

the European situation as it stood at the time, as a government we felt it would be unwise to arouse discussion in this house on matters of defence, especially when there was the possibility that our action would have been entirely misunderstood by other countries as well as our own. We urged the Minister of National Defence not to press for moneys to make good the depletions and deficiencies in defence to the extent he deemed necessary until the European situation, as it related to the war between Italy and Ethiopia, had somewhat cleared. The understanding was that we would come to parliament with a full statement of the situation at a time when such a statement was not likely to add to the difficulties of those who were dealing with affairs in Europe.

We wished moreover for further opportunity to see that the expenditures requested were absolutely essential, and that whatever it might be necessary to have done would be effective. I have listened to much of what has been said about the Department of National Defence. I know it is a popular pastime to make fun of the brass hats, as they are termed, and to ridicule those who wear gold braid, as it is termed. May I say however—and I say this as the Prime Minister of Canada—that the defence forces of Canada are part of the public service. Persons in those branches of government are not free to defend themselves on the floors of parliament. They are not supposed even to defend themselves in the press of the country, and I think it is most unchivalrous for members of parliament to belittle men who have served their country at the risk of their lives in the past, and who, in the face of a world situation such as we have to-day, are prepared, if necessary, to offer their lives in its service again.

I observed that the group opposite seemed to be greatly amused when one member read from a regulation stating the size of ties that were to be worn in relation to the size of collars and how they were to be made up. I have noticed among men who have had a military training, that one finds at their homes, both in and out of doors, evidences of order and system, which frequently are not to be found in other homes. The continuous attention paid to little things and the discipline necessary to cause a man to pay attention to such things often goes a long way towards ensuring that in a moment of action one who may be called upon to place a gun in position, will do so with accuracy; or one whose duty it is to direct a beam of light will do so with exactness and precision. Hon. members may ridicule these little things but they are a part of the training and discipline

which help to make men efficient in times of need.

Knowing that there would be the criticism that officers of the Department of National Defence were seeking to increase their own importance and to enlarge unduly the scope of the defence forces, after prorogation last year I suggested to my colleagues with the approval of the Minister of National Defence that we should have a special committee of the cabinet to take up with the Minister and the officials of his department the whole question of the defence estimates, and that we form from among members of the cabinet a Canadian defence committee. I did that for the reason I have mentioned, but even more for the reason that having regard to the world situation, I thought it important that members of the cabinet should have the fullest possible information with respect to the general defence services. I asked the Minister of National Defence to give to every member of the cabinet a secret memorandum setting forth in detail what was being proposed, what needs were likely to be served, and at what cost they would be met, in order that the defence committee of the cabinet might be in a position to take up with the heads of the branches of the defence department any points of criticism that might occur to any of them after the information had been placed before and considered by the cabinet as a whole.

I shall read the minute of His Excellency in Council of August 20, 1936, which established the defence committee:

The committee of the privy council have had before them a report, dated 19th August, 1936, from the Right Honourable the Prime Minister, submitting that he is of the opinion that a subcommittee of council should be constituted to consider problems respecting defence.

The Prime Minister therefore recommends that a subcommittee of council, to be known as the "Canadian Defence Committee" and to consist of the Right Honourable the Prime Minister, the Honourables the Minister of Justice, the Minister of Finance and the Minister of National Defence, be appointed, the Right Honourable the Prime Minister to be chairman of the said committee.

The Prime Minister further recommends that the said committee shall have power to call before it any official or employee of the government and any officer of the naval, military or air force of Canada, whose duty it shall be to afford the committee every assistance and all information in connection with any subject in regard to which the committee may desire to be informed.

The committee concur in the foregoing recommendations and submit the same for approval.

After it was formed, the committee had three important meetings with officers of the defence department in addition to other conferences. Before this committee of the cabinet