

Mr. ABBOTT: How many have left the service?

Mr. DIEFENBAKER: My hon. friend will be able to give that.

Mr. ABBOTT: I thought the hon. member might give the whole story while he was at it.

Mr. DIEFENBAKER: I am telling the story; it reveals that in the past two years, by means such as are being applied—by placing the purchase of munitions and the building of housing and the like under the Canadian Commercial Corporation—a deliberate effort is being made to get around the provisions of the Civil Service Act.

Mr. ABBOTT: That is nonsense.

Mr. DIEFENBAKER: Recently I asked how many appointments had been made to the civil service during the two years I have mentioned—May, 1945, to April, 1947. I have given the approximate figure. I asked also how many such appointees had passed a civil service examination prior to having been taken in or appointed. The answer given was, not how many had passed, but that all those appointed by the civil service commission were subject to an examination by the civil service commission. I would point out that under a provision such as this, in setting up corporations, the veterans' preference can be evaded. It can be circumvented. Of the 72,500 appointments, many of them replacements, as I have stated, made during the past two years, in 31,063 cases there was no entitlement under the veterans' preference for service in either war. I also point out that of the 31,063, only 11,094 were male.

The minister, when asked a question as to what degree of permanence this amendment was designed to cover, indicated that it is merely temporary.

Mr. ABBOTT: It is purely enabling.

Mr. DIEFENBAKER: What was that answer?

Mr. ABBOTT: I said, it is purely enabling.

Mr. DIEFENBAKER: Oh, enabling—enabling the government to do one of the things I have pointed out, to get around the civil service commission for a period of two years in so far as the Department of National Defence is concerned. I suggest to the minister that the amendment indicates that very little thought was given to the subject. The matter of the purchase of munitions and the like had to be put somewhere, and they had a corporation that had the power to spend up to \$10,000,000 out of the unappropriated moneys of Canada. They had a corporation,

I say. It was never expected to be used for this purpose, and it was decided, "Oh, here is an opportunity to place it under an act totally unfitted to administer it, without the qualifications, so far as powers are concerned, placed in the act because of the fact that the government did not wish to set up the same men, if you will, with that power, who today constitute the Canadian Commercial Corporation."

I submit, sir, that the house is entitled to fuller information than it has received up to the present time. When somebody asked the minister a question as to when this had been decided upon, whether it was decided when the act was originally passed, the answer was to the effect that it was not the occasion then to tell parliament. In other words, when the Canadian Commercial Corporation was set up, apparently it was intended to bring under it the purchase of munitions. But, to use the words of the Minister of National Defence—words to this effect—it was not considered appropriate at that time to inform the house as to the position of affairs.

Mr. ABBOTT: I was Minister of National Defence at the time.

Mr. DIEFENBAKER: There has been such a continual shuffling over there that it shows a high degree of memory on the part of the minister—

Mr. ABBOTT: A high degree of efficiency.

Mr. DIEFENBAKER: —that, after shifting around so much, he can recall that fact. After so much shifting around, it is a tribute to the abilities in that direction of hon. gentlemen opposite that they can recall what office they held at a particular time. I would like to have the Minister of Trade and Commerce comment upon this matter when he speaks. Why is it necessary to have appointments made which are not within the ambit of the civil service commission?

Hon. DOUGLAS ABBOTT (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I do not wish to prolong the debate, but I do want to say a word because the matter of defence purchasing arose during my tenure of office as Minister of National Defence. While I was in that portfolio the permanent officers pointed out to me that unless some means were found of perpetuating the system which had been followed during the war it would be necessary to recreate a complete purchasing section of the Department of National Defence. In the meantime the personnel had been dissipated, a good many of them had been dispersed, a good many in the Department of Munitions and Supply, and it would be a very difficult task to reconstitute that department. I came to the