

Supply—Civil Defence

my statement this morning which arises out of the question which was put to me several months ago by the hon. member for Esquimalt-Saanich. I am sure that my hon. friend would want to know that.

Mr. Hamilton (Notre Dame de Grace): I am grateful to the minister for his interjection and observations. But if this was not defined government policy 16 months ago, what on earth was the civil defence organization doing in preparing blueprints for the evacuation of these cities right down to the final—or presumably so—details of this evacuation? Again, if it was not government policy at that time, the department was far exceeding its authority in doing work of this kind. I suggest to the house that we could find other statements. However, I will not take the time now to do so. But the minister knows perfectly that when he spoke to the federation of mayors and municipalities—that was in 1954, if my memory serves me right—

Mr. Martin: It was 1954.

Mr. Hamilton (Notre Dame de Grace):—both he and the head of the civil defence organization, Major General Worthington, indicated at that time that evacuation was the plan of action which was going to be followed by the federal civil defence department.

Mr. Martin: That is right.

Mr. Hamilton (Notre Dame de Grace): If that was so in 1954, it must have been established government policy at that time and that brings us to the point where a moment ago the minister was just giving us another interim dose of warmed over soothing syrup. I had not intended, Mr. Chairman, to deal at all with the subject I have just covered, but I hope my remarks have brought home to the minister that while some of us have sat here for two days and listened to him wriggle and evade and give soft and easy answers to questions in this house, we have not necessarily been taken in by his attitude. We are very much aware that a great many of the questions which have been brought before him have not been satisfactorily answered, although they have been evaded by the most consummate of politicians that I have, in my short experience in this house, seen in action.

Mr. Martin: Would you say in addition to that that he was an agreeable politician?

Mr. Hamilton (Notre Dame de Grace): By every manner of means, the first quality of a politician is that he be agreeable. In that respect, I do not think there is anyone in this house who could help but like the

minister. He stands ace high with me in that regard because, as a matter of fact, he is far more agreeable than I am.

Mr. Knowles: Is that the best you can say for him?

Mr. Hamilton (Notre Dame de Grace): Let me turn to the particular situation which we have in the city of Montreal. There is at the moment in the city of Montreal proper—for purposes of this argument I must separate the city of Montreal proper from the surrounding municipalities—no civil defence organization in operation. The reason for that stems from the flat refusal of the city council of Montreal, led by its mayor and the chairman of its executive committee, to provide funds in their budget in 1955 for the support of this particular activity. Whether that decision was right or wrong is not a point to be debated here. I will say that there is a great body of opinion in Montreal and on the city council which disagrees vehemently with those who are opposed to any support of civil defence by the city. I would tell the house that a petition—perhaps I should more correctly say a motion—is on the order paper of the city council at the present time which I am informed has been seconded by 42 out of the 99 city councillors—many of the remaining 99 have not been approached—asking that the civic authorities reconsider this decision and take a more active part in the affairs of civil defence in Montreal.

Personally, so that there be no doubt about it, I regret exceedingly the way in which the city has evaded or certain of the senior people in the city have evaded their responsibilities in this matter. I hope that they will reconsider their decision. On the other hand, I think we should remember that the minister himself has been led down the garden path rather consistently in this matter. When the estimates were being considered last year and at other times, he has said we were just on the verge of reaching an agreement with the city of Montreal. When the estimates committee met back in April of this year he had just spoken to the mayor of the city of Montreal and he claimed something was definitely going to come out of that. I can remember similar statements in the press around March, 1955. The mayor was in Ottawa or General Worthington had gone to Montreal. We were just on the verge of agreement. We were just on the verge of agreement in April, 1956. I dare say when the minister stands up he will say we are just on the verge of an agreement this morning. We should not put too much hope in these potential agreements, Mr. Chairman,