

*Committee on Defence Expenditure*

And I repeat, Mr. Speaker,

—there are at least eight—indicate that no sustained effort has been made to achieve uniformity in systems within the services. The result is that mandatory directives are specialized, particularly with respect to the army.

I asked the Auditor General to inform me further about these eight systems. I understand that the navy has one and the air force has one. They were much later in creation, of course, and their system is more modern; but there are six in the army. I asked the Auditor General what the phrase “mandatory directives” meant. I will repeat his statement:

The result is that mandatory directives are specialized—

He explained to me that it refers to printed instructions. Remember that there are six different systems, Mr. Speaker. There are huge books of instruction, and I could hardly believe my ears when he told me that they ran into literally thousands of pages.

One of the difficulties is that a man trained under one of those six systems does not become readily transferable to another. He will find himself not at home there. I point out that I think the Auditor General, in his own way, is underlining what Mr. Currie has told us about this need for the creation of a system.

I want to read a word from the *Winnipeg Free Press* of January 3, because it grapples fairly firmly with the question of economy in military expenditures and I think it is worth repeating what they say. Economy is very much in the minds of the people to the south of the line and very much in the mind of the *Winnipeg Free Press*. I always read the *Winnipeg Free Press* with the feeling that it won't be unduly unfair to the government. The *Free Press* says:

Recently in these columns it was pointed out that the most promising field for economy at Ottawa was the \$2,100,000,000 voted for defence. It was noted with regret that members of the government from Mr. St. Laurent down all set aside this item of \$2,100 million as untouchable . . . This attitude, of course, is unrealistic . . . General Eisenhower, in promising large scale economies in federal expenditures, relied almost entirely upon the savings which he knew could be made in the United States defence expenditures. On this score, General Eisenhower must be considered to know what he is talking about. Not only does he propose to cut billions of dollars out of the United States defence appropriations, but he has repeatedly declared that this can be done without reducing the defence force by a single front line soldier or effective weapon.

The extract I am quoting winds up by saying:

Hitherto the St. Laurent government has taken a discouraging and non-cooperative attitude with respect to economy.

[Mr. Macdonnell (Greenwood).]

Now, Mr. Speaker, I have been trying to remind the house that the Currie report indicated a general breakdown in the system of administration, and that correcting the irregularities is only part of the job of the Minister of National Defence (Mr. Claxton) and the government. I have drawn their attention to the broad comprehensive statement of the task as indicated by Mr. Currie in the extract I read about the creation of a system. At the present time the members of this house have no means of judging the facts, and for this reason we in this party moved a subamendment designed to have Mr. Currie continue and broaden his work. This subamendment was ruled out of order, but the C.C.F. have now moved a subamendment which is in order. The Prime Minister (Mr. St. Laurent) says he will vote against it. I know it is unparliamentary to suggest that you can predict how members of the Liberal party are going to vote, but on the face of it I shall be greatly surprised if there are any defaulters, except possibly the genial member for Comox-Alberni (Mr. Gibson) who seems to flit about at times from one party to the other.

What I want to know is, why is the government against this amendment? Is it conceivable that they would vote against it if they thought a further report by Mr. Currie would reveal a good state of affairs? I suggest that it is not conceivable. If they felt confident a further report by Mr. Currie would reveal a good state of affairs I believe they would have no objection whatever. The only reason they are against it is that they fear there will be further unpleasant revelations. Now, if I am justified in saying that—and I certainly say it with the fullest conviction—and if this government refuses to allow a further investigation, I believe the government has forfeited the right to be respected by the people of this country. Remember, we are not talking about small things, we are talking about big things.

I thought the reason the Prime Minister gave for voting against this subamendment was trivial. I was surprised that a man of the Prime Minister's standing would give such a reason. What he said was that he felt the committee should be left to its own good judgment after they have had an opportunity of hearing the witnesses, including Mr. Currie himself.

Well, Mr. Speaker, was the committee left to its own good judgment with regard to consideration of the Currie report, or is there an amendment now before this house virtually giving a directive to the committee? Does anyone suggest that if this subamendment is voted down the committee, in its