

Empire Defence Plan

EMPIRE DEFENCE PLAN

INQUIRY BY MR. MACKENZIE KING AS TO ACCURACY
OR OTHERWISE OF PRESS REPORT

Right Hon. W. L. MACKENZIE KING (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I desire to ask the Prime Minister as to the accuracy or inaccuracy of a statement which recently appeared in a prominent newspaper in London, England, with respect to a new plan for empire defence which, it is alleged, has been worked out and was discussed with Sir Maurice Hankey on the occasion of his recent visit to Canada. The article to which I refer appeared in the Sunday Express, of London, England. The headlines are as follows:

New Plan For Empire Defence
Dominion Chiefs'
London
Visit
A Common Pool
Sunday Express Political Correspondent

The article is as follows:

Vitally important discussions on the defence of the empire will take place in London in a few weeks.

The Prime Minister and other leaders representative of all the dominions will be in this country in connection with the King's jubilee celebrations, which open in May, and the opportunity will be taken to hold an informal imperial conference.

An elaborate scheme of empire defence has already been worked out by the committee of Imperial Defence, on which sit technical experts and the heads of all the fighting services.

This scheme has been submitted to the dominion governments by Sir Henry Maurice Hankey, Secretary of the Cabinet, and of the committee of Imperial Defence, who returns to London this week from a tour of the empire.

I understand that the plans Sir Maurice has discussed with the dominion governments propose that the various parts of the empire should contribute to empire defence as a whole in finance, personnel and equipment.

Particular attention will be paid to defence against aerial attack.

It is not improbable that technical experts will accompany the dominion statesmen when they come to this country.

The article is dated January 6, 1935, and the question I wish to ask the Prime Minister is this: Was the recent visit of Sir Maurice Hankey to Canada made the occasion of a discussion or consideration of any plan of empire defence by any member of the government, or by any official or officials of the government, acting under the authority of any minister of the crown?

Right Hon. R. B. BENNETT (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, ordinarily I should say that a question of that character should stand until further opportunity was given to

[Mr. Cahan.]

examine into its several implications, but in order that there may be no delay in dealing with so absolutely false a statement I take the immediate opportunity of stating that it is wholly without foundation. I shall examine the situation in detail to see if there is any phase of it to which any other answer should be given, but so far as the general statement and the statement made in the newspaper are concerned they are wholly without foundation.

UNEMPLOYMENT RELIEF

CAMPS FOR SINGLE, HOMELESS MEN

On the orders of the day:

Hon. IAN MACKENZIE (Vancouver Centre) I should like to ask the Minister of National Defence (Mr. Stirling) how many of the single, homeless, unemployed men left the National Defence camps in the province of British Columbia during the month of December, how many of them have returned, and if any investigation has been held into their complaints.

Hon. GROTE STIRLING (Minister of National Defence): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Vancouver Centre (Mr. Mackenzie) was good enough to give me notice of his question, and I think the best way in which I can answer it is to read to the house a telegram to the premier of British Columbia dated December 28, 1934:

You are of course aware that the camps established by the Department of National Defence for single homeless men were to ease the burden on the provinces, and to ensure that homeless men should not be without food, clothing and shelter, which are furnished by the federal government, together with a small daily allowance for necessities not provided in kind. No powers of compulsion are exercised and discipline is maintained only for the purpose of preserving the orderly conduct of the camps. The work is such as will prevent the deterioration of young men who are free to accept any employment that may offer. When work offered involved transportation, cost thereof is furnished by the Defence department.

All the provinces in which the camps were established are aware of these conditions.

On the seventh of December a delegation from the camps was received by you. On the invitation of your Minister of Labour, representatives of headquarters military district number eleven were present. The demands of the delegation were made known by one Shaw, alleged to be secretary of a camp workers' union. You explained the situation to the delegates who retired.

On Monday, the tenth, false rumours were circulated as to the action that was to be taken by your government. On Tuesday, the eleventh, it was apparent that a considerable number of men had left the camps and were congregating in Vancouver. On investigation it appeared that scrip had been issued, giving the men from