

Supply—National Defence

help to the government. In a defence committee, composed, presumably, to a great extent, of ex-servicemen, it would be impossible to have what one must consider to have been the rather disgraceful scene we saw in this chamber tonight.

Mr. Claxton: Mr. Chairman, we have had a long day. There has been a good deal of heat, and not much light.

An hon. Member: Who started it?

Mr. Claxton: I suggest that around about five or five-fifteen there was a general impression that we were ready to consider the estimates of the Department of National Defence in detail, beginning at page 269. Since that time events have taken a different turn, and no one could regret that more than myself.

We have a heavy responsibility today, trying to do everything we can to get this country as prepared as it can be, with the resources put at our disposal by parliament. On that account it becomes important that we should get on with the job and have the utmost possible guidance from parliament. But parliament itself has its own responsibility in ensuring that in the support of our great defence effort—and it is a great one—we should have the enlightened and informed support of the whole Canadian people, every section of it.

On that account it becomes of terrific importance that what we say here and what we do here should be said and done with a full sense of responsibility, so that we build up our strength and the strength of the nations allied with us, and so that we encourage our people to work together, and so that we create unity—not disunity.

Every now and again I recognize—and I have been ten years in the House of Commons—that we have an interlude where some exchange takes place. But it is terribly important that we get back to the main job, which is that of building up the defences of this country so that we, with others, can stand against the forces of the aggressor nations.

On that account I must say before the debate concludes tonight, for the purpose of the record—because it is unnecessary to do it for any other reason—that Colonel Ralston needs no praise from me, or from any other man in the House of Commons. Nothing we can say or do here will add to or detract from the record he has made for himself. That lives in the records of Canada.

But I do say: Let us get on with the job—just as he would have wanted us to do. Let us start at page 269, as I thought we would this afternoon, and give the information that can be given—and which we are being prevented from giving, by a discussion such as that which occurred.

Mr. Drew: Don't talk nonsense.

Mr. Claxton: If I am concluding this discussion—

Mr. Drew: You are not.

Mr. Claxton: Then I might have something to say later.

Mr. Fulton: The man who started it was your own member from Temiscouata.

Mr. Claxton: I might have something to say later, but I had hoped we would get on with the business, which is to discuss the estimates of the Department of National Defence, which are before the committee in the form recommended by the Auditor General. This is the form similar to that adopted by other government departments, and it is changed substantially from last year. We are here to do that, and we would like to get on with the job.

Mr. Drew: Mr. Chairman—

Some hon. Members: Eleven o'clock.

Mr. Drew: Perhaps it would help if the minister would answer the question which has been asked, and that is as to whether he is prepared to appoint a committee. Then there would be a chance to get on with the business with some assurance that we would get the facts.

Mr. Claxton: The appointing of a committee is not for me; it is for the government. The answer has been given half a dozen times.

Item stands.

Progress reported.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mr. Fournier (Hull): Tomorrow we will continue this debate. When it is concluded we will take up the veterans resolutions—and there are three of them on the order paper—Nos. 16, 5 and 17. I hope we do reach them.

At eleven o'clock the house adjourned, without question put, pursuant to standing order.