

Committee on Defence Expenditure

entitled "The British Constitution" by Professor Jennings, one of the best-known authorities on that subject, who says at page 143 and following:

The responsibility of ministers to the House of Commons is no fiction, though it is not so simple as it sounds. All decisions of any consequences are taken by ministers, either as such or as members of the cabinet. All decisions taken by civil servants are taken on behalf of ministers and under their control.

I pause, Mr. Speaker, to interject that in this connection the military heads are in exactly the same position as the civil service in connection with defence matters and the administrative set-up of the Department of National Defence. Professor Jennings goes on:

If the minister chooses, as in the large departments inevitably he must, to leave decisions to civil servants, then he must take the political consequences of any defect of administration, any injustice to an individual, or any policy disapproved by the House of Commons. He cannot defend himself by blaming the civil servant. If the civil servant could be criticized, he would require the means of defending himself. If the minister could blame the civil servant, then the civil servant would require the power to blame the minister. In other words, the civil servant would become a politician. The fundamental principle of our system of administration is, however, that the civil service should be impartial and, as far as may be possible, anonymous.

Mr. Cruickshank: Will the hon. member permit a question?

Mr. Fulton: I regret sincerely that I cannot. My time has practically expired, and I would prefer, if I may, to continue without interruption.

One has only to remember that in this connection the military, in their relation to the minister in matters of departmental administration, and in matters of that kind, are in exactly the same position as the civil servants to realize the important implications of that principle:

The fundamental principle of our system of administration is, however, that the civil service should be impartial and, as far as may be possible, anonymous.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, we are left with the question: What is the Prime Minister going to do by way of accepting the responsibility which rests upon him for this extraordinary, this serious situation, which the Currie report has disclosed? What is he going to do to discharge the responsibility not only to the House of Commons but to the people of Canada, the taxpayers of Canada, whose money is thus being wasted and who are without any assurance that steps are being taken, and will be taken, not only in the works services department reported on by Mr. Currie but in the other branches of the Department of National Defence, to make sure that these situations

[Mr. Fulton.]

will also be cleared up? I maintain, Mr. Speaker, that the Prime Minister owes an apology to the taxpayers of Canada, firstly, for allowing this situation to develop, allowing money to be wasted, and secondly, for taking so little interest in the matter as he has shown so far in the course of this debate, and for taking no effective steps to deal with that situation.

What do we see? There is no sign that action is to be taken. The Minister of National Defence says that there is not even a breakdown. He criticized Mr. Currie. In a most extraordinary passage in his remarks on page 939 of *Hansard* he says:

The breakdown to which Mr. Currie referred was, after all, a breakdown—if it was a breakdown—in keeping accounts, and not a breakdown in providing services and doing the essential work for which the army works services exists.

What an extraordinary defence to the Currie report to say that this breakdown, if it is a breakdown, is not a breakdown, although it is a breakdown of accounting. What does the minister think that accounting methods are set up for but to protect the financial interests of the people of Canada and to control the administration and the location of the property which their tax moneys have purchased? Then the minister says that the irregularities do not matter anyway. He takes defence in the fact that an army is not a Sunday school and soldiers are not saints. He says at page 942 of *Hansard*:

There are in this house a great many veterans of the two wars. They know, and the veterans all over this country—and there are a lot of them—know, and I think the public has a pretty good idea too that an army is not a Sunday school and soldiers are not saints.

The minister should remind himself that veterans—and there are a good many of them in this house and throughout the country—are also taxpayers. Veteran taxpayers will not be very much impressed by the minister's arguments that these irregularities do not matter, that the fact that their money is being squandered, wasted to the extent permitted by a fundamentally loose system of administration at the top levels of the department, does not matter because armies are not Sunday schools and soldiers are not saints. The veterans and taxpayers of this country will not be satisfied with inaction; they will want a continuation of the investigation which Mr. Currie has shown himself to be probably the most highly qualified man in Canada to undertake, and they will want action to rectify maladministration where it may be disclosed to exist. They will not be satisfied with what the government offers them, a reference to a