

we are content. I am told that the Minister of National Defence is just arriving and I should like to check on that. Perhaps we could proceed for a few minutes.

Mr. Alkenbrack: Mr. Chairman, I do not wish to speak for very long, but I intend to take up the case of the volunteer militiaman and the local armouries. In the past these armouries have been training centres for the militia. Many of the militia units have been disbanded and the armouries have been closed. For example, the armouries in Napanee and Picton have been closed and are up for sale.

The Deputy Chairman: Order, please. The Chair has some difficulty in hearing what the hon. member is saying. Hon. members on both sides of the house should refrain from loud conversation and conduct their conversation in undertones.

Mr. Alkenbrack: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. As I was saying, many of these armouries which have been the headquarters for our volunteer militiamen in the past are being closed. Ever since confederation this country has depended on volunteers for defence. The policy of this government has been to adopt something untried, something I do not believe will serve us well in the future.

Since the minister adopted the policy of tearing down these local armouries he has built an elaborate, multi-million dollar armoury in Toronto. He would, of course, close and tear down the armouries in Picton and Napanee. I wonder what the reason for this is. The Prime Minister can go to Vancouver and very suddenly announce that he will give \$2 million for a rink in that city. However, he has done nothing for the volunteer militia in the small towns of Ontario.

In perusing the minister's speech last night I noticed, and I want to bring this to the attention of all hon. members, that he did not say one word about the volunteer soldier, nor did he say one word about the volunteer units which have always been a part of the defence of this country. It seems to me ironic that in this very building, a part of which is dedicated to remembrance of those volunteers who have fallen in the defence of this country, and indeed within the shadows of those stones which are solemn to their memory we should be obliged to speak in defence of the principles for which these men stood and the facilities that made their service possible. We should recall that it was the local armoury that made the service of these volunteers

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possible. I believe it is as accurate a statement now as it has been for many years past that Canada's defence is based on the hypotheses of a small but intensively trained regular army to act as an instructional cadre for citizen soldiers forming a well trained and competent militia which can be brought quickly to full strength and training in time of war.

Modern weapons and their technology have complicated the soldier's equipment and his drill. Surely, however, the will and the skill to defend is still the most important defence and deterrent this nation possesses. How can we foster these talents without a continuous emphasis upon proper training of our youth within the various localities as a healthy and normal activity in conjunction with home and school? Surely we all agree that for many years past the local militia units and the armouries in which they have trained have stood for that will and that skill. Indeed, they have been the only means of implementing the nation's determination to act when faced with the hard shock of war.

In my own constituency the two militia units at Picton and Napanee have been disbanded and if I interpret the signs correctly the armouries are to be disposed of. In all likelihood these worthy buildings will be torn down. Is it true that these local units and their quarters are simply to disappear? It is well recognized and no one is going to take issue with the fact that militia reorganization is necessary from time to time. Some units must merge with others and their members must change from one corps to another and be assigned to other tasks. There would be no serious disruption if this were the case.

What has caused the storm of protest is the fact that not only have the units been disbanded but their armouries are to go as well. I have received 150 letters protesting this policy. I wonder whether the full implication of this policy is understood by everyone here? I wonder whether they really can appreciate what this means to small communities where communal activity of many kinds as well as military activity is centred around these historic buildings?

In the cities where a number of military formations exist, each with a headquarters, an armoury might be removed without greatly disturbing the overall efficiency of the unit. In a small, largely rural community like ours it is a disaster of no small consequence when these facilities are removed. We should remember that the rural communities con-