

Supply—National Defence

How can we improve conditions? I suggest several approaches to the minister. I know that a pay increase is one of the methods of making service life more palatable and I think this is important. From talking to naval personnel I know they contrast their pay envelopes with those on "civvy" street and I think this accounts, especially in this inflationary age, for the reason that many people are leaving the navy. I believe 13,412 have retired at early stages from the services at their own request. This is not only a remarkable figure but a very frightening one as well. Jobs with more attractive pay are one method to tackle the problem of bringing personnel back to strength.

There are other methods as well. As the hon. member for Calgary North pointed out very ably last night, the minister talked of computers and of cost effectiveness. He has brought all the techniques of modern and efficient office management to his department or so he says. But he is leaving out the human factor, the attitude of men and women, the matter of morale and confidence in the leadership given.

I think the minister would go a long way toward solving his problem if somehow he could convince the officers and men in the services that he, his government and the department had an idea of just what they were going to do in the field of national defence. I think a war of ideas would be a much more profitable war for the minister to win than simply a war using more money.

Another suggestion I would make is that the minister and his department give some incentive to service people in the field of housing. We have in the Halifax-Dartmouth area several large housing schemes for the navy. Apartments have also been built by private entrepreneurs and are filled almost entirely with naval personnel. I suggest this gives service personnel no particular advantage except whatever advantage they may derive from living among their own kind. At the end of their stay in these places they have collected a massive pile of landlord's receipts but they have gained nothing more than shelter and accommodation.

What I think would be a useful idea for the department to explore, and I hope the minister and his associate will explore it, is to give some incentive to service people to own their own homes by giving them a certain sum as a down payment either initially or at the end of a definite period of living in these houses. In this event the net result would be that

after 15, 20 or 25 years of service the serviceman or woman would own the home and if he or she intended to move to some other place to retire that home could be sold at a profit.

I suggest that this would provide a method of savings for service people which would amount to say \$15,000 to \$25,000, thus providing a substantial sum indeed when these people retire. I have mentioned this idea before and I hope the minister and his department will study it, perhaps in consultation with Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation. I think it has advantages. It would give service people more of a stake in the communities in which they serve.

Two years ago I had the advantage of going to Camp Gagetown in New Brunswick where for the first time the special services battalion was engaged in an exercise. I should like to deal with this point in making some remarks on integration because I think the minister is half right and also half wrong in his approach to this matter.

As I say, I had the advantage with other newsmen of going into the field with the special services battalion made up of elements of ordnance, engineering, R.E.M.E. and the like when they were engaged upon a special operation. I thought they were very pleased to have this form of integration of the supporting services.

Therefore I think I can agree with the minister's concept of integration up to that point in that the supporting services can indeed be usefully integrated into one. It did not seem to me that the dental corps or the engineers—as we know, the engineers are a very proud race, almost a race apart—felt that they had suffered a loss of tradition by being so combined.

• (2:20 p.m.)

When it comes to what might be called the fighting arm of the services I think different considerations have to apply. I know opinion on this is somewhat one-sided one way or the other. The older people in the services, I think, rely very much on the traditions of the ships to which they have been posted or their squadrons or regiments. For younger men this may not necessarily be so. A very senior officer has told me that he would hate to be around on the day that the men of the Black Watch were told to give up their kilts because he knew that whoever gave such an order would be murdered. I suggest to the minister that in his consideration of integration and the provision of common ranks,