

Supply—National Defence

Mr. Pearkes: The province of British Columbia will take over that portion of the highway which is paved.

Mr. Pickersgill: Does the minister consider this a good bargain from the federal standpoint?

Mr. Pearkes: I certainly do, because the maintenance cost is pretty high on that part of the route.

Mr. Pickersgill: I think the decision was made by the previous government.

Mr. Herridge: Mr. Chairman, on this item I would like to say a few words about the militia. I noticed yesterday when the minister was giving his introductory speech that he mentioned that the reserves and the cadets would cost \$53.6 million. I notice in looking at the estimates that as far as the militia is concerned the vote is about \$16,600,000. If that is correct, that is just better than 1 per cent of the total expenditure on defence, which I think is very little indeed.

Mr. Pearkes: May I explain that now? That refers to the pay and allowances. Transportation of the militia, maintenance of their buildings and maintenance of their clothing all comes under the general administration of the army. Where it is shown separately as a militia vote it covers pay and allowances only.

Mr. Herridge: I thank the minister for his explanation; I could not reconcile the two figures. I would just like to say that our militia in Canada, in which I have taken considerable interest throughout the years, as many other Canadians have, is our citizen army composed of people willing to give their time and services, people who are carrying on their every day occupations. I know of a good number of people in the district which I have the honour to represent who have given their time and services throughout the years in serving in the militia, I think in many cases without sufficient recognition from those in charge of the regular army, and with very little recognition in many cases on the part of a great many of our people. Personally I consider this a very important part of our defence services.

I would say that the first duty would be home defence. I understand now it will be extended to include a considerable portion of civil defence, and I am sure the reserve army may be used in emergencies and disasters of other types. I think a good many people fail to realize the important part that our militia plays in the defence forces of Canada, and I am just rising to say that I think we should recognize that fact more generally than we do. I know some people who have carried on throughout the years in face of apparently

very little official support and a somewhat looking-down-the-nose attitude on the part of regular army senior officials. At least, that is the impression I have had on a number of occasions.

These people do provide a corps of trained and disciplined local people which could be used for the purposes I have mentioned and as such they are an essential part of our defence force. In my opinion, their services should receive greater consideration. I have been impressed throughout the years by the loyalty of these people who have been asked to carry on a most uninteresting form of training program. I know that in my own district for some years we had anti-aircraft batteries. I do not think the guns were even complete; I think the breach blocks are missing. Just imagine asking young men to come two nights a week to study the operations of a gun which they never fire and which was, I am told, incomplete, and to go through this procedure week after week in addition to a certain amount of other minimum training.

I am very pleased to note that in our district this situation has changed. I understand that the regiment there has light artillery, if I am correctly informed, and that the training syllabus has improved. But I suggest that consideration should be given to making the training course more interesting to the local people, both officers and other ranks, who are interested in serving in the militia. In the district I represent the local officers commanding have done something on their own initiative to correct the situation by carrying out some experimental summer manoeuvres; some trips into the mountains, some reconnaissance work, and activities of that sort. I found, after talking to some of the young men who had taken part in these manoeuvres that they appreciated what had been done and showed considerable increased interest. Also, since this change in the type of militia training has taken place there had been an increase in the number of enlistments, and that flows naturally from providing a more interesting training program in which young people can participate.

I do urge that greater support should be given to the militia, and greater recognition of the services which they have performed. I think the syllabus should provide for an increased number of outdoor manoeuvres. In my opinion the local militia should have a thorough knowledge of the geography of the district in which they reside and for some considerable distance around. I believe that some 50 years ago when the Rocky Mountain Rangers were training, the training syllabus was on that basis. They went on marches in the forest, they did some rough and ready

[Mr. Pickersgill.]