

Supply—National Defence

It was felt that it would thus be easier for the Department of National Defence to make arrangements with each individual with regard to his relocation. That, I believe, was one of the considerations.

[*English*]

Mr. Churchill: I wonder if we could now ask the Minister of National Defence about what is really the crux of the matter, and that is the danger area to be established respecting the range for mortar firing. Will the Minister of National Defence inform the committee that a range for mortar firing is essential at Valcartier camp? Will the minister also tell us when he plans to have that range established, and when firing practice will probably begin?

Mr. Hellyer: Mr. Chairman, as I recall the requisition, in order to facilitate battalion training and to enable more realistic and varied exercises to be carried on, a tremendous amount of room is required for deployment and for manoeuvre under conditions of modern warfare. To use modern equipment requires a great deal of space.

In addition to this, it is anticipated that ranges will be required for a variety of weapons including antitank, mortar, and perhaps self-propelled artillery. It takes a lot of space to have these kinds of manoeuvres and exercises. The Associate Minister has already undertaken to take a look at the area again, to determine whether the area in question is an absolute requirement. I do not think he could give any more assurance tonight, because this is not just something that you can say without taking a harder look at, than we have been able to at this time.

Mr. Churchill: You can take a look right now. The minister has now extended his request. He now says that he requests ranges for a variety of weapons. Three or four hours ago it was for mortar fire. That was an undetermined range for an undetermined size of mortar. They are undetermined because these are secrets that he keeps to himself. Now he says that anti-tank weapons may be used and that self-propelled artillery may be used. Therefore he is getting up into the 75 millimeter class, and the 105 class, and I suppose that he will have howitzers and other artillery equipment. Does this mean artillery regiments are going to be shifted to Valcartier camp for their training? I ask the minister that.

[Mr. Cadieux (Terrebonne).]

Mr. Hellyer: No, Mr. Chairman, certainly not necessarily. But what it will provide is adequate land to exercise whatever units are sent there in the normal course, and it has the facility and the flexibility which we think is essential, as part of our best deployment of the mobile force.

Mr. Churchill: May I ask the minister where the artillery regiment, the anti-tank regiment, the self-propelled artillery, and in fact all the artillery regiments now get their live ammunition training on ranges?

Mr. Hellyer: I think, speaking from memory, that it is at Shilo, Wainwright and Petawawa.

Mr. Churchill: May I ask the minister if during the course of the last 50 years, which is the time that Valcartier camp has been in operation as a military camp, it has been used for artillery purposes? If the minister has not the information on that, can he say anything with respect to the last ten years? Has the camp been used for that purpose within the last ten years?

Mr. Hellyer: I am not a military historian, Mr. Chairman. I cannot answer that question offhand.

An hon. Member: Perhaps he should be an historian.

Mr. Churchill: I think if the minister were to become a military historian that he would know something about warfare, which at the present time he does not. That is one of the greatest weaknesses in this minister. He does not know these things. Now he has been talking about establishing a larger area for training at Valcartier. First he is going to have a mortar range; then he extends it to an anti-tank range; then to self-propelled artillery. Is the minister aware that for 50 years the camp has been used for musketry purposes?

Mr. Hellyer: We are trying to get out of the musket age.

Mr. Churchill: I hope that the minister with his great interest in mobility will make arrangements to have a mobile casualty station out in the front of this building so that he and his associates can be treated for their wounds tonight, because they are suffering. They are gradually bleeding to death I think.

• (9:10 p.m.)

We want to get some satisfactory answers from the minister instead of these casual, flippant replies. Artillery training is carried