

tion especially fits her to make a tremendous material and technical contribution to the joint effort.

This joint effort raises another problem, namely, the distribution of available materials as between us and our Allies. Now that purchases on a large scale by the British Government, and probably by other governments associated with Great Britain in the struggle, are likely to be made in Canada, it is advisable that there should be an authority with power to act not only for Canada, but also as an agent for other governments if they should desire it, and in any case to co-ordinate the purchases of the Canadian Government with those made for other governments.

While the legislation which the Government have introduced provides for the creation of a Department of Munitions and Supply, it is not the intention of the Government to set up a full-fledged department immediately. We are desirous of avoiding unnecessary duplication of departments, and of having the preliminary benefit gained from actual experience of a fully authorized and competent board, working to achieve the best methods of handling the complex and far-reaching problems involved in respect of war supplies.

We feel that the reasons for having made the Defence Purchasing Board responsible to the Minister of Finance apply even more strongly in the case of a War Supply Board during the period in which an organization is being built up. The problem of finance is a vital element in the general problem of supply, and the Minister of Finance must necessarily be in close contact with whatever organization is entrusted with the responsibility of securing munitions and supply.

No one can foretell what demands this war will make upon the country. We must be prepared to meet unexpected demands quickly. This legislation gives us the power to act quickly and effectively if the need should develop for another department with a full-time Minister in charge. It is considered, however, that in the early stages surveys, investigations, organization and administrative methods can be initiated and worked out by a board in close touch with business and practical conditions, these activities to be later continued under the board or merged in a ministry as the occasion and circumstances demand, and as the experience gained may warrant.

I have given this explanation so that honourable members may understand the purport of the Bill.

Hon. Mr. DANDURAND.

Hon. F. B. BLACK: Honourable members, I think we shall in the long run lose very little time if we postpone the second reading of this Bill until to-morrow. We could more easily follow the explanation given by the honourable leader if we had had an opportunity beforehand to peruse this lengthy measure. I should like at least to look it over.

Hon. Mr. DANDURAND: I have no objection to meeting the request of my honourable friend, though I may say we are not working under any more difficult conditions than the House of Commons, which received this Bill only at ten o'clock this evening. That does not mean we should not take more time to examine it than that House did. It is intended that the Senate shall convene again at ten-thirty in the morning. I presume my honourable friend will rise early and digest the Bill before coming to the House.

Right Hon. Mr. MEIGHEN: The Bill certainly should stand until to-morrow. I am astonished that it passed through the other House in a matter of minutes. It is a very important measure and really ought to go to committee. As I understand it, the Bill provides for the calling into being of a Department of Munitions which will supplant the present Defence Purchasing Board. The poor members of that board have hardly got their seats warm yet.

Hon. Mr. DANDURAND: The war came upon them too fast.

Right Hon. Mr. MEIGHEN: The board came into existence as a result of a recommendation which arose out of embarrassments surrounding a certain war contract. They have just got the glory of that around their heads.

Hon. Mr. DANDURAND: Perhaps I was a little hasty in saying the board would disappear.

Right Hon. Mr. MEIGHEN: Surely we are not going to have for this purpose both a department and a Defence Purchasing Board.

Hon. Mr. LITTLE: They moved into a new building just this week.

Right Hon. Mr. MEIGHEN: And now they are going out the window.

I have looked through the Bill, and can see at least one merit which evidences a certain degree of education on the part of the Government. There is no five-per-cent clause in this Bill.

On motion of Hon. Mr. Black, the debate was adjourned.