

National Defence Act Amendment

constituency and in other parts of Canada. As a result I agreed to bring the matter to the attention of this house. I would suggest to the associate minister, who I am pleased to notice is listening to me very carefully indeed, that he bring this question to the attention of the minister so that some consideration might be given to the inclusion of women in combat forces particularly used for peace keeping purposes.

I want to bring to the attention of the associate minister another matter in connection with the reserve officers training plan. I am informed that this does not apply to the army at all, and to the air force only when commissions are given from the ranks when the requirement exists. I understand that there is no discrimination as far as the navy is concerned with respect to their servicemen having the opportunity to take advantage of the reserve officers training plan.

I suggest, Mr. Chairman, that this is another illustration of a form of discrimination which requires the attention of the minister and the associate minister, particularly in view of government policy as announced in this house and by various ministers throughout the country, and also in view of the speeches made on this question by the Minister of Manpower and Immigration and the present Minister of Justice, both of whom are very interested in this problem. I trust that the associate minister will make note of this question for later consideration. There have been some complaints in this respect and I did promise to raise this matter in the house.

I should also like to deal with the medical students subsidy to those serving in the armed forces. I am informed that this subsidy is not applicable to women serving in the army, as they are considered a reserve. I am also informed that the air force has not received any applications for medical students subsidy and therefore does not consider it necessary at this time. I might point out that it has not received any applications because nothing has been done to promote any applications. In many cases people are unaware that the subsidy is available. I am also informed that the medical students subsidy does not apply to the nursing service. I am told that it is not the policy of the nursing service to subsidize young nurses in schools of nursing. This is the practice in the United States, where I understand very substantial subsidies are given for training, as is the case in other countries.

I trust that the associate minister will correct me if I am inaccurate in this respect, but I understand that the Canadian defence authorities feel that many young girls would marry before completing the course. I am not sure that that is a valid argument because I know that there are a number of young women who would like to train for nursing in the armed services. Therefore, Mr. Chairman, once again I suggest there is discrimination in the application of the medical students subsidy, and I think this also merits the attention of the associate minister.

If I appear to be hesitating, Mr. Chairman, it is because I am somewhat at a loss for words and I am a little embarrassed to some extent. When I was on the defence committee following the second world war I made certain inquiries and discovered that the defence department had thousands of pairs of unused items described officially as "leg coverings, female, black". I inquired what these were, and I must say that this is a rather delicate question for a shy, old backwoods man like myself to deal with. However, when duty calls I am prepared to accept the call. I will try to be as lucid as possible on this rather unusual topic, but in order to complete my argument I must rely to some extent on the imagination of the members present. I have gone into this matter, Mr. Chairman, and I am pleased to say that this practice of distributing, by order, what were known as "leg coverings, female, black", has been discontinued. I inquired of the services most carefully, and I am glad to say that that has been discontinued, that at the present time another policy has come into force and that a grant of \$15 is given to each woman on joining the armed services toward the cost of her unmentionables. In addition, the service is so generous—one ought to relate this to what the men get—that there is a grant of \$1 per month to each woman in the armed services for the maintenance of these unmentionables. That is an improvement on the former policy. I note that, because I thought it was most improper for the general staff to choose the colour of a lady's unmentionables.

• (5:40 p.m.)

I understand that women in our armed services up to the rank of warrant officer first class are entitled to a clothing allowance of \$8 a month. I find that there is much discrimination in the amounts allowed by the armed services, when one compares the allowances given to women as against those given to men. The small allowances given to women