

Committee on Defence Expenditure

most severe critics of the government are the persons who have always derived some pleasure from calling themselves Liberals. When I was home during the Christmas recess they were the ones who were most vociferous in their condemnation of what was going on. As I say, the reaction to these things will pale into insignificance in comparison to what the reaction might be if action is not taken, first to clear up this Currie situation in the right way, and then to go into that field of defence construction where we can save the Canadian taxpayers plenty of money.

Hon. Robert H. Winters (Minister of Resources and Development): I can assure hon. members, Mr. Speaker, that I do not propose to make a long speech at this stage of the debate, but I do believe I should say a word in reply to the speech just made by the hon. member for Red Deer (Mr. Shaw). I should like also to refer back to an earlier speech he made on November 26, and to assure him and hon. members that what he said at that time did not fall on deaf ears, as he may perhaps think and as some other members indicated in speeches made in this debate. The reason I am taking part in this debate is that the construction operations in question are carried out by Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation, acting as agents for the Department of Defence Production, which in the first instance is assigned responsibility for carrying out these projects for the Department of National Defence.

From time to time reports have reached me about what have been termed irregularities at Penhold, Namao and Cold Lake in Alberta, as well as other areas where construction projects have been carried out in Canada. In each instance we try to get to the bottom of the matter and ascertain whether the rumours are true, and to make corrections where there are irregularities or defaults. Hon. members will, therefore, be pleased to know that following the speech by the hon. member for Red Deer (Mr. Shaw) I had a number of meetings with my colleagues, the Minister of National Defence (Mr. Claxton), the Minister of Defence Production (Mr. Howe), the Minister of Mines and Technical

Surveys (Mr. Prudham), who is of course immediately interested, the Solicitor General and their officials. We examined each of the points raised by the hon. member. I was satisfied that in the vast majority of instances there were logical explanations with respect to the points he raised. In a number of other instances there were corrective actions that could be taken; and where it was indicated, corrective actions were at once instituted.

I was pleased to hear the hon. member say tonight that he noted some improvements following the speech he made in the house. I hope he will take that as an indication that his speech did not fall on deaf ears, and that we are interested in making corrections where corrections are indicated. In our meetings we considered that, with respect to these projects in Alberta as well as elsewhere, the points could be effectively answered, and that the place to do so was in the committee once it has been set up. My only point in rising tonight was to assure the hon. member that when this general subject matter is before the committee, his points will be dealt with in a manner that I hope will meet with his complete satisfaction.

Mr. G. C. Nowlan (Annapolis-Kings): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Red Deer (Mr. Shaw) said he would sit down before ten o'clock. It is a fact that I shall not sit down before ten o'clock, so if Your Honour wishes to call it ten o'clock now we could adjourn this debate. Otherwise, we can carry on until ten o'clock.

Mr. Speaker: Is it the wish of hon. members that I call it ten o'clock?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

On motion of Mr. Nowlan the debate was adjourned.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mr. Fournier (Hull) moved the adjournment of the house.

He said: Mr. Speaker, Monday is private members' day, so we shall proceed according to standing order No. 15.

Motion agreed to and the house adjourned at 9.50 p.m.