

Committee on Defence Expenditures

more for the common cause if we can provide technical units which can be raised in this country very quickly and trained for their special tasks because of our special skill in the construction of airfields, roads and construction of that type? When there are so many men in Europe available for the and forces which are required right there, needing the arms and equipment which could be sent from the United States and Canada, I suggest that it may hardly be rational for us to be sending to Europe men with the lowest average hitting power of any combat forces, when the thing that they need over there is the technical service to do these jobs which I have mentioned.

When I say that, I wish it clearly understood that I am only repeating what I have often said before. When I say that, in the end it is the infantry which decides the ultimate result of any war. They are the men who in the final stages must always carry out the occupation and hold the positions which are to be held. What I have been pointing out is that these forces are available near the places where men, equipped and trained for that work, are required at this time. They are also nearer their own supplies of food and of other requirements. They do not impose the same demands on the shipping routes of the world as are imposed by every man who is moved from Canada or the United States over there. In combat forces, for the reasons I have mentioned, it would seem that we should concentrate on fighter and bomber squadrons as well as on squadrons specially trained as they were trained and equipped in the last war to guard the sea routes of the North Atlantic as well as of the Pacific.

Economy of transportation, to say nothing of the problem of supply, suggests that in land forces here in Canada we should be concentrating on these fast, compact, hard-hitting mechanized units which not only are best suited to the task, but which can be trained here as they can be trained nowhere in Europe. It is not enough to put tanks, armoured cars, reconnaissance vehicles and other equipment of that kind in the hands of men in uniform. These men must be trained to handle these complex vehicles and weapons. Training is what counts. The simple inescapable fact is that there is not enough room anywhere in Europe today to provide the training areas for units of that kind. In the unhappy event of war, property rights, unfortunately, soon go by the board, and under circumstances such as that units can take the shortest possible route to any given point. In peacetime, however—and we are

[Mr. Drew.]

talking of peace and the hope of continued peace—relatively small training areas and narrow roads make the effective training of tanks, armoured vehicles, reconnaissance and other units of that kind practically impossible.

Many hon. members in this house recall the largest training area in Britain, the Salisbury plains. Modern fighting vehicles can cross the Salisbury plains in a matter of a couple of minutes. That area is not adequate to give effective training to men handling these modern and extremely fast machines. Russia, unfortunately, has plenty of space. Before the last war Germany had just enough, but barely enough, in some of those sandy areas to the east of Berlin. Nowhere else in Europe, and most certainly not in the British isles, is adequate training space available today for fast armoured or other mechanized units. For that very reason units of that kind should be trained as much as possible here in Canada or on the North American continent where we can simulate every kind of military situation from arctic to tropical.

Moreover, we can carry out training inland as well as on the seacoasts, because with our lakes and great rivers we can carry out amphibious landings, and all the other activities of that kind, which are essential parts of modern military training for land forces. There is, in fact, every reason why training should be carried out here, and why we should be concentrating on that type of unit, so far as land forces are concerned.

May I point out another reason why that training should be carried out here, and a good deal of it carried out in the prairie provinces. Training of that kind, whether on land or in the air, consumes enormous quantities of gasoline and fuel oil. All the gasoline and fuel oil used in Great Britain or in Europe must be carried there by tankers, and that imposes an uneconomic and very heavy burden on the shipping routes and upon the tankers, which should be available for other purposes. In times of peace there are obvious reasons why tanker space should not be devoted to that purpose, except where absolutely necessary; and in time of war we all know that tankers are peculiarly vulnerable to submarine attack.

Here in Canada, with our enormous oil resources, which are increasing every day, we are in a position to supply the units direct from the fields, with very short transportation to the units themselves.

Mr. Cruickshank: By pipe line?