

Supply—National Defence

Mr. Claxton: Do you suggest that would be a good place in the winter?

Mr. Drew: And then there is Borden in Ontario. If more land is needed there, there is plenty of land that could have been acquired to add to the area of that very large camp, where at other times in the past brigades which have won renown on the field of battle in two world wars have been trained.

Then, what of Barriefield, which is not one of the largest camps by any means, but a very excellent camp and one which would compare favourably in size with some of the camps in Great Britain where divisions upon divisions have been trained in the past, and have left those camps to go right into battle. Then what about Debert, Sussex, Aldershot, Shilo, Rivers, Vernon—to mention only a few of the huge camp areas totalling millions of acres that we have here in this country.

If we needed a camp area one hundred miles by thirty miles for five years, then someone should explain to us what the ghastly failure was to act long ago. Surely we do not need to wait much longer for an area to be set aside.

And then may I refer to one of the most remarkable statements made in reference to this question of a training area. The Minister of National Defence explained that the department had its eye on an area. What an eye! This eye has apparently been well shaded for five years. But it has its eye on a place in the east. However, it may be that it would not want to tell us until after June 25, because one might know where another area might be arousing interest, in some particular part of Canada. There are of course large camp areas which would be of interest to those who may be called upon to make decisions at that time.

The really interesting part of the explanation, however, was where the minister said it was hoped that brigades would not have to do winter training in Canada, because much of the time would be spent shovelling snow. Where is the eye of the Department of National Defence?

Mr. MacDougall: That is an all-seeing eye, George.

Mr. Drew: May I suggest it does appear the Department of National Defence does need one of those trained animals to lead it around, because if that department had its eye on winter problems of this kind it would have seen what is done at the airports. Personnel at airports do not shovel the snow; yet the runways are as smooth as a billiard table, and plenty smooth enough

[Mr. Drew.]

for any artillery, tank or infantry unit to train on them. Indeed, they would be training under conditions perhaps almost too favourable, when one keeps in mind the really severe training they would need to prepare them for the areas in which they might some time have to be used.

That explanation in itself indicates why a great deal more needs to be said in the house by way of explanation and by way of suggestion, so that the Department of National Defence may get out of the woods and actually wake up to the fact that the time when parade grounds were cleared by men with shovels passed many years ago. All the department would have to do would be to borrow some of the equipment being used in other places so satisfactorily, so as to be able to train just as well as training could be carried on anywhere in the world.

And, Mr. Chairman, may I suggest that, far from taking Canadian troops out of Canada in winter, we should be training them in Canada under winter conditions; because it happens that there are the topographical contours in this country, the climate and all those other conditions which might be encountered in the very part of the world in which we would have to engage the only possible enemy we will ever have to engage within the lifetime of most of us, on a global scale.

That, Mr. Chairman, is one reason why we should, in the hope of preventing war, prepare in a way that will train our men to meet war if necessary in the very kind of area in which they would be called upon to engage the troops of the one great potential enemy that would lead the rest of the world to war at this time.

At six o'clock the committee took recess.

AFTER RECESS

The committee resumed at eight o'clock.

Mr. Drew: Before the dinner recess, Mr. Chairman, I was discussing the question of the training areas available in relation to the statement made by the minister yesterday about the fact that the government had been looking for a camp area. There is one point about which I confess there is some confusion. Perhaps the minister may have used inadvertently figures that gave a conflicting impression, but I was under the impression he used the figure of 100 square miles today in relation to the camp whereas yesterday the figure given was 100 miles by 30 miles.