Mr. ABBOTT: $325,000; what is next?

Mr. DIEFENBAKER: I was dealing with War Assets Corporation. I pointed out that there were 500 employees each earning over $3,000 a year. I give one example to indicate the attitude of the government, the sale of Fairmiles. I think the record of War Assets Corporation so far as efficiency goes deserves the serious consideration of this house and country, and information with respect to the transactions of the corporation should be given to the house and not be held back as it is being to-day in the war expenditures committee. But I shall not deal with that report since it is not before the house.

It cost this country $140,320 for eighty Fairmiles and War Assets Corporation sold forty-nine of them at $3,000 each. They could have got $15,000 and $20,000 for one or more of them. The reason they did not was that the minister said that if they had got a better price it would have created difficulty and resentment.

What about the government ships sold to the French government? Canada makes loans to France with a view to having the French government purchase commodities in Canada? The French government purchased ten Canadian government ships for $415,000 per vessel. Did the government sell them direct to the government of France? No. They sold them through an intermediary and paid that intermediary, the American Ship Brokerage Corporation, a commission of $43,000 for each ship. I tried to find out last November who the intermediary was, and we were promised the information but it has not been given to date.

What about the situation in regard to the ships that were built by the Industrial Shipping Company Limited, of Mahone Bay, Nova Scotia, which went on manufacturing tugs, barges and scows after the end of the war, and in particular ten 65-foot tugs at a unit cost of $61,000? The British government did not want them, and what did the Canadian government do? They went ahead with the completion of these ships. When they were completed they were turned over to War Assets at $61,500 apiece and War Assets sold them at $20,000 apiece. It is waste like that, conditions like that—and I have the record here showing the sales that War Assets have made but I shall not impose it on the house—which indicate that War Assets Corporation have not been protecting the interests of the Canadian people.

You were kind enough, Mr. Speaker, to grant me an extension of time. Other matters I shall refer to when we go into committee. I suggest now, as I have suggested heretofore, that at this time when the government is seeking to increase production in this country and to give an incentive to labour and the white-collared class and to the producers of this country, the minister, even now, should do two things. He should pare down these expenditures, which if they are not pared down will pare down the fabric of this confederation. We cannot go on piling up debt the way we are doing without a day of reckoning coming.

Second, I suggest that the government can never reduce taxation until it gets rid of the billion dollar mentality. I urge the government to make every effort to cut down controllable expenditure, and not to rush this parliament home, not to bring down the budget in the last few days and say that we should not continue talking because members want to go home. I want to go home too, but we have a responsibility here to the people of Canada, and that responsibility is this. Twelve million people in Canada are asking us to see that waste and over-expenditure be cut down; that taxation be reduced; that the people be given relief from the period of war control, high taxation and the like, and that jobs be furnished so that the Canadian people will have a higher standard of living.

Mr. ROBERT FAIR (Battle River): It seems customary, Mr. Speaker, for hon. members rising in this debate to offer an apology for the time they intend to take. In my case I have no apology to offer. I feel it is the duty of every member here to oppose many of the things contained in the budget which was presented on the 27th of June last.

During the last six or seven years we have put up with increases in taxation and with sufferings in many directions and, now that the shooting war is over, I think it is about time that some relief from taxation be given to the people of Canada. If we sit here dumbly, I expect that that punishment will continue, and it is not coming to our people further to endure punishment. I do not intend to deal with many subjects to-day, but I hope to discuss at the resolution stage some of the matters dealt with in the budget.

One thing I see here which should make the people of Canada think is the amount of our funded debt at the end of March this year. It is stated to be, in round figures, $16,807,000,000. When we look back to the size of our debt in 1939 we find that it amounted to $3,205,956,000. That is quite an addition to our debt in a period of seven years. It does not seem to mean much to some people. To others it means quite a lot.