

National Defence

minister to explain this matter to this house, to the Canadian people and to the salmon producers of this country.

I come back to a question which has been discussed before and which will be discussed again as long as nothing is done about it. I regard this question as a vital one and I intend to continue to raise it as long as this foolish and impossible situation exists. I refer to the Department of National Defence attitude toward one of the most serious problems in our forces, the non-existence of the French-speaking element in the senior ranks of our services. I was told the other day that I should not bring up this matter as it would be damaging to national unity. I think that what is really damaging to national unity is the situation that exists, and the federal government is not doing anything to improve it. In disregarding this problem the Department of National Defence is continuing a policy which will bring nothing but resentment. This situation has not been improved and the government is not taking a single step at the present time to improve it.

On a previous occasion I gave some figures to the house, but they were not official. However, since then I have obtained a return from the department dated December 13, 1951. This shows that of a total number of 127 officers above the rank of major at army headquarters, only three were French; of a total number of 186 officers in the Royal Canadian Navy above the rank of lieutenant commander, only four were French; out of 382 officers in the Royal Canadian Air Force of the rank of wing commander and over, only ten were French-speaking.

It is heartbreaking to think that at the service colleges at Kingston and Royal Roads the proportion of French-Canadian cadets is always so low and so unfair. It is still only 38 out of a total of 500, which means that if that rate is continued the situation will just go on deteriorating and never improve. We know that an army should always have the same ethnical make-up as the nation itself, and not be a department run exclusively for the advantage of a selected few. When the bullets are flying the department does not care whether its junior officers and privates are French, English or Ukrainian, but when it comes time to fill a post at headquarters which carries with it a good career and good pay then the department forgets these fine democratic principles. The statistics are available to prove that this system does not work, and it is the duty of the department to try a different formula.

At the moment we have two service colleges in Canada, and I cannot see any reason why we cannot have another one in Quebec.

In this way French-speaking boys would be enabled to follow a curriculum prepared for them, and in familiar surroundings. I sincerely believe that such a college would prove a great success. It is extremely difficult for a French boy to follow a technical course in a language with which he is not familiar. It is for that reason French-speaking boys do not apply to go to service college. It may be, of course, that there is definite discrimination so far as those who enter are concerned, and if that is the case it must cease right away. Let us not continue a system that is destructive of national unity, unfair to 30 per cent of the population and harmful to the services themselves.

When the whole population is called upon to pay \$2 billion for national defence, it is time for this discrimination to cease and for the department to take proper measures to cure this unfair situation.

Mr. George A. Drew (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I propose to deal only briefly with the remarks that were made earlier this afternoon in connection with the attendance of the minister in this house, and which related to a practice that has indicated a lack of concern about the debates that the ministers themselves bring on in this house. As I pointed out, a week ago today at a time when the supplementary estimates were before the house, ministers who were required in the house in order to deal with those estimates were not here, although the estimates had been brought forward in an atmosphere of urgency and with the request that they be proceeded with as quickly as possible. In so far as the minister personally is concerned, I have no intention of engaging in any debate with him.

I must admit that it is very interesting to find that, on some unnamed day, the minister can tell us the exact time at which each member enters this house. I was not previously aware of any clock that is punched by members coming into this house. If we have some special arrangement of which the members are unaware, then it would be extremely helpful if all the members knew about it. It would greatly assist in checking the attendance of every member. I suggest that the minister should let us in on his secret and tell us exactly where the rest of us may look for records of the time to which he has referred, either on a named date or an unnamed date.

Mr. Claxton: Now or some other time?

Mr. Drew: The minister will have ample opportunity to discuss this subject now that he is with us, but I wish to refer to what he said about my not being present on