

distinct lack of higher level supervision". That quotation suggests reasons why hon. members of this House of Commons should seek in every way in their power to bring about reforms which will examine with the most complete and searching inquiry every detail of the supervision, protection and accounting in relation to these vitally important public stores.

These are not just ordinary stores. These are not simply valuable pieces of public property. This is property which is part and parcel of the costly and vitally important preparation for the defence of Canada in case our security should be threatened. Therefore any method that is followed should be one which will assure that supervision either at the lower or at the higher level, as mentioned by Colonel Ross, will be examined dispassionately, judicially and completely.

Since this matter was first under discussion in the house during the present session, not only have there come to the attention of hon. members and the people of Canada incidents in particular camps, but there have become available reports of theft, looting and fires, some of them incendiary, which have resulted in the last two years in a loss estimated by the Department of National Defence at a figure of more than \$7 million. There may be some question however as to whether those figures in themselves even approach the actual value of the losses to the people of Canada. It will be recalled that the Minister of National Defence (Mr. Claxton) spoke of losses at Farnham as being in the neighbourhood of \$3,500. If the accounting methods of the Department of National Defence report a loss of only \$3,500 at Farnham, then the statement given of the total loss as in the statement prepared by the department, showing a loss of more than \$7 million, should contain figures very much higher than it actually does.

What prompts me to raise this question with some sense of urgency this afternoon is that within the last few days it has been disclosed that the individual who was asked to undertake some form of inquiry into what had occurred at Petawawa is not actually in Canada at this time. One of the reasons why this in itself should call for immediate attention is that Colonel Currie's reputation, both as an accountant and as a man of great personal integrity and ability, did convey to the public a measure of confidence when the statement was made that he had undertaken to do this work.

No one would question either the accounting ability or the personal integrity or the high standing, in the esteem of Canadians who know him, of Colonel Currie, whose

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name was placed before us as the man who had been asked to carry out certain inquiries about which we are not too clearly informed.

It has been pointed out already in this house that, no matter what Colonel Currie's personal standing may be, that in itself is no substitute for an inquiry conducted under appropriate terms of reference which would give the inquiry the opportunity to go into every detail of the situation which has been described in such forceful terms by Colonel Ross in the letter quoted by the *Calgary Herald*. Since it has been stated that Colonel Currie has left Canada and is in England, and that this was with the knowledge and permission of the Minister of National Defence, and that such inquiries as are being conducted are being carried forward by his staff, then it does seem appropriate that we should examine with the utmost care just what measure of authority the staff in Colonel Currie's office really have to conduct an inquiry into laxity in administration which, according to the letter of Colonel Ross, if that is correctly reported shows a distinct lack of high-level supervision over government stores.

When the Minister of National Defence was asked under what authority Colonel Currie has been appointed to conduct an inquiry he replied that it was under section 4 of chapter 43 of the statutes of Canada, 1950, volume I, at page 473. This is known as the National Defence Act. Section 4, which is the section the minister put forward as the statutory provision under which Colonel Currie acquired his authority through a letter from the minister, reads as follows:

The minister shall have the control and management of the Canadian forces, the Defence Research Board and of all matters relating to national defence including preparation of civil defence against enemy action, and shall be responsible for the construction and maintenance of all defence establishments and works for the defence of Canada.

That is the whole section and it contains no reference, by implication or otherwise, to an inquiry of any kind. This is the section which says that the minister shall have the control and management of the Canadian forces. Under the authority of that section the minister has written to Mr. Currie to ask him to do certain things at the Petawawa camp. It was said before, and it should be repeated, that under the letter written to Mr. Currie by the minister, Mr. Currie has no authority whatever to call for the production of documents, to compel the attendance of any witness or generally to do any of the things that are essential to the conduct of an inquiry such as I am sure most Canadians thought had been initiated when they read the announcement by the minister. The section merely says that there will be a minister.

Mr. Speaker, without getting away from the real consideration which should be in the mind of every member here, may I suggest that this does reflect the superman complex