

that the committee give the necessary directions to supply answers to these questions. The questions have been very carefully drawn with a view to eliciting information which I think is clearly in the public interest.

The CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Mr. Fleming. I think it should be clearly understood by the members of this committee as well as members in general of the House that this committee decides on its own policy. I do not propose to have any minister, no matter who he is, tell us that we shall hear this or that member or give preference to any particular subject. I say that very kindly but I believe I have the support of the committee in that respect.

Mr. REID: As a matter of fact, I am glad you mentioned that matter because I for one disagree with the minister's statement. I think members of this House of Commons will remember that the question was asked of the government at the opening of the session if members would be precluded from asking questions if a committee were sitting. It is the prerogative of any member of parliament to ask any question, Mr. Howe notwithstanding. I do not think any committee should have the onus thrown to it of answering questions which are denied in the House of Commons. The House of Commons should carry its own battle and we will carry ours.

Mr. McILRAITH: Mr. Chairman, I think that hon. members should read that question. I do not know how many reasons there are why it is an improper question in the House of Commons. First of all a great number of subdivisions of the question relate exclusively to government policy, are wholly improper and should never have been permitted to get on the order paper. The hon. member apparently did not make any inquiries of the department but I would assume the main point that he is seeking is the cost of Research Enterprises and the disposal made of it. I can only conjecture on that after reading the question, but certainly it covers a great many other side issues. I should like to see an attempt made to get the questions together that do pertain properly to the subject matter before this committee, that is, economies and war expenditures, and have those revised. Then if there are any other parts to the question of course they can easily go on the order paper. There is no doubt about that.

I want to point out to hon. members there are over 100 subdivisions to that question.

Mr. REID: If I may be allowed to answer...

Mr. McILRAITH: Just a moment until I make my point. The big part of them comes squarely within the item of war expenditures on a Crown-owned plant, and the disposal of that plant, directly within the reference. It is quite true there are other parts that do not come within that reference. For instance:—

What type of work and operation will be carried on by Canadian Arsenals Limited?

What products will they manufacture?

Obviously that does not come within the scope of this committee at all. I would think it is a question now of redrafting or picking out the parts of question 62 on yesterday's order paper that are proper subject matter for the committee and then the committee can decide what they will do with them, but to leave the question in that form is going to tie up staffs in the department indefinitely getting material that may or not be what the committee and the hon. member want. I do not think it was quite appreciated yesterday just how long that question is and how detailed. It involves for instance, accounting work in breaking down the costs of each separate building although the buildings may have been sold in a group and built in a group and the costs would be quite complete on the units built together and sold together. I ask hon. members