

Supply—National Defence

effort to get as many people trained in emergency measures activities as they possibly could in centres all across Canada.

Mr. Fisher: Do I take it, then, that these courses are really not so much courses in emergency measures training but are courses to provide recruits for the militia? The minister may think I am hairsplitting, but I have gone in and watched people taking the courses and it seemed to me that the courses, given their limitations in terms of length and intensity, are excellent. But it certainly did not strike me that the courses were intended to turn out well trained militia men. It seemed to me the purpose was to provide people with some knowledge of how to meet an emergency situation. Once you acknowledge that, surely the minister has some responsibility to see that this kind of trained personnel is in important places.

It would seem to me that this could be done by some form of encouragement or incentive to the Canadian National Railways, the Canadian Pacific Railway and the Department of Transport, for example, which operate important facilities in these transportation centres. I am not going to comment on the disappointment I feel at the minister's reply, but if this is a major effort, as the sum we are voting certainly indicates, I should like to know how it is going to pay off in relation to the emergency measures organization.

I will not sit down and wait for a reply, Mr. Chairman. From the tenor of the replies so far it does not seem to me that there will be much forthcoming, but I should like to go on to another point about which I should like to ask the minister a question. It relates to the provision to the present militia, of transport equipment to meet emergency situations. One of the things that is somewhat disturbing when you talk to people who are in the militia is the very real dearth of emergency equipment, especially transportation equipment. I am thinking not only of trucks but of such equipment as derricks, the kind of thing that can be made use of very quickly in an emergency. Are there any plans under way at the present time, particularly in relation to the money we are now being asked to vote, to provide a larger stockpile of this kind of transportation equipment at key points, or are there plans to take over the equipment of Ontario Hydro, Bell Telephone and other agencies? If there are plans to take over Hydro and Bell equipment, who will have the military authority to act under the present set-up?

Mr. Harkness: With respect to the first question, I think it is quite obvious that with a goal of 100,000 trained men under the present special militia training program it is

not possible to train a considerable number of men in every town across Canada. As I indicated before, of necessity we had to carry on this training with the facilities where they existed, and the essential purpose of the training, of course, is to get as many people as possible trained in basic survival techniques and skills. It is quite evident we are not trying to train the whole population or a certain number of people in every town or city across the country, and we just could not set up courses in those places where armouries do not exist. We had no means of doing so. That is the situation as far as the first question is concerned.

With regard to equipment, by and large the militia units have as much equipment as they have men to make use of, look after and maintain. With the increase which is taking place in the militia units, some of them will get more equipment than they have had. It is no use giving a whole mass of equipment to a unit which has no means of making use of it or looking after it.

In the event of an emergency, of course, the plan is that the survival columns formed by militia companies or battalions or other units here or there would take civilian bulldozers, cranes and so on for use in their survival and rescue operations. Only by making use of civilian resources in equipment of this kind which exist all over the country could you possibly from a practical point of view secure sufficient equipment or have sufficient equipment scattered widely across the country to be made use of in the event of an emergency.

Mr. Fisher: In relation to the first question, as the minister knows there is a suspicion in the minds of many people, not only politicians in the opposition, that this emergency training program, whatever it may achieve in terms of supporting the militia, is to quite an extent a measure to meet the unemployment situation. If its real value is to provide a significant base of people throughout the country who know how to behave in an emergency and have some training for such an event, surely the minister must recognize that the limitation that you can only train at certain places where there are armouries is foolish in terms of a broad base. I am saying to him, why can you not bring people in from divisional centres such as Hornepayne, Sioux Lookout or the radar base at Armstrong, and have them take the training? What is the impediment to fitting them into this particular scheme? Suppose we have 800 people in Port Arthur and Fort William who are trained in survival