

supplies needed by the forces. Then in 1944 an act was passed setting up the Department of Reconstruction, and in 1945 another act was passed, chapter 16 of that year, setting up the Department of Reconstruction and Supply and providing for that new department to take all powers of the Department of Munitions and Supply.

Now we have come to the time apparently where the Department of Reconstruction and Supply is folding up. The minister is shedding powers right and left.

Mr. ABBOTT: Shedding staff too.

Mr. GREEN: That is a very good thing.

Mr. ABBOTT: Very good purchasing staffs, too.

Mr. GREEN: He should have done it long since. He is shedding powers, although he is not shedding some powers that really do not belong to him, such as control of aviation in Canada. However, he is, as I say, shedding powers, and one of those powers is the power to purchase defence supplies.

Mr. ABBOTT: He has transferred the staff to another department.

Mr. GREEN: He has given up the power, turned it over to the Minister of Trade and Commerce. I repeat, that power is being transferred to the Minister of Trade and Commerce, and only indirectly at that. It is going to the Canadian Commercial Corporation, more or less remotely under the Minister of Trade and Commerce. We find that provision made in this bill by one broad, sweeping section. I would remind hon. members that when the defence purchasing board was set up full details of its powers were given, and the whole plan was carefully worked out. Now we have this one sweeping section which says, in effect, to the Minister of Trade and Commerce (Mr. MacKinnon): "Here is your baby; look after it". I doubt very much whether he is happy about having that baby, but in any event there it is, on his lap.

In effect these powers are given to one man, to Mr. W. D. Low, who may be the finest business man in the country; but in effect all those powers which were fought over and discussed in the house in 1939 for so long are now given to the managing director of the Canadian Commercial Corporation. This is a corporation composed of deputy ministers and senior civil servants, who have dozens of other jobs to do—and also Mr. Low who, in effect, is the whole corporation. So that really this is to be a one-man show. We think that is not proper. We think the job of equipping

[Mr. Green.]

the Canadian forces and of building defence projects in Canada is far too important to be turned over to one man.

There are many reasons why this method is questionable. First of all, the Department of Trade and Commerce and the Canadian Commercial Corporation have other work to do. This work is not in their line. As I said, the corporation is of a temporary nature; it is to go out of existence in another two years. The Department of Trade and Commerce is not a defence-minded department, and the minister of that department has a full-time job as it is. His job is to promote the import and export trade of Canada. He has done a great deal of work on that job, and deserves credit for his efforts. That is his job, and this new job he is now given is entirely out of line with the work of the department. On the other hand the Department of Munitions and Supply was a wartime department, and their chief job was to buy munitions of war.

We are afraid the new plan will be ineffective in keeping the Canadian forces equipped. The Department of National Defence has, or should have, the direct responsibility for equipping our forces; that is probably its main function at the present time, namely to see that the forces of Canada have the best equipment and to see that across Canada there are factories available which could turn quickly to the manufacture of weapons of war, should they be required.

The Minister of National Defence (Mr. Claxton) has emphasized repeatedly, both in the house and outside, the importance of keeping up to date and of having the best equipment. It is his department's responsibility to set up and to control that machinery. It cannot get out of that responsibility by passing the job along to the Department of Trade and Commerce.

I would ask the Minister of National Defence to explain why he is not using the defence purchasing board. Why is he not making use of the statute enacted in 1939? No doubt it would need amendments, but surely it could be used for this purpose. Then we would have the Department of National Defence directly responsible for the country's getting equipment and the Department of Finance would have the responsibility of seeing that there was no waste in connection with the purchases. If the government will not do that, why not have this crown company under the Department of National Defence rather than under the Department of Trade and Commerce?