

Proceedings on Adjournment Motion

to France, I believe. To continue, Mr. Speaker, the minister reported as follows:

—the total was 23,200 and the actual number on strength at August 1971 was 20,950 which is 2,250 under the authorized strength.

It was the last figure, Mr. Speaker, based on an estimate given in 1969, that gave rise to my question. There are a number of questions that I should like to have answered. First, has the minister been fully advised by his professional staff why the reserve forces of the Canadian armed forces are alarmingly below a strength that is even minimally acceptable? Despite what the minister may have said, statistics show that to date there has been an alarming 22 per cent drop in the strength of the reserve forces. The reason for this drop concerns me, as does our action to stop it. For instance, why is there this alarming drop-out from our armed forces? Why are so many dropping out after the initial year of indoctrination? After serving their first year, many recruits do not even bother to resign; they simply do not come back for training. Why do they stay home?

I suggest that there are many reasons, one being the inadequacy of support from the regular forces brought about by a desire on the part of forces personnel, understandably, in view of the lack of money and lack of manpower, not to detail officers and senior NCOs to reserve units for training purposes. Another reason involves lack of funds. Also, because of our inability to transfer officers and NCOs to reserve units it is difficult to give those units the level of training that is absolutely necessary if we are to give the permanent personnel of the Canadian armed forces the sort of backing that is necessary. The *raison d'être*, if you will, for our reserve forces is that they are able to provide backing for our regular Canadian armed forces.

These are the questions we want answered. Has the minister identified the problems? What does he intend to do about them? Is there an adequate advertising program? Is there an adequate integrated training program carried out with the assistance of members of the regular forces? Do the reservists have access to a level of training which is normally available at officer and NCO level in the regular forces? All these questions must be answered if we are to identify the reasons for the alarming decline to which I have called attention. I hope the distinguished parliamentary secretary will give me some answers this evening.

Mr. J.-R. Comtois (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of National Defence): May I say, in reply to the hon. member for Dartmouth-Halifax East (Mr. Forrestall), that there is little I can add to what the minister told the Standing Committee on External Affairs and National Defence on April 27, two weeks ago, when responding to a question based on a newspaper article concerning the reserve forces.

Mr. Forrestall: He was responding to Doug Rowland's question.

Mr. Comtois: To say the least, the article was rather misleading in its use of statistics and in the conclusions which were reached. It is alleged that the reserve force dropped by some 22 per cent in two years. In December,

[Mr. Forrestall.]

1969, the then minister of national defence announced a change in the authorized ceiling for the reserves to 23,200, this figure to include the militia, naval and air reserves. As of August, 1971, total reserve force strength was 20,950.

Two weeks ago the Minister of National Defence (Mr. Benson) advised the committee that the department was examining the question of the reserve forces and was developing plans concerning such matters as equipment, uniforms, training and pay.

Mr. Forrestall: Pay is important.

Mr. Comtois: As the hon. member knows, elements of the militia were training a few weeks ago with the Canadian airborne regiment in Jamaica.

Mr. Forrestall: Sixty out of 22,000.

Mr. Comtois: He will be interested to learn, also, that some 500 militiamen from across Canada will be training in Europe with the 4th Canadian mechanized battle group this summer. The first elements of this group will be departing for Europe in a week's time. Finally, it is planned that the deputy chief of operations and reserves will be appearing before the committee on May 30 to assist members in dealing with the subject of the reserve forces. Any questions of detail will be answered at that time.

HOUSING—SUGGESTED INCREASE IN FUNDS FOR HOUSING FOR INDIANS

Mr. Mark Rose (Fraser Valley West): Mr. Speaker, some two weeks ago I directed the following question to the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (Mr. Chrétien):

Bearing in mind the interest taken in low-income groups as far as housing is concerned—

I believe there had been a good deal of propaganda in connection with the government's interest in low-income housing development.

—I should like to ask the member of the government who is replying for the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development whether it is intended to increase government assistance toward the funding of housing for Indians. I ask this question in the light of the article by Mr. Stan Bailey in the *Globe and Mail* last Saturday calling attention to the frustratingly limited resources available for Indian housing at the moment.

• (2210)

The Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau), who responded on behalf of the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development who was absent at that time, said he would ask the minister to look into it. I have been waiting almost a month and have not had a response from the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development. Since there has been no reply from the minister, whom I feel should be titled perhaps minister of Indian development and northern affairs, I raise the question again tonight.

I believe that of all the low-income groups in Canada, the Indians and Métis are among the lowest. However, I was appalled by the story that appeared in the *Globe and Mail* for April 24 last under the byline of Canadian Press. It was headlined, "Indians told to look elsewhere for