

*War Appropriation Bill*

I believe, has happened to all of us. The Minister of National Defence will agree with the principle I am trying to enunciate. I think, if I may be allowed to say so, that has been one of the minister's weaknesses.

Mr. RALSTON: I do not plead guilty to being "waterlogged."

Mr. HANSON (York-Sunbury): Perhaps that was not a happy term. I do not mean to suggest that it is literally true. But that is one of the defects of people of the minister's quality. In endeavouring to do a job, he has endeavoured to do too much. I beseech him to take this suggestion from me in the spirit in which it is offered, that he try to impose on somebody else the burden of aircraft production and not keep every rein in his own hands. That advice is offered in the best of good faith.

Mr. HOWE: I offer the problem of aircraft production to anyone who cares to take it.

Mr. HANSON (York-Sunbury): Do not offer it to me.

I believe, having said what I have, that I have given some evidence of good faith and shown no desire to clog the government's war effort. Believe me, I do not want to do anything of that sort, and I do not want anybody to say that I am making criticism just for the sake of criticism or to impede the minister or anybody else at this period. We think certain things are wrong. We think it is our duty to point them out. When we have done that, I believe we have concluded our duty. I may say that for one thing which we think is wrong and which I have pointed out on the floor of this house, I have pointed out to ministers, to deputy ministers and to their executives a dozen other things which will never see the light of day; and they thanked me for doing it. I regard it as my duty to do it in that way and I shall continue along that line. If I were seeking to throw mud and scandal in the faces of ministers and the administration, I would not adopt the course I have adopted. But that is the course I intend to pursue. If anybody is sending me material just for the purpose of discrediting the war effort and not for a constructive purpose, I give him public notice here and now that I do not intend to use it in that way, and that I shall not do so until the whole thing bogs down, and then we shall have a real showdown.

My mail is flooded daily with suggestions as to this, that and the other thing. Ninety per cent of it is chaff and it goes in the wastepaper basket. But ten per cent may be wheat;

[Mr. R. B. Hanson.]

I try to examine it, and when a question arises, and the opportunity offers and I have time, I send for some man whose department is concerned; I tell him about it; I ask him to investigate it, and I am prepared to take his decision. I conclude that my duty is then done.

That is my practice with regard to individual matters which have arisen. Possibly I am doing a better service to the war effort of the country by adopting that line of policy than some people would give me credit for.

Coming back to this question of the minister's, shall I say optimism, I wonder whether he will take exception to this observation, that the statement made by him in this house on July 30 created the impression that this particular class of planes would be in production before the end of 1940? That was the inference which I myself took from his language. I am bound to tell the minister that I was greatly buoyed up by it, because I had known of the situation in Amherst. So far as I am concerned, this Anson business goes back to the unemployment situation in Amherst. Later on, I was there and saw the situation. Can the minister honestly complain if we rather hesitate to accept his assertions after comparing those statements and exposing their inconsistency.

I wish to refer to one other passage in his speech of July 30 last, and then I shall not quote anything more. On that same page of *Hansard*, page 2116, the minister said this—and I want the committee to mark these words:

Early in 1941, we expect to have a production of 360 planes per month, or about 12 planes per day. Sundays and holidays included, on the basis of production now arranged for. A further production programme is now being discussed between Great Britain and ourselves which promises to materially increase this output.

I am bound to say that this was a heartening statement and I applauded it at the time. If Canada, early in 1941, could have this production of planes, 12 a day, it would be splendid. I have no doubt the minister made the statement in good faith, but unfortunately production has not measured up to that estimate. I do not blame the minister for that. I know that there have been numberless changes in the designs of these planes. None of them, I would say, are standardized so that they can be turned out by mass production like motor cars. But the Canadian people are apt to be lulled to sleep by a promise like that, and when they find that the fulfilment is not up to the promise and the expectation, then of course there is criticism. The minister must not be unmindful of that and he must not be resentful. All the criticism I make at the moment is that probably the minister was too optimistic at that stage, but