

officer appointed by R.C.A.F. headquarters, responsible to the AOC Western Air Command and operating under directives issued by the deputy minister for air on behalf of the three services. On August 14, 1944, a board of officers of the three services determined that the programme had been completed in accordance with directives issued. Thereafter the R.C.A.F. under AOC Western Air Command assumed executive control of the system, being advised from time to time on changes in requirements by the joint communications subcommittee representing all three services on the west coast.

The joint communications committee of the three services in Ottawa has not yet issued any instructions to the subcommittee in British Columbia regarding the disposal of this system, because no disposal action can be taken until the services are assured that all post-war requirements and possible emergency requirements will be provided for. This problem is in the course of active study, and recommendations to the chiefs of staff will be submitted by the committee in due course.

This further question was asked by the hon. member for Nanaimo, in the same connection: Are there any plans for disposal of equipment or services into remote British Columbia areas when the telephone system is no longer required for defence services?

The answer is that, although telephone services into remote British Columbia areas may not be used by the defence services from day to day, they are still deemed to be an essential defence requirement. Therefore the air force and the army are carrying on discussions with a view to having the army operate these services. This would provide a training ground to maintain essential skills in the army, and guarantee instant availability of these facilities in future emergencies.

The next question: What information was sent from Ottawa to the telephone board in British Columbia regarding the disposal of telephone equipment of the Pacific network?

The answer is that there was none.

The next question: Was British Columbia Telephone given a contract to extend communications in British Columbia?

The answer is yes.

The next question: What funds were paid to British Columbia Electric for maintenance and reconstruction, between Vancouver and Hope, and between Victoria and Port Alberni?

The answer is: No funds were paid to the British Columbia Electric company. An allotment of \$332,650 was authorized by an acceptance of tender in favour of the British Columbia Telephone company, arranged by

[Mr. C. W. G. Gibson.]

the Department of Munitions and Supply. Of this, it is known that \$305,069.67 was spent. This covered the Vancouver-Hope, Victoria-Port Alberni construction only. An annual sum of \$54,860 is paid to the British Columbia Telephone company for the maintenance of these two sections.

At six o'clock the committee took recess.

After Recess

The committee resumed at eight o'clock.

Mr. GIBSON (Hamilton West): When the committee rose at six o'clock I was answering questions that had been asked at previous sittings.

Mr. PEARKES: Would the minister permit a supplementary question following the reply he gave to me just before six o'clock?

Mr. GIBSON (Hamilton West): Yes.

Mr. PEARKES: I was a little perturbed about some of the replies given by the minister. In answer to the first question it was stated that the radio station on the Queen Charlotte islands had been placed into "care and maintenance". The term "care and maintenance" usually means that the machinery is put into grease and a caretaker placed over the equipment, and that the equipment is not in operation. I realize perfectly well that the initial need for that wireless station vanished when V-J day came. On the other hand a great deal of money has been spent in erecting that communication between the Queen Charlotte islands and Prince Rupert. There are not a great many settlers, I will admit, in the northern part of the Queen Charlottes, but at the same time it is on the main route to some of the richest halibut fishing grounds in the Pacific and there are a number of settlers on the Queen Charlottes; there are also important logging operations going on there, where they have been taking out Sitka pine. I suggest that instead of leaving this valuable equipment in grease, with a caretaker to look after it, it would provide just the type of training which the personnel of the services require in maintaining wireless communication and would be of value to the settlers on the Queen Charlotte islands, because it is difficult for them to maintain any sort of communication across the rather rough waters between the Queen Charlottes and Prince Rupert. If what is being done in this case is an indication of what is to be done regarding the rest of that British Columbia communications system, then I am seriously perturbed because it might be an indication that the telephone