

Supply—National Defence

battalion may require in order to carry out the tasks which it may be called upon to perform.

With regard to the Queen's Own Rifles, may I say this. Because of my anxiety that these young Canadian soldiers should have reasonable protection, that they should be safeguarded when going into this dangerous country and serving in a terrain with which they are totally unfamiliar because they have had no training in desert warfare or even in how to live in desert country, I made certain inquiries. I was surprised that the Minister of National Defence (Mr. Campney) should have stooped to a low political trick in saying that I had made any derogatory remarks about the first battalion of the Queen's Own. The minister used words to the effect that he was surprised that I had made derogatory remarks.

Mr. Campney: He was.

Mr. Pearkes: These are the remarks that I made, and I am reading from page 80 of *Hansard*:

. . . to my personal knowledge, by something over 240 men and some of those men had been in the unit for only a few short months, less than six months.

Today the Minister of National Defence confirmed the fact that there were 240 men or thereabouts who had been sent from the second battalion in order to make up the first battalion. He also said that some of these men had only a few months of training. I never used the word "untrained". The minister put that word into my mouth. It is not contained anywhere in my speech.

Mr. Campney: I am quite content to let *Hansard* speak for itself.

Mr. Pearkes: I did say that some men had only a few months' training. Then I went on to point out that many of these men had not reached their nineteenth birthday, that they were eighteen years of age. I did not know—and I said I did not know—how many there were. I asked the minister how many there were under nineteen years of age. The minister gave that answer this afternoon and, if I heard him correctly, the number amounted to a total of 165. I suggest to you, Mr. Chairman, that 165 youths under 19 years of age in a battalion totalling 952, according to the figure which the minister gave me the day before yesterday, is a high percentage of young soldiers with only a few months of training. I never said that the regiment was unfit. I have seen these men in training. They are fine, healthy young Canadians. We have not got any better anywhere in this country or in any country. But it is only fair to them that they have

[Mr. Pearkes.]

reasonable protection when they are being sent to a theatre in which conditions are so utterly different from those conditions under which they received their previous training. It was for that reason I spoke the other day and asked for assurances that everything was being done not only to safeguard our young men going into a different and dangerous operation, but also for their health.

I can only repeat that we believe Canada should make a contribution. I repeat that we believe it is essential that the force going to the Middle East should be sufficiently strong and well equipped so it has a reasonable chance to carry out, with a reasonable degree of safety, the very difficult assignment it has to perform. The difficulties which that force may experience cannot be emphasized too greatly. I understand, from what has been said here during this week, that even since we met the situation in the Middle East has deteriorated somewhat. There are indications that Russia has been sending more supplies into Syria, and perhaps also numbers of volunteers. While we devoutly hope that our Canadian contribution will only have to be employed in ordinary police duties, either in the desert or on the Suez canal, we must face up to the fact that if the situation deteriorates a great deal more then that force may have to fulfil its role as a military force and not a police force. I do not know whether it would be possible for the United Nations to withdraw those troops if the situation did deteriorate and active military operations became necessary. I do not think they could. Let us, therefore, take every precaution we possibly can to safeguard the lives of these young men who are sent out.

Another comment that I should like to make is this. This afternoon we were told that there would be a supply base and headquarters on the *Magnificent*. I believe the minister also said there would be a small base hospital. It seems to me rather unwise to place a hospital at headquarters, because if the situation did deteriorate then headquarters would be a very vulnerable point of attack. I would prefer to see the hospital placed elsewhere. Surely it would not be impossible to transport our casualties or injured from the immediate area, and to have a hospital established perhaps in Italy, Cyprus or some other place.

When I come to the question of expense, it is impossible for me to comment on the detailed expenditures. I have not even received the table yet, but my hon. friend on my left has a copy. I had to rise to speak before the page boy was able to deliver it to me. The estimates call for an expenditure of \$1. It is obvious that this is