

Committee on Defence Expenditures

why we on this continent are obliged to have a defence program at this time. Our defence program is designed, or should be, to meet the possibility of that very formidable force striking fast anywhere at any time. When we read this resolution in the light of those facts we find that it merely asks that a committee be set up to study defence expenditures within the confines of government policy. It has never been clearly defined to me what government policy is.

Mr. Diefenbaker: Government policy of the past.

Mr. Gillis: A matter that is within the confines of government policy is all-inclusive because the defence program is all-inclusive. It runs into industry; it runs into practically everything. Quite different sections of government have to do with defence production and so forth which are not exactly national defence. If the terms of this resolution are adhered to strictly by the chairman of the committee I am afraid that the committee will not find out very much about what is going on in the realms of defence.

Another thing I am concerned about is this. The members of this committee who work under the terms of this resolution do not want to work with the idea in mind that their job is to cut expenditures. In my opinion their job is to determine whether our defence program is adequate or not. That does not mean just manpower in the navy, army or air force where our defence program is adequate or otherwise. You may have to step up expenditures. We may not be spending enough money. We may be spending money on non-essential things that should be transferred to other matters that are more essential. What I have in mind is this. Since nobody knows who the members of the committee will be, I should like to put my ideas on record with respect to certain things that I think the committee should look into. My first point is this. If we are to have a defence set-up that is going to meet this very efficient threat with which we are faced, one of the first things we have to do is to recognize the fact that the man who goes into the navy, army or air force must go in with a contented mind. That man is giving up his home and his job, as well as the comforts and security of civilian life. He is placing himself in the hands of army, navy or air force personnel who will have power over his life, who can tell him when to get up in the morning, when to go to bed at night, what he must do at a given time—and without arguing or answering back. That man must be assured that his family requirements at home are cared for.

[Mr. Gillis.]

I would draw the committee's attention to the fact that, in my opinion, the allowances for families of service personnel are inadequate. I have had many complaints from women left at home, to the effect that they are unable to maintain their homes and meet their monthly commitments with the incomes provided by way of allowances to soldiers in the ranks. Many women have written to me. I have got in touch with the Department of National Defence on many occasions, forwarding requests that men be permitted to leave the service on compassionate grounds because their families were in need.

Those men cannot go to Europe, when they are receiving letters from their wives and children stating that there is insufficient shelter and clothing, and not enough to eat at home. The minds of those men are disturbed, and they are not going to do the kind of job in the services that they can do. In my view the allowances must be stepped up. The committee must ascertain whether, on the basis of present allowances, we can have an efficient army, navy and air force. I think again of the dependent mother for whom provision was made in the last war. I think of the dependent and incapacitated father in the home where the young man was the breadwinner, and where allowances were given. But today there are no such allowances. I have received many letters of that kind, and brought them to the attention of the Department of National Defence.

Those boys want to leave the services, because they see that their fathers and mothers have not enough income to sustain life. The minds of such men are disturbed, and they cannot do the job they should be doing. To remedy this, of course, would mean an addition to defence expenditures.

At this time, in connection with our present armed forces, we have made applicable certain legislation that was effective after the last war. We have granted them educational rights, and the like. There is however one gap, and that is that the young man leaving the services at this time is not entitled to thirty days' leave, and to the thirty days' pay he received after the last war. At that time he was given a chance to leave the service, to look around, so that he might rehabilitate himself properly. Today when he goes to a depot for discharge he receives no clothing allowance. He is sent out wearing a uniform; and, in most of the cases which have been specially brought to my attention, they have had hardly enough money to pay transportation expenses home. They are out, they are unemployed, and have no chance to look around. The man coming out under those circumstances, without thirty days' pay, is in difficulties.