

Mr. HOWE: The original contract was for 12,000 guns. It would be hard to make millions out of that. Another:

Says government taking over war production in John Inglis plant vindicates him—

George Drew. Mark that.

Mr. HOMUTH: It did not vindicate the government.

Mr. HOWE: I doubt if it vindicated George Drew.

Mr. HANSON (York-Sunbury): That is a matter of opinion.

Mr. HOWE: I suppose it is; yes. To continue:

Which would otherwise have gone to a group of ambitious promoters who saw an opportunity to capitalize upon Canada's need for weapons.

We have a fine lot of statements there. I doubt if anyone would suggest that, while the brief I have before me may tend to exaggerate the harmful effects, such talk could be helpful to the production of the Inglis plant. What is the object of this sort of talk? What is behind it? Nothing but political kudos. My hon. friend rises in his place on a motion to go into supply on the estimates of the Department of External Affairs and talks politics about the Bren gun contract. Is that statesmanship? He says that so far as he is concerned the opposition will do its duty.

Mr. HOMUTH: Do yours.

Mr. HOWE: I am doing it. I am trying to protect the war production of this country. I am trying to stop attacks upon Bren gun production, and I am exposing the type of situation that we have so far as this discussion is concerned.

I do not know that I am called upon at this time to say anything further, but I do hope to take occasion in the next debate to discuss fully the aeroplane production situation in this country and to deal with some other phases of the war work. It seems to me unfortunate that statements are going unchallenged for the reason that no one has a chance to answer them at the time they are made. The leader of the opposition (Mr. Hanson) makes a statement attacking production of aeroplanes in this country.

Mr. HANSON (York-Sunbury): No, I did not. I asked the minister to make a statement explaining the lack of production.

Mr. HOWE: Yes; but he gave a press release which was the most extraordinary and misleading document ever produced in or out of this house and which I intend to deal

with fully at the next opportunity. I do conceive it to be my duty to try to stop these malicious attacks on the John Inglis company in consequence of their contractual relations with this government, and I sincerely hope that these remarks of mine will have that effect.

Mr. BROOKS: I wanted to ask the minister a question for information. In that 97,000 Bren guns—

Mr. HOWE: I did not say Bren guns. I said automatic guns.

Mr. BROOKS: Are there any included for the British government?

Mr. HOWE: Yes.

Mr. BROOKS: How many are being manufactured for the British government?

Mr. HOWE: I would say about two-thirds for the British government and one-third, Canadian.

Mr. BROOKS: What is the increase in Bren gun production?

Mr. HOWE: This is not committee. My hon. friend will have an opportunity to ask these questions.

Mr. BROOKS: I did not wish to embarrass the minister. I was asking for information.

Hon. H. A. BRUCE (Parkdale): I wish to speak for only a moment or two, and perhaps this is an appropriate time to try to pour a little oil on troubled waters. May I get back again to what I thought was the subject before us, external affairs.

Some months ago I suggested that it would be well for the Prime Minister (Mr. Mackenzie King) and the government to consider the appointment of an overseas Minister of National Defence. I do not hope to make any great impression on the Prime Minister's mind by anything that I may say, but I would call his attention to a statement made when the Minister of Overseas Military Forces, as I believe he was called at that time, was appointed in 1916. The powers of the minister were defined by the Prime Minister and are condensed in the Canadian annual review as follows:

1. He was charged with the control of and was responsible for the administration of the affairs of the military forces of Canada in the United Kingdom and on the continent of Europe; the ordnance, arms, ammunition, armouries, stores, munitions and habiliments of war belonging to Canada in those countries; all expenditure incurred in the United Kingdom or elsewhere in Europe for or in respect of these forces.

2. He was given power in urgent matters to act provisionally without reference to the Canadian government.

[Mr. R. B. Hanson.]