

Supply—National Defence

any hon. gentleman of the opposition is worried about some aspect of national defence, he will only have to speak—

Mr. Harkness: We are worried about all of it.

Mr. Pouliot: My hon. friend is worried about himself, that is the worst of it. But as he is worried about himself, he may improve in due course. I will say to the hon. gentlemen that whenever they want some information about secret matters concerning defence they will only have to go to the Minister of National Defence, and I am sure that he will trust them and give them the information they want.

Now, sir, I have spoken long enough. If I have said something that was not exactly pleasant, if I have not a flower in my mouth for every member of the opposition as Ferdinand the bull had, I regret it very much. I had to make two points. The first is that it is extremely dangerous to talk publicly about national defence strategy in the House of Commons, either in the house or before a committee. In the second place, all members of the House of Commons should bow before the man in overalls who is the friend of the soldier, the airman and the sailor.

The Deputy Chairman: The hon. member for Lethbridge. The hon. member for Nanaimo will agree that since there are other parties in this house, and that I am informed no member of the Social Credit party has spoken so far, I will give the floor to the hon. member for Lethbridge.

Mr. Fulton: Mr. Chairman, I would just draw to your attention the fact that this afternoon, after the Minister of National Defence had spoken, the hon. member for Coast-Capilano and I rose. The chairman saw the hon. member for Coast-Capilano, another member on the government side and a parliamentary assistant.

Some hon. Members: Shame, shame.

Mr. Fulton: Shame, yes; it is a shame.

The Deputy Chairman: The hon. member will realize that if he wanted to raise that incident as a point of order, it should have been raised this afternoon.

Mr. Fulton: No, Mr. Chairman, I did not want to raise a point of order; I just wanted to keep the record straight.

Mr. Blackmore: Mr. Chairman, I always like to see a man who has served his country well receive credit for that service. I had the privilege of sitting in the house during world war II, and I had the privilege also of having

a good deal of almost confidential relations with the late Mr. Ralston who was the minister of national defence. I should like to say here that, being a member of the opposition, I would have no ulterior reason for supporting the government or supporting Mr. Ralston, but in my judgment Colonel Ralston was largely responsible for the military success which Canada enjoyed during world war II. The hon. member for Temiscouata is quite justified in having his own personal opinions. He has expressed them. I do not question his sincerity. I now wish to say that in my judgment the attack which the hon. member referred to was not a result of any remark which Colonel Ralston made.

Mr. Pouliot: If my hon. friend will permit me to interrupt, may I say that it was not an attack at all. It was just a reminiscence of public statements made in the house.

Mr. Blackmore: I fear that I did not make my meaning quite clear to the hon. member for Temiscouata. I was referring to the attack of the Germans upon the allies, which resulted in a great number of deaths. I do not believe that that attack was in any way a result of the remarks of Colonel Ralston.

I think it is only fair to the country and to Colonel Ralston to make this statement, namely, that Colonel Ralston conducted the Department of National Defence in Canada during world war II under conditions of extreme difficulty. He was confronted on every hand with the almost impossible problem of getting sufficient men into the army under the right categories to enable him to reinforce the men he sent across to Europe. That was a result of the altogether uncertain attitude which was assumed by various members in the house with respect to conscription for military service. It is only fair to Colonel Ralston that that fact be known; and the statements which Colonel Ralston made had something to do with that problem also. Probably that is the thing that caused him to be released from his position.

But certainly—and let me repeat it—this country owes Colonel Ralston a debt of gratitude not only for the gallant service he rendered in world war I but also for the splendid work he did as minister of national defence in Canada during world war II.

Mr. Pearkes: Mr. Chairman, by ancient custom the seating arrangement in this chamber follows that in effect in the House of Commons at Westminster, the mother of parliaments, in which on your right are aligned the supporters of the government of the day and on your left are aligned members of the opposition. It so happens that in this particular house the majority of the government