

Mr. BLAKE. Not at all.

Mr. CARON. He gave his sanction to the opinion expressed by the hon. member for Marquette. The hon. gentleman does not read the speech of any hon. member if he does not wish to give his sanction to that speech. I ask this House whether the money which has been expended upon the Winnipeg corps has not been money well invested in the interests of the country. After the record which has been achieved by those Winnipeg battalions, by the 90th and the other battalions, which have been at the front and which have sustained the brunt of the battle, I ask whether any hon. member, whether any man in the country, will stand up and say that the Department of Militia did not exercise proper judgment in expending money upon those corps, which really were the first battalions we sent to the front and the first to meet the great emergency through which we have just passed. The hon. gentleman has referred to reports which he says have not been brought down. The hon. gentleman occasionally supposes reports which do not exist; and the hon. gentleman, with his usual confidence in himself, imagining that he is infallible, invariably believes that what he supposes must be right and true. But I tell the hon. gentleman, from my seat in Parliament, and taking my position as Minister of Militia, that when he asked me for those reports I told him that the reports which we have brought down were the only reports we have in the Department. The hon. gentleman did not contradict my statement; he did not refuse to accept it—that we had followed in the North-West exactly the same rules and regulations we apply to every district in the Dominion. I told the hon. gentleman that in the North-West we had several companies, three companies, I believe, which had been organised as mounted infantry; that those companies, after an inspection by the inspecting officer, such as is held in every other district, were considered to be so disorganised that the inspecting officer could not allow them to be kept on the roll of the militia force of Canada. The hon. gentleman says they were disorganised through the neglect of the Department of Militia, and because no uniforms were served out to them. I tell the hon. gentleman, although his brief may be a well-prepared brief, that if he cares about going into the facts and ascertaining what is right and what is wrong in reference to his statement, he will find that when those companies were organised the Department of Militia undertook to give to them saddlery and arms, and refused to give them any uniforms. They were formed under that understanding. I will give, the House the reason why the Department refused at that time, to serve out uniforms to newly organised companies. It was not at a time when I was presiding over the Department, but when a colleague of mine, who was more able than I am to preside over the Department, occupied the position, that the companies were organised, and the then Minister refused to serve out uniforms, because, as the hon. gentleman has stated, from a speech of mine, he said the organisation of the militia force in the North-West Territory was a grave question. I ask you, Mr. Speaker, and I ask this House, whether it was possible, upon the money voted by Parliament, maintaining, as we are maintaining in the older Provinces, a force of about 40,000, or more precisely, 37,000, to organise, in a territory so great, expansive and vast, that one battalion would be like no battalion at all—whether it was possible for any right-minded man to expect the Department of Militia, upon the vote of Parliament, to organise a force in the North-West. I stated that the reason why uniforms were not served out to that force—and it was a good reason—was simply because in that Territory, as recent events have shown, it became a question to know what kind of uniforms should be given to our men. Take a corps of

mounted infantry, and every man who has studied the question will say that it was perfectly useless and destructive of the organisation to have served out uniforms that are used in our infantry and cavalry corps at present. Since the outbreak in the North-West the Department has been called upon to send forward uniforms, and the hon. gentleman himself, with the great care which he took of the volunteers at the front, taking for once upon himself to give advice and not criticism, suggested that we should send up to the men who were fighting our battles some kind of uniform which would be more useful and more available for their purpose than those served out in the different infantry corps, those constituting the organised corps of Canada. Yet, the hon. gentleman not knowing that these companies were organised on the understanding that no uniforms should be sent out, but that arms and saddlery alone would be served out—the hon. gentleman, reckless in his charges, stands up in his place and says that through the negligence of the Department of Militia these companies were disorganised, because they had no uniforms served out to them. I have no doubt the hon. gentleman knows as much about military matters as he knows about everything else, and that is saying a great deal, I admit; but the hon. gentleman knows well that if they had saddles and arms they can go through their drill without having green or scarlet tunics on their backs. It was no question of the organisation of the force, no question of whether they were served with uniforms, but a question of whether the Department knew its duty in giving to the mounted infantry the saddles they required to ride their horses and the arms they required to go through their drill. The hon. gentleman says that in three years several of these companies completely disappeared, because of the neglect of the Department. Sir, they disappeared because in that great western country men move about from one district to another, and the companies organised and composed of a certain number of men one day find that those men have been transferred to some other district, for some reason or other; and still the hon. gentleman believes that the Department of Militia would be justifiable in allowing those saddles and arms and accoutrements to be distributed all over that country, and probably, to-day, if the Department had not acted judiciously, those articles would have been in the hands of the men who are shooting down our volunteers. Well, Sir, I believe it was the bounden duty of that Department to see that those arms should be returned into the Department, who were responsible for them to the country, and placed in such a position that if required at any moment they would be at the call of the Department, and could be placed in the hands of the men who, instead of fighting against the country, were fighting to defend the country. Now, the hon. gentleman has referred to some application of Mr. Redson and others, to organise a corps. Now, I wish to appeal to every impartial man, whether sitting on your right or on your left, to say whether it was possible for me, with the estimates which were voted by Parliament every year, to organise a force in the North-West. I have stated, as the hon. gentleman stated to-night, that it is a large question; and, Sir, I hope that when the estimates of my Department come down, if I propose to organise the force which I consider to be necessary and indispensable to the country—I hope that hon. gentlemen will not, as in the past, rise in their seats and state that the expenditure of the Department of Militia is so enormous that with their great love for their country, and their great love for economy, they have to vote against those estimates. I want to ask the hon. gentleman, when he speaks of uniforms, if I have not, year after year, since I have been at the head of the Department of Militia, come down with estimates, showing the House that we required 8,000 suits every year, for the force which we have, the force authorised by Parliament, recognised by