

*War Appropriation Bill*

information received bona fide, information which would in legal parlance constitute reasonable and probable cause, a term which my legal friends know—any public man or any public newspaper, I say, making statements based upon information of that kind, free from malice—I put that in because I think it is important—has no right to be termed a saboteur.

Mr. HOWE: Perhaps I should make a few remarks at this time in reply to my hon. friend the leader of the opposition. My remarks as to the nature of the sabotage, which were general in their character, were hardly intended to reflect on the hon. gentleman himself or any member of the opposition. I was talking rather fast that day—

Mr. HANSON (York-Sunbury): I think you were a little heated.

Mr. HOWE: I doubt if I directed them in that way. I was endeavouring to show the harm that is done by criticism of the type I call sabotage. As far as my references to one particular newspaper are concerned I have nothing to retract. I made them after careful consideration, I believed sincerely what I said and I do not wish to be regarded as softening at all those remarks.

Mr. HANSON (York-Sunbury): You are going to have the battle out.

Mr. HOWE: Oh, yes. So far as Federal Aircraft is concerned, and the reason that the trade took it upon themselves to come to Ottawa, I believe there was a little organization in that outside the trade itself. I got a letter—

Mr. HANSON (York-Sunbury): Not from me.

Mr. HOWE: No.

Mr. MacNICOL: Were they not invited?

Mr. HOWE: They asked for the appointment, they were permitted to come; we will put it that way. I did not think the acting minister indicated the other day that he asked them. I have not looked into that matter.

Mr. HANSON (York-Sunbury): He was not sure.

Mr. HOWE: I think it came the other way—they asked to come and he permitted them to come. I think the position they took was more or less outlined to them after they came. I got a private letter from one of them, written the same evening, which I received on my return, which indicates that that was the case. However, be that as it

[Mr. R. B. Hanson.]

may, we have six firms who were subcontractors of Federal telling us how to operate Federal. I have never permitted my subcontractors to tell me how to operate my business, and I have had many of them “gang up” and try to tell me. Remember this: these are people holding contracts with Federal Aircraft, whose profits depended on their relation with Federal. I doubt if because six of these subcontractors “gang up” and come to Ottawa the government is bound to accept their recommendations.

Mr. HANSON (York-Sunbury): I suggest that the minister do not use that expression “gang up.”

Mr. HOWE: Well, say join together. I am using the language of the contracting business, and we are talking about contracts here.

Mr. HANSON (York-Sunbury): It sounded to me like the language of thugs.

Mr. HOWE: Oh, no—perfectly good usage. However, so much for the *prima facie* case. I do not agree with the leader of the opposition that because six of them come and put in a report, the government is bound to accept the report. But the government is bound to give it consideration, and consideration was given.

Mr. BLACK (Cumberland): Does the minister not think it proper that those heads of industries who were made responsible for this production and who were suffering because the blame was placed on them should present their views?

Mr. HOWE: Is the hon. member asking a question or stating his own interpretation?

Mr. BLACK (Cumberland): Well, does the minister not think it perfectly proper for them to come and make these representations, when the blame for failure to get production was put on them?

Mr. HOWE: I do not question the right of the manufacturers to come. They came, they were well received, and they submitted a written statement. I am not questioning their right to do so, but I am questioning the position that when they do so we are bound to follow their views. When we received representations of that kind from six responsible firms we were bound to give them consideration and study, which we did. I wrote back to the firms—I do not remember the questions; they were tabled. Perhaps my hon. friend would lend me the letters.

Mr. HANSON (York-Sunbury): Yes. We sought in the proper office of this house for those letters, and they said they had never heard of them. We did not get them.