

*Supply—National Defence*

by implication that Ralston's policy cost us lives, whereas as a matter of fact, Mr. Chairman, if there was any Canadian during the last war whose policy saved lives it was Colonel Ralston, and his insistence on getting the reinforcements that were needed instead of sending tired men back into the line over and over again, units with half or two-thirds strength, units improperly rested, units filled, instead of with combat infantry, with cooks, clerks and people not properly trained in their weapons—if there was any individual whose policy saved Canadian lives in the last war, it was Colonel Ralston. And in order to keep the record straight I want to read into this night's *Hansard* Colonel Ralston's statement on November 29, 1944, after he had resigned from the cabinet, as the reasons why he resigned, and as recorded at pages 6668 and 6669 of *Hansard*. I want to quote three paragraphs of Colonel Ralston's statement:

It is most desirable that losses be replaced quickly. If they are not replaced, there are less men for the job, with the consequent additional strain. If they are not replaced, morale is bound to be lowered. It is all very well to say that units may be filled up by the end of the month or the end of the week, but what about the days and nights in between? And so pools of reinforcements in the battle areas ensure that reinforcements are available to the units when needed. It ensures that they are not dependent for their reinforcements on the arrival of a convoy, or the uncertainties of how many the convoy will bring due to shortages in the United Kingdom or in another battle area.

It means everything to men in the line to see new men come in beside them to fill the gaps while the battle is on. The men can understand shortages if they know that there are no reinforcements available, but it is different—and I found this particularly in Italy—when the men know that we have these trained infantry men of the N.R.M.A. in Canada who can be made available.

In Italy I visited the reinforcement unit and most of the infantry battalions. I talked with the men themselves, and time and again I got that same story—about having to go back in the line repeatedly, or not having leave, or being short-handed, when trained N.R.M.A. men could be made available to give them relief.

Then on page 6669:

In the last war—

That is the first world war. I continue:

In the last war battles were short, the objectives were limited and long static periods intervened. In this war a battle is a series of continuous offensive operations, or, to put it the other way, a battle is a continuous series of offensive operations. That makes it most necessary that units while they are in the battle, be reinforced on the move to keep up the momentum of the operation and each unit's fighting efficiency. That does not mean that units are kept in the line a longer time than they should be. They are withdrawn and replaced constantly by other units. It only means that, while they are there, the activity is more intense, and to support men and the success of the operation the ranks should be filled up promptly.

[Mr. Adamson.]

That was the statement the minister made on that memorable night of November 29, 1944. That was the statement of a man who had seen what lack of reinforcements did to an army. He had spent not only days but weeks in Italy on the fighting fronts, and he knew from first-hand experience how the shortage of reinforcements increased the incidence of casualties. The fact that he had to resign from this government for his courage is to me one of the black marks on Canadian political history.

I want to come now, Mr. Chairman, to the question of a defence committee. I have advocated this for some years, and a minister just the other day, in fact the day before yesterday, emphasized the importance of this committee. General Marshall, in testifying before the Senate committee, said that if certain policies were carried out, Russia was likely to declare war on us and, according to the report I saw in the newspaper—I have not got it with me—rain atomic bombs on the defenceless cities of the United States and other parts of North America.

Well, if that statement is true, if our potential enemy has this weapon in such numbers as intimated in General Marshall's testimony, then the House of Commons and the country should be apprized of the fact. It is not a matter of secrecy. The Secretary of Defense in the United States made that statement; and if he made it, surely we should be informed of the true situation. If the situation is as represented by the press reports, then we should know exactly what the situation is. If it is not as General Marshall states, then he has made a political statement to the defence committee.

That is something that affects us very closely in Canada. If our potential enemy is making atomic bombs in large quantities, then it is surely debatable as to why we should not be making this weapon ourselves. Those are questions a defence committee could go into. No one on the committee would ask for secret information. The situation as intimated by the Secretary of Defense in the United States in open testimony, or at least in testimony that was not censored, certainly indicated that we in North America are in a most perilous state. The House of Commons, the representatives of the people of Canada, should be informed equally as well as the representatives of the people of the United States; and I feel that a defence committee is a proper instrument for that information. I say this sincerely, that a defence committee would be of inestimable