

Supply—National Defence

there is a certain degree of anxiety and uncertainty, which is reasonable, amongst members of the opposition.

It is unfair for supporters of the Liberal government to accuse the opposition of not working and not being able to get information when every avenue of obtaining more detailed information is closed to them. We recognize that fact. The minister has stated time and time again in the past that he will not have a defence committee. Tonight the leader of the opposition has pleaded with the minister once again in this critical situation to give the opposition a committee. In the face of the challenges which have been made by members such as the hon. member for Parkdale, in the face of challenges which have been made in the press that the opposition is not doing its duty, in order that such challenges may be met the leader of the opposition has once again appealed to the Minister of National Defence for such a committee.

There is no thought of having a committee before which a General MacArthur or a General Marshall would be called. That is not the Canadian way of doing things, but the Canadian people have a right, I think, to have their representatives informed on certain matters which those representatives themselves realize it is not expedient to ask to have explained in the open forum of this house. There is the appeal made by the leader of the opposition. I hope that the minister has now had time to collect his thoughts and is ready to reply to the leader of the opposition. If that is done, and if there are no more questions on the general discussion, then instead of asking that the item be carried, as was done at six o'clock. I suggest that the committee follow the line of procedure suggested by the Minister of National Defence.

Mr. Wright: Mr. Chairman, I am sure we have witnessed tonight one of the most extraordinary happenings I have seen in this house in some twelve years. We have seen a Liberal member on the government side of the house rise in his place and belittle the judgment of a former minister of national defence who, as the hon. member for Nanaimo said, went to Europe in a wheelchair to try to find out the difficulties which confronted our troops over there. Yet the hon. member for Temiscouata rises in the house and belittles his judgment while members on the Liberal side sit with smiles on their faces. It is most extraordinary. After that we find the Minister of National Defence rising to defend his own reputation but saying nothing about the reputation of Colonel Ralston.

[Mr. Pearkes.]

Mr. Pouliot: Mr. Chairman, I rise on a question of privilege. Nothing offends me more than when my statements are distorted by anyone, colleagues, newspapers or anyone else. I can be called names and I do not care. The statements are there. What I said is recorded, and there is no reason whatever for the hon. member for Melfort, any more than the hon. member for Nanaimo, to distort what I have said and to draw wrong conclusions therefrom. I want them to be fair, honest and just and not to try to give a different meaning to what I said. I mentioned only one statement and I drew conclusions from it. I did not say anything else about the former minister of national defence.

Mr. Wright: That is exactly the point, Mr. Chairman. I am saying that the hon. member for Temiscouata drew absolutely unfair conclusions, conclusions which are not based on facts or truth.

Mr. Pouliot: That is your right, but it is your conclusions that are wrong.

Mr. Wright: The hon. member for Temiscouata got up in this house and implied that Colonel Ralston's statement in the house that he thought the Canadian troops needed reinforcement was the cause of the German attack on the American front.

Mr. Pouliot: The hon. member remembers if he said that?

Mr. Wright: I remember it, and for any member of this house to get up and say such a thing, and other members behind him smile at it, and the Minister of National Defence not come to the defence of the former minister—

Mr. Pouliot: Nobody smiled about it, only the hon. gentleman.

Mr. Wright: Oh no; there were no smiles on this side of the house. The smiles were all behind you. That is all I am going to say on this matter. The leader of the opposition stated that he believed we should have more details before us before voting on this first item. The first item is a vote of \$1,412 million. The total amount which we are going to vote in these estimates for all departments of the government this year is \$2,441 million. For all other items besides national defence contained in the book of estimates we are only going to vote \$1,029 million. What information is there in the book on this first item of national defence? There is half a page in a book of some 500 pages and four pages of details for a vote of \$1,412 million.