

(E) WAR ORGANIZATION AND REGULATIONS

1. AMENDMENT OF DEPARTMENT OF NATIONAL DEFENCE ACT, PRIME MINISTER'S SPEECH OF JULY 10, 1940

Right Hon. W. L. Mackenzie King (Prime Minister) moved the second reading of Bill No. 74, to amend the Department of National Defence Act.

He said: "As I intimated to the House a day or two ago, the purpose of the present measure is to make provision for an additional portfolio in relation to the Department of National Defence. At the present time the administration of all branches of the department is under the Minister of National Defence and the Minister of National Defence for Air. It is proposed to make provision for a third minister, the Minister of National Defence for Naval Services, whose duties with respect to naval matters will be similar to the duties of the Minister of National Defence for Air in regard to matters pertaining to the air forces.

The present bill repeals the act passed this session with respect to the appointment of a Minister of National Defence for Air, but re-enacts its provisions in their entirety in a broad manner which permits of the inclusion in the Defence Act, which is the act that is being amended, of the duties and functions of the Minister of National Defence for Naval Services as well as those of the Minister of National Defence for Air. It will be noticed that the bill also makes provision for the appointment of a minister to be associated with the Minister of National Defence. I might explain that when my hon. colleague who until recently was Minister of Finance (Mr. Ralston) consented to take over the duties of the Department of National Defence he felt he would wish to have associated with him a colleague who could be immediately at hand to assist him in seeing that matters of urgency in the department were expedited as rapidly as possible, and that no delays would occur, for example, through the absence of the minister himself. As an example, assuming the minister were called upon to leave the city and visit a training camp, or if he desired to perform that particular duty, one which would come naturally within the duties of the Minister of National Defence, there would not be, unless special provision were made for it, a minister here at headquarters with authority to take immediate action concerning some of those matters which might require prompt attention and action.

As the Minister of National Defence for Air has had a wide experience in the Department of National Defence, having acted as minister of that department for a considerable period of time, my colleague feels that he would be better qualified than any one else to take on the responsible duties of associate Minister of National Defence.