

this purpose of \$3,831,270,000 including authority notwithstanding section 29 of the Consolidated Revenue and Audit Act, to make commitments for the current year of \$1,924,170,835 and commitments against future years of \$1,907,099,165 against which commitments it is estimated that actual expenditures in 1951-52 will not exceed \$1,595,050,000 of which \$183,050,000 will be provided from section 3 of the Defence Appropriation Act, 1950, as supplemented by item 246, \$1,412,000,000.

(Translation):

Mr. Gagnon: Mr. Speaker, I cannot let the study of the national defence estimates go by without saying a few words about the personnel in charge of military affairs in Canada.

If it is fair and reasonable to press for a greater proportion of Canadians of French origin in the federal civil service; if it is logical and sensible to ask that members of our racial group hold the high posts to which they are entitled by reason of their number, their qualities and their ability; if in addition we are right in complaining of the present situation and in persistently claiming that the central government the consideration they French Canadians are not receiving from the deserve in respect to the allotment of positions, thereby being deprived of a great deal of influence in the administration of the country, it is also most important that in the various branches of our armed forces, the French Canadians be given the rank and the position they deserve.

We are seeking no favours or privileges. In the last war French Canadians nobly did their duty, and it has been recognized by all well informed people that, since the outbreak of the Korean conflict, Quebec has provided its fair share of volunteers. One-third of the high ranking officers' positions in our navy, army and air force, should go to our own people. In return for equality of sacrifice there should be equality of responsibilities and honours.

On Wednesday, the hon. member for Three Rivers (Mr. Balcer) made in this house a few startling revelations that must have surprised and saddened those who earnestly strive to promote harmony and understanding between the various racial groups in this country.

The hon. member gave many interesting details and clearly showed that French Canadians hold very few high positions in national defence headquarters or in the various services of our armed forces. After listening to the speech of the hon. member for Three Rivers and reading it in *Hansard*, we can easily understand why the government always declined to issue the list of chiefs of staff and staff officers.

Supply—National Defence

Our ministers were possibly ashamed to show openly how French Canadians have been treated. I congratulate my colleague from Three Rivers on bringing the matter to the attention of the authorities and I fully agree with his statements.

The French Canadian is obviously a gallant soldier but he is also capable of leadership, and I find it extremely unfair that he should be trained and led by officers who are unquestionably upright and honourable but in a language he does not understand.

Let us not forget that most of those who join the army hail from the country and that in rural Quebec the English language is quite unknown, because there is practically no opportunity to use it.

When men are being mobilized for active duty, plain decency requires that at least they be in a position to understand the orders of their superiors.

How can a military career appeal to the young French Canadian serviceman when he knows that his superiors speak a language unknown to him? What pleasure and satisfaction can he derive when he has to stand apart by himself, unable to share in the conversations of his fellows? How sad and wearying must be the constant strain to understand and obey orders spoken or written in a language not his own!

For the French Canadian, the army as it now stands is the Foreign Legion. If this system, which seems to have a character of permanency, is indeed to last indefinitely; if it is an English army that is being sought; if instead of making it a national force, the intention is to make it a racial and unilingual one, let it be known. Our men will stay at home.

The Minister of National Defence (Mr. Claxton) stated he would like to see a larger proportion of French-speaking officers in the three services. That statement possibly reflects a very natural desire, but I wonder what is being done by the general staff to follow it up. Experience has made us sceptical and verbal professions of friendship, especially from leaders in Ottawa, generally leave us rather cold. Our hopes have been so often disappointed, so often have we been lulled in our legitimate dreams by soothing generalities that we have become incredulous. We believe only in facts, palpable and authentic.

Why does the minister state that our people have neither the qualifications nor the experience for promotion to those high ranks?