

Supply—National Defence

ready to answer questions, and I shall be only too happy to do so if hon. members will put them.

Mr. Hees: Mr. Chairman, as a member of the active reserve of the armed forces, and having attended Petawawa military camp for the last three years, I agree with everything the minister and the leader of the opposition have said about the excellence of the training which is given the militia branch of our armed forces. It could not be improved upon. But something the minister said I believe is of vital importance to this house, and that is that the funds which this house is willing to vote for defence for the coming year will not make us as well prepared for any eventuality as we should like to be. The minister said that if we desire more preparation for the army, shall we say, we have to rob the air force and the navy; and if we want more preparedness or more equipment for the air force, we have to rob the other branches of the service. What this committee and this country want to hear from the Minister of National Defence is an indication as to how much money is needed to bring the forces of this country into such a position that we shall be able to deal with aggression from outside and take our place as a member of the North Atlantic alliance.

After hostilities have started—if they do—in which we find ourselves involved, if we are not sufficiently prepared either to defend ourselves adequately or to take an honourable position as a member of the north Atlantic alliance, as we have pledged ourselves to do, the minister cannot come to us and say: If you had voted me the funds, I would have been able to see to it that you were properly prepared. He and his department and this government are the people who have the knowledge on which to say what we require, on June 26, 1950, to prepare ourselves for attack from outside or to take our proper place in the north Atlantic alliance. I say to the minister that what this committee wants to hear before this session is over, in order to make these estimates mean anything, is not what it will cost to give us semi-preparedness, but what, in his greater knowledge than is available to the members of this committee and to the people of this country, he thinks are the appropriations that are needed to give us the preparedness that we require today to fulfil our duties, as a party to the North Atlantic pact, in defending this country or in quelling aggression wherever it may take place.

The minister should bring these figures before the committee and let this parliament decide, on behalf of the people of Canada, whether or not the people are willing to

foot the bill to give this country the kind of preparedness which the Minister of National Defence has implied should be considerably greater than the estimates now before us provides for the armed forces of Canada. I am asking the minister to let this committee know, today, or certainly before parliament closes, what funds are necessary to give us the preparedness which, as of June 26, 1950, in the light of the latest developments in international affairs, this country is entitled to with respect to its armed forces.

Mr. Claxton: I am sure, Mr. Chairman, that I voice the views of all members on this side of the chamber in welcoming the hon. member who has just taken his seat and in congratulating him most heartily on having made his first speech. As we all know, he had a good record of active service with the forces during the war, and also with the reserve forces. I am sure that his contribution to the work of the house in this and other fields will be extremely valuable.

With regard to his question, I may say that it is a fair and proper one, but, in view of the present state of the world, it is one which cannot be answered with a single figure. I can say that if another \$200 million were voted by parliament for defence, only a small part of it would go into personnel, and a large part of it would go into equipment. In the first instance that equipment would be an acceleration of our aircraft production program; in the second place, an acceleration of our shipbuilding program, and in the third place, the commencement of a program of replacement of some of the armour and armaments of the army. But possibly more useful than spending the whole of any such sum of money on our own equipment would be to spend it on equipment of other North Atlantic treaty countries. If he asked me how much it would cost us to ensure our safety at this time, then I can tell him that the figure would be large; because, as everyone knows, the deficiencies in equipment of the North Atlantic treaty countries are great indeed. If we had a large sum of money added to our estimates at this time we would undoubtedly give most serious consideration to making the best possible defence use of that money by building equipment and giving it or transferring it, on terms of one kind or another, to our allies in the North Atlantic treaty. That having been done, we would be better prepared than we are today in the place where we should be better prepared than we are today.

[Mr. Claxton.]