

Supply—National Defence

I see the estimated expenditure is down some \$700,000. This would seem to indicate that it is proposed to spend less time at sea this year than last year. This morning the minister indicated that a naval exercise is to be held which will take squadrons from both the east and west coasts over to Great Britain, and that those were to be the largest naval manoeuvres in which our vessels have taken part since the war. Having that in mind one would think the time spent at sea would be increased this year, but this reduction of \$700,000 in fuel costs would appear to indicate the contrary. Would the minister explain that?

Mr. Claxton: This apparent reduction is entirely due to an overestimate last year. When those estimates were prepared fuel oil was approximately \$4 per barrel. For the current year we are estimating on the basis of fuel oil at approximately \$2.80 per barrel, which more than accounts for the decrease shown.

Mr. Harkness: Then when we come to the army we find that civil salaries and wages are down, as was the case in the navy. Is that for the same reason, that they have been reducing the staff and, wherever possible, replacing officers at desk jobs with civilian personnel? If so, to what extent has that been done?

Mr. Claxton: This reduction is due to an overestimate in 1949-50. We found that by economizing we were able to get along with five hundred fewer civilians than the number for which provision had been made. Here again we are trying to reduce the number of officers at headquarters, and there has been a very substantial reduction this year.

Mr. Fulton: I am pleased to see a reduction in the amount under travel, transportation, freight and express. Was that because of an overestimate last year, or is it anticipated that there will be a curtailment in these expenditures this year?

Mr. Claxton: The largest single factor contributing to the reduction is a decrease in the cost of posting personnel, amounting to \$1,500,800. That is due to the fact that as we went through the post-war organization period we got more and more personnel to the right places at the right time. Also we are tending to increase the period of posting, to a minimum of two years.

Mr. Fulton: Would this item include the transportation costs in connection with such things as Exercise Sweetbriar and other schemes or exercises, or does this only cover such things as leave, postings, duty journeys and so on?

Mr. Claxton: This would include the portion of the transportation in connection with Exercise Sweetbriar not handled by the motor vehicles of the army itself or by the R.C.A.F. We had to transport a considerable number of personnel either by train or by commercial aircraft, and that cost would be included here.

Mr. Fulton: Then would the minister give us the actual expenditures under this heading in 1949-50?

Mr. Claxton: For travel and transportation for the active force the expenditure in 1949-50 was \$2,687,820.87. The cost of freight and express was \$1,993,099.57.

Mr. Harkness: Under the item dealing with the Canadian army reserve force, would the minister tell us the percentage of strength of the reserve force at the present time? That would give us a general idea of the strength of the reserve force in relation to what it would be if it were up to full strength. I know of one battery, for instance, which is at about 75 to 80 per cent of strength. I know of another one which is only about 10 to 15 per cent of strength, and I should like to know the general percentage for all units in the reserve.

Mr. Claxton: It is rather more than 50 per cent.

Mr. Harkness: Then could the minister tell us how many reserve army personnel went to camp last year? Often the paper strength of these reserve units is not a very good indication of the real strength or effectiveness. Quite often a considerable number of people appear on only two or three parades during the year, but they are carried on the paper strength and receive pay for the parades they attend. If you can get the number of people who have gone to camp it is a much better indication of the training a reserve unit has completed. When the minister gives that information perhaps he will also tell us what percentage of the reserve unit strength that amounts to. I think it might be helpful if we had that information as well.

Mr. Claxton: 10,002 went to camp in 1939.

Mr. Harkness: What is the official strength? I think the minister gave that earlier?

Mr. Claxton: At present it is about 44,000.

Mr. Harkness: That is a little less than 25 per cent?

Mr. Claxton: Yes.

Mr. Harkness: During consideration of these estimates a few weeks ago, in speaking of the reserve units the minister said they now had all the equipment that they required, and all that they could handle. In some