

The Budget—Mr. Gariepy

for a chance to cross. Is that right? Is that proper? I say no. For various reasons a bridge must be built across the St. Lawrence between Three Rivers and thereabouts and the south shore.

Mr. MacNICOL: That is right.

Mr. GARIEPY: That bridge will give connections and open up trade. It will give access and satisfaction to a great number of people. There are miles and miles of territory on the south shore which can be used by new industries. Industries can no longer go into the large centres because of the taxation and obligations of one kind and another, but in the territory I speak of there is room for industrial expansion, and at this time when money is plentiful and our business men are looking for new openings it is the duty of this government to invite the cooperation of the provincial government and of the municipalities and of the two railways, the Canadian Pacific and the Canadian National, both of which are interested in crossing the St. Lawrence near Three Rivers, so that all these bodies can get together to promote the building of such a bridge. It would provide work; it would give encouragement to the people, and it would meet a necessity. Now, when things are at a low ebb, and we are looking for something new and bigger, this is a project that should receive the attention of the government and of the best brains of the country to the end that a bridge may be built in the near future.

Hon. DOUGLAS ABBOTT (Minister of National Defence): Mr. Speaker, I think it is some two years since I took part in a budget debate, but I always enjoyed it. The nature of some of the opposition criticism during the present debate has made me feel that I want to get into the ring again.

The main line of criticism taken by hon. gentlemen opposite has been twofold: first, that the reduction in taxation provided for in this budget is inadequate and niggardly, to use the term used by some of the press supporting hon. gentlemen opposite; and in order to support their thesis, seeing that the budget shows a deficit of some \$300,000,000, they contend that government expenditure is extravagant and reckless and must be reduced. If they did not contend that, of course, they would be advocating either more borrowing or inflation, and while some would like to borrow more, on the other hand they do not care to advocate that openly.

Before I deal, as I propose to do, with the main heads of expenditure, I want to point out to the house what it already knows, that the

[Mr. Gariepy.]

estimates have been before the house for some two months now. The items of some of the more important departments, including agriculture and national health and welfare, and a substantial part of the estimates of the Department of Justice, have been considered in detail, and so far as I can recall the only suggestion made by hon. gentlemen opposite for a specific reduction in expenditure was in one of the items of the Department of National Health and Welfare, where they criticized a proposed expenditure of \$300,000 to see that an expenditure of some \$273,000,000 was properly made. On the other hand there have been numerous suggestions that expenditures should be increased. I asked someone in my office to prepare a list of the suggestions that have been made by hon. members opposite for increased expenditures. The job is a big one and it is not completed yet, but I can assure the house that it will be an impressive list when it is finished.

The total estimated expenditure this year is \$2,769,350,000. Of that amount \$1,515,846,000 is for demobilization and reconversion. I am prepared to concede that there may be items in those estimates which can and should be reduced. In my own department, for instance, we have estimated that some \$488,000,000 will be required for the three defence services this year, but because demobilization is proceeding more rapidly than we had anticipated and because of our continued efforts to effect economies I believe that this amount will be reduced. On the other hand I believe that the expenditures for veterans' benefits will be somewhat above those that have been estimated.

Of this total of roughly, \$1,500,000,000, close to \$700,000,000 will be for veterans' benefits in one form or another. Another \$400,000,000 odd will be for the three defence services. The house will appreciate that the balance represents either necessary demobilization or reconversion expenditures, which, while I hope they may be reduced, cannot, I believe, be substantially reduced.

Coming to what might be described as the ordinary expenditures of government, they total \$1,253,504,000. In that \$1,253,504,000 there are a considerable number of items of expenditure which can be classified as absolutely uncontrollable and a number of others which are relatively uncontrollable. I am going to break that figure down.

Public debt charges amount to \$481,207,000. Pensions, superannuation, et cetera, amount to \$76,985,000. There is no possibility of reduction in either of those two items.