

National Defence

find ways in which we can give to our young men the very finest type of equipment, the very finest type of organization. Let us save the blood of our youth with things that are made by the skill and the brains that have been trained in the great universities, technical institutes and workshops of Canada.

Only yesterday, on the motion of the Prime Minister (Mr. St. Laurent), a committee was set up which will be empowered to consider defence expenditures. I suggested to the Prime Minister yesterday that he should give consideration to the introduction, at the end of the present debate, of a resolution similar to the resolution which was moved at the determination of the debate on external affairs, a resolution which would refer to the committee on defence expenditures all the estimates which have been presented to this house by the Department of National Defence. When I made that suggestion yesterday the Prime Minister indicated that he could not accept it and he made a statement by way of explanation which, it seems to me, wholly misconceives the function of this committee and the purpose for which the estimates would be referred.

May I remind hon. members that the select committee which was approved yesterday by the resolution presented by the Prime Minister stated that a select committee be appointed: . . . to examine all expenditure of public moneys for national defence and all commitments for expenditure for national defence . . .

May I emphasize in both cases the word "all"; all expenditures and all commitments. How is a committee going to deal with all expenditures and all commitments better than by having the estimates for defence referred to it in exactly the same way as the estimates of the Department of External Affairs have been referred to the committee on external affairs? The Prime Minister said, and I quote from page 1077 of *Hansard*:

It may be that the experience acquired in the course of the work of this committee will induce us to come to the conclusion that it would be possible to have a committee that would not proceed as do some committees of congress, and that here it is something that would work satisfactorily; but I am sorry I cannot at the moment make any commitment in that regard.

I hope that the Prime Minister has not closed the door, and since the Minister of National Defence is here, I repeat that request, and I repeat it with all the earnestness I possess, because of the seriousness of the moment and because of the immense sums of money that are involved. But may I point out, in view of the misconception which obviously exists in the mind of Prime Minister, that I am not suggesting that we have any such committee as they have in congress. I am suggesting that we do exactly what they

[Mr. Drew.]

do at Westminster now and what they have done for years. For years they have had a committee in Great Britain on defence estimates. I hope it will not be suggested to us that a committee on defence estimates in Great Britain is limited in what it can do, because if we were told so it would be incorrect. It is true that the committee each year decides to deal particularly with certain specific items of defence, and get all the information in regard to those particular items. It of course examines the other items, and then the items all come before the house. But I would point out that in *May's Parliamentary Practice*, fourteenth edition, at page 641, the work of these committees is referred to, and it explains that:

The reference of the estimates to the consideration of a select committee has become a regular feature of Commons procedure since 1912, with the exception of the war years 1914-20 and from 1939 onwards. In these periods—from 1917 to 1920 and from 1939 onwards—the examination of war expenditure was entrusted to select committees on national expenditure.

The estimates committee was empowered to examine any of the estimates presented to the house, to suggest the form in which the estimates might be presented, and to report what economies, consistent with the policy implied in the estimates, might be effected.

Now, that is exactly what I am suggesting should be done here. We should do precisely what they have been doing at Westminster ever since 1912. All the estimates should be referred, and the committee on defence expenditures empowered to choose those items with which they will deal, then get all the information and make its recommendations to this house.

Over and over again we have heard the suggestion that we must not in any way depart from the principle that the government is responsible for policy. I cannot remember a single occasion when any member in the house has suggested at any time that we sought to intervene in the field of policy. What we do say is this, that the government makes policy, and that those policies result in the presentation of estimates. Those estimates come before us; and, just as they do at Westminster, recognizing the policies implied in the estimates, we should examine those estimates and, as representatives of the people of Canada, here in this House of Commons, through that committee, see what money we can save for the hard-pressed taxpayers of Canada.

Let us realize that we are dealing with almost half the total expenditures for the coming year. The total of the estimates now before us is \$4,335,000,000. Of that figure, those for national defence are \$2,100,000,000. That being the case, then surely if there ever was a time when we had an opportunity to