

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, January 19, 1953

The house met at 2.30 p.m.

PRIVILEGE

MR. GEORGE—REFERENCE IN DEBATE TO HON.
MEMBER FOR WESTMORLAND

Mr. E. W. George (Westmorland): I rise on a question of privilege, Mr. Speaker. I want to deal with the personal attack made against me by the hon. member for Calgary West (Mr. Nickle) in this house on the evening of January 15. He asked for an explanation regarding the matters he then raised, and I am glad to give him the explanation for which he asked. I make this explanation out of a strong sense of responsibility as a member of this house.

When I heard of the nature of the hon. member's speech, I naturally wished to take time to read it in *Hansard* and put myself in a position where I could verify properly all the factual references made in that speech and the one which I am making this afternoon. I am, therefore, taking the very first opportunity which has been open to me to rise in this house and reply to the hon. member for Calgary West. I propose to deal with this matter simply by laying the facts of the situation before this house.

On a matter of this kind involving the privileges of the house, and myself as a member, I recognize that it is for the house to decide whether my actions, as a member of this house and as a commanding officer of a reserve unit, have been proper or not. It is in the sense of one being concerned not only with the charge that has been made against me but with the broad principles which ought to govern the conduct of members of this house that I make these remarks today.

When I assumed command of my regiment, the 8th Princess Louise's (New Brunswick) Hussars, in January, 1951, on the death of the former commanding officer, we had an excellent unit, and it was rated as the best reserve army regiment in Canada by Mr. Ross Munro in the *Edmonton Journal* on the 17th February, 1951. In 1950 we won the Leonard trophy, emblematic of the best reserve armoured regiment in Canada.

The death of the former commanding officer created a real problem as to what

would happen to the regiment, and how and by whom it would be led in the future. As second in command, in order to maintain continuity within the regiment, I felt that I was under a strong moral obligation to the unit, and to the army itself, to contribute what I could to the maintenance of the unit's excellent reputation.

The former commanding officer did an excellent job, by his initiative and application to the heavy task. I, as second in command, in Ottawa a large part of the years 1949 and 1950, was not completely in the picture when I took over the regiment. Naturally, on assuming command, I had to devote a large amount of time to the task of familiarizing myself with all the details of the unit's operations and in addition as a consequence of the change of command certain organizational changes within the unit occurred. I mention this so that hon. members will appreciate the problems with which I was faced in 1951, as a result of having assumed command.

I think that many hon. members are familiar with the difficulties faced in the administration of reserve units in a rural area. As an example I might give some details about the organization of my own regiment, and the large territory in which it carries on its operations. Our regimental area is spread over a radius of 85 miles; regimental headquarters and "B" squadron are at Sussex; headquarters squadron at Hampton and St. Martins; "A" squadron at Petitcodiac, Havelock and Salisbury; and "C" squadron at Dorchester, Sackville and Port Elgin. This is a slight change from the regimental areas of 1951, as in that year we were training in both Saint John and Moncton, but we did not have the Petitcodiac-Salisbury area.

In order to familiarize myself with the affairs of the regiment, as well as looking after the day-to-day affairs I spent most of my spare time working for the reserve army. I took no holidays, and spent any time I had, including every week end, in the interests of the reserve.

The training program for 1951 included one evening at local headquarters, and one week end per month at Sussex on corps training; three Sundays per month were used by the squadrons, one or two of them at a time, depending upon their number of personnel