

impaired security. However, that is all past and we do not need to waste time in talking about it now.

Without taking up any more of the time of the committee in general remarks, I should like to come to a few specific questions. I would ask the minister first of all if he will take the administration item of \$7 million. He has already made some general references to it. He has indicated certain reductions in staff. I should be glad, however, if he would give us some figures, if he would give us a picture of this department over which he is presiding. I should like to know, for example, how many there are in the department compared with the number a year ago. If he can do so, I would ask him to split them up—and from what he said I believe he can—and tell us how many in the department now are on the munitions and supply side and how many are on the reconstruction side. I should like him to give us a general picture of the department as he sees it, because, after all, we cannot understand whether it is functioning efficiently until we know how he expects it to function. Therefore it will be a help to us if the minister, without putting us to the necessity of asking a great many detailed questions, will give us a projection of the department so far as he can see it.

I should like to have exact figures of employees a year ago and now. I should like to get an idea in a general way, without pursuing the minister into tiresome details, of what the general break-down of the department is. He has told us what is going on now, which, he says, is very small compared with what it was several months ago. The question I would ask is, how far he has been able to reduce that staff, how much farther he will be able to go, and at what pace, having regard to the purely munitions and supply side of the case. On the other hand, how many of these employees are now on the reconstruction side and how many does he consider will be involved when the reconstruction side of the job becomes more developed?

I might remind the minister that the words of the act originally setting up the reconstruction department, as well as the words of the Prime Minister at the time it was set up, outlined a job of almost astronomical proportions, as I read it. It seemed to me a most formidable undertaking, and perhaps the minister could now, without going into the minutiae, give us a picture of this department as he sees it.

There are other questions which we shall wish to follow up, but I think it is more convenient to the minister at the moment if I stick entirely to the item of administration so that we may confine ourselves to that subject at the outset. Before taking my seat, I might say that the minister has made reference to the many industries—you cannot call them anything else—which have been operated under the department, with, I suppose, greater rapidity in some cases and less in others, which industries the department will cease to operate. That, however, can come later. We shall want information about that, but if the minister would see fit now to give us details along the lines I have indicated, with reference to the purely administrative staff, I think that would give us a start.

Mr. STEWART (Winnipeg North): Are we to follow the procedure of other departments, Mr. Chairman, and have a general discussion first and then examine each item on the statement, or are we to discuss a particular part of the expenditures of the Department of Munitions and Supply?

Mr. HOWE: It shall be as the committee wishes; I have no preference in the matter. Whichever makes for time will be agreeable to me.

The CHAIRMAN: Is it agreed that we have a general discussion at the opening and then take up individual items?

Some hon. MEMBERS: Agreed.

Mr. STEWART (Winnipeg North): In that case I should like to say a few words on certain aspects of the Department of Munitions and Supply. I think Canada can take great pride in what the department has done. I say that as a member of a party which has consistently opposed the government, and if the country can take pride in it, so can the minister. We are all united on that. Production amounting to twelve and three-quarter billions of dollars is a tremendous piece of work for a country of the size of Canada, but—and there are always “buts” in these matters—I do not feel so happy about the situation as it exists to-day. I do not think there is so much credit coming to the minister or to the department now. The minister has referred in the past, especially when discussing the war expenditures committee, to a fishing expedition. I do not think that is in the minds of any of us. There have been extravagances possibly and wasteful expenditures, and one could scarcely expect anything else when we have had expenditures of such magnitude. These, I have no doubt, will be discussed