

ister telling us he will do something to improve the situation at Halifax. This matter is not new, it has been before the House from time to time. It commenced as soon as the war broke out. At the short session of Parliament, in August, 1914, we learned that the politicians in Halifax were becoming active and endeavouring to get all the money they could out of the department by interfering with military affairs. The matter was drawn to the attention of the Prime Minister at that date, and we got an assurance from him that it would be stopped. It has never been stopped, it is going on to-day, and we have the junior member from Halifax stating to-night that the military hospitals cannot be run without the interference of local committees, who order everything that is bought for the hospitals, doing all the business over the heads of the men who ought to do it and who should be entrusted to do it by the minister. That is very easily stopped; the minister could stop it with a stroke of the pen. Let him instruct his chief officer at Halifax, whoever he is, that he must not accept any recommendation from any local politicians, or any man who interferes with him in conducting the local business. Let him do that in good faith. Let him tell his officer that if he wants to purchase goods for the military hospitals, or wants to do anything at all in the way of repairs or spending money—and there is a good deal of money being spent—he will have a free hand to do it, in a business way, and that if he refuses to accept the orders of local politicians the minister will stand by him, that he will see to it that he does not suffer by that refusal. If the minister will tell us that he will do that, I think it will cure the whole business. I think he should give us an assurance to-night, because this is a complaint of long standing, and should not be allowed to go on from year to year without something being done about it.

Mr. J. J. HUGHES: Coming from one of the Maritime Provinces, I am somewhat interested in this matter, and know a little about it. I was somewhat disappointed at the minister's attitude, because he seemed to take the ground that the military establishment at Halifax was not overmanned. The headquarters are at Halifax for the three Maritime Provinces. When that list was published a few days ago, it was really startling to see the number of names, and the enormous aggregate of salaries. And the list is not complete. How many were left off the list I do not know, but I know that some are left off, because

I see only one medical man from Prince Edward Island. Every business man knows, no matter what his business is—and I presume this applies to military as well as civil affairs—that if you have too many men in your employ you get less work and inferior work from them. They are falling over each other, and I think this is the case at Halifax to-day. I will give some concrete cases which will illustrate the point.

The CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dugald Stewart): I ask the hon. member to be as brief as he can. His remarks are not at all relevant to the matter under consideration, and I thought we had agreed that, with the statement of the minister, we would come back to the business properly before the committee, and I may say to the hon. gentleman, also, that as I understand his remarks, they are not much more than a repetition of what has been said by others who preceded him, and I can see no harm in his shortening his remarks, so that we can get down to the work properly before us.

Mr. McKENZIE: Is closure invoked?

The CHAIRMAN: Order, order.

Mr. McKENZIE: I am asking a question. Are we to be shut off?

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. gentleman understands me. I only want to get the committee back to the discussion of what is properly before us. I have no desire to restrict the debate, and I do not think the minister has any such desire.

Mr. McKENZIE: I think it is a rule that great latitude is allowed in committee. We are on the militia estimates, which provide the money of the country for military purposes, which, of course, we are glad to expend in a proper way, but I think it is unwise for the Chairman to draw the line too sharply when the discussion is in regard to the expenditure on militia matters.

Mr. J. J. HUGHES: I will endeavour to comply with the Chairman's wishes in regard to the brevity of my remarks, and I believe I would have been through now if I had not been interrupted. I was saying that the overmanning of any staff leads to inferior work, and less work, being done, and I was going to give some concrete instances. I have been informed, for instance, of the case of a young man from Prince Edward Island who is now at Halifax. His mother wished to communicate with him