

Mr. ROSS (Souris): And that includes equipment for the army overseas?

Mr. RALSTON: Yes.

Item agreed to.

On item 10—Operating cost of mechanical transport, fuel maintenance, etc. (not including repair parts).

Mr. GRAYDON: May I ask the minister a question arising out of one part of the discussion that took place the other evening, either on this item or on some other comparable item, in connection with the war appropriation bill while it was in committee last year. I refer to the economies which were to be instituted by the minister. I believe it was the Minister of National Defence who undertook to see that certain economies were put into practice in connection with the use of mechanical vehicles such as jeeps and other mechanical transport using gasoline. The point was raised in the committee that there was some thought in the public mind that there was perhaps a rather reckless use of gasoline in certain instances. Naturally that was something that would creep in, but the minister indicated that the department was prepared to institute a campaign of economy in the use of gasoline, in view of the shortage generally with which we were faced. What plans has he put into effect to bring about those economies?

Mr. RALSTON: All I can say is that the strictest check is kept on cars going out, the routes to be followed, the mileage to be covered and the gasoline to be used. Strictness is observed with regard to the use of cars in an endeavour to avoid two trips where one will do. I myself sometimes observe that this is not being carried out. I see a car going without a full load. But I know the quartermaster-general is particularly strong on this and has checked a good many times the use of cars for any purpose which is not strictly a service purpose, and even the use of a service car by service personnel when that use could have been obviated. I cannot tell of any system except rigid vigilance in an endeavour to see that the use of gasoline is curtailed in every way possible. In connection with staff cars and cars of that kind, there has been a marked reduction in the use of them since the gasoline shortage has become acute, and everyone is concerned to conserve gasoline. I cannot give my hon. friend any system which has been put into effect apart from that.

Mr. GRAYDON: Has there been a reduction in the number of ordinary automobiles used by the army here, outside training or service generally?

Mr. RALSTON: The transport officer is not here, but I do not know of any number. In some places cars have been cut down or taken off the establishment altogether. I cannot say about Ottawa.

Mr. FRASER (Peterborough West): How are the service stations selected for supplying gasoline and oil for the different army vehicles that pass through the various cities, towns, and villages? I ask that question because I know that in some instances army vehicles go two miles or so out of their way in order to get gasoline from some particular service station, and they pass half a dozen others on their way.

Mr. RALSTON: I am afraid I shall have to guess at that in the absence of the transport officer, but gasoline is bought by contract from different companies and is supplied at their stations. The service station is not selected; it is supplied by contract, and they go to the nearest station of that particular company to fill up, when they cannot be served at our transport supply station. That is my idea of what the practice is.

Mr. FRASER (Peterborough West): My understanding is that, first of all, tenders are submitted by these companies. It is by tender system, is it?

Mr. RALSTON: The Department of Munitions and Supply buys it for us.

Mr. FRASER (Peterborough West): If an army truck were going to Kingston, it could stop at one of the supply depots of that company.

Mr. RALSTON: I think so, when necessary. Ordinarily, they would first stop at military supply depots, if available.

Mr. FRASER (Peterborough West): It would not be told, "You must go to No. 1 gasoline station, and must not go to No. 3 or No. 4"?

Mr. RALSTON: It could go to any station of the company. Remember, I am speculating when I make that answer, because I have no transport officer with me. Perhaps I had better get the information accurately for the hon. member, because I do not wish to put on record something which is only a pure guess.

Mr. FRASER (Peterborough West): I should be glad if the minister would do that.