

Committee on Defence Expenditure

are told across the floor of the house by a minister and his deputy, who cannot possibly have all the details of the problem.

I earnestly hope that when the committee is set up the terms of reference will be broadened so we will know not only that the money being expended is adequately and properly expended, but that it results in fighting material which will be useful and effective. If we do not do that we are not only negligent in our duty, but it may almost be said that we are traitors to our cause.

For that reason I protest against the amendment by the Minister of National Defence (Mr. Claxton), which would confine the discussion in the committee to a matter which although serious has already been reported upon. Why not let the committee proceed immediately to a discussion of the real defence problems of Canada? Remember this, that last year Russia produced 22,000 aircraft and 63,000 aircraft engines. They were good aircraft, and good aircraft engines. We are not playing this game for marbles; we are playing it in deadly earnest. And if we do not produce an effective fighting machine we might as well wash the whole thing out, and surrender now.

Mr. J. M. Macdonnell (Greenwood): Mr. Speaker, on December 15, and for a day or two following, we in this chamber had a somewhat unusual experience. For the moment—no, not for the moment; for two or three days—that spirit which we see across the gangway, and with which we are so familiar; that spirit which has been described in an old phrase becoming somewhat abused and a little hackneyed but still, I think, very descriptive, “that tranquil consciousness of effortless superiority” to which the government treats us so frequently—that, for the moment, was absent.

There was a considerable amount of hurrying to and fro. In plain words the Currie report had been a bit of a bombshell. The Prime Minister (Mr. St. Laurent) in his opening remarks took it very seriously. He did not pretend that he was not unhappy, and he spoke of it in terms which I think were calculated to make us all feel that it would be taken very seriously. Speaking of the report he said, as reported on page 640 of *Hansard*:

In cases where action has not already been taken along the lines of such recommendations, the government and the department are acting with dispatch, and will give most urgent consideration to these recommendations.

So far that was good. I think we were entitled to believe that this was going to be taken seriously, but that did not last very

long. It was not very long before the old self-satisfaction and what I can call only arrogance and disregard of the usually accepted rights of parliament were back and in full play. As a matter of fact, on the 15th itself that attitude was brought back from a rather unexpected quarter, by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Abbott), who is usually a man one can do business with and talk to in a reasonable manner. The Minister of Finance stepped out of his usual quality and put closure on us. I shall explain in a minute what I mean by closure. I think in fact that it was closure.

We had been debating the motion of the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles). The hon. member had spoken, and then the minister spoke in what I thought was a most reasonable manner. However, he gave no indication of what was to follow, and then at the end of his speech he said that he thought there was not any need of discussing this any further at the moment, and moved that the debate be adjourned. I managed, perhaps with a little forbearance on your part, Mr. Speaker, to ask him if he really did want to apply closure. But apparently he did; therefore that was—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Would the hon. member state how he connects what he is referring to now with the motion before the house?

Mr. Macdonnell (Greenwood): I am just giving this as an illustration of the return of government arrogance to which I was referring. I was just giving this as a means of laying a foundation.

An hon. Member: It may be in the sand.

Mr. Macdonnell (Greenwood): That remains to be seen. I was saying that when you suffer an indignity or deprivation of your rights it does not really help you very much if it is done in a nice way. I remember reading an essay on murder in which the writer stated that he once knew a bulldog that murdered a brother bulldog “with pleasing circumstances of good taste.” Nevertheless the bulldog was murdered. Our right to have that debate was murdered by the genial Minister of Finance.

That was on Monday night. As I say, after that there was a return of the old arrogance, and by Wednesday night it was back in full play. On Wednesday night we had a speech by the Acting Minister of National Defence (Mr. Campney) who took the line that this report did not cut much ice at all. He was in a pleasant mood and he philosophized. He said, among other things, “the fallibility of human nature is not confined to any particular class of people or any particular area.”