

Supply—National Defence

If you have an emergency situation and must reach a decision during a critical time like this—I am a C.C.F.'er, not a Liberal—I do not think we should be asking for a breakdown of the money that is to be spent on freight, express, postage, telephones and telegrams. As members of parliament I think we would be stupid if we expected that kind of thing during a special session called to make emergency decisions.

As I said, I have not spoken before and intend to speak for only two or three minutes. All my years in politics have been spent in opposition, both in British Columbia and here. I believe there are times when we should forget completely our party and politics and be concerned only with decisions. This is such a time. There are occasions when responsibility must rest with the government. During my 23 years in opposition I have found myself in opposition to Liberals more than once, but on this occasion I am prepared to say I think Canada through the minister of external affairs has made a contribution which has meant a great deal to the world and to the preservation of the commonwealth.

We are wrong in this House of Commons to hold up the house on questions such as whether it is to be the Queen's Own Rifles, the Seaforth Highlanders or anybody else that is to go over to Egypt, or how they are to be equipped. The government has the responsibility and if it fails it will be charged in this house. But I say that because it has made the decision it is its responsibility. We have been discussing telephone charges and everything else on this sheet, and I say it is ridiculous and stupid. I hope that now we will stick strictly to the principle. Do we believe in the force? Yes. Do we believe in Hungarian aid? Yes. Then let us vote for these things and get on right now.

Mr. Quelch: I wonder whether the Minister of National Defence could clarify the point raised by the hon. member for Okanagan Boundary regarding the degree to which these men are covered by insurance. I understand they are not covered by the general insurance principle of the Pension Act. On the other hand, if these men suffer any form of disability while on duty they will be covered. But what about the man who may be off duty, who may perhaps be sight-seeing and some friendly little Arab, we will say, sticks a knife in his back or drops a bomb on him? What is the situation then? Is he covered?

Mr. Campney: The general principle, and I do not think it has ever been varied, is that when service people are on duty—and

[Mr. Winch.]

there is always a question of fact in each case—they are covered and if they are not on duty they are just like anyone else employed in civilian life who is off duty, meets with an accident, gets into trouble or has an accident with his car. I do not think you should consider the liability in the case of the soldier who is off duty as being any different from that of any other person.

Mr. Quelch: Surely that is a ridiculous suggestion. Surely you are not going to say that when you send a man into a situation like that existing in Egypt at the present time he is in exactly the same position as if he is wandering down a street in Canada. It is an entirely different situation. Just because a man may not actually be on duty surely is no reason to say that if one of the members of the Arab army or even an Israeli happens to stick a knife in his back there is no greater hazard than if he is walking down a street in Montreal. Surely that man should be covered fully the whole time he is there so far as any action by either the Arab army or the Israeli army is concerned. I can quite understand that if the soldier were run over by a civilian car there perhaps might be some responsibility on the part of the soldier because he was not more careful, but surely he should be covered if he suffers any disability as the result of any action of a member of the Arab army or the Jewish army.

Mr. Campney: You are dealing with incidents involving members of other forces. In that case the soldier would be taken care of. Certainly we have never had any difficulties, except in the very occasional case such as mentioned by the hon. member who spoke earlier, which has not been amicably adjusted. You have to consider the facts in all these cases. You just cannot say that everybody is covered or is not covered, but I have never been accused in our department of being unreasonable with regard to these cases, and I would be glad to look into the situation as to the police force. I presume the United Nations will be looking into it too, but I do not want to commit myself to a general principle in the face of conditions that are not yet clarified.

Mr. Low: Would the United Nations not have some responsibility in this case? I should like to hear from the Secretary of State for External Affairs.

Mr. Pearson: They are looking into their responsibility as an organization now in respect of this international police force,