

Mr. ST. LAURENT: I do not think the facts would justify the impression the hon. member has. During the war we conscripted men for service in the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, but we did not take men who were fit for military service. If men volunteered for service in the Royal Canadian Mounted Police they were not taken on unless they were considered fit for our service and were not fit for ordinary military service.

Mr. COCKERAM: I should like to ask the minister if, as a result of engaging men in the Royal Canadian Mounted Police during the war, he lowered the standard of physical fitness?

Mr. ST. LAURENT: No. Hon. members will realize that there was a pretty arbitrary system of determining military fitness for the armed services, and that system has not been adopted for the determination of the fitness of men to join the Royal Canadian Mounted Police; but I think their appearance justifies the feeling that generally the medical fitness of the R.C.M.P. is good.

Mr. COTE (Matapedia-Matane): Is there anything in this amount pertaining to the increase of our forces in regard to counter-espionage?

Mr. ST. LAURENT: The whole of the force is available for any of the operations which have to be performed by it, and we are aiming at an increase of 690 in the establishment.

Mr. JACKMAN: What is the marriage limitation in the case of new recruits to the mounted police?

Mr. ST. LAURENT: New recruits are not allowed to get married status in the force during the first five years.

Mr. JACKMAN: Am I to understand, from what the minister said, that men who were formerly in the force, and had leave of absence to enlist in war service, found, when they returned, that their service years—four, five, or even six—would not count against the marriage limitation?

Mr. ST. LAURENT: Those who got leave of absence were still carried as on the strength of the force and the war period would count in their favour for all purposes.

Mr. JACKMAN: The question we were discussing then was with regard to men whose term of enlistment with the force had expired.

Mr. ST. LAURENT: Yes.

Mr. JACKMAN: And who then, on their own, enlisted in the war services and now have reentered the force and find that the marriage

term does not run during their war service. I may just add that, while there may be some strict legal rule in connection with the administration of the force to permit that proceeding, it does seem to me a grave hardship on a man who, first of all, must serve five years before he is allowed to be married, then serves the country in an equally dangerous, if not more dangerous form of service, and finds, having spent five or six years in war service, that still he cannot marry. I hope, the minister or the chief of the force will realize that there are many of us, and I think the great majority of the people of Canada, who feel that these men should not be unduly delayed, as far as the marriage restriction is concerned, because of their war service.

Mr. LENNARD: Item 613 covers clothing allowances, and I would suggest—though some may think it a foolish suggestion—that service ribbons be supplied as part of the clothing allowance, because these men in the R.C.M.P. who have to put up many service ribbons need to renew them every three months, and in some case the cost amounts to \$15 or \$20 a year, which is quite an item in the pay of mounted policemen.

Mr. ST. LAURENT: I do not know whether the hon. member is aware that we do issue our own service ribbons. We do not supply the ribbons for decorations won in other services than our own.

Mr. LENNARD: You mean, other than the R.C.M.P.?

Mr. ST. LAURENT: Yes.

Mr. LENNARD: That issue amounts to probably no more than one decoration.

Mr. COCKERAM: A few minutes ago, in reply to a question of the hon. member for Calgary East, the minister stated that there were seven members of the forces who had returned and been reengaged but were not given their seniority, and I wondered why there should be a difference in the practice in the government service, because in industry when a man comes back we are compelled to give him his seniority in the industrial organization.

Mr. ST. LAURENT: The reason is that a circular was issued at the beginning of the war explaining to all the men that this service of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police was essential to the safety of the state, and stating to them that as many as could be spared would be given leave of absence, but as to the others they were requested to continue in the service of their country in the R.C.M.P. force. They were told at