

Supply—Defence Production

I have some other observations on the first item of this department, but before entering upon those I shall resume my seat so that anyone else who wishes to touch on this specific matter will have an opportunity to do so and so that the debate may be kept together.

Mr. Dinsdale: I do not intend to pursue the question that has been before the house during the earlier part of the afternoon, because as I have listened to the discussion I have felt that it has been very adequately covered by my colleagues on this side of the house. I am not discontinuing the discussion at this time because my feelings are any less intense on the matter. I should like to support to the full the statements in regard to this point of principle that has been raised by the other members who have taken part in the discussion.

Before I came to the House of Commons, as a private citizen I was of the opinion that anyone who assumed the position of minister of the crown did so with a sense of responsibility and a sense of humility, as becomes a servant of the public; and I still think anyone who carries out the high responsibility of service to Her Majesty should do so with singleness of purpose and without allowing any other outside interests to interfere or overlap in that peculiar responsibility in a democratic country.

Now I want to give some attention to certain aspects that could be properly discussed under this first item of the departmental estimates before the house at the present time. I want to deal in the first instance with Canada's aircraft production program; second, with the guided missile program, and finally I have some comments to make on the development of our radar screen in general with particular reference to the D.E.W. line development, which is the last aspect of the three-line radar screen to be undertaken in the defence of Canada and the whole North American continent.

The minister, in his statement in introducing the estimates, spent some considerable time on the progress of our aircraft production industry. It was encouraging to note that certain aspects of the program undertaken in the build-up just before, during and after the Korean crisis have now reached completion. He mentioned specifically the Harvard program and the T-33 program as having been completed and the CF-100 Canadian all-weather jet fighter program as well under control at the present time.

I must admit at the outset, Mr. Chairman, that following the drastic decline in our aircraft industry at the end of world war II

we have made a fair degree of recovery. At the peak period of production during world war II the aircraft industry in Canada, largely devoted to military production of course, was employing some 120,000 Canadians. I remember receiving some correspondence from a friend of mine, a lady some 65 years of age at that time, and she enclosed a photograph of herself in overalls. During those emergency days she had been called into the aircraft industry and was working on the Mosquito assembly line. Underneath the picture she had written: "I build 'em and you fly 'em."

That was the sort of spirit manifested by Canadians during world war II which made it possible to achieve such a tremendous output in a relatively short time after years of delay by the government in building up a sufficient defence industry in this country. It was the spirit of the people, as demonstrated in that particular incident, that made it possible to achieve such a remarkable level of production in a relatively short time. But by 1946 the aircraft industry had almost completely melted away, with the total number of employees being some 6,000, a tremendous drop from such a high employment level.

The minister told us that the industry has come back in the Canadian economy so that now it occupies ninth place in factory value and is in third place so far as employment of Canadian labour is concerned. In the 10-year interval since 1946 we have recovered to a large extent the ground that was lost through the rather hasty, unwise demobilization of the industry that took place in the immediate post-war years.

It is not necessary this afternoon to discuss in detail the mistakes that were made in the hasty build-up. During the years I have been a member of the house these mistakes and errors in judgment have been pointed out on many occasions. For example, there has been reference to the CF-100 program. After it was realized that we had not made the world safe for democracy and that it was going to be necessary to have some continuing defence measures we moved rather rapidly to produce an aircraft that would be suitable to carry out an essentially defensive role, and the CF-100, or the XF-100 as it was originally called, was gradually put into production.

After many setbacks and mistakes in judgment, which I suppose could have been expected in developing an aircraft of this type from scratch, the CF-100 is now in service in Canada carrying out a basic fighter defence role, and we are informed that it will continue to serve adequately in that capacity for at least one or two years more. In fact it has to serve for the next one or

[Mr. Hamilton (Notre Dame de Grace).]