

ments and changes, and I think it must have been apparent to any hon. member that either defence purchasing would return to the Department of National Defence or else it would be handled by some continuing agency of the government. The government's view throughout was that it should be handled by a separate agency, and the Canadian Commercial Corporation was envisaged as such an agency. That is what I meant when I said it was created having that in mind, though the immediate object for which it was set up was different.

Let me take up some of the points made by the hon. member for Vancouver South (Mr. Green). He said that this would be a one-man show and objected to it on that score. Well, if defence purchasing were put under a branch of the Department of National Defence, as has been suggested by speakers opposite, I suggest it would still be a one-man show, and the one man would be either the head of the branch or the minister concerned. There is no escaping from the fact that ultimately responsibility under our parliamentary system must be taken by one man.

The hon. member suggested a board. I think it has been found by experience that a board is frequently not the most efficient, economic and speedy means of doing administrative and executive work. Our experience is that it is often better to do it either directly in a government department or to have it done by a crown company.

The hon. member says this is not a wartime show. It is not a wartime show because it is not war time, but this carries into peace time in the person of Mr. W. D. Low and other senior officials the experience and the knowledge and the files and the contacts with industry throughout the country which the Department of Munitions and Supply built up over six years.

The hon. member said that this was not a defence-minded department and that it was not responsible for defence, and the hon. member for Nanaimo (Mr. Pearkes) made somewhat similar observations. The Canadian Commercial Corporation is intended to be a purchasing agency. It does not design munitions of war or equipment. Those designs are worked out in the department of defence, or under its authority, but, the design having been arrived at, the Canadian Commercial Corporation is to be asked to obtain tenders and place a contract. The corporation is a purchasing agency and the matter would be handled in that way because it is considered to be desirable that there should be a civilian agency of government having

continuous contact with civilian suppliers and manufacturers of munitions of war. As I pointed out, these are exactly the same people who had this continuous association through the Department of Munitions and Supply with the suppliers of munitions during the war.

Mr. DIFENBAKER: If the minister will allow a question just for the purpose of getting information, is this new plan as covered by the amendment, section 17, to be a continuing one, and has it been determined by the government that this is the proper way of performing in the future the functions covered by the section?

Mr. CLAXTON: Of course. That is the very purpose of the bill, for two years, and then the whole matter will be reviewed.

Mr. DIFENBAKER: Oh!

Mr. FRASER: Two years is just the thin end of the wedge.

Mr. CLAXTON: My hon. friend seems to regard it as curious that it should be put before parliament again after a period of two years, but that is done expressly for the purpose of ensuring that there shall be a review of the situation at the end of two years. I think my hon. friend is one of those who rather likes to have parliament have a say in these matters.

Mr. DIFENBAKER: Yes, and I do not like boards.

Mr. CLAXTON: As far as we can see, this is the most desirable way of doing this purchasing in the light of our wartime experience. If two years from now it is found that it is not the most desirable way, we shall be quite prepared to change it.

As I was saying, the function of the corporation is not to design equipment, it is not to fix specifications; it is to place orders, and it is considered desirable that that should be done outside the Department of National Defence, because our belief is that the Department of National Defence should be primarily engaged with defence matters and not directly charged with questions of purchase and in some respects, inspection, industrial organization and the like, although I shall have a word to say further on that point.

The hon. member asked what was the position of Canadian Arsenals Limited. Canadian Arsenals Limited is at present under the Minister of Reconstruction and Supply, and the minister through whom the company will report to parliament has not yet been finally decided upon, though obviously it will be either the Minister of Trade and Commerce