

with the Department of Reconstruction Act—which this bill purports to do—the words “defence projects” should be eliminated, because you and I both hope that there will not be any defence projects for some considerable time.

Mr. MacNICOL: As I understand it, the department will have plans and specifications for jobs A, B, C and D, et cetera; and that tenders will be called. The successful contractor, if he is qualified to do the work—and I think he should be qualified; I am not in favour of awarding contracts to the lowest tenderer, if he is not qualified to do the job—will get the work. But if the engineers in the department consider that a certain contractor has all the qualifications and the equipment required to do the job, and he is also the lowest tenderer, he will get the job?

Mr. HOWE: That is correct.

Mr. MacNICOL: One further question: The department itself, under its own men, engaged by itself, is not going to carry on any construction work?

Mr. HOWE: Not so long as I am minister.

Mr. MACDONNELL: I should like to make a few general observations on this resolution. The observations I am going to make ought to be palatable, indeed, to the minister; but whether they will be or not remain to be seen.

I believe that this bill will put two jobs, each of which requires the ablest and most industrious man we can possibly find, on the shoulders of the Minister of Reconstruction and Supply, and I believe it is making a fool out of the business of reconstruction. The job of reconstruction is one of great importance. It is a job, above all, which requires a man who will have time to think and to plan, who will not have the day-to-day and hour-to-hour decisions which the present minister has to make. That is my conception of it.

In this connection I should like to repeat what the Prime Minister said at the time this department was organized. In passing, may I say that I ask the minister to believe that, however much he may disagree with me, this is sincerely said, because I earnestly believe he is at present attempting to do what no human being can do.

In describing the duties of the minister the Prime Minister said this:

He will continue to administer the department of which he is now the head.

The Prime Minister said that the department will fade away. I would remind the minister of the old lines about the soldier

who fades away and gradually dies. But they often live a long time before they die. I will remind the minister later that he gave us a list of fifteen enterprises which are still under his control. They may be in process of liquidation, but they are not yet liquidated.

Let me now read what the Prime Minister said:

He will also have the special duty of meeting with experts on reconstruction—

And this was in June, 1944.

—of meeting with a committee of the cabinet which will be composed of ministers who will also be expected to give their time and thought to the formulating of plans related to reconstruction, and to seeing that these plans are carried out. As part of his duty there will be also the obligation of keeping himself informed with respect to what has been and is being done by the provinces and municipalities, and, as far as it may be possible through consultation with them, and in other ways, of seeking to combine in the most effective way the work of reconstruction of the federal government and of the provincial governments and municipalities.

I hope people will not think I am splitting hairs. I am talking about this because I regard this reconstruction job as a job of terrific importance. I think that particularly those of us who believe in private enterprise should regard it as particularly important. If this appears paradoxical to any of my hon. friends to the left, let me put it frankly to them that I believe that the government has certain tasks, important tasks to discharge, and that it must give regulation, guidance and stimulus, if we may call it that.

Mr. BLACKMORE: Provided that the purchasing power is there.

Mr. MACDONNELL: I have read what the Prime Minister outlined as to the duties to be carried out by the Minister of Reconstruction. In England they have one of the ablest men produced in the war, Lord Woolton, giving them his whole time. His work is also mentioned in the Prime Minister's speech. It is a job where a man has to have time to study and think.

It was only the night before last, I believe, that the minister told us of the companies still on hand. I know many of them are liquidated, and others are in process of liquidation. But he will agree with me that a company which is in process of liquidation needs a lot of time and thought given to it as well. We must not forget that the minister has the T.C.A. on his hands and perhaps other things of which I know nothing.

An hon. MEMBER: Wartime Housing.

Mr. MACDONNELL: There were the fifteen companies he mentioned the night before