

Supply—National Defence

they are doing a necessary and worth-while job. As a result they have lost their motivation to remain in the forces: thus the very large departure of servicemen that has taken place.

This decline in morale is forcefully illustrated by the large number of personnel who have left the armed services of their own volition. I do not refer to those who were dismissed or put out for disciplinary reasons, I refer to only those who have left of their own volition. These people could not see any future in the armed forces because they have no motivation to remain. This is illustrated by a return to a question by the hon. member for Edmonton West to be found at page 781 of *Hansard* for February 7. The return was made in answer to question No. 4 which asked for the number of persons who were retired from the defence forces at their own request prior to normal retirement age. The answer was 13,142. Nothing like this has ever taken place in the history of the Canadian armed forces and it indicates exactly what I have just said, that a very large proportion of those people in the armed forces have lost their morale and want to get out because they feel they have no future and are not doing a necessary job.

This same return indicates that a high proportion of these 13,000 odd individuals who left at their own request were highly trained officers, N.C.O.'s and specialists who are essential to the efficient operation of any modern military force.

In answer to a question I asked, to be found in *Hansard* for February 9 another return was made which shows what the reduction in the strength of the armed forces has been. We find that it dropped from approximately 124,000 in 1961-62 to approximately 109,000 at the end of December, 1965. At the present time, according to press reports, the strength is now below 107,000. During that same period this report indicates that enlistments had dropped from 16,526 in 1961 to 10,415 in 1965. Last year the losses of the armed forces personnel totalled 17,696, all ranks, which is a total loss or wastage of 7,281, or a rate of wastage of some 600 men per month.

These figures show two things. First of all, they show that it has become increasingly difficult to get people to enlist in the services and second, a very large proportion of highly trained personnel are getting out. In addition to the ones who have got out there are quite a number who are trying to get out but who

have not been released. I have referred several of these cases to the minister and the associate minister, but I do not know how many there are. The number must be considerable today. These people would get out if they could but the department, because of the shortage of trained personnel at this time, will not allow them to do so.

The loss of so many highly trained personnel is very serious and has caused a decline in the quality and effectiveness of our defence forces. This is manifested by the situation which exists now in all three of the defence forces. Let us take the navy as a first example to see what has happened there.

When the minister was sworn in the navy had 43 anti-submarine vessels in commission and in operation including, of course, the *Bonaventure*, destroyer escorts and frigates. In addition we had two flotillas of mine sweepers. What ships does the navy now have? As close as I can determine we now have 34 antisubmarine vessels and no mine sweepers. Of the 34 antisubmarine vessels we have left there are five or six laid up at Halifax and two at Esquimalt because of a lack of sufficiently trained personnel to man them. This means there are seven or eight vessels which cannot go to sea. We now have some 27 operational fighting ships left in our navy. That is far below the number that we are committed to provide as part of our contribution to the NATO alliance, and far below the number required for the many other responsibilities the navy would have in the event of war. In spite of this, the minister keeps on saying and has been saying for the last two years, that the effectiveness of the armed forces has improved.

Mr. Hellyer: That is true.

Mr. Harkness: The minister suggests that is true, but I ask any reasonable person in this chamber how it could be true when the number of fighting ships has decreased seriously, with a large percentage of the ones left not able to go to sea because of the lack of trained personnel to man them.

Mr. Hellyer: Because they are old ships, now obsolete.

Mr. Harkness: The minister suggests that the ships we now have are much more efficient and up to date than the ones we had, but that is not the case. With one or two exceptions we have the same ships. I believe one or two have been put into service in the last two or three years with slightly improved