

Committee on Defence Expenditures

The chairman of the subcommittee dealing with that matter was Mr. Tripp, who at that time represented the old constituency of Assiniboia. Two plants had been erected at great public expense, one in the Niagara district and one at Calgary, and it was recommended that one should be retained so that the farmers of Canada might be able to obtain fertilizer at a reasonable price in the post-war years. Ammonium nitrate was the fertilizer that we then had in mind. That recommendation was neglected, the plants were sold but I do hope that recommendations made by this committee will be carried out as far as possible by the government of the day.

I remember also how members from British Columbia pointed out that, after the war, industries which had been established on the Pacific coast would require basic supplies which they then had to ship in from great distances. I remember the late Mr. McGeer, the Minister of Fisheries (Mr. Mayhew) and Senator Reid bringing up this matter. Two of them were members of the subcommittee along with myself. Mr. McGeer appeared before that committee and urged that the iron ore and coal resources to be found in great abundance on Vancouver island should be utilized for the establishment of an industry there to provide steel plate for the ship-building industry and so on.

We were told at that time that no such industry would be permitted on Vancouver island, that any expansion that would be made would be in connection with mills already established such as those owned by Algoma Steel Company and the Steel Company of Canada. Look up the record and you will see that what I say in that respect is absolutely correct. What do we see today? We see British Columbia ore going to Japan, being fabricated and then sent back to Vancouver in many forms. All these might have been produced on Vancouver island if the same consideration had been given to establishing an industry there as was given to the established mills at Algoma and Hamilton.

These are the kind of matters that should receive consideration by members of parliament and by this parliamentary committee in connection with our defence preparations. The leader of the opposition spoke about the principal job of Canada being production of certain types of equipment and perhaps the training of men for service in the air. Well, they need aeroplanes. We established a great industry in Canada and made some of the outstanding aeroplanes now flying across this country and across the ocean. We established Canadaair, and then we parted with it. Today

[Mr. Coldwell.]

we have to buy the product of an industry which the people of Canada established here.

Then, of course, there are the contracts that are made for the provision of equipment. Are they being properly fulfilled? During the sittings of the war expenditures committee during the last war, hon. members at times not only had the opportunity of visiting some of the plants that were providing the equipment for these large expenditures, but on occasion we had the privilege of seeing some of the great projects that this country undertook. They were great projects which reflect a great deal of credit upon Canada. For example, when we saw millions of dollars being expended at Gander in Newfoundland, we wanted to know what it was all about. A small subcommittee of the war expenditures committee went to Gander. There we satisfied ourselves that the millions of dollars that we saw on the accounts of the government of Canada were no doubt fully justified. An excellent job was being done in completing a great field from which planes could be shuttled across the Atlantic to assist those who were defending freedom in Europe.

Then, we built the great Polymer plant at Sarnia, one of the most successful projects that this country has ever undertaken, and one of which we can be justly proud. This plant has not only performed a useful function, but has brought a considerable return to Canada. It is a clear indication that projects of that description can be undertaken by crown corporations and brought to a successful conclusion. My regret is that when we had the opportunity of doing more of this kind of thing during the war, we did not do it. I am not pretending that the \$164 million to which I referred as being paid to the Aluminum Company came out of Canada. It came out of our allies principally, but some of it came from Canada. I believe it is to be regretted that some of these great industries could not have been retained under the ownership and control of the people of Canada after we had, with our allies, so largely paid for them. Such matters should concern this committee.

I believe it is the duty of the committee to see to it that we get the very best value for the moneys we expend in providing the equipment which our men need. I believe everyone in this house is anxious that in the defence preparations as well as if, God forbid, war should come upon us, the young men who carry the badge of Canada shall be equipped with the best and most complete equipment it is possible for this country to provide. I think we all have that desire. We stand behind these young men who are called upon