

War Appropriation

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WAR APPROPRIATION BILL**PROVISION FOR GRANTING TO HIS MAJESTY AID FOR NATIONAL DEFENCE AND SECURITY**

The house resumed from Tuesday, May 5, consideration in committee of a resolution to provide sums not exceeding \$2,000,000,000 for the year ending March 31, 1943, for granting to his majesty aid for national defence and security—Mr. Ilsley—Mr. Vien in the chair.

Mr. HARRIS (Danforth): On several occasions we have been trying to find out what progress has been made with regard to certain recommendations which have been put on the record during the last ten or eleven months. The minister was kind enough to indicate that he would give the committee a fairly comprehensive statement, the idea being that this would avoid the necessity of cross-examination across the floor of the house. Altogether there are close to forty recommendations not enumerated or numbered as such but appearing in the context of evidence which the minister's department and other war departments have had before them. I should be glad to have a statement from the minister.

Mr. RALSTON: I will endeavour as briefly as I can to summarize the action taken, or the comments of the department with regard to some of the more important recommendations. I am sure my hon. friend does not expect me to go into the whole matter, because I presume all the recommendations will come before the war expenditures committee when it meets.

One recommendation has to do with the appointment of a financial superintendent under the jurisdiction of the deputy minister. That recommendation, in the case of the Department of National Defence (Army) had already been carried out. As a matter of fact, there had been a financial superintendent for some years.

With respect to a war establishments committee, that also was recommended, and that recommendation, if it was intended to apply to the Department of National Defence, (Army), is met by the fact that we have had and have a war establishments committee which is functioning, I think, satisfactorily. The director of staff duties is chairman; the director of military operations and intelligence and the director of mobilization and recruiting are members.

The committee recommended that someone from the deputy minister's branch should

[Mr. McLarty.]

become a member of the war establishments committee, and the financial superintendent himself became a member of it, although he had been functioning from June 30, 1941. Later, on March 7 of this year, the director of military training was appointed a member. Hon. members will understand that frequently these establishments are related to training centres or to some unit, the training of which needs particular attention and in respect of which, therefore, the knowledge of the director of military training is needed as to establishment requirements.

A recommendation was made suggesting that a staff of highly trained civil servants, with expert background, should assist the financial superintendent in carrying out his duties. Under that, there were to be appointed 21 grade 4 civil clerks, who had had a university course in economics and commerce. That was authorized at a meeting of the committee some time before, for the purpose of assisting the financial superintendent. Of these, ten were appointed in the army service and six were assigned to work on estimates and finance under the financial superintendent.

A recommendation was made with regard to the long and complicated procedure concerning war establishments, suggesting that that be simplified without weakening the financial and constitutional controls of the civil power. I could dilate at some length on that particular recommendation, but perhaps it will suffice to say that we have adopted a plan whereby there will be simpler procedure in certain increases in establishments. I think it is that increases up to 5 per cent, not more than 5 per cent of personnel, are made on the authorization of the minister, and do not go to the privy council at all. The same applies to increases in establishments in England; up to 5 per cent are made on the authority of the army commander without reference to the authorities here. Up to 10 per cent may be made in connection with establishments, if that is done for the purpose of bringing them up to correspond with British establishments. Further than that, a sweeping and thorough examination has been made of departmental procedure in order to shorten the time, if we possibly can, for a file to pass from one branch to another with respect to establishments.

I will not go into details here. I myself have discussed the matter thoroughly with the director of staff duties and with the financial superintendent, and I can assure the committee that a substantial saving of time will be effected in that respect as well. I must say it is pretty difficult to do it and at the same time to preserve the reservation made in the recommendation, that is that we must not