

Committee on Defence Expenditure

of one inquiry to another inquiry? This report and the report of the Auditor General make it clear that what we need in this case is not a further inquiry but action; and that what we need in the way of inquiry is a similar one to be conducted by Mr. Currie into the rest of the army and the whole of the navy and the air force with regard to organization and administration by the Department of National Defence.

We have been told by Mr. Currie that so lax were the methods used that there was an invitation to wrongdoing. That invitation has been extended by these lax methods right across Canada. Surely what all of us want to see is the removal of any possibility that these lax methods may continue. The best way that can be done is to have a complete and comprehensive inquiry into the whole of the Department of National Defence, as has been suggested.

Mr. Speaker, when the proposal is put forward that there be an inquiry of this kind, the most improper statement has been made that this proposal constitutes criticism of our armed forces. I cannot imagine anything less worthy of this government than the suggestion that an attempt to deal with this situation constitutes criticism of the armed forces. Every remark I have made is directed to the government. The one place where criticism should be directed is to the government itself for the conditions which existed and the invitation, as Mr. Currie states it, to wrongdoing, which has been created right across this country.

Mr. Cleaver: And not to the thieves.

Mr. Drew: Mr. Speaker, when interjections of this kind and suggestions such as those to which I have referred are made, I remind those who make them that the hon. member who spoke first was the hon. member for Nanaimo (Mr. Pearkes). When these statements are made about the criticism of the army and the danger of lowering morale I ask, is there any hon. member in this house who on second thought will suggest that the officer who has had the most experience of any officer in Canada, the man who has been awarded more decorations for valour than any other officer in Canada, the man who at his own expense has given such unlimited time to the advancement of the reserve forces, army, navy and air, is in fact criticizing the members of any of those forces when he makes such statements in this house as he did in this debate? What I have just said applies in various degrees to others who have spoken on this subject, whose record on the field of battle in the last war precludes any suggestion that they

would in any way seek to attack our armed forces, or to minimize their effectiveness, or in any way interfere with their morale.

No, Mr. Speaker; the one danger to morale that lies in this report, or in the Auditor General's report, or in any of the other disclosures would be the knowledge in the minds of those now in uniform that nothing effective was going to be done to deal with these irregularities which have occurred.

Every day that elapses without that kind of action which indicates an acceptance of the kind of responsibility that should be shown does raise questions which could interfere with morale; and it is with that thought in mind that I and others in this house have urged that the government act without delay on the report now before it, and that they also conduct a wider complete inquiry into the whole organization and administration of the armed services.

I have already suggested, and I repeat the suggestion, that if the government really meant what it said when it expressed its confidence in Mr. Currie, that it seek to have Mr. Currie conduct that wider inquiry with the same independence and impartiality that he showed in conducting the inquiry of which we now have a report. Mr. Currie of course would be free to do that if this diversionary action, to use a term that we have heard, were not employed, and the device were not adopted of having an inquiry into a report of another inquirer.

Let us see what would happen even if for the first time we did receive the kind of report from this committee that we had hoped we might receive when we urged the setting up of such a committee. That report would come back to this house. It would have no effect except as a finding of fact, corresponding with Mr. Currie's finding of fact, until it had been brought to the attention of this house by a motion for its approval. Are we to have another inquiry into an inquiry into an inquiry? That is what this procedure suggests. No, Mr. Speaker; right at this moment young men in uniform are facing a dangerous and terrible enemy on the field of battle. Young men in the Royal Canadian Air Force in France and in Britain at this very time are manning the aircraft of the squadrons which are over there as part of the joint defence of our freedom.

In Germany young Canadians in the army are carrying the name of Canada on their shoulders in a manner which gives us justification for pride in the Canadian uniform wherever it may be. At sea and in many parts of the world young men and women are offering the highest form of service to their country, to their fellow Canadians, that