



## STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

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CANADA'S RESERVE ARMY

An address by Hon. Brooke Claxton,  
Minister of National Defence, at  
the Annual Dinner of the Governor  
General's Foot Guards, at Ottawa  
on September 11, 1948.

From the earliest days the people of what is now Canada looked for their defence largely to voluntary citizen forces. Under the French regime companies of militia were embodied to defend the settlers' homes alike against Indians and English. After the Cession in 1760 a large number of the officers and men who served with Wolfe settled in Canada - you will still find Warrens and Wilsons, Murrays, Mackays and Frasers speaking French on both banks of the St. Lawrence. The early soldier settlers and others who came here from the British Isles gave our early settlements a military background. It was natural that this soil should produce local companies of volunteers which became the ancestors of the regiments which have brought fame to themselves and glory to Canada.

The character of Canada's armed forces was determined by the geographical situation of our country. Canada was favoured above almost every other country. We had plenty of land so we have no aggressive designs on anyone. We had plenty to do and so we did not have to work off our aggressive instincts in seeking more power. We had comfortable boundaries of long stretches of sea to the west and east, the friendly Eskimo to the north and the friendly American to the south. No country could have or has had less aggressive instincts, desires or ambitions.

While we did not need a large standing army - that would have been completely unthinkable - we did feel that we should have militia forces with the minimum of regulars required to train and administer those forces.

In the First Great War Canada's armed forces earned a name second to none. Canada's forces in that war were organized on the basis of the militia units. After the war there was a great falling off in militia interest, support and activity. I was in the militia at the time and I can remember how difficult were the conditions of work and service. It was not until we got along in the thirties and the international situation had greatly deteriorated that serious attention was given to the work of preparation. Preparedness was accelerated in the years just before the Second World War with the result that when it did come upon us most of the units then in the Non-Permanent Active Militia, as it was then called, were in pretty good shape. Many of them

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