

Supply—National Defence

shoulders. Armed forces morale is discussed: He is seen yawning. He gives the impression of downright arrogance, of total disinterest in any opinion not his own.

Simulators are discussed: no answer. The CF-5 was questioned: still no answer. Inadequacies in the Navy are discussed: still no concern.

These are the only remarks I had in mind. For the benefit of the house and the effectiveness of our work, I ask the minister who is the perfect gentleman to live according to his standards and to take part in the discussion. Otherwise, it can go on for a long time.

● (8:10 p.m.)

[English]

Mr. Nesbitt: Mr. Chairman, I have a few remarks and suggestions to make to the Minister of National Defence, which might also be helpful to the Associate Minister. In the last day or so we have heard a great many comments in the house concerning morale in the armed forces. I think most members of the house who have looked into the matter, whether they agree to admit it or not, find that morale in the armed forces is indeed very bad. We have heard the reasons for this a number of times. They include uncertainty in the minds of those who would consider the forces as a career. A combination of events has helped to bedevil the minister and his department at this time. While on the one hand the economy of the country is booming and there is a shortage of labour, on the other new defence policies are being brought in, regardless of their merit, which have caused great apprehension and uncertainty in the minds of the personnel of the armed forces.

I have talked to many people of the armed services whom I have met in the last year or so, and who have said to me, "Well, our rates of pay are not that good. We don't know whether we are going to be kept on. We are getting older. We might be perhaps 30, or 32 years of age. It may be difficult to get a job. It might be better to leave now, when we know we can get a job, and have some kind of future, than wait in the armed forces and find ourselves suddenly retired, or sacked, with no particular future." They feel that it is better to leave of their own choosing when they can get a better position and better salary in industry than to wait until they are compulsorily retired, or are just let out.

The minister and his department are in an unfortunate position. There is a combination

[Mr. Régimbal.]

of high demand in industry generally for skilled and semi-skilled labour, while at the same time the armed forces have not caught up with pay scales. I know the minister told us the other night that bonuses are to be paid and that the government is going to raise pay scales. Whether these measures prove sufficient incentive under the circumstances remains to be seen.

As another little item may I mention that you always find lags in all government departments, of all varieties and at all levels. Regulations made for previous occasions hang on and on, while circumstances in the country change and complicate matters. As a matter of fact I have had correspondence with the Associated Minister of National Defence with regard to a particular case which illustrates the point I refer to.

The case at issue which illustrates one of these troublesome regulations has to do with a man who has been in the air force for two full terms of five years, and who served two years of his third five year term. In all he has had a total of 12 years service. In common with others, he had a wife and children to maintain, and decided to retire. He knew when he retired, and accepted the fact, that he would give up his rehabilitation pay, and he hoped that after 12 years good service to his country—perhaps the department might consider moving his wife and family back to his home city. But, oh no, they would not do that, they would not consider doing that.

This sort of thing gets around. If the minister and his department hope to get new recruits, regulations of this type will have to be rejected. I have heard this sort of story before. In smaller cities it is the subject of discussion. People will say that when Mr. so and so left, after 12 years, the services would not even move his wife and children home.

No other branch of the civil service, to my knowledge, functions like this. At one time there may have been a good reason for the regulation, but surely there cannot be a good reason now. There are many regulations like that. If the minister hopes to get new recruits into the armed services, then he had better look at these regulations to try to get rid of them. They do not help morale in the armed services, nor do they encourage recruiting when there is such a need for it.

I do not wish to take any longer on this subject, or to repeat what others have said. But I do think it is important that we get people back into the armed services. If they are given a greater sense of security for the future and some hope for advancement, apart