

Supply—National Defence

[English]

Mr. Churchill: Let us not talk about long-range equipment or long-range mortars. What is the range of these weapons? That is what I want to know. Give me the exact range.

● (5:50 p.m.)

Mr. Hellyer: As my hon. friend well knows from having been minister of national defence at one time, the exact ranges of these weapons are not given.

Mr. Churchill: Then could we have the approximate range?

Mr. Hellyer: I think the hon. gentleman would have to be more specific. A wide range of equipment is used at Valcartier and would require different areas of territory. But the amount of land that has been acquired or is in the process of being acquired is adequate to provide battalion exercises, including those for armoured vehicles if required, and has ranges adequate for mortars and so on.

Mr. Churchill: The hon. member for Springfield and others who have participated in the discussion have got the minister to indicate to us now that the land has already been expropriated and the question of the price people are to receive for their buildings and farms is under negotiation. We have had information that these 25 families have been informed they will be in a danger zone because long-range weapons of some sort or other are going to be used for practice purposes.

Therefore a shotgun has been placed at the heads of these people. They are told, "You are now in a danger zone; it is too bad but in order to protect your safety it would be advisable for you to move". This is a scandalous thing to do. Twenty-five families whose ancestors have been living in this area for 150 years are suddenly to be moved by arbitrary action on the part of the Department of National Defence.

I think this action should cease immediately and for several reasons. I shall give two. One is that Camp Valcartier has been in use ever since the days of Sir Sam Hughes whose actions are now being emulated by this minister. It was found to be satisfactory in the years of the first world war for the setting up of musketry ranges for the first contingent and ever since then it has been found to be suitable. If additional land is required for range practice for rifles, machine guns, mortars or artillery it should be found elsewhere and not at the expense of these 25 families. What is going on in this area? Why is there

[Mr. Cadieux (Terrebonne).]

this disregard of families? There is a callous indifference on the part of these two ministers.

Neither of these two ministers has said he has visited the area. They have reported that an investigation was made by civilian personnel of the Department of National Defence and then the military side said, "Well, for range purposes the village and the farm homes will be in a danger area so you should do something about it". Consequently the families are now likely to be dispossessed.

I think this is a shocking piece of bungling on the part of the Department of National Defence. It just happens that most of these people are Irish. I am part Irish and I should like to say something for the Irish, as I did for the Toronto Irish militia regiment which was disbanded some time ago. What has the minister got against the Irish? They are the best fighters in the world, and he knows it.

In these circumstances we are going to dispossess people who have been established for 150 years in this area. The reason given is that more space is required for an army camp. If there is one country in the world that has a vast amount of uninhabited land suitable for army purposes it is Canada. The camps I have visited in this country have all been desert areas, sandy and bare, and there are hundreds more like them available.

If the minister wants the troops to try out long-range mortars, whose range he will not divulge because the Russians might find out, let him pick some other spot and let Valcartier be used as it has been over the years for basic training and musketry practice. Why dispossess 25 families in this way? This is a roundabout way of doing it. The department says, "You are now in a danger area; we are so sorry but you have to move". The property has already been expropriated. Why was this information not divulged earlier?

Where were the minister's study groups? Did he receive advice from his senior officers with regard to this matter or is this just another example of his autocratic methods? I say to the minister that he should cancel this program immediately and save these 25 families.

Mr. Schreyer: Mr. Chairman, I do not want to be vindictive in this matter but when the Associate Minister said the reason for expropriation action being taken first and negotiation coming next was the fear of speculation in land I feel this is a very common excuse given by governments when they resort to this kind of procedure in order to acquire