

Supply—National Defence

source to get information on the subject, because what he said sounded to me like a duplication of civil defence in Great Britain during the last war. I do not think it could be any more practical or up to date. But in this complicated country of ours I hope it will not be necessary to get an amendment to the British North America Act for the purpose of financing this program, as between the provinces and the dominion. Would the minister tell us how the expense of bringing this program into effect is to be apportioned among federal, provincial and municipal authorities?

Mr. Martin: My good friend has complimented me upon the completeness of the statement. I am afraid however that my statement does not deserve his compliment, because apparently it has not convinced the hon. member, or has not indicated to him that I have already dealt with that problem. We had a conference in Ottawa under the chairmanship of my colleague the Minister of National Defence about six or seven weeks ago. This conference was with representatives from the provinces. Upon that occasion we discussed the area of responsibility, both from the point of view of function and that of finance. I set out today the extent to which at this time the federal government concedes it is prepared to go. I pointed out that we are prepared to undertake the financial responsibility for the training of instructors, both those who would become leaders in communities and those who would become civil defence instructors as well as technical instructors in communities of others who will carry on in connection with this work. We will be responsible for that financially. Already we have paid the way of two hundred people from all parts of this country to Ottawa, and provided for their maintenance while here to take these courses. We are also undertaking the responsibility for providing education material, that is a responsibility we have assumed. We also are making provisions for sirens in communities of twenty thousand and over, and we are accepting about one-third of the cost of hose couplings, to effect the standardization of hose couplings. We have undertaken to pay for the cost of certain equipment for civil defence, and so on.

We do not assume for one moment the full financial responsibility. We say we have a role to play, that the municipalities have a role to play and that the provinces have a role to play. But I may say that at that conference, under the chairmanship of the Minister of National Defence, there was a wide area of agreement.

[Mr. Gillis.]

I would point out to my hon. friend that in most communities of Canada and in all cities of fifty thousand and over, with the exception of two, civil defence directors have been appointed and are actually functioning. Their salaries and their operations, except for those things I have indicated, are being assumed primarily by the municipalities and the provinces.

Mr. Dickey: Mr. Chairman, I should like to say a few words on the general question of civil defence. I am afraid I shall have to take exception to some of the observations of the hon. member for Lanark. Apparently he considers nothing has been done by the Minister of National Defence, the Minister of National Health and Welfare, and the federal authorities generally, to deal with this problem.

I would not suggest for one moment that any of us, particularly the two ministers who have been directly responsible, are satisfied with the situation in the matter of civil defence. However it is a big problem which cannot be solved overnight. I say these two ministers are to be complimented upon the way in which the problem has been approached, and upon the progress already made.

I can speak for no part of the country other than that which I represent, but I do say that, through the co-operation of the federal and provincial governments, as well as the authorities of the city of Halifax and the county of Halifax, a great deal has already been done in that area to set up the civil defence organization and to commence preparations for whatever eventuality may lie ahead of us.

I think there is local responsibility in connection with this problem. I submit to the hon. member for Lanark that many of the conditions he described were the kind of thing for which local authorities should accept responsibility. Civil defence is of importance to many localities in the maritime provinces, but particularly to the city of Halifax which I have the honour to represent. Halifax was designated as an important target area by the committee set up some time ago by the Department of National Defence. The residents of Halifax know from past experience of the unexpectedness with which an emergent situation, one creating problems which could not possibly be met without the help of a carefully co-ordinated organization, can arise. As was set out so fully in the statement this afternoon by the Minister of National Health and Welfare, the federal government has assumed certain important responsibilities for the training of personnel, the providing of assistance to local