

Supply—National Defence

Let us look at what they do in some other parliaments. I have in my hand the books of defence estimates of the British House of Commons for 1951. The army estimates contain ten items and there is a book of 196 pages giving details and explanatory notes. Then there are the air estimates, another book of 212 pages of details and explanatory notes on all the different items. Then we have the navy estimates, a book of some 300 pages with details and explanatory notes for all the items. That is what members of the British house have before them when they vote on their national defence estimates. We have an item of \$1,412 million occupying half a page plus three pages of details of services. I ask hon. members if that is a fair thing to present to this house. Is it any wonder that the house wants a committee? Is it any wonder that we need more details before we can intelligently vote \$1,412 million for this purpose? The people of this country are prepared to spend money for national defence, but they do expect this house to see that the money is spent wisely. That is what we are sent here for; that is what the hon. members who sit behind the Minister of National Defence are here for. Yet we see them ready to accept everything the minister wants to say. When the hon. member for Temiscouata makes a comic opera speech, they pound their desks. To them it is funny. Well, it is not funny to the people of Canada. With the situation that exists in the world today we in this house should realize that these defence estimates may mean life or death to many of our young people. We should see that we get the best value for our money, the best planes, the best tanks and the best equipment possible.

Are we getting it? Well, between 1946 and 1950 we spent \$1,237,294,000 on national defence; but when we had to send a brigade to Korea we had a hard job to find the men. When the defence estimates were before the public accounts committee it was admitted that we did not have one modern tank in 1950. It was admitted that we had only two jet-propelled planes in 1950, and one of them blew up. It was admitted that when we sent three destroyers to Korea we had to scrape the bottom of the barrel to get enough men to man them. Yet we spent \$1,237,294,000 in 1946-47, 1947-48, 1948-49 and 1949-50. Is it not time we asked a few questions in this house? Is it not time we got a few more details? I think we should have more information in the estimates so we can intelligently discuss the expenditure of this \$1,412 million.

I do not like the attitude of this house tonight. I did not like the speech of the

hon. member for Temiscouata, making a joke of this whole matter of defence. It is too important at this time to joke about. Some twelve months ago the Minister of National Defence intimated that we were going to raise forty squadrons, and that we would send eleven squadrons to Europe. What have we done? We have sent one squadron to Europe. We are going to send two more, and when those squadrons are finally equipped and sent we will have one squadron left at home. It is true that it takes time to produce jet planes; we realize that, but I do not think it takes all the time we have spent in the last four years.

As far as I am concerned I believe we should have a national survey of the manpower and material resources of this country. I do not believe we can have an efficient war effort without first knowing what we have to work with. That is the first problem, and it is time we had that survey. I do not care whether you call it national registration or anything else; it is essential that we have it. It is essential that when we are spending the sums of money we are going to spend this year and in the next three years, we have a committee on war expenditures such as we had during the last war, which can keep track of these moneys. That is all this house wants. It wants the government to take it into its confidence, and see that the taxpayers are getting value for the money being spent on national defence.

Mr. Gardiner: I think I am the senior member of the government in the house at the moment, and one of three in their seats this evening who served in the government during the time Colonel Ralston was a member of the government. On a question of privilege, Mr. Chairman, I want to call your attention to the fact that the hon. member for Melfort made a suggestion which I think it is improper for a member of this house to make. Everyone knows that the hon. member for Temiscouata has the ability to bring smiles to the faces of members on all sides. He also has the ability to turn around and move some of us to tears occasionally. During the greater part of the speech this evening by the hon. member for Temiscouata there were smiles on the faces of all hon. members of this house.

Some hon. Members: No.

Mr. Gardiner: Well, one hon. member has called attention to the fact that we sit face to face in this house, not in a circular arrangement. Sitting in a front bench on this side I think I have an opportunity to see the faces of hon. members on the other