

Committee on Defence Expenditure

Mr. McIlraith: I cannot give that date, offhand; but I can recall to the hon. member's attention the fact that the further restrictions referred to in the question were imposed by the United States government on December 30, 1952.

VICTORIA DAY

REQUEST FOR ANNOUNCEMENT OF DATE
OF HOLIDAY

On the orders of the day:

Mr. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, I should like to ask a question of the Secretary of State. In view of conflicting interpretations in the press concerning the act passed last year, can an official announcement be made as to which Monday in May will be observed as Victoria day?

Hon. F. G. Bradley (Secretary of State): Mr. Speaker, an announcement is to be made in due course.

DEFENCE EXPENDITURE

APPOINTMENT OF SPECIAL COMMITTEE

The house resumed, from Friday, January 16, consideration of the motion of Mr. St. Laurent for the appointment of a committee to examine defence expenditures and commitments, and the amendment thereto of Mr. Claxton, and the amendment to the amendment of Mr. Knowles.

Mr. G. C. Nowlan (Annapolis-Kings): Mr. Speaker, I intend to intervene but briefly in his debate, which is taking place on the subject as set forth in the resolution read to be house a moment ago by the Clerk Assistant. Many matters have been covered in debate, with some of which I should like to deal again. I do not think it would be fair to the house, however, to repeat some of the arguments made here before, important as they may be.

References have been made to statements made by the chief of general staff, both in a letter tabled in the house and in an article which has appeared subsequently in the *Canadian Army Journal*. I was very glad indeed to hear the statement of the Prime Minister (Mr. St. Laurent) that the article in question had been written prior to the chief of general staff having seen the Currie report. This might suggest that the printing of the *Canadian Army Journal* is not as expeditious as one might like. Nevertheless it is a good thing that the statements contained therein cannot be construed as a criticism of the House of Commons, as such.

However, in his letter, the chief of general staff referred to what he termed as attacks

upon the armed services. And the minister, speaking in the house on January 13, said, as reported in *Hansard*:

Perhaps I have been overenthusiastic in the defence of the armed forces, against what I felt to be unjustified charges.

I say, with respect, that that is a red herring thrown across the trail to try to obscure the real matter which should be investigated. In so far as I know, there have been no charges made against the armed forces at any time—certainly by no member on this side of the house. That should be made clear.

Mr. Currie in his report, and quite properly, reflects credit upon and compliments the members of the armed forces for having failed to walk through the open door which was left open to them by the administration, through this government, of the Department of National Defence. He says that it reflects great credit upon the honesty and integrity of the members of the forces. With that we all agree. We realize, as I think the Solicitor General (Mr. Campney) said earlier in this debate, that in any group of men you are bound to find some crooks. That is true. But we do take pride in the fact that the number of those who have appeared in any investigation of the armed forces is very small indeed.

I am sure that the reputation of our armed forces as to either honesty or efficiency, will compare very well with the reputation of the forces of any other nation in the world. I am quite sure that members of the armed forces would compare most favourably with a similar group of citizens from any walk of life, even members of the House of Commons. Some of us have had experience in the armed forces. There are many sitting around here, some like myself, who were rear rank privates while others were colonels, generals or occupied comparable ranks in the sister services. I think we all realize that the one thing which undermines the morale of the armed forces more than anything else is the loss of confidence in those at or near the top. That is something which saps the morale of the armed forces. It is something this parliament should rectify. That is what we are trying to deal with during this discussion of the Currie report, and nothing more.

Let us analyse for a moment the speeches made by the Solicitor General and the Minister of National Defence (Mr. Claxton), the latter speaking on January 13, both of which were long, both of which fully covered the field, and both of which were undoubtedly carefully prepared. I think they made the best defence possible in view of the circumstances with which they were confronted.

[Mr. Fleming.]