

*Dissolution of Parliament*

government has never solved any of the pre-war problems; I do not know how it is going to solve post-war problems.

Mr. ROGERS: Oh, oh.

Mr. MANION: Let me say to the Minister of National Defence (Mr. Rogers), who is laughing now, that for years he was Minister of Labour. He was the man who was supposed to handle unemployment in this country. I say that no minister of labour in the history of Canada has ever made such a complete failure of the handling of such a problem as did the hon. gentleman. His reward for handling the Department of Labour in such a weak manner was to be made Minister of National Defence, at the present time, the most important department in the government. How can the people of Canada expect that a minister of labour who made a failure of running the labour department should make a success of the administration of the Department of National Defence? This is one of the reasons why the Department of National Defence has been such a farce under the present Minister of National Defence, as was the Department of Labour under the same minister.

The minister who preceded the present Minister of National Defence has many faults, as I expect many of us have. That hon. gentleman was shown up in this parliament as having acted, to say the least, not advisedly in regard to the Bren gun. But he was defended by the Prime Minister. He was defended by the Minister of Transport (Mr. Howe). He was defended by the then minister of labour, the present Minister of National Defence. He was defended also by one or two others, but I have forgotten which ones. These hon. gentlemen stood by him. Why then has he been demoted? If he was right, why has he been demoted? If he was wrong, why has he been kept in the government? What I meant really to say was that with all his faults I think the former minister of national defence (Mr. Mackenzie) was a more capable minister of national defence than is the present minister.

I have a few words to say with regard to the government's present war effort which has been referred to in the speech from the throne, as well as by the Prime Minister in his remarks on the floor of the house this afternoon. In view of the fact that long before the war this government was nicknamed the "do-nothing government," the people of Canada should not have expected that this government would be able to handle the war effort at all well. The people have not been

[Mr. Manion.]

disappointed in that. Not only did this government not prepare for war, but to my mind they have handled the war effort of Canada in a most disgraceful manner. After more than a year's warning we have called up one division to go overseas. There were not enough clothes for these men; there were not enough boots, not enough blankets and not enough machine guns. These men went overseas unequipped to a large extent. What equipment they had was obtained by gathering in what clothes and equipment could be found scattered here, there and everywhere throughout all sections of Canada. I know of one battalion from British Columbia which was dressed in cotton underwear and cotton clothing. These men crossed this north country in the middle of December and continued across the north Atlantic in the same kind of weather.

I say, again without fear of contradiction—this information comes to me from doctors in charge of these militia regiments—that many of these men are sick and large numbers have been sent to the hospital because of lack of preparation and because of lack of vision on the part of this government.

If it were true that no one had foreseen the danger of war then perhaps I could not criticize. But I find that the Prime Minister, in his remarks on the address in reply to the speech from the throne during last session—I refer particularly to pages 24, 25, 26 and 27 of *Hansard*—said repeatedly that for as long as five years he had thought of nothing except the necessity of preparing for war. Yet no preparation of any kind was made. If it were not for the fact that this is a tragedy, some of the stories which we hear about the lack of preparation would be quite funny. For example, when the war began a general wrote me—I wonder if I can remember the phrase he used?—stating that the anti-aircraft units had no anti-aircraft guns, and that the searchlight units had no searchlights. That is what has happened all across this country. There has been a complete lack of preparation, and as a result the war effort so far is deplorable.

I intended to deal with this quite fully when I was speaking on the address in reply to the speech from the throne. Whatever has been achieved in the way of preparation has been obtained only by kicking this government into action. The matter of mothers' allowances was settled only the other day. There are thousands of widowed mothers and other dependants of men who have enlisted to whom this government has failed to give the proper allowance. One man told me that he had been in the army for four months and had had to sell an old car which he had so that