

Mr. HANSELL: I shall not take much time. It is nearly six o'clock, and perhaps the hon. member for Lake Centre will be able to speak before the recess or immediately after eight o'clock. I have but one question to ask. Parliament has been summoned, I fancy, to discuss the reaction of this country to government policy with respect to the men in the forces now in Canada. I still feel slightly in a quandary as to what the government policy actually is. When we came here to parliament we were quite certain that government policy was against conscripting the N.R.M.A. men overseas. Now there has been passed an order in council which, when it was read, appeared to be a reversal of that policy. I pick up the evening paper, and the headline, which I believe you, Mr. Speaker, can read from where you sit, fifty or sixty feet away, is this: "Zombies to the Front." But since this headline was put in type we have listened to a little questioning of General McNaughton and it appears that that is not the case, that perhaps the press got its wires crossed a little bit. I am still uncertain as to what government policy is, and whether or not this order in council reverses the policy of a day or two ago. I take it that the reason for calling parliament has its basis in a conflict of opinion which occurred between the former Minister of National Defence and the government in respect of policy. Personally I feel that before we are through with this matter, the hon. member for Prince (Mr. Ralston), the late Minister of National Defence, should make a statement.

Some hon. MEMBERS: The former minister.

Mr. HANSELL: The former Minister of National Defence. It may be that I am addicted to the use of the expression "the late So-and-so", because in the course of my life time I have had to hold so many funerals, although the word is very ghostly to me. I thank hon. members for the correction. I personally think that the former Minister of National Defence should be the one to answer questions, so that from him we could gain some knowledge of this matter. He was in harness in Canada since General McNaughton returned from England, and should know the situation. I have said that the reason for calling parliament has its basis in the fact that there was a difference of opinion with respect to the policy of the former minister of defence and the government. When the former minister resigned his position this country was stirred; feelings ran high, so much so that pressure of public

opinion caused the Prime Minister or Your Honour to feel it imperative to call parliament. I doubt whether General McNaughton can answer the question I am about to put, and therefore I do not ask that he necessarily shall answer it.

May I say in passing that I appreciated the suggestion of the hon. member for Témiscouata that General McNaughton should be seated. I appreciate, too, that General McNaughton is not a criminal on trial for his life. On the basis of his position as an honoured general of the army he should be treated with the utmost respect.

My question is perhaps more directed to the Prime Minister than to General McNaughton; or possibly the former Minister of National Defence would like to answer it. This is my question: Would Colonel Ralston's resignation have been necessary if this order in council had been passed upon his report to the cabinet after his return from overseas? That is my question, and I think the people of Canada have a right to know.

Mr. ROWE: Do not embarrass the general; page the Prime Minister.

Mr. DIEFENBAKER: That apparently was the \$64 question.

Mr. HANSELL: Just a moment. I appreciate the fact that the hon. member for Lake Centre wants the floor. He will get it all right.

Mr. DIEFENBAKER: I have waited for three minutes.

Mr. HANSELL: I want an answer. The Prime Minister can accept resignations and can put in his cabinet whomsoever he chooses, but he cannot trifle with the feelings of the people of Canada, and, as my hon. friend the member for Bow River says, with the lives of our fighting men. I want that question answered. Surely the Prime Minister can answer it. If he cannot, we shall have to try to get it from the former Minister of National Defence.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: At the beginning of this afternoon's session, the leader of the opposition asked that General McNaughton's answers to questions be confined to to-day. I thought at that time that in regard to the questions to be asked, there would be a fair distribution as between the members on different sides of the house, and that the general would not be subjected to almost continuous cross-examination by members of one particular group. I am hoping