

Reconstruction and Supply

Mr. HOWE: This reconstruction is a co-ordinating department which does not take over the work of any other departments of government but tries to assist in timing the work so that it will fit into the pattern of full employment.

Mr. PROBE: I am still not satisfied as to the purpose of section 9 paragraph (e). I should like an explanation as to the need of that paragraph.

Mr. HOWE: The old act gave powers to purchase those materials. Naturally they are not purchased by the department. We are the servant of the armed services, and under the new bill we shall still be. The army requisitions anything that it requires, sends the requisition to us and we purchase the materials. We continue to do this. I might remind my hon. friend that there are 500,000 people in the armed services to-day. They must eat and they must have boots and clothing. It is the function of the Department of Munitions and Supply now, and it will be the function of the Department of Reconstruction and Supply to purchase these supplies when they are requisitioned by the armed services.

Mr. PROBE: I am in considerable confusion here, because I was just reading a little summary of supplies that were being sold by War Assets Corporation. For example, I note that 10,660 odd pairs of C.W.A.C.'s shoes—very good shoes too by the way—were being sold by War Assets Corporation to a distributor in Montreal at the rate of approximately \$1.70 a pair. The minister assured us that these shoes had a certain ceiling on resale, and I am going to look for those shoes on the retail market with great interest, expecting that they will be sold for about \$2.25 a pair. Are we on the one hand to dispose of these shoes and the equipment of our armed services with the aid of War Assets because they seem to be surplus, and then next week are we to buy more C.W.A.C. shoes because some department of ordnance made an error in guessing the amount of material that the same service personnel would be using? Could the minister assure us that at least an ample stock of all these clothing supplies, motors and the more expensive equipment other than edibles is still in store for the use of the armed services until they are demobilized?

Mr. HOWE: I might point out that anything of war assets has to come from the army, navy or air force. If we are asked to buy any article that has been declared surplus we always check with War Assets to see what became of the surplus declared. It

[Mr. Jackman.]

might be an odd size. There is usually a very good reason for declaring a surplus; but what is declared surplus is not for us to determine; it is a matter for the armed services itself. The purpose of this amendment is to change the last line of the old act. It says:

Storage or supply of any munitions of war or necessary for the needs of the government or of the community in war.

We are not at war, and therefore we are deleting this phrase, but at the same time we will carry on the same functions for the armed services in peace that we did in war. It is just a change in phraseology.

Mr. PROBE: The minister has added a paragraph and the word "reconstruction". I hope we are not selling all these commodities on the one hand and on the other require them later on.

Mr. HANSELL: Before we leave section 9, may I say that I was particularly interested in the minister's reply to the remarks of the hon. member for Davenport. When the hon. member asked what was really meant by some of those projects such as "roads", the minister to my mind made a sad confession. He said that the time might come when industry was unable to provide employment, jobs. It does not make any difference to me whether he referred to private industry or government-owned industry. He feared the time would come when industry would not be able to provide jobs. I do not believe that the ultimate objective and function of industry is to provide jobs, but rather to supply the best quality of production at the cheapest price to the consumer as rapidly as possible, and with as little human effort, sweat and toil as possible. If we follow the minister's argument through and the time eventually comes when we have what was once upon a time known to be overproduction, then the minister says that this measure will give us the opportunity of stepping in and providing work. What for? For work's sake? If that is the case, then what we are doing to-night is passing a bill enabling the government to set up in future years huge labour camps. The only difference between this and what happened in pre-war years will be that the work camps will be a sort of glorified thing.

I believe that I have thrown some light on this, and perhaps in years to come I might be able to refer to my two-minute speech to-night and remind the minister that a good title for this bill should have been "The Department of Glorified Relief".