

After Recess

The house resumed at eight o'clock.

Miss AGNES C. MACPHAIL (Grey-Bruce): Mr. Speaker, I was sorry not to be able to be in the house during the past week; it was my bad luck but certainly not my responsibility. I would have been very much interested to hear all the speeches made on this question of increased armaments. I was not able even to read all the speeches in Hansard, but I was able to follow the reports in the daily press; which is possibly not the best medium, but at any rate is better than nothing. I would particularly like to have heard the speech of the Minister of National Defence (Mr. Mackenzie). I would like to have heard his justification for the increase in the estimates, and I would like to have heard him quoting poetry. Of course I can read it, but poetry never is quite so enjoyable when read. I would like to have known from his speech just when it was that Canada arrived at the present very dangerous position. When did he come to the conclusion, and what brought him to that conclusion, that this country and this government, which had no money for many things which it seemed necessary to find money for, suddenly had thirteen and a half million dollars with which apparently they could find nothing better to do than submit increased military estimates? I fear I really shall have to read his speeches to find out what it was that brought him to that conclusion.

Then too, I wanted so much to know against whom we are arming. It is only sixteen months or so since we had a general election, and although I read the press diligently I do not recall any speeches by the Minister of National Defence at that time, or indeed by the Prime Minister (Mr. Mackenzie King), telling Canada of her great danger, of the bombs that were to drop on the elevators in western Canada. About eighteen or twenty months ago people were wishing that would happen; it would have been one way of getting rid of the wheat. Someone says, "Drop them on the grain exchange," but the worst thing about bombs is that they are often dropped in the wrong places. Some member was greatly worried about one dropping on the House of Commons. I am sure the country listening to this debate would not think it such a calamity, certainly not this week when I was home in bed. If the Prime Minister during the election campaign had made such eloquent speeches as the one he made this afternoon—because it was an eloquent speech; I did not like it, but it was eloquent—if he had made such eloquent

speeches on this subject from coast to coast throughout Canada, these coasts which now stand in such need of defence, would there have been the same deadening monotony of Liberals in the house as there is now? I doubt it. Therefore I wish he had made the speeches. The speech he made to-day was a very different one from those he made during the campaign on the same subject or similar ones. I am not clear as to how many cruisers we are to have. We are to have four mine sweepers, but if we spelled "mine sweeper" differently, changing the "e" in "mine" to "d," it might not be bad to have half a dozen.

It is said that all this increase of expenditure is to be for the defence of Canada. My first fear is that if we increase our military estimates, if we increase our fighting forces, they will not be used for the defence of Canada but will make us much more liable to be drawn at the heels of Great Britain into a European or world war. There are very good reasons for thinking that. I admire the dexterity with which the Prime Minister explained away Sir Samuel Hoare's speech, but I believe even the right hon. gentleman would admit that it was to him an embarrassing speech and took quite a lot of explaining. We have had in Canada in the last year a good many imperialists, most of them from Great Britain but some of them Canadians, making throughout the country speeches which lead me to believe that there is a very real danger that an increase in military estimates will make it more likely that we shall be drawn into a European war. Then, too, I noticed the Prime Minister's anxiety that he should not turn up at the imperial conference with empty hands. He does not appear to be going to. And apparently he is not the only person going to the coronation, which brings me to my second worry. We are going to send to the coronation and to the imperial conference—it is hard to distinguish one from the other—334 officers and men of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

Mr. DUNNING: No, no.

Miss MACPHAIL: Well, I am quoting from the paper, with a picture of Assistant Commissioner S. T. Wood.

Mr. MACKENZIE (Vancouver): That is incorrect. The total for the mounted police is thirty-four.

Miss MACPHAIL: Well, that is another indication that we should not rely too much on the papers. But 364 officers and men from the military forces—are those figures correct?