

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Friday, March 27, 1953

The house met at 2.30 p.m.

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

BROADCASTING—CONCURRENCE IN FIRST REPORT

Mr. W. A. Robinson (Simcoe East) presented the first report of the special committee on broadcasting, and moved that the report be concurred in.

Motion agreed to.

RAILWAYS AND SHIPPING—SECOND REPORT

Mr. Hughes Cleaver (Halton) presented the second report of the sessional committee on railways and shipping owned, operated and controlled by the government.

Mr. Macdonnell (Greenwood): On a question of privilege, Mr. Speaker, I wish to point out that this is a majority report.

CANADIAN NATIONAL RAILWAYS

REFERENCE OF ESTIMATES TO COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY

Hon. Douglas Abbott (Minister of Finance) moved:

That votes Nos. 467, 471 and 476 of the main estimates for 1953-54, approved and reported upon this day by the sessional committee on railways and shipping owned, operated and controlled by the government, be referred back to the committee of supply.

Motion agreed to.

NATIONAL DEFENCE

ALLEGED STATEMENT OF WING COMMANDER R. H. ROHMER—CANADIAN DEFENCE AGAINST AIR ATTACK

On the orders of the day:

Mr. G. R. Pearkes (Nanaimo): May I direct a question to the Minister of National Defence, notice of which I have given his office. Has the minister any comment to make on the address delivered in Toronto yesterday by Wing Commander R. H. Rohmer, D.F.C., in which he stated that Canada is absolutely defenceless to air attack—

Some hon. Members: Order, order.

Mr. Ferguson: Don't you want to hear the truth?

Mr. Pearkes:—and that it is high time the people of Canada were told the truth?

Some hon. Members: Order.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. As the hon. member knows, he must not give any information—

An hon. Member: He is reading a speech.

Mr. Ferguson: This is a matter of national importance.

An hon. Member: Horses to you.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. It is not possible for the Speaker to be heard if there is noise in the house. The hon. member for Nanaimo (Mr. Pearkes) is asking a question. He is entitled to ask the question if the matter is urgent, but he must not give any information when asking the question. He must simply ask his question.

Mr. Pearkes: I have asked my question, Mr. Speaker.

An hon. Member: He has given a speech.

Hon. Brooke Claxton (Minister of National Defence): I can only answer the question fully by going extensively into the situation regarding the production of aircraft. This question was covered before by my colleague the Minister of Defence Production (Mr. Howe), in a statement in the house on February 16, in so far as the production by A.V. Roe Canada Limited is concerned.

In answer to the hon. member for Nanaimo, I can tell him that we have today six squadrons of Sabre fighters abroad, the most formidable fighter aircraft in operation today. The importance of the Canadian Sabre squadrons was indicated by references to them in the press growing out of the recent incidents in Europe. Three more squadrons are on their way over. We shall complete our full commitment of an air division of twelve squadrons to NATO by the date set and we shall do that in the belief—which I think is shared by all Canadians—that the best place to defend Canada and to prevent aggression is as far away from our shores as possible.

As I have indicated, a report on the production of the CF-100 has already been made to the house—that is the other fighter aircraft we have in production—and this report and others available to me on the production of the aircraft and the engines