

RE SHORTAGE OF MILITARY STORES

Coupled with the specific attacks upon certain contracts of the Department of National Defence was a criticism of the lack of certain supplies for the equipment of the troops when they were called out at the outbreak of war.

Deficiencies did exist. They had existed for years. The Minister of National Defence pointed out to Parliament in February 1937 that all three defence services were almost completely lacking in all types of stores and equipment. There were not only shortages of clothing but there were shortages of aircraft, ships, weapons and ammunition.

Parliament was asked for funds with which to begin repairing these deficiencies. A substantially increased appropriation for the Department of National Defence was voted.

The Minister made it quite plain that the sums provided would make only a modest beginning.

It was obvious that all the deficiencies could not be made good simultaneously. Parliament was informed that the Government had decided, upon advice, to adopt a certain order of priority. This order was: 1st, the Air Force; 2nd, the Navy; 3rd, the Militia. It was also indicated that the Pacific Coast should be given priority over the Atlantic.

The reason underlying these priorities was that certain requirements would take time to procure. It was felt that a beginning should be made upon these. Aircraft, ships, machine guns, are items which it was realized would require two or more years to make. The development of aerodromes and construction of fortification works were other items which would take time. It was considered that a start should be made upon these.

Clothing, boots and shoes and other items, with respect to which the deficiencies were just as glaring, could be produced at short notice. The department had only so much money and it was decided to concentrate this upon requirements which could not be improvised at short notice.

Nevertheless the question of equipment for the Militia was constantly before the Department. Each year, the problem was considered and, each year, it was found, upon analysis, that clothing, etc., could not be purchased without taking funds away from requirements more fundamentally essential to the real defence of Canada.

In 1939, the estimates included for the first time a sum for uniforms. The amount was \$174,500.

During the Session, representatives of the Militia made strong representations that further provision for Militia clothing should be made. In particular, they emphasized the need for boots. It will be remembered that after this time the Militia were preparing to turn out guards of honour for the pending visit of Their Majesties the King and Queen. There was the keenest desire on their part to make a representable showing. The Department cooperated by all means in its power.

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