

War Appropriation Bill

Following the request of the Acting Minister of Munitions and Supply for the opinion of the undersigned as to how the Anson project can be expedited, the following unanimous recommendations are submitted:

1. Federal Aircraft Ltd., to be dissolved.
2. de Havilland to be asked to manage (or administer) for the department, the Anson project, taking over the personnel, material, records, etc., of Federal Aircraft Limited forthwith.
3. de Havilland to assume responsibility for engineering and procurement of material.
4. These functions of de Havilland not to include the taking over of Federal Aircraft Limited's financial obligations (other than for material) or financial functions or contractual obligations; all of which the department can handle best.
5. Contracts for components, etc., made henceforward to be with the department (upon the recommendation of de Havilland, if desired).

DATED 7th January, 1941.

Massey Harris Ltd.,
M. F. Verity,
Superintendent.

Boeing Aircraft of Canada Ltd.,
S. Burke,
President.

National Steel Car Ltd.,
R. J. Magor,
President.

Canadian Car & Foundry, Ltd.,
V. M. Drury,
President.

de Havilland Aircraft of Canada, Ltd.,
P. C. Garratt,
Managing Director.

Ottawa Car & Aircraft Ltd.,
Redmond Quain,
President and Managing Director.

Mr. DOUGLAS (Weyburn): I want first to remind the committee that the members of the Cooperative Commonwealth group in this house, at the outbreak of war envisaged just such a debate as has taken place during the last few days in reference to these war appropriations. With that in mind we made two suggestions to deal with such a situation. First we suggested that from time to time the government ought to have closed sessions of this house at which hon. members could be given confidential information—not necessarily units of production—as to the actual progress being made in the supplying of war material. Failing that we suggested that a committee should be set up representing all parties in the house, to which information could be given as to the exact progress we were making in the production of war materials. We should not confuse that committee with the committee the Prime Minister is suggesting to go over the accounts. That is a different matter altogether; accounts are one thing and actual production of the article is another.

[Mr. Howe.]

The government did not see fit to accept either of these suggestions, for various reasons into which we need not go at this time. But I want to remind the Minister of Munitions and Supply that if he feels there has been undue criticism of him the blame can be laid nowhere else than at the door of the government itself, which failed to place any machinery in our parliamentary system at this time by which members could get the actual facts with reference to our war effort.

The other day sitting in his seat in the house the Minister of Justice said, across the floor of the house, that it was the opposition that needed strengthening. That may or may not be true. The fact of the matter remains that the opposition cannot do the job which under our parliamentary system it is supposed to do if it has not access to the facts. Until the minister gave his statement the other day it is doubtful whether out of the 244 men and one lady in the house there were more than twenty who knew anything about the exact state of aircraft production in Canada. In fact I doubt whether there are many who know a great deal more about it even now, after the statement.

When I listened to the minister's speech the other day my mind went back to some of the debates which took place two years ago in the British House of Commons. I recalled some of the speeches made by Sir Kingsley Wood, who was then in charge of aircraft production, by Mr. Churchill, by Mr. Amery, by Sir Roger Keyes and by Mr. Greenwood. Some of the statements made the other day by the minister were reminiscent of statements made on those occasions. People who questioned, people who queried, people who criticized two years ago in England were being accused of undermining public confidence.

I submit to the minister that abuse does not dispel criticism. Accusing one member of "groping in the sewer", another member of "getting his information by devious methods", and calling, "sabotage, sabotage!" will not answer the things hon. members want to know. I suggest further that to end every discussion of a contract by saying that it is "up to schedule" is not sufficient. That was what happened all through 1939 in Great Britain. What does "up to schedule" mean? It may mean nothing. It may refer to a pre-war schedule. It may be a schedule drawn up prior to the collapse of France. Unless we know what the schedule is, unless we have some information concerning it, to say that it is up to schedule has no meaning at all. It means nothing until we know who set the schedule, when it was set and what it