

the country. I came down year after year, and I told Parliament, not using my own information, except as I acquired it from the men who are known by every hon. gentleman here as those who composed the staff of the Department of Militia, men who have acquired large experience, men who know the requirements of the force, I have stated, year after year, and Session after Session, that we required 8,000 suits a year, and yet these patriotic gentlemen, who find that we should have sent up uniforms to three companies in the Duck Lake and Saskatchewan district, only voted the amount required for 5,000 uniforms.

Mr. BLAKE. How much were we asked to vote?

Mr. CARON. I made my statement year after year, and every item was criticised for weeks and weeks; and the press controlled by the hon. gentleman took intense pleasure in stating that they had been able to keep the Minister of Militia before the House on his estimates for weeks and weeks, criticising the items. I say, that nobody caring for his country, nobody who has any love for his country, would have incurred the expense of the speeches of these hon. gentlemen in criticising items which were absolutely indispensable to make the force efficient, and to make it such as it has been. Yet, I am prepared to say that, even with the adverse votes of these hon. gentlemen, I was able to get up such a force, at the moment when the country called upon that force to come forward, at a period when it was almost impossible, as most people believed, to send a force up to the North-West; at a period when our great highway, the Pacific Railway, was unfinished; still, with all these obstacles in the way, it was possible to organise within the smallest possible time, a force that has done so much for Canada, because it has shown that Canada's sons are deserving of the name of men, who showed themselves ready to go to the front and fight our battles; but I must say, knowing what I say, that it was not due to the hon. gentlemen on your left, Mr. Speaker, if that force went up organised and equipped as it was. The hon. gentleman, the other day, in a speech he made, stated that he would take the earliest possible opportunity, from information he had received, to show that great extravagance had been perpetrated in connection with supplies and in the transport service which enabled our men to go to the front and do their duty. I did not hesitate for one moment—nor would I hesitate to-morrow, even after the speeches of the hon. gentleman—to take the proper steps to enable that force, without any delay, to obey the call of their brilliant commander, General Middleton, who, in his despatches to me, says that at no moment was he delayed by either defect in the transport or defect in the commissariat, and that it was wonderful to him how Canada was able, in that emergency, to organise the force that was sent to the front. Not having been in my place when the hon. gentleman commenced, I do not know whether I have answered all his objections, although I hardly hope that, because he always puts forward so very many. It is disadvantageous to discuss a question of this kind, involving great details, before the papers are brought down; but I believe that when they are brought down it will be established beyond the possibility of doubt—I do not say of discussion—that everything that could be done for the North-West was done. In regard to the three companies that have come under the special protection of the hon. gentleman, I never heard him say anything about them until they were disbanded and their arms and accoutrements had all been returned to the Department; but as soon as everything had been done to secure the responsibility of the Department, the hon. gentleman said they should not have been disbanded. I am very sorry that they did not exist, but we were bound to do what the Department did at that time. Now, I have only one word more to say before I resume my seat. The arms the hon. gentleman refers to had all been collected for safe-

Mr. CARON.

keeping; they were all brought in and put under the control of the Mounted Police. We had no organisation in that vast district. The only officer representing the Department of Militia was Col. Houghton, who was Deputy Adjutant-General at Winnipeg; and hon. gentlemen will understand what an enormous expense would be involved in sending an officer up, starting from Winnipeg and going over the whole of that district, merely to inspect three companies. Those arms which had been collected and placed for safe-keeping in the hands of the Mounted Police were the first arms which had been given to the first men who rose for the purpose of defending that district against the rebellion which had broken out. Therefore, judging, not as the hon. gentleman has judged, without any facts, but in the light of experience, I think the course followed by the Department of Militia has turned out to be, so far, successful. Of course, I have the greatest possible respect for the opinion of the hon. gentleman, more especially on military matters, and I am perfectly certain that when he takes the same amount of trouble that he does in other matters, and looks into the papers and studies up the question, if he can find time to study militia questions, he will not be as severe in his criticism as he has been to-night.

Mr. WATSON. I am a little surprised to hear the remarks of the hon. Minister of Militia, especially with regard to something I said two years ago. I believed at that time, and I believe still, that if the Government had spent more money farther west than Winnipeg on the Militia, it would have been better for the Province. I think the Government made a great mistake in not keeping up those three companies that have been spoken of so slightly, at Duck Lake, Battleford and Prince Albert. I believe that if those three companies had been kept up the trouble in the North-West would not have taken place. Those three companies would have been larger in number than the half-breed rebels who rose at Duck Lake and took part in the massacre there. The expense the hon. gentleman speaks of, in Col. Houghton going as far west as Prince Albert to inspect those three companies, would have been money well spent, and would have saved the money and blood that have been expended in the late trouble. The remarks I made were with regard to the desire that existed to form some companies in the Province of Manitoba. For instance, in the town of Portage la Prairie, where I reside, for the last four or five years the people have been petitioning the Minister of Militia to have a company of mounted infantry formed in that district. If a few hundred men had been formed into such companies at different parts of the Province, a few years ago, and had been placed at the call of Col. McLeod and Major Walsh, and those gentlemen had received their instructions from the Militia Department, this whole rebellion would have been put down within two or three weeks, and millions of dollars would have been saved to the country. I have some reason to know why the companies at Prince Albert and Duck Lake were disbanded. Some three years ago, when I, along with a few others, were actually trying to form a company of mounted rifles at Portage la Prairie, we were informed by Col. Houghton that the companies had been disbanded and that all they had were rifles and saddlery. And the reason the companies were disbanded was, according to his statement, because the volunteers were dissatisfied with the Government for not paying them for the time they drilled and not furnishing them with uniforms. Of course, that being the case, we wanted to form a good company, but did not wish to receive the rifles, which were claimed to be rusted and out of repair, having lain there a long time, and the saddles were of a very cheap class. The Minister of Militia has stated that the Opposition criticised the estimates for the past year, of his Department. The Opposition were quite justified in criticising the hon. gentleman's estimates. So far