

Supply—National Defence

Mr. Winch: Then I was correct. You cannot yet move a complete battalion on your own without any suspension of other operations.

Mr. Pearkes: I just said that we can move a whole battalion if we suspended other normal operations which consist in the movement of personnel overseas and the replenishing of the brigade which is now in Europe and the air division which is there. Those are normal operations which go on. But we have not—and I do not think we should have—a large number of aircraft standing by just in the eventuality that the United Nations might find themselves suddenly plunged into some situation demanding that Canada send a brigade somewhere in the world. It is a contingency which is not likely to develop overnight.

Mr. Denis: Mr. Chairman, I have a report from the *Ottawa Journal* to the effect that the parliamentary secretary presumptive to the Minister of Finance has criticized the government for granting Major General Plow nine months' leave with pay so that he could qualify for a higher army pension and become lieutenant governor of Nova Scotia. Is the hon. minister aware of this pension being granted to Major General Plow, and has he any comment to make, because after all it is a criticism coming from a member who is pretty close to the government. He was last year and I suppose he will be next year.

Mr. Pearkes: The position of lieutenant governor of Nova Scotia became vacant last year, I think it was, and the gentleman who was selected to become the new lieutenant governor, and I might say it was a very popular selection, was Major General Plow, who was at that time in command of the Atlantic area and who was very well known in Nova Scotia. He was granted permission to retire from the army before he had reached the normal retirement age to assume his important position as lieutenant governor of Nova Scotia.

Mr. Denis: Was this pension granted to the major general according to the rules and regulations and the ordinary pension benefits of the armed services? Second, if this criticism by the former parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Finance means he does not approve of the granting of the pension, are his chances to be again nominated as parliamentary assistant reduced or increased?

Mr. Bell (Carleton): Perhaps the hon. gentleman would like to read the text of the committee report and not the press report.

Mr. Denis: It is worse. If you read it it is worse.

Mr. Pearkes: I understand the Auditor General did make some comments in connection with this point.

Mr. Hellyer: Could the minister give us some information as to the mechanical and armament equipment which is included in the appropriation?

Mr. Pearkes: Is this item 220?

Mr. Hellyer: No, 219.

Mr. Pearkes: This covers mechanically propelled vehicles, mobile engineering equipment, warehouse material, handling equipment and spare parts and accessories for all components of the Canadian army. The estimates for equipment under this item are based on the anticipated deliveries of various items, such as trucks, buses, station wagons, vehicle kits, mechanically-propelled equipment and requirements for the northwest highway system which the army has to maintain. In most cases expenditures in 1959-60 will be largely in respect to contracts carried forward from previous years.

Mr. Pickersgill: I wonder if I could ask the minister if he would tell us if there is any proposal to do any paving of the northwest highway?

Mr. Pearkes: That will come under the other vote, but I can answer the question now. The first 50 miles are being paved and work will be completed this year. It was started a year ago and runs from Dawson Creek up to Fort St. John. The contract has been let for another 35 miles to be paved this year, and I expect the work will be completed next year. That will cover the heavily travelled part of the highway where there is a fairly heavy population of farmers and people connected with the oil wells in that district. It was considered desirable to pave this highway in order to reduce maintenance costs. In addition to that we have made arrangements with the province of British Columbia that when this highway is paved they will take over the responsibility for maintaining it.

Mr. Pickersgill: The cost of the paving is being borne entirely by the federal government?

Mr. Pearkes: The cost of the paving is being borne by the Department of National Defence, because it was considered essential to do it in order to keep down the ever-increasing cost of maintaining a gravel road.

Mr. Pickersgill: But it will become to all intents and purposes a part of the provincial highway system once this is done?