

Supply—National Defence

not move one thousand men with their equipment from Ottawa to Vancouver or from Vancouver to Ottawa. Am I right or wrong?

Mr. Pearkes: You are wrong.

Mr. Winch: He could not move one thousand men immediately.

Mr. Pearkes: Mr. Chairman, it is ridiculous for the hon. gentleman to be making statements like that—

Mr. Winch: It is not.

Mr. Pearkes:—which I am obliged to deny all the time because they are completely inaccurate.

Mr. Pearson: Perhaps, Mr. Chairman, I could read exactly what the minister said as reported at page 5392 of *Hansard* of yesterday. He said:

We should be able to move one battalion, with its equipment, in the very near future.

I presume that means that we cannot move one battalion with its equipment now.

Mr. Winch: That is exactly what I said.

Mr. Pearkes: To any place in the world, although those words are not in there. We can move them from here to Vancouver and we can move them by calling upon aircraft to move those troops. Is it not sensible to encourage commercial aircraft to carry on with their ordinary work? There is no need to have a large number of transport planes tied up when there are commercial planes available in the event of an emergency.

Mr. Winch: The minister does not deny the words he used to the effect that he hoped to be able in the near future to move a battalion. That is exactly what I said.

Mr. Hellyer: According to the figures I have here, no funds at all are allotted for tanks and armoured fighting vehicles. Can the minister give us any indication as to when new armoured equipment might be required for our troops overseas or at home?

Mr. Pearkes: There is no requirement for any new heavy armoured vehicles for overseas at the present time. A brigade group with its armoured components is equipped with Centurion tanks and with the Ferret armoured cars. I do not know of any more suitable weapons than those for the type of work that they are carrying on.

Mr. Winch: Mr. Chairman, I believe a most important point has been raised in view of the quotation from *Hansard* by the Leader of the Opposition and the answer of the Minister of National Defence in which for the first time he said that the plan for moving is tied in with the acquisition of commercial aircraft in order to be able to move troops

[Mr. Winch.]

in an emergency. This is the first time I have heard this phase raised. Will the minister now—and I think it is a matter of the utmost importance—tell us what is the direct arrangement or what is the tie-in between his department, the army, the air force and all commercial airlines whereby in an emergency they can be called in for the transportation of troops and equipment? The minister just made it clear now that he is in the position that he hopes to be able to move a battalion. But now we hope we will do it by the use and co-operation of commercial airlines. What now is the tie-in between the army, the navy and the commercial airlines so that in an emergency they immediately come under the army or the R.C.A.F.?

Mr. Pearkes: The hon. gentleman suggests that for the first time arrangements are being made for commercial transport to move personnel and supplies of the armed forces; but that is not correct. During the Korean war C.P.A. were moving them continually—

Mr. Winch: I mean in an emergency.

Mr. Pearkes:—and also during the construction of the D.E.W. line; and in the supplying each year of the northern stations commercial planes are used. We can make agreements any time with the commercial companies to hire planes or charter them or, if necessary, we could requisition them. As far as the air force transport command is concerned, we have two squadrons of what are known as the Flying Boxcars which take heavy equipment and are able to carry out a great deal of supply work; and there is a tremendous amount of supply work going on for our northern stations.

In addition to that, we have the long range North Star aircraft carrying out every week flights from Canada to Europe in order to supply the personnel that are there. We have those facilities. At any time in the case of an emergency civilian aircraft could be brought in if we did not have enough of our own transport. But in addition to all of that, we are augmenting our transport command this year by the type of aircraft that I have mentioned half a dozen times during this debate. The first of those new aircraft will be available this year, in which case we will be able to move a complete battalion, with all its equipment, without interfering with any of the other services. We could move them today if we were prepared to suspend some of the other operations which we are normally carrying out and we would suspend those operations in an emergency if we had to make every R.C.A.F. plane available.