

*Supply—National Defence*

hon. member for Calgary North the other day, that only 12 per cent of the defence budget has been allocated for new equipment, then what has happened?

● (4:00 p.m.)

I think it is incumbent upon the minister to explain clearly to the members of the committee and to the Canadian public as a whole just where all this money is going. It seems very confusing that the department's policy in one year should be to retire people from the armed services and pay them rather lavish retirement bonuses but in subsequent months, when faced with a shortage of trained military personnel, to transfer men from one unit in order to bring another up to full strength. It also seems strange that the department now finds itself in the position of having to pay re-enlistment bonuses in order to entice people to remain in the services. This seems to be a complete contradiction of policy in the course of a very few months. It may be that the policy of this department in this regard has been given a good public image but it seems to me that the results indicate something quite different.

I am of the opinion that the public relations efforts that went into this change have been very expensive and I am not sure that this has not succeeded in giving the people of this country and the members of this committee an entirely misleading and false impression of the reality of the situation. It seems that we are looking at a hoax of epic proportions because it does not appear possible that Canada's defence capability has been improved during the course of the past year or 18 months. Certainly this cannot be the case when we have been able to allocate only 12 per cent of the defence budget to weaponry acquisition, unless that figure is wrong. If the figure is wrong I should like to hear the minister refute it.

I have no intention of speaking further on matters of broad policy concerning this department but I do wish to make some remarks concerning the administrative practices followed by the department in the acquisition of land for departmental purposes. I refer specifically to the decision of the Department of National Defence to expropriate several thousands of acres of land, including an entire village, in order to enlarge the area of Camp Valcartier.

This decision taken by itself may seem to be concerned with only a small isolated incident in the department's activities but it does

raise several questions that deserve consideration. First of all, what specific military purposes demanded or necessitated that this particular army camp be enlarged? According to my information, the army now has large blocks of land for training purposes in close proximity to that camp, although perhaps not adjacent. Even though it were agreed that the military did require extra land for its purposes, could not the department have acquired that land in more unsettled areas where the land is not being used? Canada is not a densely populated land. There are hundreds of thousands of acres of open space which could be utilized for such purposes. Why is it so necessary to expropriate farm land and an entire village?

The procedure that was followed by the department in an attempt to acquire this property near Valcartier makes me curious. From all accounts I have heard and articles I have read I have gained the impression that the officials of the government expropriated first and then negotiated as to the price to be paid to the property holders. It seems to me that the statutory power to expropriate should not have been invoked unless free negotiation ended in a stalemate. To expropriate first and then approach the owners as to the price to be paid seems to me to be an abuse of this power.

I must admit that in the past six or so years there has been a tendency on the part of governments, federal and provincial, to take a more administratively convenient approach in acquiring property for the Crown. Governments today are rather more inclined to file plans of expropriation first in land titles offices and then go about the process of negotiating with the property owners the price to be paid. I think we have degenerated into a rather sorry state when we give preference to administrative convenience over the rights of individual small property holders.

It may well be that in respect of the land acquisition being attempted at this time near Camp Valcartier the government has in fact attempted to acquire the land through free negotiation. But that certainly is not the impression I have of the matter and I hope that the responsible minister or the minister who is informed in this regard will be able to give us some clarification.

It is also my impression that no high ranking official of the department has bothered to go to the area to meet with the people who are affected and that no attempt has

[Mr. Schreyer.]