

Supply—National Defence

northwest highway, or the Alaska highway as it is usually known, is completely under control of the army and whether the army is wholly responsible for its maintenance?

Mr. Claxton: It is entirely under the army.

Mr. Harkness: The item for aerial photographic survey is reduced from \$709,033 to \$533,380, which would indicate that the number of squadrons used in this work is being reduced. I have always felt that these aerial photographic squadrons did an extremely useful work, not only during the war but since the war as well. They have mapped a large part of the country and I wonder why their strength is being reduced. I think this section of the air force has a greater practical use in time of peace than almost any other component and it would be a pity if it were cut down.

Mr. Claxton: I would quite agree with my hon. friend, if there were the same need as existed before. We have been able to accelerate the program over the last three years so that in each year we have been able to photograph almost a million square miles. The number of man-years which it is estimated will be needed in 1950-51 is 206 as against 305 provided for 1949-50.

Mr. Harkness: What does "man-year" mean?

Mr. Claxton: The average number of men that would be employed for a full year if they were employed, over that period. The work is gradually being completed and I hope we will see another sharp reduction next year because the need will no longer exist to the same extent. In other words, we have largely covered Canada by aerial photography and have turned over the photographs to the Department of Mines and Technical Surveys for mapping. As we reduce the amount of aerial photography required we plan to convert some of the squadrons engaged in that work to other operational work such as aerial reconnaissance and bombing.

Mr. Drew: Mr. Chairman, before this item passes I want to point out that the questions that have been asked have been in a general way based upon the necessity of seeking to obtain information which is not present in the details. I can only express my regret, with the changes that have taken place in our relationships with other Atlantic powers and with the events that have occurred so recently, that there should be no indication that it is the intention of the Department of National Defence to adjust its affairs in accordance with these extremely important changes.

[Mr. Harkness.]

At the moment there is nothing that anyone can do to obtain information which is essential except to ask the type of general questions which have been pressed for. In spite of the fact that we have gained nothing in that respect during the present session I can only express the hope that when the house meets next year we will then have the estimates presented in a way which can be understood and that those estimates, to whatever extent is practical, will follow the same pattern as the estimates of other departments so that they can be examined in the same measure of detail. When I say that it is hoped they can be examined next year, that is always subject to the hope that this condition which has become so serious may not demand a much earlier consideration by the house of the problem we are discussing.

Item agreed to.

Defence forces—

203. Defence research and development, subject to allocation by the treasury board, and to authorize total commitments for this purpose of \$27,983,161 including authority notwithstanding section 29 of the Consolidated Revenue and Audit Act, to make commitments for the current year of \$24,925,361 and commitments for future years of \$3,057,800 against which commitments it is estimated that actual expenditure in 1950-51 will not exceed \$23,925,361.

Mr. Herridge: I do not know whether the minister has seen the article, but in the last issue of the *Montreal Standard* there is a news report under a byline of Ottawa. There is an article by Gerald Waring, entitled "White Elephant in the Arctic." In brief this article points out that in 1945 certain arrangements were made between Canada and the United States for the installation of long-range aerial navigation stations in the north and that something over \$50 million has been spent on those stations. It is stated that these stations have been found to be entirely unsuccessful and that the whole thing has had to be abandoned. Canada is said to have paid a fairly large proportion of the \$50 million which was expended.

Secondly, the article states that a great portion of the supplies were flown in by air at great expense during the first year, but then during the second year they were taken in by water transport at much less expense. The suggestion is that all the equipment should have been taken in by water. The article is said to be based on certain defence forces information.

I should like the minister to inform the committee if there is any basis for what is stated in this article and why, if great saving could have been made by the use of water transport, this equipment was flown in by air. Surely if this article is correct I think