

am informed that 35 per cent of the militia order of battle are Highland units. I wonder if the minister wishes to alienate such a sizeable proportion of the militia.

On a dollars and cents basis there is little ground for the curtailing decision. It is estimated that the life expectancy of the new green trousers is approximately two years, at a cost of approximately \$10. The Highland units suggest that the minister should save the \$10 and instead restore a kilt maintenance grant of \$5 per annum for the Highland militia and cadets. I might mention now, Mr. Speaker, that I am glad to see the minister has taken his seat in this chamber and will reply to my presentation. I might also mention that the \$10 for the green trousers does not include payment for certain undergarments, which it is well known Highland units do not need or wear.

It seems strange that the forces are advertising for recruits and at the same time are giving up the best kind of advertising they have. In this respect I note that in the estimates there is an increase of \$2 million in defence expenditure on information. I hope that tomorrow I will also have a chance to inquire into the spending of that large amount of money.

It is the negative approach that the minister seems to take to recruiting people into militia that I believe is particularly unsuccessful. Field Marshall Montgomery established as a principle of war that we should reinforce success. The Highland units have always had success in attracting recruits. Why not reinforce their successful ways?

This government adopts the attitude of the born loser. In "Defence for the 70's" it stated, "The government intends to maintain the reserve force at the current authorized size." In "Defence 1971" it stated, "The average militia strength in 1971 was approximately 18,000." In "Defence 1972", at page 91 it states, "As of October 1, 1972, the militia strength was 16,583." Obviously, the government is failing to attract recruits into the militia; and I do not wonder, when it takes away the things the militia feel most seriously about.

The government pretends to encourage groups to remember their heritage. The very fine Royal 22nd Regiment wear on their cap badges "Je me souviens"—a fine motto, and I agree with their wearing it. Pride of past, race, family and self are all intertwined, and the proud regiments are the best. Perhaps I might close by recommending to the minister that he should not choose Highland units to be the next victim of his policy of anonymity for all units in the forces. Instead, he might consider Sir Wilfrid Laurier's enlightened comment in a speech delivered in Toronto on January 5, 1893, when he said, "If I were not French I would choose to be Scotch."

Hon. James Richardson (Minister of National Defence): Mr. Speaker, I welcome the opportunity provided by the ten o'clock debate to reply to the hon. member for Victoria (Mr. McKinnon). I know that since he entered this House after the election of October 30 last he has had a very keen interest in the armed forces, both the regular and the reserve. I might say that my awareness of his interest has resulted from personal conversations as well as from questions he has directed to me across the floor.

Adjournment Debate

The subject of dress for Highland units that he first raised back in April, and which he has addressed himself to again tonight, is a matter which I like to think is of as much concern and importance to me as it is to many members of the House and many Canadians. First of all, I would like to clarify any misunderstanding that may exist with regard to the present policy. There is no regulation of any kind which prevents the Highland units from wearing the kilt. I am well aware, however, that there was a change of policy brought about before I became Minister of National Defence. This change in policy had the effect of eliminating financial support from the department for the purchase and, particularly, for the maintenance of the kilt.

I have the responsibility, as the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) knows, as have other ministers, for reassessing the decisions made by my predecessors. At this point in time the most I can say to the hon. member for Victoria is that I believe he has brought forward for public attention and consideration a matter of importance. It is important to the department, particularly important to the Highland units, and I like to believe it is of importance to Canada.

I say to the hon. member that there are a number of matters, and this is one of them, which I am still evaluating as Minister of National Defence and upon which I am still reaching my own conclusions. I have not yet had an opportunity to fully assess the implications of the proposals that he is suggesting. However, it does not trouble me to say to him that I am in general agreement with the sentiments and representations that he has made on behalf of Highland units.

It should be pointed out that in matters of dress of all federal employees, including the armed forces, the approval of Treasury Board is required. With this in mind, and also having regard to the numerous other financial demands on my budget, it is my personal belief that the Canadian armed forces—I will conclude in less than one minute, Mr. Speaker, if I may.

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laniel): Order, please. The rule of the "late show" is applied strictly. I am ready to let the minister go on but I am afraid that this will set a precedent for another evening, and we are already in difficulty in that the minister has now taken one minute longer than he should. I will let the minister continue, but I would not want this occasion to create a precedent.

An hon. Member: One minute.

Mr. Richardson: What I want to say, and this is really the main point I wanted to bring before hon. members is that it is my personal belief that the Canadian armed forces would be well served if the payment for some part of the capital cost of kilts for the Highland units, and an annual grant per member for the maintenance of kilts, was reinstated as our policy.

I will conclude by saying that I welcome the representations by the hon. member for Victoria because, as I have said, the sentiments he has expressed are very close to my own. I wish to assure him tonight that I intend to move