

Reconstruction and Supply

last. This conjoining of these departments under one minister is a matter of real importance. I do not care how great a man the minister is, in my opinion he cannot possibly do these two jobs. Above all, this job of reconstruction demands some leisure on the part of the minister, and I doubt if the minister ever has ten minutes between appointments from morning to night. He has told us of the difficulty of getting men.

Turning aside for a moment, I should like to remind the minister of a couple of lamentable cases of people having too many jobs, one in literature and the other in history. We all know about our friend, Pooh-Bah who had such a wide range of jobs and who was threatened with death by boiling in oil. I am not so sure whether he got that. Then there was also the historical case of Mr. Mussolini; he had far too many jobs, and I know the minister well remembers that he came to a most untimely end.

Speaking seriously, and not forgetting what one hon. gentleman to my left said the other day when he told us that we could never make the minister change his mind, I hope that what I am saying will register in some way, because I am convinced that these two jobs cannot be done together. Surely there is some man of capacity sitting among all those bright faces we see over there who can bring some ability to this job, so that the present minister will not have to carry such an overwhelming load.

Let me recapitulate what I have said. This job is vital to the country and it needs all the time of one man. If any man can cover what the Prime Minister has outlined, I am ready to give him full marks. As I say, it demands all the time of one man, and I submit that the welfare of this country demands that it be arranged in that way. What has that man to do? He will have to deal with the liquidation of these companies, and some of them are very large ventures which will not liquidate in a hurry. Wartime Housing will not be liquidated overnight. War Assets will not be liquidated overnight, nor will Polymer and a good many others. If this thing is done I venture to predict that in a year or two the minister will say, "If I only had had time to do this, that and the other, I could have done a better job." This is a big job and, if it is carried on in this way, I believe it will be impossible for any man to do it.

Mr. ROSS (Souris): I was just going to add a word to what the hon. member for Muskoka-Ontario has said. I think this is a distinctly bad move for Canada. We have had before

[Mr. Macdonnell.]

us the war appropriation, and we can see now that it is a full-time job for anyone to clean up the Department of Munitions and Supply; even War Assets alone is almost a full-time job. The manner in which that has been handled has unnecessarily cost the taxpayers of this country millions of dollars a month. The department should be revamped.

We have been making requests in committees, but I suppose we cannot discuss those matters at this particular time. There is, however, one matter I wish to bring up right now. Back in 1942 the ministers of government promised that the men being discharged would be given first priority on the purchase of army or government equipment. For instance, those who settled on the land would have a priority to purchase automobiles, station wagons, tractors and other equipment that might be disposed of. We were told that in 1942, in 1943 and in 1944, but to-day no priority exists for any ex-service man from any of the three branches.

I have in mind a young chap who has been freshly discharged. He informs me that a few weeks back he interviewed the officials in War Assets, but they told him that they had received no instructions regarding priority on the sale of equipment to any ex-service person over a civilian. That is a most disappointing thing at this stage. It is proof that they are falling down.

I have another request which I should like to read to the committee, and I have no doubt that the minister has received similar requests from departments of education across Canada. This telegram reads:

J. A. Ross, M.P.

Will you kindly urge on behalf of the Manitoba school trustees association that the War Assets Corporation turn over all instructional equipment and material to the educational authorities throughout the dominion for use in the schools.

Robt. Love,
Secretary.

I am sure not a member of this committee will object to that request being met, and I know not a taxpayer would object to that equipment being handled in that way. I think every taxpayer in Canada would support that request of the trustees of my province. I have no doubt the other provinces have made similar requests.

Mr. FRASER: I have one right here.

Mr. ROSS (Souris): I urge the minister to give thought to matters of this kind. I am sure he will not rise in his place and object to our request that discharged men and women from the different armed forces be granted priorities for equipment which might