

*Defence of Canada Regulations*

Right Hon. ERNEST LAPOINTE (Minister of Justice): Mr. Speaker, I desire to say at the outset that I am pleased to have the defence of Canada regulations submitted to a committee of the house, not, as was suggested by the hon. member for Vancouver South (Mr. Green), in order to devise a policy, but perhaps to revise policies, to examine the regulations and to consider in what way it might be desirable to modify them, if the committee believes they should be modified.

This is in no sense a waiting performance. Not only have the policies been defined, applied and carried out; as the circumstances require, and that frequently, they are modified. It is in the very nature of things that it should be so. Regulations for the defence of a country are necessarily subject to changes in the light of new conditions which may arise during a war. Our regulations have been altered because of new conditions, and they may well be changed again because of further new conditions which may present themselves.

In England the regulations were criticized on the ground that they were too strict and too arbitrary. Changes were made so as to make them more lenient. Conditions at the time permitted the government of Great Britain to do this. But since those modifications took place conditions have changed again, as hon. members well know, and the government of Great Britain have had to modify anew their regulations so as to make them stricter than they were in the first instance. All this has happened because of changing circumstances; and this is necessarily so in war time.

Here in Canada we were told that our regulations imposed greater restrictions on the liberty of the subject than the British regulations did; this was the criticism which during a long period we had to meet. Now, however, because of changed conditions in Great Britain, the regulations in Great Britain have become stricter; many of the activities in the way of internment and otherwise have taken place only recently. Certain projects now being negotiated between the government of Great Britain and the government of Canada go to show that conditions in Canada and Great Britain are far from identical.

I make these observations to indicate that there cannot be any rigid make-up of regulations in war-time. My own view, one which I have expressed on many occasions in answer to those who have protested that we were taking away the liberties of the Canadian people while defending the liberties of peoples in Europe, is that in order to defend their liberties people must agree to the imposition

[Mr. Pouliot.]

of restraint and restriction to which in ordinary times they would not willingly submit. Men who enlist for active service agree to subject themselves to much greater restriction than civilians have to endure. Surely those who are not taking an active part in the war should be willing to accept such restrictions as are necessary for the safety of the state.

I want to congratulate hon. members who have taken part in this debate upon the moderation of their remarks. One feature of the debate with which I am more particularly pleased is the expression of utter confidence by all sides of the house in the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. Canada has reason to be proud of its Royal Canadian Mounted Police. This force has a reputation throughout the world. It has been the endeavour at all times of those who have had to do with the force to keep its standards at the highest. That has been true in the past and it is true to-day. Canada would be in a most difficult position in many respects if we had not the Royal Canadian Mounted Police at this time.

The criticism has been offered that the suggested increase of 500 men in the strength of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police is much too small. I may say to hon. members that it is the belief of the police authorities that it would be impossible at this time to recruit more than 500 men in view of the difficulty of obtaining the necessary instructors. As hon. members know, the police are quite busy at all points in Canada. We have not the necessary accommodation to train more than 500 recruits. A Royal Canadian Mounted Police constable cannot be improvised; he must have the necessary education and receive the training which is necessary in order that the standard of the force and its usefulness to Canada may be maintained.

There are about 2,500 regular members of the force. With this additional 500 men we will have a strength of 3,000. There are also 1,500 special constables. These men are veterans and are under the direct control of the police authorities. Their work consists of guarding public property like the Montreal harbour and other works of the kind. In all there are about 4,000 men on the police payroll. These men work; let there be no mistake about that. Yesterday an hon. member asked what the Minister of Justice was going to do about the Italian population of Canada now that Italy had declared war. Let me tell him what the Minister of Justice did. The very minute that news was received that Italy had declared war on Great Britain and France he signed an order for the internment of many hundreds of men whose names were on the list of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police as suspects. I cannot give the house the