

parliamentary system from that which we have. Ours follows very closely the British system; and it is a striking fact that in Britain there is no committee of parliament on military affairs or defence. It has often been discussed and suggested but it has always been decided against.

Mr. GREEN: They have none on external affairs either, have they?

Mr. CLAXTON: That is quite correct. I think a case can be made against having functional committees. Last year, when it was suggested that there should be a committee on health and security, I believe I made the same observations. I am still of the same view, that it is cutting across our parliamentary system to have committees on functional matters. It is based on a different concept of government than from that which we have. In the United States, as hon. members know, committees of congress have an important part and a positive role in formulating policies, and, in fact, carrying on government; whereas here that is the responsibility of the administration, and it carries out that responsibility as long as it can keep the support and confidence of the house.

Quite apart from these general remarks, I should like to point out to hon. members the rather difficult position we in the Department of National Defence are in this year. I think it is just two months ago today that I was appointed as the first minister of a single department since the war, and we decided at once to try to merge the three civil establishments in the three existing departments. In order to bring that about I thought it desirable to get the whole department, including the headquarters of the three armed services, in one physical location, and just four weeks ago we started the move from the various buildings in Ottawa in order to get the department into the three buildings on Cartier square. That has been an immense job, very creditably carried out. It had to be carried on simultaneously with the ordinary work of the department, and at a time of year when the estimates were being prepared. It has involved the physical dislocation of virtually everyone in the department. That move will not be complete for another month or more; it has to be done by steps. Then, the physical move having been completed, we will be engaged in the work of merging the civilian branches into one set of branches, and consolidating and coordinating the branches of the three services. That will be going on steadily throughout the year. This operation of establishing an organization on a sound post-war basis will take a considerable period

[Mr. Claxton.]

of time. It is easy to speak about it; it is fairly easy to draw a blueprint of it, but it requires literally thousands of changes to be worked out in practice. If this work is to be carried on as rapidly and as effectively as I believe all hon. members would like us to do it, then it will be necessary for us in the department to give a very great part of our time and attention just to that job.

As hon. members know, the establishment of a parliamentary committee means at once that the minister and the senior officials of the department, as well as considerable numbers of the staff, become fully engaged in attending to the work of servicing the committee, securing information and that kind of thing. In a time of very quick change and development that is a difficult operation to perform, more difficult than at any other time. For that reason I believe that if a committee on military affairs is desired by the house it would be greatly preferred that it should not be introduced this year. In this matter we are in the hands of the house, which of course has control of the rules of procedure, but my hope would be that we would not have a committee on military affairs, certainly not this year.

Mr. LENNARD: A few moments ago the minister stated that there would be a deputy minister and three associate deputy ministers. Can the minister say whether these associate deputy ministers will be responsible directly to the minister, or through the deputy minister of defence?

Mr. CLAXTON: They will be responsible through the deputy minister of defence, but of course will have access to the minister at any time.

Mr. GRAYDON: Originally I did not intend to enter this discussion, but decided to do so when the minister mentioned the standing committee on external affairs which was set up a year ago last September, at the first session of this parliament. It seems to me the relationship between the questions of external affairs and defence is now closer and more integrated than at any other stage in our national development and our national history. It took session after session before the government were persuaded to set up what we thought, and what we now know, to be a most vital standing committee in our parliamentary structure, that on external affairs. The work of that committee during the last two sessions has justified all the arguments which we had previously advanced from time to time and which I may say went unheeded by the government for a long