

Supply—National Defence

research, and, with regard to technical matters of production, and the like, personnel of Canadian Arsenals Limited who are specially expert in that field.

Mr. Pearkes: Would that be a change in policy?

Mr. Claxton: No.

Mr. Pearkes: In the past was not the research work done at the arsenals? Has it now been changed?

Mr. Howe: Perhaps I could explain that. It was never the intention to set up the arsenals as a research plant. The purpose was to retain the skills and to retain the machine tools, or a certain number of them, used for the art, and do such gun-work as is carried out in peacetime which, as my hon. friend knows, is largely repair and maintenance work on existing guns or, if a new gun is required—for example, if a British-type gun is abandoned and a United States gun is installed—the tooling for the United States gun would be carried out at the arsenals plant, and the tooling data sent out to whoever was to be in charge of the large-scale production of the weapon.

But that is quite different from development. This is a production plant on a small scale for the purpose of retaining a staff that can be a nucleus of a greatly expanded activity.

Mr. Pearkes: Where is the repair work being done now on guns of a type different from those being made by this Sorel company?

Mr. Claxton: Those are all done by Canadian army establishments, largely RCEME—the Royal Canadian Electrical and Mechanical Engineers.

Mr. Pearkes: They have facilities to repair guns?

Mr. Claxton: Yes; the gun depot is at Long Point.

Mr. Pearkes: That is not the same place that has been taken over by this Sorel company?

Mr. Claxton: No, it is across the river.

Mr. Black (Cumberland): I was interested in the statement by the Minister of Defence Production in which he pointed out that component parts of the gun are being made by outside industries. Is that distribution under the direction of his department, or of the principal manufacturers of the gun? If there is distribution of the construction of these components, has any such distribution been assigned to industries in the maritime provinces? Many of them had a splendid

[Mr. Claxton.]

record during the last war in the manufacture of guns and other primary requirements.

Mr. Howe: The distribution of subcontracting is carried out by the private contractor. Whether any of it is being done in the maritime provinces, I cannot say. However, the Trenton plant of Dosco is being equipped with special machinery for doing naval work of a different type, and plans are being made to utilize the manufacturing facilities of the maritime provinces as soon as the primary work has advanced to a point where the work can be distributed.

Mr. Drew: My impression was that the setting up of these arsenals was for the purpose of having certain machinery available, of having certain skills developed to carry on what the minister has described as the art and which I believe is the term ordinarily applied to the over-all skill in the development of weapons of this type. We are not yet into an all-out war, but it seems to me that if there was a sound argument in the past for setting up arsenals of that kind, for equipping them, for training a skilled staff and for maintaining the gunmaker's art—we are told that we may be in a long struggle for ten, twenty or twenty-five years or more and we know that that struggle is one in which the development of new guns and other arms will be essential for the preservation of peace—it would seem that there is a sound argument now to retain this arsenal for the purpose for which it was built, for which it has been equipped and for which a staff has been trained. Does the minister think it wise at this time to abandon that particular function of the arsenal and to place that skill entirely under a private manufacturer who is carrying out a particular contract with a specific objective?

Mr. Howe: We are using the arsenal for exactly the purpose for which it was retained between the two wars, that is, to have available in Canada skills to do certain operations as required in a war. The three-inch gun is one of the few weapons that has been standardized by three countries. It has always been the objective of Canadian production to obtain contracts of a size that will permit economical operation. Our difficulty in Canada, particularly in the matter of guns, is that until we have all-out fighting the number of guns required by our services is small. For instance, I think our requirement for the three-inch naval gun is something in the order of twelve.

On the other hand, the United States require large facilities and they were willing to place a large order in Canada. I think the original order was for something like 120