

National Defence

obtaining all the tanks the United Kingdom can let us have, as fast as they can build them. If it is suggested that we should construct tanks in Canada, then I say this would be an industrial monstrosity. There is no doubt about our capacity to construct anything in this country. That does not mean, however, we should try to build everything. It is only sensible for us to make for ourselves and others the things we need for ourselves. To start a production line to meet the Canadian need for tanks I repeat would be an industrial monstrosity. The British, Americans and French are all making their own tanks. If we made tanks in addition to the numbers they turn out we could only dispose of them by giving them away. We think it more desirable, and so I believe do all the nations associated with us, that we make and give away the things we have decided to make and give away: electronic equipment, wireless sets, medium and light guns and ammunition of various calibres.

One can see how the mind of the hon. member for Nanaimo must have been working. What is the military critic of the Conservative opposition to do if he cannot find anything to criticize? He must lose his job. It is interesting to note, however, that this suggestion was not made in time for us to do anything about it, had we thought it desirable to do so. The intention to raise the brigade was announced on May 4, 1951. Subsequently the estimates of the Department of National Defence were under discussion in this chamber for nine days, during quite a few of which the hon. member for Nanaimo was in his seat. He did not say anything about this, though that was the time to speak. He is a military expert, and we in this house are entitled to the advantage of his advice. During that session no member of the Conservative opposition made the suggestion that we should have an armoured brigade, or that we should strengthen our armour. The next session of parliament opened on October 9, 1951. At that session the debate on the address gave the hon. member for Nanaimo or any other Conservative member the opportunity to bring up this point. Only one did so, the hon. member for Winnipeg South Centre, on October 23, 1951, and that was after the brigade had started to move.

The memory of the opposition is short. On the opening day of that session the leader of the opposition (Mr. Drew) asked for a debate on external affairs and defence matters. Any of these questions could have been brought up during the speech from the throne. However, the Prime Minister (Mr. St. Laurent), who is more accommodating to the opposition than any prime minister I have ever heard of, offered to bring on such a debate at once. This did not suit the leader of the opposition, who suggested that it be postponed as the hon. member for Nanaimo would not be available until Monday, October 22. After consultation with the opposition parties the Prime Minister announced that the debate would take place then. Even before that, however, in a statement on October 18, 1951, the Minister of National Defence (Mr. Claxton) had announced the pending departure of the 27th brigade. At the conclusion of that statement he told the house the Prime Minister would be putting a motion on the order paper calling for approval of the action of the government in connection with the United Nations and the North Atlantic treaty. The Prime Minister gave notice of that motion next morning and it read:

That this house approves the continuation of Canada's participation in the efforts being made through the United Nations to establish international peace, and in particular to defeat aggression and restore peace in Korea, and by the North Atlantic treaty nations to deter aggression and promote stability and well-being in the north Atlantic area.

The motion was introduced on Monday, October 22, with the Prime Minister making a short speech. He was followed by the Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. Pearson) and spokesmen for each of the parties on external affairs. The Minister of National Defence then made a statement on defence, and was followed by the hon. member for Nanaimo.

On motion of Mr. George the debate was adjourned.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mr. Fournier (Hull): Monday is private members' day.

At eleven o'clock the house adjourned, without question put, pursuant to standing order.