

*Reconstruction and Supply*

business, but I am quite in favour of the Department of Reconstruction giving direction as to what shall and must be done, and the sooner it gets busy the better.

Mr. HACKETT: Has the minister considered the possibility of offering for sale by public auction a given number of vehicles in different localities throughout the country? I speak in particular of trucks and tractors.

Mr. HOWE: It is done with vehicles of military type. They are auctioned. A number of auctions have been held, and an attempt is being made to distribute the auctions about the country so that each section of the country will have a chance to buy that type of vehicle. But if it is an ordinary commercial vehicle, we try to distribute it through the dealers, so that it can be put in shape and sold as a vehicle in satisfactory running order. If it is a military type we must tell the buyer that there is no chance of getting repair parts over a period; he must buy the vehicle "as is, where is." The vehicles are then removed to parks and auctioned only to bona fide farmers. The federation of agriculture, which works very closely with us, certifies that the buyers are bona fide farmers, and only bids from bona fide farmers are accepted in the distribution of purely military types of trucks.

I may also say that we have auctions of miscellaneous materials when they can be offered in small lots. Usually the material comes to us in big lots and is not suitable for direct sale to the people in the form in which we receive it, in which event it is distributed through wholesalers.

Mr. HACKETT: I am speaking in particular of trucks and tractors.

Mr. HOWE: I do not think we have ever had a tractor sale.

Mr. HACKETT: I am anxious to know if there have ever been auctions of these vehicles in Quebec and if it is contemplated holding any after giving notice and a description of the vehicles.

Mr. HOWE: I believe there have been auctions in Quebec but I cannot tell where. I shall be glad to get the information and tell my hon. friend where auctions have been held. A great many have been held across Canada, and I would be surprised if there had not been any in the province of Quebec.

Mr. SKEY: The minister has mentioned that the government must sell on a wholesale basis. I am speaking for a great many people in Canada who do not understand why it cannot sell on a retail basis or in

[Mr. MacNicol.]

small quantities to those who want to buy a considerable number of things that have been declared surplus from the armed forces. I would ask the minister to explain why the government must sell on a wholesale basis.

Mr. HOWE: The reason is that we have not the retail outlets. To sell \$10 million worth, a store like Eaton's has retail outlets all across the country, one in every town, and it handles a limited quantity of goods. War Assets Corporation has a tremendous variety of goods and instead of \$10 million, it is handling a billion or two, or will before it is through. It is physically impossible to hire sufficient staff and to build enough stores. We are using the existing stores and staff to sell to distributors on a wholesale basis and allow them to do the retailing. It would be difficult otherwise. However, we are getting off on another subject and I wonder if we could not carry this resolution so that we may have the bill distributed.

Mr. POULIOT: Would it not be possible to have some bulldozers. We need one here for the civil service and I need one for an institution in my county.

Some hon. MEMBERS. Carried.

Mr. POULIOT: No. We want bulldozers. We want something for the people. At the present time it is hard to get anything.

Mr. SKEY: The people of Canada have paid and paid generously in taxes throughout the war and, if the government has all this equipment declared surplus, the people cannot understand why they should have to buy it through retail sources. Why cannot they buy directly from the government, seeing that they have paid so well for these things? They cannot understand why the government do not simply declare them surplus, publish a list of what there is to be sold and allow the people of Canada to have the benefit of the things they have paid for already.

Mr. FLEMING: What is to become of the wartime bureau of technical personnel?

Mr. HOWE: It is not under my supervision, but I believe it is still operative. I am not sure. I believe it is under labour.

Mr. MacMASTER: The minister used the word "renegotiation" in connection with certain contracts. If he had said "liquidation" I would have understood him. He must have been thinking of some contracts. Are there any which he will renegotiate and not liquidate?

Mr. HOWE: Renegotiation is a step toward liquidation. Every contract is surveyed