

*War Appropriation—Army*

When we appointed Major-General Browne director-general of the reserve army, it was not just a gesture. We believe that the reserve army deserved encouragement and the sort of supervision he can give. I believe his appointment has been amply justified by the results shown across Canada. It is quite possible that the reserve army units in military district No. 2 may feel that there is little chance of activity, but it is a great satisfaction to them, as I know from what I see when I visit them, that they are ready if the opportunity for action does come, and I have not any doubt, seeing them as I did, led by veterans of the great war, that they would give a good account of themselves. I saw businessmen in all walks of life doing their part in the reserve army along with the young chaps to see to it that the traditions of the army are upheld, and seeing them I have felt that Canada had a reserve force which could be depended upon should the need arise. It is not a glamorous role, I know. They do not expect a glamorous role. All they want is to feel in their hearts the satisfaction of knowing that they are doing their duty, that the people of this country appreciate what they are doing and that their job is something worth while. That is what I have tried to tell them. That is what I honestly believe myself. The reserve army gives the men two chances to serve, a chance to serve at their ordinary vocation or business in the daytime and a chance after hours, to prepare to serve as soldiers to prevent homes and business from being swept away if the threat should come. Their readiness to serve is a challenge to any citizen of this dominion.

Mr. DIEFENBAKER: I should like to ask a question of the minister arising out of a statement he made some time ago. If I understood him aright, he said that there would be an increase in Sten machine-gun production this year. Recently there has been considerable reference in United States papers to a reshuffling of war production in Canada. Only the other day there was a dispatch from Washington by a Canadian Press writer who said:

As seen from here, Canada may be forced to make drastic changes in the next two or three months, switching factories to new production, stopping the production of some war materials, particularly certain ground equipment and, generally, reshuffling her whole industrial machine built up since the start of the war.

This article is dated Washington, May 7, and goes on to say:

Instead of guns and shells, it may be ships, naval and cargo-carrying. The total effort will be the same, the change coming in emphasis.

[Mr. Ralston.]

Reference has been made by some hon. members who have preceded me to the necessity of providing for the reserve army still more supplies, such as munitions, machine guns and the like. Up to the present one of the main reasons why these units were unable to be supplied with the necessary munitions and equipment was the fact that requirements in Britain and in other parts of the world and in the Canadian army overseas made it impossible to supply the units in Canada. The minister to-night has made it very clear—I think he has uttered a warning to the people of Canada—in discussing the possible role of the reserve army, that it is within the realm of possibility that the men of the reserve army may have to be used for the defence of Canada, if I understood him aright. That being so the reserve army should be fully equipped. As I have already pointed out, during the past few weeks the press of the United States and, in a lesser degree, of Canada have given great attention to the fact that, in a reshuffle of production, great changes will take place in the war factories of Canada. I ask the minister if it is a fact that there is on hand to-day such an excess of rifles, machine guns, mortars and the like as to justify reduction in production of any of these lines at this time. The minister has mentioned that there will be an increase in Sten gun production, but I would ask him, knowing there must be consultation with him in the determination of a matter such as this, whether it is intended during the next six or eight months, in any event from now until the end of the year, to cancel the further production of Boys anti-tank rifles, to reduce Bren gun production by approximately sixty per cent, as well as to drop the production of 3.7 anti-aircraft guns and mountings. There has been a great deal of reference in the press to this sort of thing. If it is correct, my submission is that it is not justifiable at this time, provided that the reserve army and the other units in Canada have not, as they have not at the present time, full equipment. I think it would be a fine idea if the minister could give a statement, circumscribed as it must necessarily be by consideration of safety, as to what changes in the matter of gun production and the like have been decided upon and how these changes will be effected during the next few months.

Mr. RALSTON: I may say to my hon. friend that, with the limitation which he imposes, and which is quite justified, I could not possibly make any statement at all. I mean that I am circumscribed by the bounds