

of business they probably proceeded and asked for tenders or bought from War Assets Corporation.

If I have no estimate at all to pay for the furniture the committee will realize that I am in one of those positions where the public service will not be efficiently carried on. If I am requested to buy furniture for veterans affairs or any other department I cannot buy it.

Mr. BOUCHER: Borrow, beg or steal from your neighbours.

Mr. FOURNIER (Hull): I am trying to show what position I shall be in. I do not suppose the committee would accept the amendment, but if it did, on this item I would be in a quandary. I do not know whether I would be back in the house or whether I would be in the department looking to see where I could get the money, because I am sure I have expended part of it. Probably the department has paid out that amount of money.

The hon. gentleman says that I have not proven that it is needed. Unless we change the whole set-up, how can I give any more information except to bring every file to the committee or answer any question which may be placed on the order paper or produce everything which we have done since March 31 of this year. That can be easily done because all the records are kept. I do not think it is quite fair to say that I have not justified this amount. I have explained to the hon. member that the government has this director of economies who goes over the whole thing. I cannot purchase anything before the Department of Finance or the comptroller of the treasury encumbers the amount out of the general vote. When it is encumbered and we decide to purchase, it has to go to the treasury board and be approved.

If the hon. member wishes me to bring down every purchase we have made under this vote I can do so. But in all fairness to my department I do not think the amendment to bring it down to one dollar would meet the case. What the hon. member for Lake Centre has said, if he is trying to impress these departments as to the purchase of furniture, will reach the proper authorities. With this explanation I might ask the hon. member for Lake Centre to withdraw his amendment. It applies not only to the Department of Public Works, but to every other department of government, since the money is expended for all departments. In all fairness to those who have made these requests,

[Mr. A. Fournier.]

which are justified, they cannot be deprived of the things they require to do the work given to them under the law.

Mr. MACKENZIE: I have probably the keenest admiration for the hon. member for Lake Centre of anyone in this house. I have never been so amazed and astounded, so bemused and bewildered in my life as by the silliness of this amendment. The personnel of the Department of Veterans Affairs has increased from some 2,000 to 15,000 or 16,000. We are establishing new offices across Canada to render service to those who rendered the finest service in the world to us. It is not the Minister of Public Works who is asking for this money. He is the agent, principally of my department, in asking for new furniture to be used by those looking after those service men who gave us the best service in the world. My hon. friend, a veteran himself and a splendid one, in moving to reduce this vote to \$1, is insulting the intelligence of this House of Commons.

An hon. MEMBER: That brings the hon. member for Rosedale to his feet.

Mr. MACKENZIE: He never talks sense anyway, so it does not matter.

Mr. JACKMAN: I am not going to bother to ask the minister to withdraw that remark, but he mentioned the thousands of additional employees of his department. What happened to the dozens upon dozens of brass hats and junior officers all down the line? Why not use their desks and chairs?

Mr. MACKENZIE: Is that what the hon. gentleman thinks of those who have saved Canada for freedom? Is that what he thinks of the service we are rendering to these men right across Canada?

Mr. JACKMAN: What are you speaking of, anyway?

Mr. MACKENZIE: I am speaking of the service we are rendering the veterans of Canada. Will my hon. friend sit down? I have the floor.

The CHAIRMAN: Order. Hon. members must address the Chair.

Mr. MACKENZIE: Mr. Chairman, I am sure the hon. member for Lake Centre does not really mean this at all in his heart; I am sure it is purely a gesture. We need this furniture for our offices throughout Canada, for servicing the amenities and facilities for our returned soldiers throughout the land, not only in Ottawa but in every single village of this country. This money is not requested by the Minister of Public Works for his own department; it is asked by him for other