

*War Appropriation*

Mr. RALSTON: As my hon. friend has anticipated, that is a matter which is not in my department, but the Minister of Pensions and National Health is here and he might give what information he can.

Mr. MACKENZIE (Vancouver Centre): All I can say is that the department has been giving for some time attention to what might be termed a national fitness measure along the lines suggested by the member for Vancouver East. The two orders in council to which he has referred apply only to those who have enlisted, have been called up under the National Resources Mobilization Act, or have volunteered for active service, and naturally they must be quite limited in application. The member for Saskatoon City asked about the percentage which could be made mendable by this process. It would not be large, between 10 and 15 per cent, even as regards minor defects. As regards major defects, which would come under the Department of Pensions and National Health, it would not be more than 2 or 3 per cent, according to the estimate of medical officers. With regard to the larger measure which has been envisaged, and which would be for the use of the country to train men in habits of physical fitness, it is now being considered, but I cannot announce a definite policy.

Mr. HANSON (York-Sunbury): That is a large order. What is considered to be a major defect? I do not want to get down to individual cases, but I have in mind a man in the air force with a hernia. I have written to the minister about this case. Is a small hernia a major defect? The public ought to know, and the soldiers themselves should know just what the plan encompasses.

Mr. MACKENZIE (Vancouver Centre): There are different conditions of hernia—I am not speaking as a medical man. In the great war operations were frequently carried out and the hernia condition remedied, following which the men went overseas, stayed some years and rendered excellent service. In this war medical opinion is against major operations for hernia. That is the prevailing opinion of medical advisers in our department at least.

Mr. COLDWELL: In view of the number of men being called up and the fact that the Minister of Munitions and Supply the other evening spoke of the shortage of men, I wish to refer to a matter which I think has not been given sufficient attention by this committee. It involves all three defence departments and the Department of Munitions and Supply also. If my recollection serves me correctly the hon.

member for St. John-Albert (Mr. Hazen) raised it last week. It is in connection with delinquency among children, arising from the fact that many men are overseas or in the army and many mothers are working. What forcibly brought it to my notice was a statement in the May issue of the *Canadian Forum* to the effect that a partial survey made by the Toronto board of education shows that in the public schools in the industrial areas of Toronto in more than 20 per cent of the families the mother was working and not home at noon. The statement went on to indicate that this condition was leading to considerable delinquency among children, and the social service agencies such as we have are quite unable to deal with the problem piecemeal. If the state needs, as I think it may, the services of mothers in connection with the war effort, then it is the responsibility of the state to see to it that their families are properly cared for.

When our party was in Great Britain—there are several members of that party in the house this afternoon—we were struck by the arrangements made over there to cope with this situation. For example, in Stoke-on-Trent we visited the large community kitchen and the feeding centres from which meals were served to families whose mothers were working or where the wage was not sufficient to provide proper and adequate food. We saw the crèches, and the playrooms in the air raid shelters where children could be taken care of while their mothers were away from them, sometimes on account of the raids and sometimes on account of working conditions.

It strikes me that this is not a question for the local municipality; it is a question for the dominion as a whole and ought to be provided for by this government and this parliament. Sometimes a new war industry comes into an area and no prior information is given by any of the departments as to the extent to which a problem of this sort will be created in the community concerned. It seems to me that the local authority should be taken into the government's confidence as to the type of worker required, whether women will be employed and whether families will have to be looked after. Adequate grants should be made by this parliament to the local authority, educational or social service as the case may be, in order that proper care may be provided for the children of the community—I mean care in crèches for the infants, in nursery schools for pre-kindergarten age children, and so on—and steps should be taken to ensure that the children at noon get proper and adequate food.

[Mr. MacInnis.]