

Supply—National Defence

Mr. Fair: Mr. Chairman, I will not take up too much time; in fact, I will take just a few minutes. I also want to pay my respects to a great Canadian in the person of the late Colonel Ralston. He has been condemned by some here just because he was doing the right thing for his country in trying to have equality of service, something which we have advocated right along. I think that by this time the facts are known, even though at one time they were not known to most people throughout the country.

On the 18th day of last month, in the debate on the budget address, I advocated that the men who were doing our fighting should not be subject to income tax. At that time I pointed out that they are paying their full share over there, by offering everything they have. They do not know whether they will ever return to this country; and if they do so, they are asked to help pay off the war debt and contribute towards paying other expenses which are in some cases unnecessary. They are asked to do this in addition to doing their bit over there. In spite of the explanation given by the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Finance this afternoon, with his customary energy, I feel that some method can be worked out which will free the fighting men of the obligation of paying income tax. Let those who are staying home and making good profits make up those taxes.

There is a question that I want to ask the Minister of National Defence in connection with a camp in the best constituency in Canada. I refer to Wainwright camp in the Battle River constituency. At the present time it is one of the largest camps in Canada, although not many years ago we had buffalo, yak, elk and many other animals running about the country there. They were inside fences; but the national park has been done away with, and now it is turned into a military camp. On another occasion last year I had representations from the people of the town of Wainwright and the board of trade there with respect to housing for the wives and families of the officers and men attending that camp. The board of trade pointed out that in that town there have been provided schools, a good hospital, water and sewers. I understand that at the present time nothing has been done in connection with providing homes for the wives and families of those men serving at that camp. Only a short time ago I read that quite a large amount of money is being spent at Rockcliffe air station in order to provide similar accommodation. I should like to know now from the Minister of National Defence what provision is being made at

Wainwright camp. Buildings might be erected either at the town of Wainwright or near the camp, wherever the department might find it to be most suitable for them to be erected.

Mr. Coldwell: Before the minister speaks I want to reiterate a suggestion that we have made several times, and that is for a war expenditures committee. I have noticed that at times it has been referred to as a defence committee. I want to make it very plain to the minister and to the committee that we think the defence policy of the government must be the responsibility of the government. It is not a committee to go into all the phases of defence, and the policy of the government regarding defence, that I think the house needs. I do not think anyone in the house is really asking for that, but sometimes it is said that that is what is being asked for. What we need is a committee that can go into all the phases of war expenditure, including the expenditures of the defence departments.

We did that in effect during the last war. At the beginning I think it was intended that this might be confined more or less to the department of munitions and supply, but hon. members who were on that committee will recall that we had the military men before us who told us a great deal about the equipment, the expenditures and the arrangements made for obtaining the equipment. We all saw to it, or we were given the information to enable us to understand, that we were getting the equipment that the armed forces needed.

I just rose to say that, because I did not want the minister to misunderstand. It is not a committee that would go into the policy, because we cannot take the responsibility for that policy. We can take responsibility only for the things that concern us as a house.

Just before I sit down I want to say also that all of us who sat in the house during the war had, I think, the highest regard for Colonel Ralston. As has been said so many times here this evening, he was a great Canadian, he was a great gentleman and one who invariably treated every hon. member with the greatest consideration and courtesy. Indeed, because he attended to the matters that were brought to him by individual members and because he was working long hours, as I know his own staff of assistants did, he served his country in a manner that I think will be an example to any minister of the crown in any department who may come after him in the years ahead.

Mr. Adamson: The quite shocking statement has been made in this house at least