

Supply—National Defence

hit from the latest kind of bomb or missile. If this is the centre for the co-ordination of these activities, how could that co-ordination be carried out by the Prime Minister, if the Prime Minister had responsibility at that time, if he is not going to be at the government emergency headquarters but, as he has stated, remains in his shelter at Sussex street?

Mr. Harkness: It is quite apparent that this has nothing to do with the estimates which are under consideration. This is a question which the hon. member should ask of the Prime Minister when the emergency measures organization is being discussed. The Department of National Defence is responsible for the rescue operations, for the warning systems, for the maintenance of emergency wireless and other communications of that kind and aid to the civil power. These things constitute our responsibility.

Mr. Martin (Essex East): In view of what the minister has just said to the Leader of the Opposition, and in view of the great interest in these matters in the country, may I ask the minister if we are going to have an opportunity of discussing this matter within the course of the next month or so. I mean, it is all very well for the minister who is in charge of one phase of civil defence operations to say "I have nothing to do with shelters; I have nothing to do with whether or not the Prime Minister stays at No. 24 Sussex street in the event of an emergency or moves out". It is all very well for a minister to say that or for the Minister of National Health and Welfare, who has a responsibility in this field, to escape any responsibility for current discussions. However, this diffusion of authority makes it very difficult for us in this committee, and for the people in the country, to ascertain precisely what government policy is, what progress is being made.

For instance, there are some very important questions one would like to ask about the irritation experienced by the premier of Manitoba as a result of the lack of any clear policy on the part of the federal government. The premier of that province built a shelter for himself, but he has become frustrated. He has said that he is no longer going to spend even his idle moments in the shelter, so equivocal has the government become in its civil defence policy. Can the minister give us any indication of the opportunity we will have, before the dissolution of parliament, for instance, to discuss this matter? This is an important question in which the people of Canada are very interested at the moment. Can the minister give us some enlightenment as to how and when we might have the

[Mr. Pearson.]

opportunity of eliciting some answers to some questions which the minister says are not his direct responsibility?

Mr. Harkness: Mr. Chairman, all this is quite evidently completely out of order. Every department of the government, as the hon. member should know, has some responsibility now so far as civil defence measures are concerned, particularly so far as the operation of that particular department in an emergency is concerned. As I have said before, that is all co-ordinated by and comes under the control of the emergency measures organization which reports to the Prime Minister.

Mr. Martin (Essex East): That only confirms what I have said.

Mr. Matheson: May I make a brief contribution to this discussion that has taken place. Frankly, at the beginning of this program I had grave doubts that it was possible to take men, many of them unemployed and many of them with no military training of any kind, and make soldiers of them in a short time. I know that in our community the Brockville Rifles undertook this task, and they did it superbly. I took occasion to inspect these groups. I knew something about the E.M.O. operation and the St. John's training, and I thought the co-operation was extremely successful.

The Leader of the Opposition has raised an important point; that is, how do we manage to preserve some sort of control over and communication with these people who have learned something of and who are now interested in this matter of survival? I put to the minister a suggestion that one of the most useful bodies in Canada is the St. John ambulance corps. I know the minister agrees with me in this because his department has done a great deal of work through St. John ambulance, as has the Department of National Health and Welfare. It seems to me that in Canada, as in perhaps no western country, we have skilled people with advanced training in staff work, in military operations and so on, who have devoted themselves to the cause of St. John ambulance particularly, and in recent months to E.M.O. operations. Probably some of these people in Toronto, in Winnipeg and across the country could give the minister's department a great deal of help in respect of this critical matter of co-ordinating these activities.

I suggest that right now the St. John's ambulance corps in Canada knows a great deal more about who should be called out and where they can be obtained than anyone else in the country, including any government department. I think there is nothing