

(b) consider representations made by any government department, provincial government, municipality or public body with respect to surplus crown assets and make recommendations to the minister in connection therewith; and

(c) exercise and perform such duties and make such investigations and reports as the governor in council or the minister may from time to time direct.

Mr. GILLIS: I have no desire to hold up the passage of this bill; we are prepared to expedite it. But shall we have an opportunity some time before Christmas to discuss this whole matter of reconstruction? I understand that War Assets Corporation will come under the minister's department. It is disposing of millions of dollars worth of property accumulated by the Canadian people during the war. The minister will not know anything about those transactions until after they are made, or whether they are right or wrong. They are just reported.

I should like to have the minister's personal opinion on one point. A number of airports across Canada are being declared surplus war materials, and are being placed in the hands of War Assets Corporation. There is a serious housing shortage in Canada. Most of these airports were modern villages with paved streets, electric lighting, central heating and so on. With only a little renovation those buildings would accommodate thousands of people.

I am particularly interested, because one of those airports is in my own community, situated between Sydney and Glace Bay. War Assets Corporation is going to dispose of it. That airport is a modern village, equipped in every way to house thousands of people who are looking for accommodation. There is no housing available in that community, nor is there likely to be for some considerable time. Does the minister think it is feasible to utilize the services already provided in a village of that kind for the purpose of creating housing facilities, until such time as we can build houses?

Mr. HOWE: That is exactly what is being done in many communities. In order to make sure of prompt action in changing over existing accommodation of that type for purposes of housing, the department has appointed a special officer in the person of Brigadier General Colin Campbell, a former member of this House of Commons. All hon. members know that he is a vigorous and able engineer, with a fine war record. Brigadier General Campbell has been spending all his time during the last several months in working with municipalities to make available that type of living accommodation. The government can hardly be expected to enter into

this as a government enterprise. We are quite willing to turn it over to a town, a village or anyone who wishes to sponsor it for local needs. However, my hon. friend will appreciate the difficulty of the government's going into the housing business, in that type of accommodation.

Mr. GILLIS: The minister's department has been written to on several occasions with respect to that particular airport. The answer received would indicate that the department did not know anything about it. I bring this matter to the minister's attention, because there is a tendency for no one in Ottawa to know anything about the maritimes.

Mr. HOWE: My department knows a great deal about the maritimes, but knows nothing about any building until it is declared surplus. I think the difficulty has been that the hon. member was inquiring about those buildings at a time when they were in the possession of one of the armed services, and had not been declared surplus. One ruling we must stand by in the Department of Reconstruction is that we must deal with nothing of which we do not have possession. We get possession of buildings of that type only after they are declared surplus by the branch of the armed services owning them.

Mr. WRIGHT: Under the operations of the Veterans Land Act \$1,200 has been made available to returning men for the purchase of stock and equipment. A large amount of equipment formerly used by the armed forces—trucks, tools and the like—might very well be used by those who are administering the act in connection with the resettling of soldiers on the land. Is War Assets Corporation making any equipment available to those who are administering the Veterans Land Act; if so, under what terms?

The ACTING CHAIRMAN (Mr. Golding): I do not think the hon. member's question is relevant to the section. The section reads:

The rights, powers, duties, liabilities and functions of the minister shall extend and apply to such boards and other public bodies, officers, subjects, services and properties of the crown as may be designated or assigned to the minister by the governor in council, over which the minister shall have the control, regulation, management and supervision.

Mr. WRIGHT: The department is handling War Assets.

Mr. HOWE: I think, Mr. Chairman, the question is a fair one. The priority set up for war assets gives any federal government department first priority. If the Department of Veterans Affairs wishes to be a claimant for