

*The Address—Mr. Drew*

subjects that will engage the attention of the members of this house during the present session.

I will refer first to national defence. On no single subject of importance is the Canadian public less accurately informed. On no single question is it so necessary that the public be fully informed, subject only to the strict demands of secrecy—and the real demands of secrecy cover a very limited part of our defence preparations.

We must examine defence not only from the point of view of the effectiveness of the defence forces themselves, both from the point of view of training and equipment, but we must also insist upon such detail as will make it possible for us to be sure that the huge sums of money which are to be spent on defence are to be spent in the best possible way.

It now appears that Canada is likely to spend as much in the year 1951 for national defence as was spent in the whole five years following the last world war.

I am sure there will be no tendency on the part of the members of this house to limit any expenditures that are actually necessary; but when it is probable that we shall be called upon to approve expenditures in excess of one and a half billion dollars in a single year, a duty is imposed upon every member in every part of this house to insist that we have the most complete information, and that we know that every dollar is being spent for the best possible purpose and that it will produce the greatest possible results at the earliest possible time.

Although the government had never been stunted by parliament in the money it asked for preparation for defence, the people of Canada learned with amazement and dismay last year, when the attack came on Korea, that we had no land forces ready to go into action. With all the millions that have been spent since that time, there is very great uncertainty that we have more than a very small number who are ready to go into action yet.

Many alarming details have come to light within the past few weeks. It was with astonishment that those who were aware of our shortage of weapons learned that a government arsenal, which could have been making modern weapons, was making shot-guns to be sold for sporting purposes. It was with equal astonishment that we learned it was necessary to send Canadian forces to the United States to train, although we have been spending so much money on the many large military camps across Canada. But details of that kind are in themselves not

nearly so alarming as the statement issued a few weeks ago by the conference of defence associations.

To appreciate the importance of their statement, we must recall that this annual conference of the defence associations brings together senior officers appointed by each of the military associations which represent all the different services of the Canadian army. These are the men who are actually serving in our reserve forces. These are the men who are in close contact with our permanent forces as well. These are the men who are largely responsible for interpreting the opinion of those who are in uniform. That conference represents the highest possible authority in regard to the actual state of training of our reserve forces, upon which the land defence of Canada or our participation in any collective plan must still in the main depend.

Recognizing the special position they occupy, and the absolute impartiality of the views they express, let me quote from the statement presented to the government less than a month ago by the conference of defence associations:

We feel Canadians are prepared to pay such taxes in view of the issues involved, but we do not feel that Canadians are prepared to see moneys wasted. It is our considered and unanimous opinion that proper value is not being received for much of the public moneys now being spent on the reserve force.

In spite of the existing shortages of facilities for the reserve force, in many places the strength of units does not absorb present facilities for training by a substantial margin. Far more men could be trained in the reserve force than are presently coming forward.

The turnover of other ranks is such that the vast majority of men who appear from time to time on the nominal rolls of reserve force units receive no training worthy of the name. They do not stay with the unit long enough. To say that the reserve force is 40,000 strong, and to give the Canadian people the idea that it has 40,000 men who could quickly be ready for action, is a travesty of the facts. There are few, if any, reserve units in Canada that could be ready to function in action under a minimum period of six months. This includes AA—

*Anti-aircraft.*

—and other such units which should be ready for immediate action. The Canadian public, in spite of the moneys spent, cannot look to effective and efficient protection from internal sabotage or external aggression from its reserve force for a considerable period after war breaks out, and the active force is far too small to undertake the full burden of such duties.

That is the end of an extremely significant and illuminating quotation from the presentation made to the government by the conference of defence associations. Let me repeat that those who attended were all senior officers—officers appointed by the Canadian Infantry Association, the Canadian Artillery