

Supply—National Defence

Mr. MacInnis (Cape Breton South): I am aware of the statement previously made by President de Gaulle, but there seems to be a little more determination in the one he made recently. A date line has been set of April 4 with respect to the NATO forces.

Mr. Knowles: What year?

Mr. MacInnis (Cape Breton South): This year.

Mr. Knowles: The hon. member did not read the paper.

Mr. MacInnis (Cape Breton South): Probably I read a different paper. In any case General de Gaulle has indicated his intention of taking over service personnel of foreign countries that remain in France after April 4.

Mr. Walker: But what year?

Mr. MacInnis (Cape Breton South): 1969 is the answer, and I thank the hon. member very much. With respect to the question asked by the hon. member for Kootenay West, when that same problem came up on a previous occasion the Department of National Defence had no answer for it. In many respects the policies followed by the government are most ridiculous.

On the question of morale I realize that the matter I am going to mention comes under the jurisdiction of the Minister of Veterans Affairs. It concerns our enlisted men and women and their pensions, and in the case of pensions I feel the Minister of National Defence should take it upon himself to make representations on behalf of service personnel and their families.

The Auditor General's report has indicated that in some cases pensions for service personnel were dated back to the age of nine years. I contrast that with the case of Sergeant Hamood, a man from my own town, who was serving in Europe. I bring it to the minister's attention because I think it is his responsibility to intercede with the Minister of Veterans Affairs. This sergeant was a married man, serving in Europe and living off the base. Each and every day he took part in a car pool in order to arrive for duty at nine o'clock in the morning. On the particular morning I am referring to he was travelling with his own commanding officer. There was an accident and this young Sergeant Hamood was taken to hospital. There they had to cut his uniform off, and there he died. But the Minister of Veterans Affairs can see no reason why his survivors should get a pension,

[Mr. Herridge.]

despite the fact that the man was killed on his way to work, was in uniform, and was travelling with his own commanding officer.

It is the minister's responsibility to look after the troops. This man's wife and children are denied a pension because, according to the department's interpretation, he was not on duty at the time he was killed. It is something which has a direct effect on the morale of our troops and I believe the minister should take the matter up with his colleague, the Minister of Veterans Affairs, and have something done about it.

As the various items of the estimates come up I have every intention of saying more with respect to these matters. Once again I plead with the minister to intervene on behalf of the sergeant's family I have mentioned.

Mr. Grills: Mr. Chairman, the reason I am taking part in this debate at this time is due to the fact that one of the largest and finest air stations in Canada is in my riding. I refer of course to Trenton air station, the home base of Transport Command, as well as No. 6 repair depot.

I have more than a casual interest in this debate because I represent many of the personnel at this air station and am associated with them in the business and social life of our community. I have met some of the finest calibre of citizens who have intended fulfilling their careers in the air force.

So far as the minister is concerned, as an individual outside his office I have found him a likeable person. At one time it was said that he somewhat resembled the Leader of the Opposition, but I am afraid that so far as ability is concerned there is no resemblance. During my acquaintance and experience with armed service personnel I have never witnessed morale so low within the services. In my opinion nothing in the history of the Canadian armed forces has shaken the individual serviceman's morale more than the mismanagement of integration.

Why is morale so low within all services and throughout all ranks? The answer lies in the methods used to release personnel ahead of their normal retiring dates. The total disregard of the individual and the callous and ruthless method of chopping away careers has alarmed everyone.

● (7:30 p.m.)

Airmen and officers with long and honourable service were suddenly released. For many months all ranks knew that releases would be made because the minister made frequent