

to sit here for two or three weeks, as he must do under our present antiquated system of procedure. We are doing the same thing as they did in the time of the Napoleonic wars; there is a resolution first, a bill, and all that kind of thing going on in a circle. If we had the British system, by which, during the first forty-five minutes each day that parliament meets in war time, hon. members can rise and ask the very questions which are being asked here this afternoon, hundreds of questions could be answered, avoiding unnecessary long debates and saving months of time which are wasted by us in debating war policy under an old system. Whether it be this or any other government that is in power, I sympathize with any minister who has to be here for weeks and attend to departmental affairs as well and carry on, and I apologize sometimes myself for asking on urgent matters. But I say this, representing a soldier city, that we should have a new system. I raised this point last year and the year before. To-day we are sitting from three to six and from eight to eleven. Surely the British policy of setting aside forty-five minutes each day for answering war questions would be a great improvement on the present practice and curtail weeks of debate. I receive the British *Hansard* daily from the old country, and I am surprised at the questions which are asked on the orders of the day. In nearly every case the minister has had notice and the answer is often read. That is true even with respect to such questions as the one which was raised this afternoon by the leader of the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation. The minister has his answer ready; he can rise in his place and say why Mrs. A or B or C or D did not get her dependency money, or why her soldier husband was not admitted to hospital, or did not get his pay, or questions about soldiers' parcels not delivered in enemy countries. Supplementary questions are allowed as well.

I must say that the system in the minister's department is such that the letters I write about hospitalization or departmental matters are answered the next day or so. I believe I write to the department as much as any hon. member, because a great many people write to me. I am sorry they do, because I do not want all that work, but our officials endeavour to help the private member and his constituents, and our civil service do it well.

I have one other question to ask, and I shall occupy only a few moments, because it is hard to raise important questions of policy regarding the war in the haphazard way which is followed in this house, one hon. member

after another rising and asking such questions as occur to him on a variety of different topics. For that reason I did not like to interfere last evening with the train of thought of various hon. members on certain features of the debate. However, the minister made a radio speech on Sunday evening. In my opinion it was a very good radio speech. I speak only as a private member. I believe it is my duty to give the government independent support as long as they are trying to carry on a total war, and I intend to do so irrespective of politics. I believe that every hon. gentleman on this side of this chamber is trying to do the same thing. I am sure they are.

I believe it would be an advantage if the minister would devote some time to disseminating news on the radio himself in this way, because to-day the radio is of great importance. I say this without disparaging the splendid work of the press, which have rendered splendid service in connection with the war, but I believe the minister should explain over the radio the position of the soldier and his dependents in this matter of hospitalization, pay and better conditions for the soldier's care.

I have tried to get some into the hospital, but you cannot do it unless you sign a contract. There is a great deal of suffering, and federal power will have to do something more about this matter in the future than it has so far done, because after all the soldier's wife and his children are civilians. Parliament will have to go into the whole question of public health for civilians and soldiers. It is one of the greatest problems before us, but for many years past it has been made a football here. This is a comparatively rich country; the health of the Canadian people is a matter of first importance to all of us, and the first duty of a government is the care of its people. We have all been surprised at the criticism that has appeared in newspapers throughout the empire about the decadence of our race, the number of people who have been found unfit for active service, and the fact that the civilian population has been finding it exceedingly difficult to stand up against the battle of nerves or ready to serve in the war. I urge parliament to take the necessary steps to help the municipalities in this direction of caring for soldiers and civilians. The minister speaks very well over the radio—I heard him on Sunday night—and he and other members of the government might very well give their assistance in this matter. The hon. member who is at the moment in the chair (Mr. McCann) is an authority on the subject