

the Governor General in Council is one of regulating or supervising. There are two branches the duties of which run necessarily more or less together, the military and the civil; but the command and discipline of militia, the nomination of officers and matters of that description exclusively belong to the general, subject to the approval of the minister. He must have the minister's approval; and if the minister refuses, then the responsibility is on him and he will have to reckon with parliament. But the idea underlying the present system is that you should have two capable, honest men at the head of the militia who will have above all things the interests of the service at heart. And if that fundamental principle fails, no legislation can be perfect. The minister should have the initiation of all matters involving the expenditure of money. He will have charge of the financial aspect of all questions of supply, works and buildings, arms, ordnance, &c., and especially the control of the civil branch and supplies, the Governor in Council being authorized to make orders respecting the duties of each and as to certain of their subordinates. The military branch being in short under the general and the civil branch under the minister. The military branch to command, train, educate and organize the militia for war. The civil branch to clothe, arm, feed, transport and look after the business end in general. An experienced general officer to train, command, organize and discipline. The minister to look after the business and expenditure of the department. After all what is the object the law should aim at? It is to attain the greatest efficiency combined with the greatest simplicity and the least expense. Just consider the subject matter of our present system. You have 2,000 men at the most on a war footing, to be largely used in detachments or as schools of training for the militia. And you have 45,000 men, who are expected to appear under arms once a year and train from twelve to sixteen days.

Now, let me quote the minister in the Committee of the Whole against the existing system:—

Without troubling this committee by going into details, I think I may say, without fear of contradiction, that it is quite obvious that the system which has been in existence in this country ever since confederation has not worked well. I am not going to animadvert upon or criticise any officers who have been sent out here to assist us in administering the militia of this country. I do not propose to do that, but I think that every one will agree that the system has not worked well, and I am prepared to blame the system much more than the individuals who have attempted to work it. I believe it is an impossible system. I believe it is absolutely and entirely impossible to get on with the system which we have attempted to work in this country since confederation.

Strong words! Statements merely. In reply I will content myself with giving past experience of the existing system:

Established in England in 1793. Kept in force there without change until 1870. Change when made then was more on account of the magnitude to which the army had grown and the increase of expenditure than anything else. The English system lately again changed under the reconstruction report.

In neither case was there any change in the principle of having a general officer charged with the responsible command and discipline of the army in the sense we understand it here.

Since confederation the existing system has been in force, 37 years—25 under Conservative sway, five under old Liberal rule (old school), Alexander Mackenzie; under present minister eight years. In the 30 years only with one general officer commanding was there any serious friction. This minister in eight years has disposed of four: Generals Gascoigne, Hutton, O'Grady-Haley, and lastly, Dundonald. Boasted of the efficiency lately of the militia when Dundonald came and of the great improvement of the militia in the last three years. For the expense expended upon them our militia will compare favourably with any militia in the world. The existing system has been in force on the same principle as to the military branch as I have mentioned in England and Canada continuously 111 years. Constitutional authorities show it was not only introduced to prevent abuses, but will be successful, if fairly administered. Today Scotland is under a general officer commanding in the sense we understand it in perfect parallel in principle with our present scheme. What is good enough for Scotland should be good enough for us in a military sense.

Before going further into this question, let me point out one or two specific matters. While the minister says there shall be no more a General Officer Commanding in Canada, yet he retains the option to appoint one. Under the present system there must be an officer in command of our forces who holds the rank of not less than colonel in His Majesty's regular army. In discussing this question the other day the hon. minister was misleading. He made the charge that under the present Act our Canadian militia were being discriminated against. Sir, there is no question of discrimination, but simply a question of qualification. It is true that before a Canadian could be appointed General Officer Commanding under the present law, he would have to obtain the rank of colonel in His Majesty's regular army, but that after all is simply a question of qualification. No man thinks more of the rights of Canadians than I do or of the militia,