

*National Defence*

unit in which we had the major industries for producing textiles, for example, and the various manufactured goods which we ordinarily need, we should not be under the necessity of transporting manufactured products over that vast rocky wilderness, and the nation would be ever so much stronger by reason of that fact. The same thing should be true of the west coast. I think it is a dead loss for the people of British Columbia to have to haul so large a percentage of the manufactured products they need across not only one barren wilderness in Ontario but another barren wilderness in the Rocky mountains and pay the shot both ways. That certainly does not look like a good national economy.

While we are considering the matter of defence we could have in mind some such desirable objective as that of creating several rather more or less self-sufficient economic units in our country. I think it would be all to the good from the standpoint of defence as well as economics. Therefore I should like to see the Minister of National Defence (Mr. Claxton) persuade his colleagues, and if he cannot persuade them let us know about it and we will help him—I should like to see the Minister of National Defence persuade these men that they ought to take definite steps to industrialize the region west of the Rocky mountains, the prairie region, and the maritimes so that those areas will have great industries and will have a strong pulsating economy which will enable them to live independently of the rest of Canada. That does not mean that Canada is not going to work together as a unit. It means there will be less need in times to come for assistance such as is now given to the rather undeveloped areas of Canada, shall I say. I do not know whether we have enough machine tools; I am not in a position to be able to find out. I do not know whether we have all the factories necessary to manufacture the ships and guns and tanks and planes and other necessities of war soon enough to be able to successfully conduct a major operation. I trust that things of that kind are being looked after.

There is another matter I think has been impressed upon all hon. members of the house and perhaps many people throughout the country by what has occurred in Canada during the last few years in the way of emergencies. Out in the Fraser valley two years ago we had a disastrous flood. After the horse was out of the stable we did our best to put it back and repair the stable, but it would have been a great deal better if we had repaired the stable and kept the horse in before the thing happened, in other words if we had been ready for it. Now we have

the Winnipeg disaster. I am told that it was made known to a committee of the house today that early in the spring a certain United States engineer went to the town of Emerson, after having taken cognizance of the heavy snow lying in the upper reaches of the Red river and after having computed the probable rate at which that snow would melt; that he went into a drug store in that town and put a little mark on the door post, saying, "That is the point at which the waters will stand when they are going out of the Red river." If that fact had been conveyed with sufficient emphasis to all the people down the Red river who would be affected, think of the millions of bags of sand that could have been accumulated during the long weeks before the sudden onset of this flood, and look at the tremendous losses that could have been avoided, just being prepared.

Since it is quite obvious that the Minister of National Defence (Mr. Claxton) is going to be called upon to contribute liberally in dealing with these disasters, as they occur one after another, I do not see any particular reason why he should not say, "Very well. Since we are going to be called in on these big emergencies, we had better be trained so we can go at them effectively. We had better have plans all made so that we shall be ready to fight the battle with some hope of success and some measure of efficiency before it is lost."

That brings to attention several thoughts. Perhaps the minister has already taken this step, but in case he has not I trust that the defence research board will be advised that it would be well for them to be examining into these matters and giving advice on how the boys should be trained and equipped, and drilled to deal with various kinds of emergencies such as floods, fires, forest fires and the like, which are always liable to occur suddenly in Canada, judging by our experiences of the last few years. That is something which the minister might keep in mind in the days to come.

I have just been rambling around in my remarks this evening, but I think I have suggested a good many things that the defence research board, which is dealt with in part III of the act, can be instructed to give very careful attention to, and I would be glad if the minister, the next time he has occasion to speak, could tell us that he has envisaged all these possibilities and has made all these preparations so that we shall not be caught off guard in case there should be a major disaster.

The minister may say we have not the money to do these things. Well, my general reaction, which I am not going to discuss at