to time make such regulations as may be necessary to carry into effect the provisions of the bill. No provision is made for the publication of those regulations, or to provide that they shall have the force of law after they are once made.

Section 14 provides—and I believe very properly—that subject to the order of the minister any person carrying on business, which comes within the scope of this enact-