

Supply—National Defence

Mr. Martin (Essex East): They like putting on a show.

Mr. Pearson: Yes, as my hon. friend from Essex East says, they are more concerned with putting on a show than with permanent results.

Mr. Churchill: Is that what you have been doing?

Mr. Pearson: Let the minister tell us what assurance we have that the majority of the graduates of these courses, who have been given this excellent training, will be available to give the population the benefit of that instruction should an emergency arise. Is there any way by which the emergency measures organization or any other government authority can get in touch with these people should they be required in an emergency? Does the government know anything about them once they have graduated from these courses, unless they join the military forces of Canada?

Mr. Harkness: The hon. member started out by saying he had suspicions in his mind about the purpose of the courses. I often think that is all he has in his mind, suspicions. As far as this point to which he and some other hon. members have been directing a lot of attention, namely that the government should keep these men under its thumb, that the government should conscript these men in some way—

Some hon. Members: No, no.

Mr. Harkness: That is the whole argument the hon. member is making. He does not use the word "conscription" but that is the implication of everything he has been saying. Other hon. members have spoken on the same lines. As I have already pointed out, in this country we have no means of doing that. The names of these people, their addresses, their occupations and so forth are kept, and these are made available to the officials of the local emergency measures organization. Of course those who have taken courses are encouraged to join either the regular militia or the emergency measures organization or the St. John's ambulance corps or any other organization of that kind which is organized to give assistance in various ways in the event of an emergency. I submit there is really nothing further we can do under our present system to make use of these people. The argument advanced by the hon. member would lead to the conclusion that you should not train anybody unless you can keep him completely under your thumb and make sure you can get him the moment you want him.

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An hon. Member: Nonsense.

Mr. Harkness: That is not the system of government under which we work.

Mr. Hellyer: You have no system. That is the trouble with your government.

Mr. Harkness: Now the hon. member for Trinity is starting to talk. Everyone realises that this scheme is a very successful scheme.

Mr. Chevrier: Read the press.

Mr. Harkness: I think nobody in this committee can go to the people who have been employed in carrying out this scheme and get any other story from them except that it has been extremely successful and that the men who have been turned out are of good calibre; that they have entered with interest and zest into the training, with the result that remarkable success has been achieved.

Of course the hon. member for Trinity decried this program when it was announced. He poured scorn on it and said it did not amount to anything, as is his practice with regard to anything this government does. He said it was going to be Harkness' broomstick army. Those words will come back to haunt him. They have already done so, as a matter of fact. The attempt on his part to discredit this scheme, as well as his hope that it would not be successful, have proved completely inaccurate, as have most of his utterances and statements. As I have said, the scheme has been extremely successful. The Leader of the Opposition made the point that only a small proportion of those who have been trained have gone into militia units. That again is inaccurate. Of the 39,000, I believe, who successfully completed the first two courses, 14,000 have gone into the regular militia—a very high proportion—and another 2,600, I think it was, volunteered for the regular forces. Some 1,400 of these have been accepted into the regular forces.

Mr. Churchill: Splendid.

Mr. Harkness: Thus it can be seen that a very high proportion of the people who have taken these courses are making definite use of them in the militia or in the regular army. In addition, a considerable number of people were given time off from employment to take these courses on the understanding that they would go back and set up emergency measures organizations in their own factories, offices and so forth. Those people are now engaged in that type of activity.

Mr. Pearson: The minister is now following his usual tactics; when he is unable to deal with the points which have been raised he misrepresents the position of those who