

Supply—National Defence

Since this particular incident was brought to my notice, however, we have sent out instructions to the effect that commanding officers should be more careful to consider the relative cost of alternative means of transportation when they authorize travel.

Mr. Herridge: I am sorry to trouble the minister again but I wish to return to this intriguing episode of the enlistment of boys in short pants in the armed forces of Canada. I am sure the minister wishes to give us all the information he can. Would he agree to having all those persons mentioned by the Auditor General called before the defence committee so that they can explain in detail how these lads were enlisted at that time and in what circumstances; the regiments to which they belonged and the services which they performed before they reached the normal age of enlistment?

Mr. Hellyer: These gentlemen are all retired from the service now. But every case has already been thoroughly investigated. Our legal department has reached the conclusion that in all cases the evidence presented was valid—and the application of the law is based on valid evidence.

In these circumstances I think the only course open to the hon. gentleman, if he feels this practice should be ended, would be to introduce or support amendments to the law which would obviate these payments to people who serve at a certain age.

Mr. Herridge: In reply to the minister I would say that the first thing to do would be to move an amendment to the National Defence Act providing for the raising of the age of enlistment in the armed forces of Canada. It is not fair to have people of nine years of age enlisting in the army. It is going too far.

An hon. Member: How old were you?

Mr. Herridge: Eighteen. Would the committee not have the right to call these people to whom I have referred?

Mr. Churchill: It would be up to the committee.

Mr. Hellyer: I cannot answer that question offhand. I believe the standing committee would have the power to call witnesses if it wanted to. I think the relevant committee would be the Public Accounts Committee, because this affects an item which is now included in the Public Accounts.

Mr. Nielsen: I was interested in the minister's promise yesterday in reply to several questions put to him by members on this side

of the house that he would explain to us the performance capabilities of the CF-5. I can recall in particular questions about the take-off run, the length of runway required, and this somewhat astounding capability of the CF-5 to land on grass. The minister was also talking about the ground support role which this aircraft could play.

Would he now fulfil his promise of yesterday and elaborate on these matters for the benefit of those of us in the opposition who are not quite so technically informed as is the minister?

Mr. Hellyer: If the hon. member would look at the record I think he will find I said that this information could best be given before the standing committee which will be meeting in a few days, and before which all this information can be given, such as take-off characteristics, performance at different altitudes under varying loads, and so on. This would involve more technical information than it would be appropriate to give before the committee of the whole house.

Mr. Nielsen: I think I recall the minister's promise last evening. He specifically mentioned vote 15 on which all this elaboration and enlightenment was to be forthcoming. Surely the minister can enlighten the committee this evening on all these matters, particularly in view of the lengthy and detailed statement in support of the aircraft he gave to us last night?

Mr. Hellyer: I think the hon. gentleman has juxtaposed two things in his mind. He could confirm this, I believe, by looking again at the record. In view of the fact that there are so many different conditions in respect of which he would, no doubt, want information concerning the performance of this plane, the best place to have an answer to these questions is in the standing committee, where officers could show charts and graphs of performance over a wide range.

Mr. Nielsen: I would be prepared to wait for the meetings of the committee if the minister was prepared to tell us this evening that because of his limited knowledge of the performance capabilities of this aircraft he is incapable of advising us with regard to them. Otherwise I think we should have an explanation tonight. If the minister would go so far as to admit this, I am prepared to be patient.