

Supply—National Defence

Let us look at the trend. In January the net increase of the three services was 2,642. For February it was 2,173; for March it was 2,075. Does the minister remember what the figure for April was?

Mr. Claxton: It was 1,934.

Mr. Fulton: For April the estimated increase was 1,934. Therefore the figures show a steady decline during the first four months. I realize that does not take into account the increase which will certainly be shown as a result of the announcement of the drive to recruit a special brigade for Europe, but the over-all trend was down steadily. That, Mr. Chairman, is a trend that will have to be reckoned with. That of course is the normal trend with respect to recruiting in the forces; that the winter months are the high months. Then, as we get toward the summer, they decrease, and particularly in the case of this country we must accept that, with the competing claims of industrial defence production, and particularly as that program is stepped up, there will be a tendency toward a greater increase in the downward trend of the recruiting figure.

Even if we take it that the average of 2,000 a month will be maintained, which seems to me to be making an estimate at a higher figure than the circumstances justify, when the minister made his announcement on February 5 we had 50,000 personnel to raise for the three services in order to achieve the program—fifty thousand at the rate of 2,000 a month. Even if that rate were maintained it would thus take 25 months to reach the objective, or just over two years. Therefore I cannot see that the figures, as they are at the present time, justify the minister's anticipation that the program will be completed in a year and a half.

Furthermore, when one looks at the experience of the Korean brigade, which shows that approximately something over 10 per cent of the new recruitment had to be discharged or released even before the brigade ever left the continent, it certainly shows that the present recruiting policy and the policy of suddenly rushing into recruiting drives and putting pressure on is not an efficient one, is not the way in which any country should approach this problem of raising forces, because it is unscientific and unsafe, because it is inefficient and expensive.

All this, Mr. Chairman, leads me to the conclusion that we need to take a second look at our manpower policy. I certainly wish to support the suggestion that has been made in this debate by one or two speakers

who preceded me, namely, that we need right now a national registration put into effect in this country.

The minister has said that we have a three-year program, but he himself has admitted that it does not rest with us to determine whether we shall have three years to complete that program. It rests with the Russians, who are the only potential aggressors. The implications as to whether or not we are going to be able to fulfil our commitments within the present limitation of 115,000 for the forces—I have dealt with the implications inherent in that problem—the implications inherent in the question of reinforcements and the rate of casualties in Korea, the implications inherent in the necessity to rotate the brigades in Europe and Korea, and the eleven squadrons of air force in Europe, plus the implications inherent in the tremendously high proportion of discharges from the Korean force, even before they left this country, particularly when this is reinforced by the fact and sober realization that we may not have three years, but may have only three months or less—all these implications, it seems to me, point inescapably to the conclusion that we must prepare now to meet the worst. And the only way we can prepare to meet the worst is by having a survey of our manpower, by national registration, and by preparation now to put into effect those measures to raise the forces which I believe may be necessary even without an act of aggression by Russia, but which will certainly become necessary the moment Russia commits an act of aggression.

Mr. Chairman, my own view as to the only proper, the fair and the safe way in which to raise a force to go into battle has been expressed already, and I think it does not need amplification. I am now trying to approach the problem within the limitations of the program laid down by the government, and trying to show that within the limitations of their own program it is necessary for them to take a second look at the whole problem.

I think that can be seen in a clearer light when we examine the methods now being followed to raise the brigade for Europe. In my view the wrong method of recruiting is being followed. I do not consider it fair to ask men to volunteer to discharge a national duty. I do not consider it fair, nor do I consider it safe or efficient. And I press this again, particularly in view of the fact that these men are asked to go to Europe to take their places in the line, where they may be called upon to meet a highly trained and ruthless enemy at any time.