

*National Defence*

can afford to leave her to do a lot of the protecting of our affairs, but that great nation may be so occupied in several other areas of the globe that she may not be able to give us the attention that we may wish to have her give. I really have a feeling that we ought to attempt to be ready to stand on our own feet pretty well in case of an emergency.

So much having been said in a general way, I should like to draw attention to four or five things that have been in my mind since I have had the responsibility of giving defence matters attention for my group. I feel that our production of food, clothing and shelter has not been kept up to the standard which we would wish in case we became suddenly engaged in a war. We are allowing our production to run down. The scarcity-minded men whose fallacies control government policy seem to be terrified at the thought of having any more wheat than we can sell in a given year, or the capacity to produce any more dairy products than we can use in a given year, and so on right through the various types of production of which we are capable.

Suppose it became necessary for us to put a million men into the field in a short time and find food, clothing and shelter with which to support such an army, together with another army engaged in war production. I think we should find that we were running into scarcities in a way that would confound us if war came. I hope the minister is fully cognizant of the potentialities of such a situation. I do not find any comfort in the scarcity which is being artificially induced in this country by a government that does not know how to deal with abundance. I hope the minister will not take anything I say as being in any way unkind or adverse criticism. I am merely endeavouring to warn the country before it is too late.

The situation does not look good to me so far as Canadian production is concerned. When a country like Canada cannot supply enough bacon to fulfil the contract with Great Britain it is not a very good sign that our house is being well managed. That is just one illustration of many.

I do not know whether or not we have a civilian defence organization throughout Canada. When I was in Great Britain in 1941 I was greatly impressed with the efficiency which they had developed by that time in the matter of taking care of fires, gas attacks, and that sort of thing. They had citizens defence committees in superabundance, well trained and ready to go. I have not heard any rumours concerning citizens defence committees being ready to go in Canada at all. Even if we depend upon the

[Mr. Blackmore.]

United States for the major portion of our protection I think we should still have some sort of provision for citizens defence committees. I will not go into further detail in that regard but I hope that my general words will impress those who need to be impressed in Canada.

In line with the general necessity for guarding against the possibility of being completely put out of business by two or three well directed blows, I think we ought to have decentralization of Canadian industries to a far greater extent than at the present time. All the talking that we from western Canada and the maritimes have been able to do does not seem to have percolated into the heads of the responsible men in Ontario and Quebec to the extent that they are impressed that they really ought to put some industries in other parts of Canada from the standpoint of sheer common-sense self-defence. I hope it will not be necessary to sound that warning any more.

All our great munitions factories are located in Ontario and Quebec. An attacking force only needs to concentrate on those two provinces and the rest of us will simply be overcome as the result thereof. That does not seem like wise planning for a great nation such as Canada. Of course it will be said there are a lot of objections, but there will be a whole lot of wishes that things had been different if a serious disaster should befall us, and it were found that disaster had occurred because of our inability to have a little foresight instead of nothing but hindsight.

I think regional defence units have been completely neglected in Canada. I may be too far out of touch with the facts but I have an idea I am going to confide to those members who are indulgent enough to be paying attention to me. I believe that one day when Canada is organized in the most efficient way she will endeavour to lay out the whole country in certain more or less self-sufficient units. I think we spend far too much of our time and effort in hauling pretty nearly everything in Canada over two great rocky barren wastes. We take everything from Ontario and Quebec across a thousand miles of rocky wilderness; which is a dead loss to the railroads making the trip, and we make the western provinces pay the whole cost. Then we haul everything back over that same dead barren waste, making the east pay all the costs, or the west if possible, and usually the east is able to make the west do it. All this is a dead loss to the economy of Canada.

In my judgment it is a matter that ought to be overcome. If we had in the three prairie provinces a more or less self-sufficient